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**Leaving Competitive Sport: Scottish Female
Athletes' Experiences of Sport Career Transitions**

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Abstract

Over the last three decades, the sports research community has demonstrated a growing interest in the process of sport retirement. The majority of the sport retirement research has focused on male professional athletes, traditionally those in the popular spectator sports. Yet, the process of leaving sport applies to thousands of individuals, both male and female, who engage in competitive sport. To date very little consideration has been given to the retirement experiences of female athletes. Three separate studies have been undertaken to address this identified gap in the literature.

Studies One and Two aimed to explore the experiences of sport retirement for elite female athletes in Scotland, using a mixture of quantitative and qualitative methodologies. In Study One questionnaire data was collected from 92 former Scottish elite female athletes. Questionnaire sections were designed to examine what were felt to be the major elements of the Taylor and Ogilvie (1994; 2001) conceptual model of adaptation to retirement from sport, in order to explore the applicability of this model to female athletes in Scotland. The results of the study provide support for the use of this model to assist in our understanding of the retirement transition. The findings highlighted the importance of athletic identity, reason for retirement, and perceptions of control in predicting the level of difficulty and adjustment that an athlete may experience upon their retirement. The most significant finding was the effect that athletic identity had on the retirement process, with those identifying strongly with the athletic role reporting significantly higher levels of difficulty, emotional adjustment, and social adjustment. 29

of these athletes participated in an in-depth interview within Study Two, enabling a more in-depth analysis of their retirement experiences. In this study particular attention was paid to the effect of athletic identity on this transition. In support of the findings of Study One, athletes with a strong and exclusive athletic identity were found to be more likely to experience difficulties when they retire. In comparison, athletes with lower levels of athletic identity generally experience some mild negative emotions after initially retiring, followed by a relatively smooth transition into their life after sport.

The second part of this thesis examines formal programmes available to support female athletic retirement in Scotland. Study Three provides an evaluation of the Performance Lifestyle programme offered by the Scottish Institute of Sport, focusing in particular on the services related to preparation for life after sport. The perspectives of a number of different groups with an interest or involvement in the programme were examined and comparisons made with the delivery of Performance Lifestyle to other athlete groups in Great Britain. The results show that Performance Lifestyle is a very valuable source of support for athletes who are part of the Institute Network. The programme does deal with the issue of the end of the career, but it is definitely a weaker aspect, largely due to lack of resources. Performance Lifestyle in Scotland compares favourably with programmes offered by the Institute Network in England and by Welsh Rugby. However other professional sports are currently offering superior programmes due to higher levels of investment and resources.

Declaration

I declare that I alone composed this thesis and that it embodies the results of my own research. Where appropriate, I have acknowledged the nature and extent of work carried out by others included in the thesis.

Signed:

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Date:

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Introduction

Retirement has been identified as one of the major stress points encountered by an athlete in the course of their sports career. Over the last three decades, the sports research community has demonstrated a growing interest in the process of sport retirement. Coakley defined retirement as “the process of transition from participation in competitive sport to another activity or set of activities” (1983, p1). Earlier studies focused on the adaptation to the difficulties and trauma that can follow the termination of the career (see for example: Allison and Meyer, 1988; Curtis and Ennis, 1988; Hill and Lowe, 1974; Koukouris, 1991a; McPherson, 1980; Mihovilovic, 1968). More recent studies have examined factors which can affect the quality of adaptation to retirement, potential cultural differences in the career termination process, and provision of support for athletes experiencing difficult transitions (see for example: Alfermann, Stambulova, and Zemaityte, 2004; Cecic Erpic, Wylleman, and Zupancic, 2004; Lally, 2007; Lavalley, 2005; Wylleman, Alfermann, and Lavalley, 2004).

The majority of the sport retirement research has focused on male professional athletes, traditionally those in the popular spectator sports. Yet, the process of leaving sport applies to thousands of individuals, both male and female, who engage in competitive sport. To date very little consideration has been given to the retirement experiences of female athletes. There has been no research looking specifically at female athletes in Scotland.

The experience of any sports career will be affected by the social and cultural climate within which it takes place. Wylleman (2004, cited in Stambulova, Stephan, and Japhag, 2007) utilised an ecological approach to describe the elite sport climate within a country. With this approach, there are three levels. The macro-level considers aspects such as the size of the country, the population, and the level of welfare. The meso-level looks at quality of sports-specific guidance, the athletic infrastructure, the level of media attention received, and public support for elite athletes. Finally, the micro-level is concerned with the athlete's psychosocial situation. This approach highlights the impact of cultural aspects on athletic career termination.

Scotland is a relatively small country, with a total area of less than 50,000 square kilometres and a population of just over five million (Scotland: The Official Online Gateway, 2008). Nearly all female athletes in Scotland have to combine their sport with another career and plan for life after sport. Opportunities for full time participation in sport are limited. Even female athletes who are full time are very unlikely to make large amounts of money from their sport and will therefore require an alternative source of finance when their career is finished. Female sports in Scotland have a considerably lower profile than their male counterparts. Only a small number of female athletes receive much media attention and opportunities to develop a career within sport after retirement are quite minimal. Many of the sports governing bodies are small and run primarily by volunteers. Their primary focus is on provision of participation opportunities at all levels, with little in the way of additional support for athletes.

The Scottish Institute of Sport was set up to ensure that non-professional Scottish athletes are able to make their mark in an increasingly competitive environment.¹ Prior to its inception, there were no national programmes available to assist athletes during their career in sport or through their retirement. The Scottish Institute of Sport now provides support to athletes through its Performance Lifestyle programme.

The aim of this thesis is to explore the experiences of sport retirement for elite female athletes in Scotland. Three research questions have been developed to meet this aim:

- 1) What factors influence the retirement transition for Scottish female athletes?
- 2) How does level of identification with the athletic role affect the retirement transition?
- 3) What formal programmes are available to support female athletic retirement in Scotland?

Chapter One provides an insight into the development and impact of a career in elite sport. The major stages of a career in sport and typical career crises are examined. Following this, the research findings on the effects of participation in sport on personal development, education, career planning, career maturity, social mobility, and body image are reviewed. The aim of Chapter Two is to highlight the importance of athletic identity for the career termination process. Identity construction and identity foreclosure will both be examined, along with the literature pertaining to identification with the athletic role and links to athletic retirement. Chapter Three reviews the literature examining the retirement transition in sport. The first section will provide an overview of the theoretical

¹ See www.sisport.com

perspectives that have been utilised to explain the process of retirement in sport. This is followed by a discussion of the literature surrounding reasons for athletic retirement, quality of adaptation to this transition, and factors relating to adaptation.

Chapter Four presents Study One, which examines the characteristics of the retirement transition for Scottish female athletes. Quantitative data was collected through the application of a questionnaire. Questionnaire sections were designed to examine what were felt to be the major elements of the Taylor and Ogilvie (1994; 2001) conceptual model of adaptation to retirement from sport, in order to explore the applicability of this model to female athletes in Scotland. Athletic Identity was identified within the first study as being one of the most important factors influencing retirement difficulty and transitional adjustment. Study Two was primarily designed to explore this relationship in more detail. Chapter Five presents the second study, in which a qualitative approach was adopted, complementing the quantitative nature of the first study. Nau suggests that “blending qualitative and quantitative methods of research can produce a final product which can highlight the significant contributions of both” (1995, p1). In-depth interviews enabled a comparison of athletes with low and high levels of athletic identity, examining similarities and differences in their experiences of retirement.

Chapter Six moves on to examine the second major theme of the thesis, regarding the provision of retirement support to athletes. This chapter identifies the diverse forms of interventions that have been utilised for assisting sport career termination

and then examines the career assistance programmes that have been developed in a number of countries including Australia, Canada, the United States, and Great Britain. Chapter Seven presents Study Three. This study is an evaluation of the delivery of the Performance Lifestyle programme in Scotland, focusing in particular on the services related to preparation for life after sport. The perspectives of a number of different groups with an interest or involvement in the programme have been sought. Following this, the study looks to suggest some ways in which the service can be improved through comparisons to the delivery of Performance Lifestyle to other athlete groups in Great Britain.

Chapter 1: LITERATURE REVIEW: The Sports Career

Haerle used the term career to refer to “the fate of a man running his life cycle in a particular society at a particular time” (1975a, p463). The process by which an individual enters and progresses in a particular line of work is shaped by their background characteristics and by age and gender norms (Hastings, Kurth, and Meyer, 1989). Rosenberg (1980b) and Salmela (1994) have suggested that a career in sport can be viewed as a compressed version of a normal working experience. One major difference that has been highlighted is the uncertainty and insecurity that characterises the sporting career (McPherson, 1978; McPherson, 1980; Vamplew, 2004).

The aim of this chapter is to provide an insight into the development and impact of a career in elite sport, providing a back-drop for the three studies within this thesis. The first section describes the major stages of a career in sport, evaluating issues surrounding career lengths and typical career crises an athlete faces. The second section examines the research findings on the effects of participation in sport on personal development, education, career planning, career maturity, social mobility, and body image.

1.1 Career Patterns

Only a small number of the top level Spanish athletes in Ferrado’s (1979) study described athletics as a job or profession. In comparison, Vuolle found that “during the peak period of athletic career, sport clearly had a dominant position”

(1978, p20). For elite level amateur athletes in more recent times, this is a more representative viewpoint. For many athletes, sport goals become the main life goals and their lifestyles are subordinated to sport (Stambulova, 1994). Rosenberg suggests that “as sport has grown to be viewed as work, as big business, it has become increasingly distinguished and separated from other forms of playful activity” (1980b, p41).

A typical career in sport is generally substantially shorter than careers in other professions. Early research suggested that the average career for professional athletes was between five and ten years, as long as they survive the first two years (McPherson, 1978). Career length varies across different sports. Sugawara (1972) examined the careers of top sportsmen in Japan and found that they were longest for baseball players and shortest for swimmers. This finding is supported by the work of Vuolle (1978) who found that the active careers of team athletes were longer than those of individual athletes. Vamplew (2004) adds that historically footballers had the shortest careers among team sport athletes. There are some sports in which longer careers are more likely, such as snooker, golf and cricket. McPherson (1980) suggested that a sportsperson’s level of education also had a bearing on the length of their career. Athletes who did not attend college were generally more involved in their occupation and had longer careers. In comparison, college-educated athletes often entered the elite levels of their sport at a later time and also terminated their careers at an earlier age.

Career models propose that a person’s involvement in an activity moves through various phases (Hastings *et al.*, 1989). People weigh up the perceived benefits and

costs associated with a particular activity when making choices about how to use their time and energy. These choices, made at crucial phases of a career, have been described as “career contingencies” (Haerle, 1975a, p464). Research suggests that sports careers have age norms that represent presumptions of what people of various ages can or should be doing in particular competitive settings (McPherson, 1978). Both upward and downward mobility within the sport structure can happen very suddenly, presenting new career contingencies and crises to athletes (Rosenberg, 1980a).

Stambulova describes sports career crises as “predictable transitional phases that are associated with defined difficulties, the overcoming of which has great importance” (1994, p226). In later research, she identifies three possible types of crises that athletes may encounter during their sporting career: (1) age-related crises (crisis-transitions between adjacent age-related stages); (2) sports career-related crises (crisis-transitions between adjacent stages of the sports career), and (3) situation-related crises (crisis-transitions that are caused by particular circumstances in the individual’s sports career, or life in general) (Stambulova, 2000).

Identified sports career transitions include: the beginning of sports specialisation; to intensive training; to high-achievement sports and adult sports; from amateur to professional sport; from the culmination to the end of the sports career; and the termination of the sports career (European Federation of Sport Psychology, 1997). Some transitions are predictable and anticipated. They are part of a sequence of age-related events or changes and are generally associated with the socialisation

process. Other transitions do not occur in a set plan or schedule and cannot be anticipated, for example a career-ending injury or an unanticipated deselection (Wylleman and Lavallee, 2004). Scully and Clarke (1997) distinguish between sport-specific withdrawal and general drop-out. In the former, the athlete has withdrawn from one sport to become involved in another, whereas in the latter the athlete has dropped out of all competitive sport permanently. The ending of the sports career is the crisis period which forms the main focus for this thesis.

1.2 Effects of Sport

Many studies have attempted to show that participation in sport enhances psychosocial development, but the research is inconsistent and contradictory. There has been a lot of debate as to whether or not sport has any effect on character development (Petitpas and Champagne, 1988). Athletes preoccupied with competition, practice and winning may not be as attentive to their educational and career plans as others (Blann, 1985; McPherson, 1978). Broom (1982) suggests that an emphasis on sport from an early age is often at the expense of education. Brown and Hartley (1998) add that participation in intercollegiate sport can be developmentally detrimental for many athletes. Athletes who neglect their educational and occupational development may be more likely to experience difficulties at the end of their sporting career (Remer, Tongate, and Watson, 1978). As it is not realistic for most female athletes to believe they can make a living based solely on their athletic skills, these issues are likely to be of particular importance.

At all levels of sport, the physical activity, teamwork and competition aspects of sport have important implications for social, physical, and personal development (Baillie and Danish, 1992; Perna, Zaichkowsky, and Bocknek, 1996). Several studies have suggested that sports participation can have a positive influence on aspects of personal development. Sports participation has been linked to improved athletic skills (Brown, Glastetter-Fender, and Shelton, 2000), enhanced physical abilities (Cornelius, 1995), and improved physiological functioning (Martin, 1999). Studies have also demonstrated that participation in sporting activities can enhance leadership skills (Baillie and Danish, 1992), increase feelings of self-worth (Nelson, 1983; Sands, 1978), and improve family and peer interaction (Phillips and Schafer, 1971). A number of personality traits are thought to be particularly salient in a successful athlete. These include competitiveness, independence, self-assertiveness, independence, tough-mindedness, and conscientiousness (Dubois, 1980; Ogilvie and Gustavson, 1980). In both Pawlak's (1984) study of Polish Olympians and Sugawara's (1972) study of top sportsmen in Japan, subjects generally considered that they were somewhat highly regarded by society and that their success in their sport contributed to the prestige of their position in society. Nelson suggests that an "emphasis in sports on such achievement factors as hard work, persistence, self-improvement, and preparation today for competition tomorrow carries over into other endeavours" (1983, p180).

Not all of the research that has been conducted in this area is in agreement with the above findings. Thomas and Ermler proposed that "we often mistake the image projected by the young athlete at the moments of success and privilege as a confidence and self-assurance reflective of personal and social development"

(1988, p138). Several past studies have shown that personal development in several areas may be hindered as a result of athletic participation (Kennedy and Dimick, 1987; Perna *et al.*, 1996; Remer *et al.*, 1978). Kerr and Dacyshyn (2000) discovered that participation in elite gymnastics may have the effect of postponing identity formation. Participation in elite-level sport has also been thought to impede an athlete's social support system due to its often all-encompassing nature (Scanlan, Stein, and Ravizza, 1989). Sports participation of this kind can be disruptive to everything from an athlete's family relationships and work responsibilities to their physical health and personal comfort (Hughes and Coakley, 1991). In some cases it could also leave them without basic skills required for coping with life, such as "reading and writing, looking for a sale or balancing a chequebook" (Thomas and Ermler, 1988, p139).

In addition to the pressures and problems that accompany life in general, athletes face unique personal, academic, social, and vocational problems (Lanning, 1982; Sands, 1978). Vuolle (1978) found that nearly half of the Olympians in his study experienced great sacrifices in family life. Research into the careers of boxers documents the special strain that is placed upon the boxer's marriage, whilst the physical effects of the sport have a very detrimental long term effect (Hare, 1971; Weinberg and Arond, 1969). In direct contrast to the earlier findings described, in which positive factors from sport were seen to be carried over into everyday life, Ogilvie and Gustavson concluded that the athletes' "strong motivation to become winners did not carry over to education, nor did they feel it elevated their financial aspirations" (1980, p114).

The relationship between sport and education has been the subject of several studies, the majority North American-based. Whilst a number have shown that student-athletes often perform better in education than non-athletes, others have demonstrated sport having a detrimental effect on educational attainment. Athletes who allow their sport to have a negative effect on their education may be reducing their options and therefore face additional problems at the end of their sporting career. Haerle (1975a; 1975b) believes that attendance at college or university opens up new options to athletes who would otherwise be dependent on being successful in their sporting career, and that involvement in sport can actually enhance the level of educational aspirations and expectations. Otto and Alwin (1977) suggest that the two cultures of sport and education are causally linked, while Phillips and Schafer state that “there is compelling evidence that athletes get slightly better grades than do comparable non-athletes” (1971, p328). Loy (1972) examined the social origins and occupational mobility of a sample of American male college athletes and found that all but a small percentage of the athletes received a college degree, and nearly half earned an advanced degree. This finding of educational attainment in student-athletes is supported by similar studies of male college athletes conducted by Otto and Alwin (1977) and Kennedy and Dimick (1987). Pawlak agreed with these findings:

Comparing educational indices of Olympians with that of the entire population of Poland we found that, in comparison with Poles working in the socialised economy, the percentage of Olympians who completed higher education was eight times higher (1984, p171).

While there are undoubtedly many athletes who are good students and successful in the field of education, a number of studies suggest that this is not always the

case (Renick, 1974; Rosenberg, 1980b). Many athletes fail to graduate; they have distorted priorities and never manage the time demands that are placed upon them (Lanning, 1982; Whitner and Myers, 1986). In Sack and Thiel's (1979) study of social mobility in Notre Dame male college football players, they were found to have earned fewer advanced degrees than other students, perhaps indicating a lower priority placed upon academic accomplishments. In another study on male college athletes, Adler and Adler (1987) also found that the player's sport role often encroached on their academic role. This was influenced by their coaches, who spoke about the importance of education, but in reality accorded athletic and team functions higher salience.

There is a suggestion that these educational problems can start at high school level. Landers and colleagues concluded that "male high school students who participated only in athletics lack the academic skills necessary to fulfil their higher educational aspirations" (Landers, Feltz, Obermeier, and Brouse, 1978, p479). Top amateur athletes in both Spain (Ferrado, 1979) and Finland (Vuolle, 1978) suggested that sport had undesirable and negative effects on schooling and on education. A study by Meyer (1990) is one of the few which paid particular attention to female collegiate athletes. These females felt that being an athlete did not have a negative effect on academic achievement. However, the majority did feel that their sport took up too much of their time while they were at college. For all athletes, both male and female, it is certainly clear that the longer education is neglected, the further behind their age-contemporaries they are likely to fall (Broom, 1982).

Studies have also examined the effects of participation in sport on career development, defined as “the formation of mature, realistic career plans grounded in assessing one’s career goals, interests, and abilities and awareness of vocational opportunities and requirements” (Lally and Kerr, 2005, p275). Athletes who have low levels of career maturity or restricted career plans may experience more adjustment difficulties at the end of their sporting career (Murphy, Petitpas, and Brewer, 1996). Brown *et al.* suggest that:

The demands of playing, training, and travelling generally compete with adequate career preparation, rendering many student-athletes ill-prepared for career and life choices outside the sports milieu (2000, p53).

This is supported in the studies of Blann (1985) and Kleiber and Malik (1989), who found that participation in collegiate sport could detrimentally affect the athlete’s ability to formulate mature career plans. Reinforcement received from significant others for their sports participation leads to athletes neglecting to tend to their career development concerns (Brown and Hartley, 1998). Coaches and team management also tend to discourage preparation for post-sport careers, as they see it as a distraction (Broom, 1982). The development of unrealistic sporting goals has been highlighted by the research as one of the reasons for lower levels of career maturity among some athletes (Kennedy and Dimick, 1987).

The notion that sport can serve as an effective vehicle for upward social mobility has been accepted without question by many individuals involved in elite sport (Phillips and Schafer, 1971; Sack and Thiel, 1979). Dubois adds to this by suggesting that:

Economically disadvantaged individuals in general and ethnic minorities in particular are the most often mentioned beneficiaries of the 'upward mobility through sport' belief (1980, p93).

Studies in this area have yielded conflicting results. Loy (1972) found that the majority of the former athletes were employed in occupations of higher socioeconomic status than their parents. Sack and Thiel (1979) also demonstrated considerable social mobility for former players, while Luschen (1969) found that for a significant number of athletes mobility from one social class to another was seen. However, he also suggested that sport could only compensate in a small degree for poor academic or occupational performance. In comparison, Dubois, examining the occupational attainment of former American college athletes, found that "for the sample of athletes investigated in this study, the notion of sport as a stepping stone to high status attainment is a myth" (1980, p104).

Sport may contribute to positive perceptions of the body through improved physical fitness and self esteem (Blasco, Garcia-Merita, Atienza, and Balaguer, 1997; Martin, 1999). This could have a positive influence at the end of the sport career, in terms of improved physical health and attitude towards physical activity. However, it could also work negatively if an athlete struggles with the changes in their body that accompany the end of a strict and intense training regime. Some athletes, particularly those in aesthetic-based sports, engage in destructive habits upon ending their sports career when they are unable to deal with their lowered physical self esteem (Ryan, 2000).

1.3 Conclusion

The research findings are inconsistent in relation to the positive and negative effects of sports participation in areas such as education and career planning. The widespread view is that participation in sport enhances social mobility and career prospects but the evidence is not conclusive. It seems reasonable to hypothesise that the way in which athletes experience the retirement transition will relate to their educational and employment experiences during their sporting careers. The existing research literature suggests that these experiences are extremely varied and do not point in a consistent direction.

Chapter 2: LITERATURE REVIEW: Athletic Identity

Identities are described as the social meanings that persons attribute to themselves in a role (Burke and Reitzes, 1991). Donnelly and Young suggest that “accurate identity construction begins during the socialisation stage” (1988, p226). Knowledge of the construct of identity and how it is developed provides a framework for understanding role-related behaviour (Brown and Hartley, 1998). The aim of this chapter is to highlight the importance of athletic identity for the career termination process. The first section will provide an overview of identity construction. The second section will examine identification with the athletic role and the final section will consider the concept of identity foreclosure.

2.1 Identity

Abbott and colleagues define an identity as “a set of self-definitions developed, confirmed, and maintained through social interaction” (Abbott, Weinmann, Bailey, and Laguna, 1999, p370). Identity theory is used to link the individual and the social structure. Adler and Adler describe that the theory “analyses structural characteristics of individuals’ self-conceptions, their behaviour, and their social relations with others” (1987, p444). The major components of identity theory are role identity, role behaviour, and commitment to the role (Hoelter, 1983). Leonard and Schmitt define an individual’s role identity as “his imaginative view of himself as he likes to think of himself being and acting as an occupant of that position” (1987, p252). Role identities are considered to be dynamic, as they are based on and maintained by social interaction. A change in an individual’s social

environment should result in a change within their identity hierarchy (Gergen, 1991).

Identity is often discussed in terms of self-concept. The prevailing view of the self-concept is that it is a multidimensional entity that includes all of a person's thoughts and feelings about the self within the various aspects of their life (Brewer, Van Raalte, and Linder, 1993). Horton and Mack suggest that "the multidimensional nature of the self-concept allows people to activate different dimensions of the self at different times" (2000, p102). Personality theorists recognise that identity has a public and a private orientation. The private orientation describes those elements of identity that are potentially unavailable to public scrutiny. In comparison, the public orientation is the way in which a person is viewed by others (Webb, Nasco, Riley, and Headrick, 1998).

Identity development requires the exploration of varied behaviours and roles. This exploratory behaviour plays an important function in building self-esteem, learning life skills, and developing career maturity (Pearson and Petitpas, 1990). Ogilvie and Howe (1982) suggest that a child begins to develop a sense of identity between the ages of seven and twelve. A critical period for identity formation is adolescence, during which an individual works towards establishing commitments to the alternatives that appear most consistent with their skills, values, interests, and personal needs (Murphy *et al.*, 1996). During this time, the adolescent's major task is the acquisition of a sense of autonomy, achievement and initiative (Baillie and Danish, 1992).

A person's environment plays a role in the development of their identity. Individuals search for role identities that are recognised by both themselves and others as desirable and valuable (Kosonen, 1999; Stevenson, 1990). Those who gain rewards or have become tied to others by virtue of having and maintaining a certain identity are more likely to show higher levels of commitment to that identity (Burke and Reitzes, 1991). People will modify their role identities based on their interpretation of how others view their public behaviours (Leonard and Schmitt, 1987). Within sport, the environment may have a particularly strong influence on an individual's identity development due to the nature of people's involvement. For example, as Gearing describes; "British football clubs are peculiar and unique institutions which stamp a certain character on young men as they pass through the stages of adolescence and early adulthood" (1999, p46).

Core feelings of identity are not invested equally in all roles. Some roles are more salient than others (Adler and Adler, 1987). Identity salience can be described as the probability that a given identity will be activated in a given situation (Horton and Mack, 2000). Role identities are placed into a hierarchy, with the most dominant and salient identity located at the top (Abbott *et al.*, 1999). A relationship has also been shown to exist between role evaluation and identity salience (Adler and Adler, 1987). Hoelter suggested that "if one evaluates a particular identity negatively, that identity will most likely carry less weight in arriving at an overall self-definition" (1983, p141). Competence can also have an impact. A role is likely to have higher salience if it is one in which the individual performs particularly well (Curry, 1993). Incompetence in a role that has high perceived importance can severely affect self-esteem and feelings of self worth

(Hale, James, and Stambulova, 1999). The salience of an identity increases as the level of commitment to the role which gave rise to that identity increases (Brown and Hartley, 1998; Curry and Weaner, 1987).

2.2 Athletic Identity

For many athletes, their identity in sport is the attribute most valued by others from earliest childhood, and therefore the main one they have come to value in themselves (Heyman, 1986). The extent to which an athlete's sport identity is an important part of their self-concept will determine how likely it is that their thoughts and behaviours associated with this role will be expressed in any given situation (Martin, Adams-Mushett, and Smith, 1995). Athletic identity is a unique and important dimension of the self-concept that provides a framework for interpreting information and inspires behaviour consistent with the athlete role (Horton and Mack, 2000). Brewer *et al.* defined it as the "degree to which an individual identifies with the athlete role" (1993, p237).

An athlete's identification with the sports role can begin as early as childhood and continues to develop and intensify through adolescence and into their adult years (Baillie and Danish, 1992; Broom, 1982; Brown and Hartley, 1998; Heyman, 1987; Webb *et al.*, 1998). This is different to those in other professional careers, who acquire their central identity after a long apprenticeship (Drahota and Eitzen, 1998). Early experience of success, along with high levels of perceived competence, lead toward a definition of the self as an athlete (Baillie, 1993). Identities that are built primarily on successful performances in this way are very

fragile, with the athlete's self-esteem high when they win and low when they lose (Thomas and Ermler, 1988). The athlete's sense of worth is based around their ability to perform in sport (Lanning, 1982). Coaches and others involved in sport often discourage activities that may divert the focus of the athlete away from their performance. Ogilvie and Taylor describe athletes who are this strongly invested in sport as being one-dimensional, as their self concept does not extend beyond the limits of their sport (Ogilvie and Taylor, 1993a; Ogilvie and Taylor, 1993b; Taylor and Ogilvie, 1994).

This early identification with the sport role means that the young athlete may have prematurely shaped their identity and career choice before they have sufficiently sampled a variety of interests and talents (Brown and Hartley, 1998). For example, Stevenson (1999) found that as the rewards received from the athletic role identity increased, the greater was the perceived cost of not performing the role and the greater the incentive to maintain it. Similarly, Andrews stated that "as the young hockey athlete enters adolescence, he invests more of himself psychologically, physically, and materially into the game" (1981, p56).

As individuals become more involved in and committed to a sport, they develop an identity that excludes other facets of their personalities (Crook and Robertson, 1991; Lavalley, Gordon, and Grove, 1997a). In the course of the time and energy involved in developing this identity of an athlete, "other necessary components of a mature, functional, and broad-based identity may be missed" (Heyman, 1987, p137). The heavy demands of the athlete role can conflict with other important roles and activities, causing problems to arise such as limited relationships with

peers and a lack of social and career development (Brown and Hartley, 1998; Lavallee, 2005). Orlick (1990) suggested that something has to suffer when one aspect of an individual's life weighs too heavily for a prolonged period of time.

Two forms of athletic identity are discussed; private or self identity, and public or social identity. Private or self identity is used to describe an individual's internal thoughts, feelings and assessment of oneself as an athlete. Public or social identity refers to an individual's perceptions of others' views of them as athletes (Martin *et al.*, 1995). These two constructs may contribute differently during periods of identity crisis. For example, the negative relationship found between athletic identity and self esteem is due almost exclusively to the public athletic identity (Webb *et al.*, 1998). This public definition of athletic identity acknowledges that the extent to which an individual identifies with the role of athlete may be strongly influenced by family members, friends, coaches, teachers, and the media (Brewer *et al.*, 1993). Athletes will internalise the perceptions of important others and will define themselves as they are defined by others (Horton and Mack, 2000). Curry suggests that "although many persons might like to imagine themselves as successful athletes, without role support from others such identity claims remain fantasy" (1993, p74).

Several studies have examined the level of athletic identity in male and female athletes, with some inconsistencies in the findings. Studies examining levels of sport role commitment in college student-athletes by Curry (1993) and Murphy *et al.* (1996) both found no differences in levels of athletic identity between male and female athletes. These results suggest that men and women athletes identify in

a similar way with the athlete role. Martin *et al.* (1995) also found no significant gender differences. However, work by Brewer and colleagues (Brewer *et al.*, 1993; Brewer, Van Raalte, and Petitpas, 2000) and Weichman and Williams (1997; cited in Burke and Szabo, 2001) suggest that a higher level of athletic identity is seen in males than in females. The magnitude of gender differences in athletic identity is likely to be greater among individuals at low levels of sport involvement than among individuals at higher levels (Good, Brewer, Petitpas, Van Raalte, and Mahar, 1993).

Horton and Mack (2000) found that although college and adult athletes may exhibit the same levels of identity to the sport role, the way this identity is organised in relation to other dimensions of the self is likely to be very different in the two groups. This may be because college athletes may have fewer life roles and therefore experience less role conflict. Cultural differences have also been found in athletic identity. Eastern European athletes were found to be more committed to sport and have a higher level of athletic identity. This may be due to sport being seen as a means for upward mobility within these cultures (Alfermann *et al.*, 2004). Brewer and colleagues have suggested that patterns of identification with the athletic role would be expected to vary as a function of the sport situation. For example, changes of athletic identity may occur as a function of team selection outcome. Athletes who are not selected may decrease their identification with the athletic role to assist them in coping with the situation (Brewer, Selby, Linder, and Petitpas, 1999).

There may be both positive and negative consequences associated with having a strong athletic identity. A strong athletic identity has been linked to the development of a salient sense of self (Brewer *et al.*, 1993), improved athletic performance (Brewer *et al.*, 1993), increased self confidence (Martin, Adams-Mushett, and Eklund, 1994), improved social relationships and social interaction (Brown and Hartley, 1998), and decreased anxiety (Horton and Mack, 2000). Athletic identity is also thought to have implications for social relations. For example, individuals with strong athletic identities are more likely to form relationships with other athletes in comparison to those with a weaker level of identification (Martin, Eklund, and Mushett, 1997). Martin (1999) found that higher levels of athletic identity in swimmers with disabilities was linked to an enhanced sense of body image.

While there are potential benefits of having a strong athletic identity, studies have also identified possible detrimental effects. The often single-minded pursuit of excellence that accompanies participation in elite sports has potential psychological and social dangers (Taylor and Ogilvie, 1994). A high level of identification with the athlete role may lead to a quality education being devalued or ignored at some stages of development, which can leave athletes lacking in important academic skills (Brown and Hartley, 1998; Nelson, 1983). Linked to this is the suggestion that a strong athletic identity is associated with delayed career development by athletes, partially due to the belief that career planning may be seen as a threat to athletic performance by both athletes and coaches (Brown *et al.*, 2000; Lavalley, Gordon, and Grove, 1996; Murphy *et al.*, 1996).

A strong athletic identity has also been associated in past research with inhibited development of important life skills (Pearson and Petitpas, 1990), increased depression following identity-threatening events (Brewer, 1993), increased risk of neurotic illness in the event of an appropriate threat (Little, 1969), and an increased strain on personal relationships (Messner, 1992). Horton and Mack additionally suggest that “over commitment to the athlete role may lead to dysfunctional practices within the athlete role: over training, anxiety when not training, or in extreme cases, the use of performance enhancing drugs” (2000, p103).

The most important proposed costs of a strong athletic identity relate to difficulties that an athlete may encounter in sports career transitions, such as dealing with injury, missing team selection, or career termination (Brewer *et al.*, 1993). Heyman suggests that “so long as they can participate successfully, no problems may be manifest. Problems emerge, however, when the athlete can no longer successfully participate” (1986, p68). The athletes who have based their self-worth primarily on their athletic performances are thought to be at the greatest risk of experiencing these problems during transitions (Crook and Robertson, 1991; Hurley and Mills, 1993; Lavalley, Golby, and Lavalley, 2002).

Injuries can be extremely disruptive to an individual’s sense of self for those who have a strong athletic identity. This is particularly the case when the athlete lacks other sources of self-worth and self-identification (Brewer *et al.*, 1993). Brewer (1993) found that athletic identity contributes uniquely to depressed mood in injured athletes. This association was found to be most positive in the athletes

with the strongest identification with the athlete role. Athletic injuries may also cause athletes to experience “identity crises, social withdrawal, and fear, anxiety and loss of self-esteem” (Ogilvie and Taylor, 1993b). Due to the unexpected nature of injuries, athletes may find themselves locked into their athletic identity as they have had no opportunity to prepare psychologically for the career crisis. They have not had a chance to redirect their energies away from their athletic identity and into some other identity pursuit. Webb *et al.* conclude, “relative to other reasons for retiring from sports, injury-related retirements are more problematic for individuals with strong athletic identities” (1998, p356).

The special issues that can be posed by the retirement of athletes from competitive sport exist because of the intensity of involvement and commitment to the athletic identity that is required to achieve success. An important aspect of retirement for many athletes is the loss of identity and the struggle to find a new one (Kerr and Dacyshyn, 2000; Messner, 1992; Wheeler, Malone, Vanvlack, Nelson, and Steadward, 1996). Lavalley *et al.* (1997a) suggest that this change in identity may sometimes occur over a long period of time. Sometimes, the retired athlete simply cannot fill the void that is left by the loss of the dominant athletic identity (Abbott *et al.*, 1999). Without sport to define themselves, many ex-athletes are left with confusion as to their identity, low in self esteem and confidence (Crook and Robertson, 1991). After their retirement, ex-athletes need to adapt to viewing themselves in other roles (Murphy, 1995). This process is made more difficult if society does not give up a person’s previous identity and treats them on the basis of who they used to be (Drahota and Eitzen, 1998). Chamalidis (1997) suggests

that the strength of the athletic identity will determine the intensity of the identity crisis that they will face at the termination of their career.

If a sport identity remains dominant after retirement this can lead to increased problems in the transition out of sport. Research by Lavalley *et al.* (1997a) supports this, demonstrating that decreased athletic identity since retirement was associated with greater overall success in coping with retirement. Alfermann *et al.* (2004) found that high levels of athletic identity correlated to a longer duration of adaptation to retirement, to more negative emotions following career termination, and to less satisfaction with the time of career termination. High levels of athletic identity have also been linked to the degree of emotional adjustment required upon career termination and increased reliance on denial coping strategies (Grove, Lavalley, and Gordon, 1997). Prolonged use of denial can increase distress and may interfere with the use of more productive, problem-focused coping strategies.

2.3 Identity Foreclosure

Petitpas (1978) proposed that for a person to achieve a stable and unique identity, it is necessary for them to experience crisis in the form of being forced to choose from a series of meaningful alternatives. Kerr and Dacyshyn add that “exploration and experimentation with various roles and relationships is essential for learning about oneself” (2000, p127). Individuals who make a commitment to a specific role without engaging in this exploratory behaviour are said to be in a state of identity foreclosure (Murphy *et al.*, 1996). Individuals in a state of foreclosure have adopted a rigid identity without any searching of internal needs and values.

They have adopted a socially accepted role identity and gained a sense of safety and security avoiding identity crisis (Heyman, 1987; Petitpas, 1978).

Two kinds of identity foreclosure have been identified. Individuals who are psychologically foreclosed demonstrate a strong tendency to avoid personal change, avoid others who have views that may challenge their own, and cling rigidly to predetermined career goals. Those who are situationally foreclosed also appear rigid and closed but the reasons for their foreclosure are different. People in this status have not had exposure to ideas, information and lifestyles different to their own (Petitpas, 1978). Friedman and Marcia discovered “that foreclosed college women scored low on the anxiety scale, high on self-esteem scales, and that they tended to answer questions in socially accepted ways” (1970; cited in Petitpas, 1978, p559).

Research suggests that athletes could be at an increased risk of identity foreclosure (Brown *et al.*, 2000; Murphy *et al.*, 1996). Heyman suggests that “the opportunity to explore oneself in a variety of situations becomes more limited in a world made up of athletes and expectations about athletes” (1987, p139). The commitment and dedication necessary to succeed in competitive sport could restrict an athlete’s opportunities to engage in exploratory behaviours, described earlier as essential for identity development. Athletes may prematurely commit themselves to unrealistic objectives and life aspirations, without considering meaningful values and goals (Nelson, 1983). Brown and Glastetter-Fender (2000) concluded that the commitment and demands at this level would interfere with opportunities for exploratory behaviour and promote identity foreclosure. In their

study of athletic identity and identity foreclosure in student-athletes, Murphy and colleagues found that both of these constructs were inversely related to career maturity. However, in comparison to other studies, they suggest “failing to explore alternative roles and behaviours and identifying strongly and exclusively with the athlete role are separate processes” (Murphy *et al.*, 1996, p243). This finding is supported by the work of Brown *et al.* (2000). Identity foreclosure can cause adjustment problems if that identity is lost, for example upon career transition and where there are few alternatives for structuring a new identity.

2.4 Conclusion

Athletic identity has been regarded in the literature as an important but potentially damaging aspect of an athlete’s self-concept. However, several studies have shown that athletic identity does not necessarily lead to stunted development in other life roles. If an athlete can maintain a balanced lifestyle and base their self-worth on more than their sporting successes and achievements, they can create a self-concept that is not solely defined by their sport (Hurley and Mills, 1993; Kerr and Dacyshyn, 2000). However, if an individual does commit to a strong and exclusive athletic identity then this can potentially lead to problems upon retirement. Further research is required to clarify the effect athletic identity can have during this transition and ways in which a more balanced identity hierarchy can be achieved.

Chapter 3: LITERATURE REVIEW: Athletic Retirement

Retirement is a major event in the life cycle, which can have important financial, occupational, interpersonal, and psychological consequences for the athlete. Nearly all athletes will have to make transitions into different lifestyles after the end of their competitive sporting career (Lerch, 1982). There is still considerable debate about the evidence and extent of the distress caused by retirement from sport (Lavallee, Grove, Gordon, and Ford, 1998). A large amount of the documented information on retirement from sport is anecdotal and journalistic in nature (Johnson, 1972; Kaplan, 1977; McLaughlin, 1981a; McLaughlin, 1981b; White, 1974). The majority of the empirical research that has been conducted has focused on the experiences of male athletes, with a dearth of research conducted on female sport. Traditionally sport sociologists have considered retirement from sport as a termination, abrupt or otherwise, which requires a certain amount of adjustment to the role withdrawal (Greendorfer and Blinde, 1985). However, other theorists have indicated that retirement from sport could be experienced as a relief; an opportunity to pursue new roles and experiences (Coakley, 1983; Kerr and Dacyshyn, 2000).

The aim of this chapter is to review the literature that examines the retirement transition in sport. The first section will provide an overview of the theoretical perspectives that have been utilised to explain the process of retirement in sport. The second section will discuss the literature surrounding reasons for athletic retirement and the third section will examine the variety of findings regarding the

quality of adaptation to this transition. The final section will examine the factors which relate to adaptation to retirement.

3.1 Theoretical Perspectives

A variety of theoretical models have been used in past literature to explain the process of, and the reactions to, retirement from sport. Many models have been borrowed from mainstream sociological and psychological literature. Two of these frameworks that will be examined in detail within this chapter are social gerontological models of ageing and thanatological models of death and dying. Theories of adjustment and of coping from other areas of research have also been applied to the area of sport retirement with some success, as have developmental models of transition.

Although athletes retiring from competitive sport are different from those retiring from the workforce who, typically, are older and leaving the occupational world altogether, social gerontological theories have been widely used by sport sociologists in an attempt to understand the problems and processes that athletes confront as they leave their sporting careers (Drahota and Eitzen, 1998). Gerontology has been defined as the systematic analysis of the ageing process (Lavalley, 2000). Models from gerontology and the social psychology of ageing assume that athletes experience adjustment difficulties similar to workforce retirees, including “loss of status, downward mobility, identity crisis and loss of sense of purpose” (Blinde and Greendorfer, 1985, p88). According to Koukouris (1991b) these models share two underlying beliefs, firstly that sport retirement is

a termination or end, and secondly that the termination requires a certain amount of psychological adjustment to the role withdrawal. Although a number of the major gerontological theories can be applied to the sport retirement process, four are perhaps the most appropriate: disengagement theory, activity theory, continuity theory, and social breakdown theory.

Disengagement theory (Cumming, Dean, Newell, and McCaffrey, 1960), the first formally articulated theory of adjustment to old age, proposes that there is a mutual withdrawal of the ageing individual and society for the satisfaction and benefit of both. This mutual withdrawal enables younger people to enter the workforce and for the retired individuals to enjoy their remaining years (Ogilvie and Taylor, 1993b). However, Baillie and Danish (1992) have indicated that as mutual withdrawal is rarely the situation in sport, this theory offers little to the understanding of sport retirement. Anecdotal accounts have indicated that the tendency is for the athlete to stay within sport long after their skills have begun to deteriorate (Kramer, 1973; Rosenberg, 1981a). The application of disengagement theory to sport has also been criticised as in most cases the retiring athlete is not leaving the labour force permanently and will need to settle into a second career (Lerch, 1981). No longer in favour with gerontologists, the theory has been accused of being narrow in scope and of lacking convincing empirical substantiation (Rosenberg, 1981a). However McPherson suggested that “disengagement theory may partially explain why some athletes do not adjust to retirement” (1978, p59).

Activity theory, a second major gerontological theory offered as an alternative to disengagement theory, maintains that the best adjusted individual will replace lost roles with new ones, so that a person's overall activity level is maintained as the individual moves from one stage of their life to another (Ogilvie and Taylor, 1993b). This theory suggests that psychological well being and life satisfaction are positively related to the degree to which a person can maintain patterns of activity and involvement (Gordon, 1995; Kuypers and Bengston, 1973). Lerch (1981) suggests that it may explain the situation of the early-retiring athlete. Baillie and Danish question the usefulness of this theory in sport retirement research: "activity theory is based on the belief that a smoother transition occurs when there is no appreciable change in the retiree's level of activity. For many athletes, such a situation is nearly impossible" (1992, p89). Lavallee (2000) suggests that activity theory may not apply universally to athletic career transitions because there is usually neither a cessation of work activity nor a complete end to participation in sport.

Continuity theory also assumes a certain level of activity. However, unlike activity theory, this theory suggests that substitution is not necessary for lost roles. Instead, the time and energy previously devoted to the lost role can be redirected or redistributed among remaining roles (Gordon, 1995). This theory therefore suggests that activities, habits, and predispositions learned in one stage of the life cycle are carried over to the next (Greendorfer and Blinde, 1985). A difficult transition is predicted for those who are enmeshed in their career or role and therefore do not have sufficiently varied alternative roles to which to turn to (Baillie and Danish, 1992). This theory can perhaps explain the tendency of

athletes to stay within their sport despite declining abilities. They may not have suitable alternative roles among which to distribute their time and energy (Rosenberg, 1981a). However, this theory does not fully explain the situation of athletes who maintain some level of involvement in their sport, often in a different form and at a different level of intensity, after retirement (Curtis and Ennis, 1988).

A further criticism of continuity theory is suggested by Gordon:

If the lost role was an important role, consolidation of other activities may not provide the same basis for a meaningful existence, and therefore may not provide a satisfactory solution (1995, p477)

Social breakdown theory is the most clinical, initially developed to help explain the genesis of mental disorder in a general population (Kuypers and Bengston, 1973). This theory proposes that with the loss of a specific role, a person becomes increasingly susceptible to external labelling. If this labelling is unfavourable, this is likely to lead to the person withdrawing further and reducing involvement in other activities (Greendorfer and Blinde, 1985). This withdrawal can bring about further negative evaluation, creating a negative downward cycle which leads to an atrophy of skills and lowered self image (Rosenberg, 1981b). Authors of this theory, Kuypers and Bengston (1973), also propose a 'social reconstruction' cycle to break the downward spiral and restore and maintain a more positive self-image. This theory has a clear application to retirement from sport. Baillie and Danish describe that "when termination not only shows the athlete that his or her best skill is now worthless but also illustrates the individual's possible social deficits, the likelihood of negative external labelling is high" (1992, p89).

Two further social gerontological models, subculture theory and exchange theory, have also been applied to sport retirement. Subculture theory builds upon activity theory, adding the possibility of subcultural norms which are different from those of the surrounding society. Therefore it is possible for an older person to be both less active and well-adjusted to old age (Gordon, 1995). There may be some merit in this approach as competitive athletes have fairly obvious and distinguishable subcultural characteristics. Subculture theory may assist in explaining some of the adjustment problems faced by retiring athletes, but it is questionable whether it can help to predict successful adjustment (Rosenberg, 1981a).

Exchange theory has been applied to adjustment to ageing in an attempt to show that successful ageing requires both awareness and realignment of one's diminishing power resources. The theory suggests that those who adjust successfully manage to rearrange their social networks and activities so that what remains generates maximum returns. The theory can help athletes to understand their relationship with sport and provide a perspective on what will happen to that relationship over time (Gordon, 1995). Rosenberg suggests that "exchange theory can be employed to spell out in no uncertain terms both the nature of the athlete-management relationship and how the balance of power must inevitably shift in management's favour as the athlete ages" (1981b, p4). Although important differences exist between the athletic population and the traditional worker population, consideration of gerontological theories may be informative (Baillie and Danish, 1992). Gordon (1995) suggested that the latter two theories, social breakdown and exchange, are the most salient for sport retirement research. In contrast, McPherson (1978) stated that the theories of disengagement, activity and

continuity are the most useful for studying reactions of former athletes to retirement.

Thanatology, the study of death, dying and grief, has also been applied to retirement from sport. Reactions of athletes to the end of the sports career are seen as paralleling the psychological process seen in individuals who have suffered a disabling injury or who face terminal illness (Ogilvie and Howe, 1982). Social death, derived from the science of thanatology, refers “to a form of social withdrawal and rejection from an individual’s primary affiliation group” (Fortunato and Marchant, 1999, p270). This concept, not related to biological death, focuses on how members of a group treat an individual who has recently left the group. The individual is treated as if they were dead, although still physiologically and intellectually alive (Rosenberg, 1984).

Applied to sport retirement, social death has been associated with a downward slide during a sport career or unconditional release from a team (Greendorfer and Blinde, 1985). This theory has received support from anecdotal and fictitious accounts of athletes who have experienced similar reactions upon retirement (Lerch, 1984a). But it is by no means limited to fictional accounts. In Blinde and Greendorfer’s (1985) study, a majority of the athletes themselves drew on the death analogy, indicating their feelings often paralleled those related to death and dying. The concept of social death has been criticised for giving an excessively negative characterisation of sport retirement. The comparison of retirement from sport with the cessation of physical life rests on somewhat tenuous grounds, due to the fact that the event outcomes are so drastically different (Lerch, 1984a).

However, it is suggested that for the analysis of involuntary retirement, the analogy of social death may still be useful (Gordon, 1995).

Using literature that deals with coping with loss may help to understand, in psychological terms, what an athlete experiences at the end of their relationship with sport. Werthner and Orlick suggested that “it would be helpful for athletes to understand the coping process and to recognise that they may experience a sense of loss” (1982, p189). Stage models of grief and loss have often been utilised in the sport retirement literature, the most well known of these being the ‘stages of grieving’ concept, developed by Kubler-Ross (1969).

Kubler-Ross defined five distinct sequential stages in the grieving process that she found to be almost universal in coping with loss: denial, anger, bargaining, depression, and finally acceptance (Johnson, 1997). The first stage of denial, in which the individual refuses to acknowledge the news of impending death, has been described as often being devoid of feeling (Brammer and Abrego, 1981). Following this are the stages of anger, directed at the perceived injustice of the situation that they find themselves in, and bargaining, in which the patient tries to negotiate for a lengthened existence (Wolff and Lester, 1989). In the athletic situation the anger is often directed at coaches and other players, as well as at family and friends. The bargaining stage is commonly seen amongst athletes whose sporting career comes to an unanticipated end, who try to bargain with the coach or team manager for just one more game, one more season, or one more chance (Blinde and Stratta, 1992). Feelings of anger and rage will eventually give way, replaced by a sense of loss and hopelessness. In this stage of depression, the

terminal patient has given up and seems to want to hasten the end (Wolff and Lester, 1989). The final stage, acceptance, is when the patient finally comes to terms with the situation. Signs of acceptance do not necessarily imply that the individual is happy with the situation. Hallinan and Snyder (1988) describe that instead, there comes a point where the individual recognises the inevitability of the situation.

Several theorists support the applicability of this model as a framework for examining disengagement from sport (Hallinan and Snyder, 1988; Ogilvie and Taylor, 1993b). Wolff and Lester suggests that the model “may provide a basis for counselling professional athletes through the crisis of retirement” (1989, p1044). Blinde and Stratta (1992) found that the athletes experienced a series of responses often paralleled those identified by Kubler-Ross’s model. One of the most consistent criticisms of this model is that the stages highlighted may not have the universality they are believed to have (Heil, 1997; Lerch, 1984a). Movement from one stage to another is not necessarily a distinct or abrupt shift; rather oscillation between stages is quite common (Blinde and Stratta, 1992). For some individuals, the stages do not follow in the order described, and one specific stage in the process can be exaggerated, prolonged, or revisited.

A second thanatological theory frequently applied to the sporting context is the awareness context, developed by Glaser and Strauss (1965). They identified four awareness contexts related to people’s implicit and explicit knowledge of a dying individual’s status: closed, suspicion or suspected, mutual pretence, and open (Gordon, 1995). Fortunato and Marchant (1999) have described the application of

these awareness contexts to athletes' involuntary exit from their sporting career. Closed awareness applies to situations in which the athlete is unaware of the impending end and of the plan of the coach to drop them, as their deterioration in form or failure in performance has not been openly discussed.

Suspected awareness is more complicated than that of closed. This occurs when the athlete suspects that their place in the team may be in jeopardy. This is often confirmed by the non-verbal communication they receive from coaches or management, for example different treatment than that given to other team-mates (Fortunato and Marchant, 1999). The awareness context of mutual pretence occurs when all people concerned know that the career is reaching its conclusion, irrespective of how well the athlete performs. Despite this, the athlete received encouragement from the others, in what is like an adult form of make-believe (Lerch, 1984a). A mutual pretence that is not sustained becomes an open awareness context. In this form of awareness, the athlete, coaches and other players all openly acknowledge that the career is ending (Fortunato and Marchant, 1999).

Questions have been raised about the ability of models from social gerontology and thanatology to capture the process of leaving competitive sport sufficiently (Crook and Robertson, 1991; Gordon, 1995). Both models are criticised for being one-dimensional (Parker, 1994), and for the basic underlying presumption that the process of retirement is psychologically traumatic and requires serious adjustment for the athlete (Allison and Meyer, 1988; Gordon, 1995). Another criticism

levelled at both theories is that they view retirement as being a singular, abrupt and negative event (Chow, 2002).

Criticisms of the use of the social gerontological approach have focused on the analogy between athletic and old age retirement and the inability of the models to explain athletes' responses to leaving sport adequately (Crook and Robertson, 1991). Retiring athletes are often in the prime of their life, in their twenties and thirties, chronologically and biologically younger than the retiring worker. They therefore cannot afford to withdraw from society as several of the models taken from gerontology suggest (Werthner and Orlick, 1982). The applicability of these models to individuals who inevitably continue into another career post-sport can as a result be questioned. Koukouris suggests that social gerontological theories also "underestimate the number of former competitive athletes who practice recreational physical activities and other sports after disengagement from a major sport" (1994, p115).

The second major criticism is concerned with the inability of the gerontological models to explain variations in athletes' responses to retirement (Gordon, 1995). Both Allison and Meyer (1988) and Greendorfer and Blinde (1985) note that data from many studies have not provided strong support for any of these theoretical models, calling into question the usefulness of these approaches. Gerontological models fail to adequately capture the nature and dynamics of sports career termination resulting in an incomplete understanding of this process (Lavallee *et al.*, 2002).

The major problem with the use of thanatological approaches within sport retirement research is that they assume that athletes will experience serious adjustment problems during the process of finishing their sport career. These models present an overly negative portrayal of sport retirement, stereotyping athletes' reactions (Blinde and Greendorfer, 1985). In reality reactions vary from one individual to another. Lavallee *et al.* (2002) suggest that the clinical utility of these models for assisting athletes can be questioned because they were developed with non-sport populations. One final problem with the thanatological approach is that sports retirement is a mid-life change, rather than an end-of-life change. As Drahota and Eitzen describe:

In thanatological theory there is no adjustment period after death, but there is after exiting from professional sports. Although exiting a role, professional athletes have not exited from life (1998, p265).

Since neither of these approaches can adequately account for the complex nature of sport retirement, an alternative perspective is needed which can account for the variety of factors that influence responses to retirement and explain both positive and negative experiences (Crook and Robertson, 1991).

In contrast to the idea of retirement as a single discrete event, other researchers have characterised it as a transition or series of processes. Schlossberg proposes that a transition can be said to occur "if an event or non-event results in a change in assumptions about oneself and the world and thus required a corresponding change in one's behaviour and relationships" (1981, p5). Transitions occur through events such as a change in location, taking on a new social role, or

physiological changes (Pearson and Petitpas, 1990). The primary focus from this perspective is on the continuity, rather than termination, of behaviours; on retirement as a transition or process, rather than an event; and on the gradual alteration of goals and interest, rather than complete abandonment (Greendorfer and Blinde, 1985). The outcome of a transition is neither always positive nor always negative. A transition can provide both an opportunity for psychological growth and a danger of psychological deterioration (Schlossberg, 1981). Individuals differ in their ability to adapt to change and theories of transition are useful in describing and understanding how the physical, psychological, and social changes that accompany life changes impact on individuals (Pearson and Petitpas, 1990).

The most frequently employed theoretical framework is Schlossberg's (1981) developmental model of transition. Schlossberg suggests that his model "represents a framework in which transitions of all kinds – positive and negative, dramatic and ordinary – can be analysed, and possible interventions formulated" (1981, p3). The transition itself is not of primary importance, but rather how the transition fits with an individual's situation at the time. The model theorised that adaptation to transition depends on three interacting factors: the characteristics of the transition, the characteristics of the individual, and the characteristics of the environment.

The first factor, the characteristics of the transition, examines the timing, source and duration of the transition, the levels of stress involved and the individual's previous experience with similar transitions (Crook and Robertson, 1991). The

second factor, the characteristics of the individual, examines personal and demographic characteristics such as gender, age, stage of life and state of health, as well as psychological resources such as personality, commitment, and coping skills (Swain, 1991). The final factor, the characteristics of the environment, examines the social support and the options that are available both pre- and post-transition. Ease of adaptation to a transition depends upon an individual's perceived balance of resources to deficits in terms of these three factors. The factors all interact with each other to bring about successful or unsuccessful transition (Gorbett, 1985).

Schlossberg's model includes a wider range of influences than either social gerontological or thanatological models and strives to account for diversity in the experiences of transitions (Lavalley *et al.*, 2002). The model has been successfully used to describe factors affecting the transition out of sport among various groups of sport retirees including professional athletes (Swain, 1991), disability athletes (Wheeler *et al.*, 1996), college athletes (Parker, 1994), and elite female athletes (Chow, 1999; cited in Chow, 2002). Wheeler *et al.* (1996) concluded that the model could prove extremely useful to counsellors, coaches and athletes in examining the process of retirement from sport.

Taylor and Ogilvie (1994; 2001) built upon Schlossberg's model by operationalising it for sport, examining the specific factors that affect sport retirement and an athlete's ability to adapt to change. Figure 1 below is the Taylor and Ogilvie model of athletic retirement. This model focuses on reasons for career termination, factors and resources related to adaptation to retirement, and the

quality of the transition. The model predicts two alternative outcomes: ‘healthy career transition’ and ‘career transition distress’, and suggests that in the case of the latter reaction, there is a need for psychological intervention (Taylor and Ogilvie, 1994; 2001).

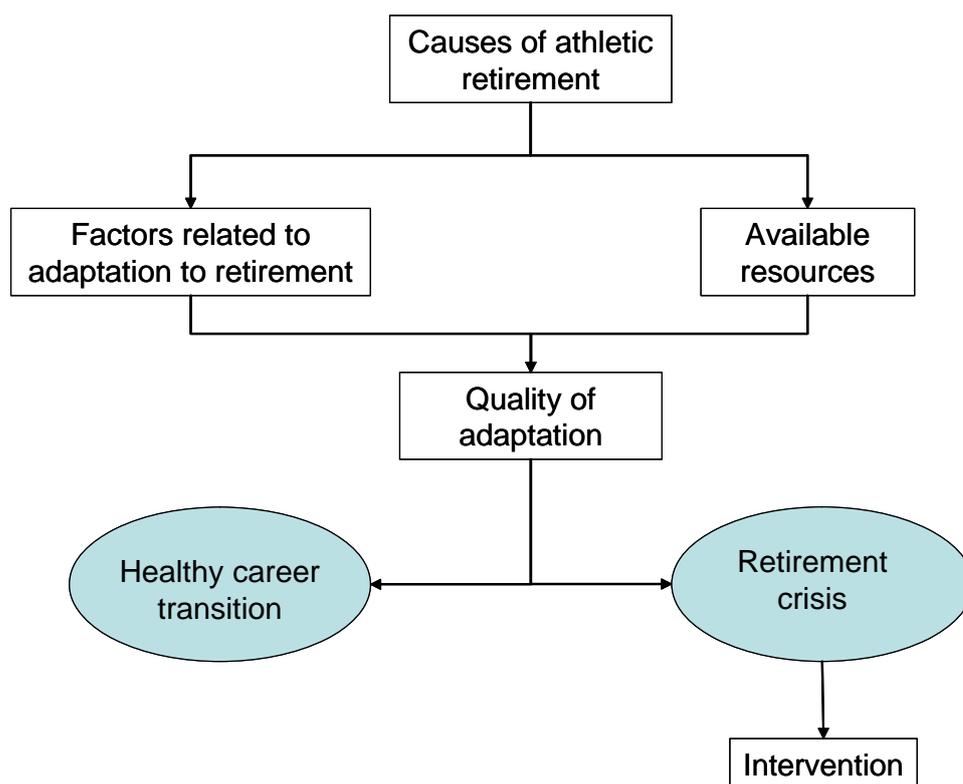


Figure 1: Conceptual model of athletic retirement (Taylor and Ogilvie, 1994; 2001)

In general, models of transitions have been shown to provide a flexible approach to examining athletic retirement and have been successfully used in the development of instruments to examine this type of retirement (Wheeler *et al.*, 1996). However, they have been criticised for failing to provide an adequate framework within which interventions can be employed (Lavalley *et al.*, 2002). The Schlossberg model (1981) has also been criticised for lacking operationalised detail of specific components (Taylor and Ogilvie, 1994).

Social gerontological and thanatological theories, frequently used within early sport retirement research, have been heavily criticised for limiting perspectives, colouring and narrowing interpretations of athletic retirement (Baillie and Danish, 1992; Crook and Robertson, 1991). Alternative perspectives that stress transition and the re-prioritisation of interests may offer a more suitable framework (Greendorfer and Blinde, 1985). Retirement from sport is more closely allied to the concept of a career change in mid-life than to the process of old-age retirement, as it is not a transition into unemployment, but rather a change to another occupation (Reynolds, 1981).

Short-term careers are not unique to sport. Comparisons can be drawn to careers from areas such as politics, entertainment, and the arts (Pickman, 1987). Most short-term careers are also likely to have high rewards, experiences of success and failure, and the need to adjust to disengagement and movement to another occupational role (Curtis and Ennis, 1988). Research from this field may therefore have some relevance and application to sport.

This thesis proposes to adopt the Taylor and Ogilvie model (1994; 2001). There are three key elements within this model: causes of athletic retirement, quality of adaptation, and factors and resources related to adaptation to retirement. There has been considerable research carried out across a number of sports and countries examining these elements, and the rest of this chapter reviews this research literature.

3.2 Reasons for Career Termination

Retirement from competitive sport is an inevitable part of an athlete's life span, whether they choose to disengage from sport or are forced to retire. An analysis of the process of retirement from sport should begin with identifying the reasons for the end of the athletic career. Many factors interact to influence the termination of an athlete's career. Towards the end of the sport career there are both internal and external pressures to retire (Koukouris, 1994). Along with an analysis of the reasons for career termination, it is also useful to determine which of these are most associated with retirement difficulties.

Athletic career terminations fall broadly into two categories: retirements that are freely chosen and those that are forced by circumstances (Webb *et al.*, 1998). Involuntary retirement is described by Crook and Robertson as "externally exposed retirement over which the athlete has no control" (1991, p120). Athletes may be forced to retire for a variety of reasons, including being cut from the team, conflict with management, and career-ending injury. Drahota and Eitzen (1998) found that the majority of the professional athletes in their study, while entering the role voluntarily, exited involuntarily. This was also the case in the study by Mihovilovic, where "95.4 percent of the subjects are in the group of causes independent of the decision of the player" (1968, p77).

Unless the career end is involuntary and unexpected, athletes are likely to undergo a conscious and unconscious process of continual analysis and evaluation of the status of their careers (Allison and Meyer, 1988). McLaughlin (1981a) suggests that the decision to retire voluntarily is one of the toughest choices a person can

make. The thought of the loss of status and identity connected to an athlete's sporting performance can be terrifying. A seemingly voluntary decision to quit could also be a grudging recognition of the hard truth (Messner, 1992). More commonly athletes will hang on too long, either due to their love of their sport or their lack of alternatives (Rosenberg, 1980b). Athletes are often unwilling to recognise that their skills are declining and delay the decision to retire as long as possible, sometimes until they are forced to finish (McPherson, 1978; Vamplew, 1984). This situation is highlighted by Weinberg and Arond:

It's hard to quit. Fighting gets into your blood, and you can't get it out. Many fighters try to make one comeback, at least, and some fight until they are definitely punch-drunk (1969, p452).

Despite this distinction between voluntary and forced retirement, it has been noted that it is not always clear and may be artificial in some situations. Kerr and Dacyshyn (2000) found that many of the athletes could not give clear-cut answers because voluntary and involuntary disengagement may co-exist. Many retirement decisions fall on a continuum between these two extremes, questioning the value and appropriateness of this distinction (Messner, 1992).

A number of empirical studies have attempted to categorise the main reasons that emerged for retirement. Allison and Meyer (1988), investigating the transition experiences of female professional tennis players, suggested that five major reasons emerged for retirement that were closely related to the least enjoyable experiences from life on the tennis tour. These were frustration, injury, travel, age, and other players. Lavalley *et al.* discovered that the elite Australian athletes being

investigated retired from sport for the following nine reasons: “work/study commitment, lost motivation, age, injury, deselection, politics of sport, decrease in performance, finance, and decrease in enjoyment” (1997b, p132). Coaches identified three main reasons for the retirement decision of elite athletes: familial problems, future profession apprehensions, and injury (Svoboda and Vanek, 1982). Although the structure of sport in a particular country does have some influence, the most important reason for retirement for the majority of athletes can be placed into one of four categories: chronological age, deselection, injury, and free choice.

Chronological age plays an important role throughout the sport career, causing the elite athlete considerable anxiety (Andrews, 1981). In nearly every sport, ageing athletes are devalued by fans, management, media, and other athletes. As Messner describes, sport “is one of the few professions where a twenty-seven year old man can be referred to as a ‘veteran’, a thirty-five year old as an ‘old man’” (1992, p112). The influence of age on career termination is a function of both physiological and psychological factors. As athletes get older, they may lose their motivation to compete and train which can have an influence on the decision to retire (Ogilvie and Taylor, 1993a). The reaction to a retirement caused by chronological age will depend on the extent to which the athlete accepts the inevitable decline of skill with increasing age. Some athletes will accept this as obvious, make plans for retirement, and move successfully into a new career area. Others will fight the process and are eventually forced to finish their sporting career. Lavalley *et al.* suggest that:

Age is one of the most significant reasons for retirement, because psychological motivation, social status and physical capabilities can all complicate an individual's ability to continue competing at an elite level (2002, p187).

A second major reason for termination of the sports career is deselection; either being cut from a team or failing to progress to a higher level of competition (Murphy, 1995). The selection process, which occurs at every level of sport, follows Darwinian survival of the fittest philosophy (Ogilvie and Taylor, 1993a). Older athletes are often cut from the team in favour of younger players. Athletes who are not capable of performing at the next level of competition, or who no longer meet the performance criteria for a team, are deselected. Careers in sport are generally short and the possibility of failure and its consequences is always a concern for an athlete in any sport (Ball, 1976). Webb *et al.* (1998) suggest that deselected athletes are forced to confront the inherent limitations of their athletic ability, more so than athletes retiring for other reasons. As a consequence of this, transitions out of sport occurring for this reason often lead to lowered self-confidence and self-esteem.

Injury is one of the major reasons for involuntary and unanticipated exits from sport. This can be in the form of a career-ending injury, or it may be an accumulation of smaller niggling injuries that gradually wear the athlete's body down (Messner, 1992; Sime, 1998). A build up of smaller injuries leads to decreased performance. Even a small reduction in physical capabilities can be enough to make athletes no longer competitive at their level of sport (Ogilvie and Taylor, 1993b). This is why an injury that is not serious or complicated from a physical perspective can still be psychologically debilitating (Deutsch, 1985).

Small injuries can also be problematic as, according to Kraus and Conroy, “there is some evidence that a prior history of injury places ... players at greater risk of recurrent injury” (1984, p176). More serious injuries will not only terminate an athlete’s career, but can also have an impact on their life after sport if the physical effects of the injury influence their ability to start a new career (Lerch, 1984b). When serious injury does occur, the considerable effort and time necessary during the process of rehabilitation may contribute to the decision to retire (Ogilvie and Taylor, 1993b). Some athletes experience marked physical and psychological problems which can delay or in some instances prevent their return to competitive sport (Johnson, 1997; Johnson and Bakkioui, 1999). This is a difficult time for the athlete as they need to simultaneously prepare for the potential end of their athletic career while at the same time remain positive about the potential for recovery (Rotella, 1985).

Injury is often understood by the athlete as a betrayal by their usually healthy and physically fit body. This contributes to some of the psychological difficulties that can follow injury, including depression, anxiety, fear, loss of self-esteem, and substance abuse (Green and Weinberg, 2001; Ogilvie and Taylor, 1993a; Pearson and Petitpas, 1990). Whilst the physical problems that accompany injury are dealt with by medical services, athletes rarely receive assistance in dealing with these psychological and emotional side effects (Young and White, 1999). Injury is one of the reasons for retirement which is most likely to cause trauma for the athlete. An injury at or near the peak of a career has been particularly strongly linked to problems in transition (Hurley and Mills, 1993; May and Sieb, 1987; Rotella, 1985).

Many individuals freely elect to finish their sporting career for a number of personal, social, or sport-related reasons (Prus, 1984). Hastings *et al.* (1989) noted that female swimmers were more likely to cite family responsibilities as the reason for the termination of their competitive career, whilst males were more likely to identify job responsibilities. Other reasons that have been highlighted include financial issues (McGown and Rail, 1996; McPherson, 1978; Shahnasarian, 1992), internal shifts in the athletes' personal values (Koukouris, 1994; Swain, 1991), and loss of motivation (Kaplan, 1977; Tinley, 2002). In his study of Finnish amateur athletes, Vuolle concluded that "over 60 percent of retired athletes mentioned re-examination of life values as the cause for giving up sport. This meant that it was by far the most common motive for retiring" (1978, p23). Elite athletes with disabilities were also found commonly to retire due to a need to pursue other aspects of their lives. These athletes described themselves as arriving at a point within their career in which they recognised that there were other priorities aside from those connected to their sports involvement (Wheeler *et al.*, 1996). Athletes may reach a stage when the perceived benefits of pursuing another activity outweigh the rewards of continuing involvement in sport (Murphy, 1995).

The majority of studies found the reason for retirement was a contributing factor in determining adjustment. Only one study, examining Polish Olympians, found that the way in which the athletes parted from sport did not influence their life after retirement (Pawlak, 1984). Several authors suggest that the severity of the experience depends on whether the retirement was voluntary or forced (Hurley and Mills, 1993; Webb *et al.*, 1998). Andrews (1981) suggested that whether the

player voluntarily or involuntarily withdraws from his role will determine whether he perceives such a move as failure. Voluntary withdrawal from competitive sport had been found to be associated with a greater number of options for moving into other occupations, enabling new roles to be assumed with fewer problems and less stress (McGown and Rail, 1996). Fortunato and Marchant (1999) found that Australian football players were especially vulnerable to difficulties when career termination is precipitated by deselection or injury. Sinclair and Orlick observed that retirements within the category of age were also problematic:

Athletes retiring largely due to declining personal performance tended to experience the most problems with loss of status, and a lack of self confidence, in the months following retirement (1993, p145).

Although the categorisation of reason for retirement into the preceding four factors has been well supported by previous literature, there remains a problem. Several of the situations that have been placed in the free choice category are not as voluntary as first thought. For example, an athlete withdrawing due to financial difficulties may feel that this is their only option and therefore that it is not what they would class as a voluntary withdrawal. Further investigation is still required to clarify the categorisation of reasons for retirement. Overall, however, the evidence is that the reason for retirement heavily influences adjustment.

3.3 Quality of Adaptation to Athletic Retirement

A number of problems can impede adaptation to retirement. Whether these stresses are social, psychological, financial, or physical, their effects may produce

some form of trauma (Ogilvie and Taylor, 1993a; William-Rice, 1996). Athletes who have experienced retirement as a crisis have highlighted problems that include depression (Kerr and Dacyshyn, 2000), loss of self-esteem (Curtis and Ennis, 1988), eating disorders and health problems (Messner, 1992), substance abuse (Baillie and Danish, 1992; Chow, 2002), decreased life satisfaction (Curtis and Ennis, 1988), and attempted suicide (Hill and Lowe, 1974). Athletic retirement can cause marital instability and put a strain on other close relationships (McKenzie, 1999; Sands, 1978). One of the reasons behind these social difficulties is the loss of time spent with other athletes and coaches, as well as the loss of team camaraderie (Astle, 1986).

The reality of entering the previously disdained category of non-athlete causes particular problems for some athletes (Hughes and Coakley, 1991). These athletes have to face the humiliating realism that they are no longer able to perform the role they have devoted their lives to mastering and alongside this often also face a dramatic new economic reality (Broom, 1982). Adaptation to retirement requires the athlete to make major life-choices. Athletes who are not able to let go and transfer their energies into alternative activities will have the most difficulty with their transition (Ogilvie, 1984).

However, while there are many examples of traumatic problems faced by athletes, it is not certain that these represent normative behaviour. In contrast to the crisis orientation described above, some researchers have suggested that retirement from sport could be a positive experience (Coakley, 1983; Stambulova, 2000). Leaving competitive sport could present new opportunities for personal growth and

development, allowing the athlete to explore new career paths (Murphy, 1995). Athletes might feel relief from the pressures of training and competition and welcome the chance to focus on other aspects of their life (Chow, 2002). This is more likely to be the case for athletes who have achieved all of their goals within their sporting career, and for athletes who have planned for their future beyond sport (Martin, 1996; Udry, Gould, Bridges, and Beck, 1997).

Research on athletic retirement has often been undertaken with the assumption that both male and female athletes will encounter similar experiences. The unique socio-cultural factors faced by women in sport make this assumption problematic (McGown and Rail, 1996). Studies that have made comparisons between male and female athletes have found that although there are similarities that are evident, differences are also seen in the reasons for retirement and in adaptation. For example, Alfermann *et al.* found that “females reported slightly lesser negative emotions after career termination and a longer duration of adaptation to post-career life than male athletes” (2004, p66).

Research on retirement from professional sport has been conducted in a number of countries, including the USA (Allison and Meyer, 1988; Drahota and Eitzen, 1998; Haerle, 1975a; Haerle, 1975b; Lerch, 1981; Rosenberg, 1981b), Great Britain (Gearing, 1999), Australia (Fortunato and Marchant, 1999), Canada (Swain, 1991), and Yugoslavia (Mihovilovic, 1968). The majority of these studies provide evidence to support the notion of retirement as a difficult and problematic time. Gearing’s (1999) study of British male professional football players found that the immediate post-playing period was particularly problematic for the

players, as they struggled with the constraints and demands of 'normal' life. Australian Rules football players expressed the bitterness they felt at having to retire and described feelings of anger, loss, and dissatisfaction (Fortunato and Marchant, 1999). In his study of American baseball players, Haerle concluded that:

Problems of occupational adjustment for the retired players are exacerbated by the fact that many of them desire to remain connected with baseball in some capacity; front office, manager, coach, scout, and so on (1975b, p392).

In another study of American professional athletes, Drahotka and Eitzen (1998) found that those who did not have the stardom and marketability floundered if they had not prepared for life after their sport career ended. Mihovilovic (1968) suggested that the reaction to retirement by professional sportsmen in Yugoslavia is manifested by increased smoking, drinking, and neglect of physical exercise and health. However, a closer examination of the results of this study indicates that these adjustment problems may not have been as pervasive as Mihovilovic suggested. For example, 60 percent of the players remained non-smokers or drank no more than they did before retirement, and 82 percent stayed in good physical shape. Speed, Seedsman and Morris (2002) investigated the retirement experiences of jockeys and found for a significant number retirement was very stressful, characterised by limited social and employment opportunities, financial hardship, poor physical health, and emotional distress.

There are a number of studies of professional sport that provide a different illustration of athletic retirement. Swain (1991) found that although the decision to

retire was stressful, it was no more so than difficult decisions faced within other areas of life. Athletes in this study typically felt relieved when they had committed themselves to withdraw, weary of the physical and emotional demands of their sporting career. An examination of American baseball by Lerch (1982) adds to this, finding that the retired players were on the whole satisfied with their lives and experienced only minor adjustment problems. Lerch concluded that “the stereotype of the downtrodden ex-ballplayer who is extremely dissatisfied with life does not hold up under close scrutiny” (1982, p40). One of the few studies which has focused specifically on female sport was conducted on American professional female tennis players by Allison and Meyer (1988). They found that 50 percent of the players indicated that they felt relief upon retirement and welcomed the opportunity to pursue other life roles previously impeded by their athletic career.

There has also been disagreement as to the effects of retiring from elite level amateur sport. A Canadian study of Olympic athletes found that 78 percent had a moderately difficult or very difficult time in the transition from a career in sport to a new life (Werthner and Orlick, 1986). This finding is supported by Svoboda and Vanek (1982), who discovered that only 17 percent of the Czechoslovakian athletes studies had no negative sensations or difficulties during their retirement, and by Ungerleider’s (1997) investigation of American Olympic athletes. Athletes from New Zealand described feeling stranded, disillusioned, and directionless when their career ended, losing their passion and excitement for life (Denison, 1997). French Olympic athletes whose careers ended voluntarily described facing many physical problems including weight gain, bodily pains and tensions, and

decreased body image and satisfaction (Stephan and Bilard, 2003). Problems with body image and weight were also a key component of Kerr and Dacyshyn's (2000) study of Canadian female gymnasts. Gymnasts described feelings of uncertainty and disorientation during their retirement. In another study of Canadian female athletes the positive feelings of the canoeists upon their retirement were outweighed by negative feelings such as bitterness, fright, disgust, insecurity, and melancholy (McGown and Rail, 1996). Research from a number of other countries provides support for the notion of retirement as a negative event, including Russia (Stambulova, 1994), France and Greece (Chamalidis, 1997), Germany (Franke, 1999), and Romania (Grigore and Burchel, 1999).

There have been several Canadian studies which contradict the notion of disengagement from elite amateur sport as a negative event. Sinclair and Orlick (1993) describe that the majority of the retired athletes in their study handled their retirement well and that it had changed their lives in a positive manner, while the athletes in Baillie and Lampron's (1992) investigation highlighted the benefits of retirement as being the end of rigorous training schedules and of a constant focus on diet. Curtis and Ennis (1988) found that the players who maintained some form of contact with hockey were less likely to say that retirement from competition was difficult. These findings are supported by a study of Polish Olympic athletes (Pawlak, 1984) and one of Slovenian amateur athletes (Sasa, 1999).

Wheeler *et al.* (1996) conducted research on the retirement experiences of athletes with disabilities. There is little doubt from this study that elite athletes with

disabilities are as committed to sport as non-disabled athletes. But upon retirement, these athletes face additional problems, as they have to face up to the issues associated with ageing with a physical disability. Similar to other elite athletes, disability athletes in this study referred to a sense of loss, a hollowness, and a void left by exiting sport. These findings are supported by a study by Bardaxoglou, Siegentaler, and Biebuick, who found that “more than some able-bodied athletes in retirement, disabled athletes seem to have some difficulties in anticipating their future” (1999, p83).

A third area of research within the sport retirement literature concerns transitions out of college level sport. The majority of this research suggests that there are limited or no problems associated with this type of transition. Studies by Perna, Ahlgren & Zaichkowsky (1999) and Bowlus (1975) both demonstrated that life satisfaction after college was either no different or better among athletes than non-athletes. Greendorfer and Blinde (1985) found that over half of the athletes within their study were either happy or extremely satisfied with the end of their career and did not experience feelings of loss or disruption. This is supported by Parker, who concluded that “players were not pushed, kicking and screaming, from a sport that they loved. In fact, most expressed a relief that it was over” (1994, p301). Two main supporting arguments are provided for these findings. Firstly, retirement from college sport is seen as part of other normal developments in life such as the transition from college to the work force, new friendships and relationships, and other roles associated with early adulthood (Coakley, 1983). Secondly, retirement from college sport did not seem to mark the end of

involvement in sport for the majority of individuals. Sport remained an important element in their lives (Greendorfer and Blinde, 1985).

Hallinan and Snyder (1988) state that more severe outcomes are likely when the disengagement from college sport is both unexpected and permanent. For the female college athletes in their study, the loss of their sport role through a forced exit left a void of time and energy. The athletes described having difficulties in accepting their new, non-playing roles. Blinde and Stratta (1992) also considered involuntary and unanticipated exits from college sport. It was evident from their results that the exiting process was characterised by a great deal of disruption and trauma for most of the athletes, who expressed feelings of shock, denial, and anger, and tended to isolate themselves from others involved in their sport. Blinde and Stratta (1992) conclude that these types of exits may be particularly difficult as they have to remain in an environment which is haunted with memories of their previous sport role. Kleiber and Brock (1992) found that college athletes who suffered a career-ending injury expressed significantly lower later life satisfaction than other athletes or non-athletes. The findings of Harrison and Lawrence's (2003) study of African American college athletes provide further supporting evidence for the negative effects of transitions from college sport.

Although many athletes make successful transitions out of sport, there are significant numbers of athletes at all levels for whom the adjustment is difficult, incomplete, and traumatic. Also it is clear that retirement crises are more likely to occur to elite and professional athletes than to college level athletes. Previous research had identified numerous responses to retirement, ranging from extreme

adjustment difficulties to views of the process as liberating. These competing perspectives demonstrate that understanding of the process of retirement from sport is still incomplete (Allison and Meyer, 1988). The question of whether retirement is a final and negative event that severs the athlete from sport, or a transition process that allows an athlete to resume participation in other activities, remains unresolved (Greendorfer and Blinde, 1985). What is certain is that it is not possible to find simple generalisations that apply to all people, given the range of variables that may influence the process (Swain, 1991).

3.4 Factors Related to Adaptation

One of the most important areas of research on retirement from sport is identifying the underlying factors associated with retirement from sport. There are personal, social, environmental and developmental factors that previous research indicates may influence adaptation to sport career termination and the transition to post-sport life period (Grove *et al.*, 1997; Ogilvie and Taylor, 1993a; Sasa, 1999; Sinclair and Orlick, 1993). There are two main groups of factors: available resources, for example feelings of control, social support networks, pre-retirement planning, and coping skills; and developmental experiences, such as level of education, level of success in sport, social factors, and self-esteem. Other factors should also be considered, including the timing of the transition, state of health, and financial issues. This section will examine what each of these factors brings to the retirement process and how they relate to problematic or trouble-free adaptation.

Psychological control, which has been defined as “the extent to which one believes (s)he has influence over her/his own life outcomes” (Webb *et al.*, 1998, p341), is a critical aspect of an athlete’s ability to deal effectively with negative events. Athletes who are able to control the time and circumstances of their retirement are better able to prepare themselves, both psychologically and practically, for their retirement. Athletes who perceive a lack of control over their exit from competitive sport have been shown to experience the greatest adjustment difficulties (Alfermann and Gross, 1997; Lavallee, Grove, and Gordon, 1997b). A perceived lack of control has been linked to feelings of anxiety and concern (Andrews, 1981), and to diminished life satisfaction and feelings of uncertainty about the future (Webb *et al.*, 1998). The concept of control is meaningful in studies of retirement from sport as three of the four primary categories of reasons for retirement – chronological age, injury, and deselection – are likely to be linked to low levels of perceived control by the athletes.

Hurley and Mills (1993) suggest that social support is possibly one of the single most important factors in the adjustment process. Whilst the presence of supporting relationships can provide individuals with the help needed to ease the impact of retirement, lack of social support can leave athletes feeling isolated and lonely, leading to distress (Pearson and Petitpas, 1990). Athletes are vulnerable to the loss of their primary social support group upon their retirement. Frequency of contact with former team-mates is usually greatly reduced at the end of the athlete’s career. Many of these former team-mates will avoid the retired athlete, therefore no longer being sources of support (Crook and Robertson, 1991; Wheeler *et al.*, 1996). British professional footballers highlighted that the loss of

camaraderie with team-mates was a source of problems during their exit from sport (Gearing, 1999).

Athletes need to develop meaningful friendships outside of sport so that upon retirement they have people with whom to share new experiences (Werthner and Orlick, 1982). Messner (1992) suggests that it is not only relationships with team-mates that were strained or terminated during retirement, those with other friends and with family also suffer. Friends and family can be very important in helping to ease the transition out of a sport career, as their emotional support can act as a buffer against the stressors of termination (Ogilvie and Taylor, 1993a; Werthner and Orlick, 1986).

Support from significant others was shown to have a positive relationship with satisfaction in the athlete's post-playing job (Reynolds, 1981). Elite Australian Rules footballers who had negative experiences of retirement expressed that their family and friends did not really understand what they were going through (Fortunato and Marchant, 1999). Another source of problems could be that family members and close friends who enjoyed the fame and prestige may not support the decision of the athlete to retire. They lose their sense of importance and their admiration for the athlete wanes (Hare, 1971). Another common feeling, particularly among athletes who were deselected, was that they felt a lack of support from their club and their coaches. After retirement, they often felt cut off from the system, discarded and forgotten about (Rosenberg, 1981a). Social support can become even more of a problem if an athlete who is deficient in support also lacks the social skills to develop new friendships and relationships

(Crook and Robertson, 1991). This can often be the case with an athlete who has been heavily involved in their sport to the detriment of other developmental areas. Similar to dealing with other sources of stress, having support during the period of transition out of sport can be the key to a successful adaptation (Murphy, 1995).

Although retirement represents one of the few certainties in a career in sport, most athletes fail to anticipate and prepare for the event. This lack of preparation is a major factor affecting an athlete's adjustment to retirement. Athletes have to be aware that their skills will not last forever and they will eventually need a second occupation. Pre-retirement planning gives athletes feelings of control over the situation, broadens self-identity and correlates with more positive and less negative emotion after retirement, a shorter duration of adaptation, and higher life satisfaction (Alfermann *et al.*, 2004). Despite the obvious importance of pre-retirement planning, for most athletes their focus is firmly rooted in the present and they fail to make sufficient preparations for the end of their career (Drahota and Eitzen, 1998). This is not helped by a reluctance of both athletes and their coaches to discuss retirement while they are still actively competing. Crook and Robertson (1991) suggest that coaches fear that this could detract from the athlete's concentration on their sport.

Several studies provide evidence for the lack of pre-retirement planning by the majority of athletes. Forty two percent of Canadian female canoeists admitted to not taking any action in preparation for their retirement from international competition (McGown and Rail, 1996). Eighty three percent of American hockey players in Blann and Zaichkowsky's study (1986, cited in Baillie and Danish,

1992) expressed that they had not devoted enough time and energy to planning for their post-hockey career. Haerle found that “75 percent of the respondents reported that they did not even begin to consider retirement until they were in the last quarter of their active career in baseball” (1975a, p499). Traditional occupational retirement preparation programmes have been used as a way to improve and understand the retirement process (Rowen and Wilks, 1987). Pre-retirement planning programmes should also be available to assist athletes with the exit from sport. Preparation for retirement is a long-term process that should be started early on in the sports career. Athletes need to understand that it is possible both to participate in competitive sport and prepare for a second career that will suit their individual abilities and interests (Taylor and Ogilvie, 2001). Earlier research has demonstrated that pre-retirement planning is a factor that can influence an athlete’s adjustment to retirement.

Linked to the area of pre-retirement planning is the importance of a meaningful post-sport career. Sinclair and Orlick (1993) found that 91 percent of these athletes had something of interest to get involved in immediately after retirement. Athletes with something new to direct their energies and commitments to are said to be more likely to make a better transition out of competitive sport (Wheeler *et al.*, 1996). An athlete with a broad range of interests is more resistant to being overwhelmed by the irreversible loss of their sport career (Wehlage, 1980). Having a range of new interests outside of their main sport can also provide athletes with “opportunities to experience other forms of success, leading in turn to improved self-esteem and self-confidence, and ultimately to acceptance of the situation” (Blinde and Stratta, 1992, p14).

One area in which pre-retirement planning can help is with the development of transferable skills. A second career after sport generally requires different skills than those learned as an athlete (Sinclair and Orlick, 1993). The skills that an athlete develops within their sport are often so specific that they cannot be utilised in a post-retirement career. In addition to this, they seldom have the opportunity to develop skills that are needed for this second career (McPherson, 1980). The development of certain transferable skills can influence the smoothness of an athlete's transfer out of competitive sport (Danish, Owens, Green, and Brunelle, 1997). These skills can include communication, critical thinking, effective decision-making, a degree of independence, and skills of social interaction (Thomas and Ermler, 1988). Mayocchi and Hanrahan found that "knowledge of transferable skills increases athletes' confidence that their skills could be used in other settings and challenges some of the athletes' doubts about their ability to begin a new career" (2000, p97).

Individuals who have no interests or skills outside of sport may choose to stay in the sporting world rather than facing an identity crisis that can lead to adjustment problems (Gorbett, 1985; McPherson, 1978). Werthner and Orlick (1986) found that the majority of the Olympic athletes in their study who had no adjustment problems remained involved in their sport. They concluded that this continued involvement seemed to help ease the transition out of their competitive career. This finding is supported by Baillie (1992, cited in Baillie, 1993), who found that remaining involved in sport after retirement was related to better scores for emotional adjustment. Lavalley *et al.* (1997a) warn that although maintaining involvement with sport after retirement from competitive participation can help to

ease transition, it can put athletes at risk of experiencing transition difficulties when they finally end this involvement. The decision to maintain involvement should not be an emergency solution, but rather the result of careful planning (Svoboda and Vanek, 1982).

The presence or absence of coping skills will influence the quality of an athlete's adaptation to retirement. Coping is defined as "constantly changing cognitive and behavioural efforts to manage specific external and/or internal demands that are appraised as taxing or exceeding the resources of the person" (Grove *et al.*, 1997, p192). Emotion-focused coping is designed to regulate emotional responses to a problem, while problem-focused coping is directed at managing or altering the issue (Green and Weinberg, 2001). Coping strategies are strongly influenced by many factors including personality, perceived control, and gender (Harrison and Lawrence, 2003). Johnson (1997) suggests that women rely on emotion-focused coping strategies to a greater extent than men. Previous research highlighted that individuals who are high in positive coping resources tend to experience less stress during retirement from sport than those possessing few coping skills (Lavalley *et al.*, 2002).

Level of success in sport is another factor that may have an influence on the quality of adaptation to retirement. Athletes who achieve their sports-related goals tend to have higher levels of life satisfaction and an easier transition out of their sport career (Sinclair and Orlick, 1993; Werthner and Orlick, 1986). Recognition and visibility can also have an influence on how an athlete reacts to retirement from sport (Kleiber, Greendorfer, Blinde, and Samdahl, 1987). Athletes who

make it to the top of their sport often have more opportunities presented to them upon retirement and are perhaps less likely to face problems (Vuolle, 1978). Haerle (1975b) found that being a well-known baseball player could open doors and help with obtaining the first non-playing job.

There are a number of social differentiation factors which can influence the process of disengagement out of sport, including gender, age, race, socioeconomic status, cultural norms, and marital status (Blinde and Greendorfer, 1985; McPherson, 1984). Svoboda and Vanek suggest that “it is first of all age, sex and marital status that play evident roles in ways in which the stressors are perceived” (1982, p169). Athletes with certain racial or ethnic backgrounds may find transitions difficult as they may lack the financial resources needed for skill development, or could be victims of discriminatory practices which can impede the process (Blinde and Greendorfer, 1985). This is supported by Schlossberg (1981), who suggests that ethnic or racial background may be an isolating factor which can make adaptation more difficult. Socioeconomic status may make a difference to the amount of stress that is associated with leaving competitive sport. Athletes who are financially dependent on their sport participation possess few skills to earn a living outside of sport. They have limited financial resources to fall back on will perceive retirement as a threat and, as a result, experience higher levels of distress. Coakley suggests that:

Former athletes probably do not have as much in common with one another as they do with non-athletes of the same gender, race, age, educational level, and socioeconomic background (1983, p9).

Some of the problems associated with retirement are linked to the extent to which an athlete depends on their participation in sport for their identity and self-esteem. Hurley and Mills (1993) suggest that the greater the degree of self-esteem that is derived from sport, the larger the feelings of loss are likely to be. These athletes struggle to find something that will give them the positive feelings of self-esteem that their sport career did (Harris and Eitzen, 1978). This narrow appreciation of self-worth can leave an athlete feeling depressed and vulnerable (Botterill, 1982). Wehlage (1980) suggests that athletes are less likely to feel unfulfilled if their self-esteem is based on varied and multiple goals and values.

There are a number of other factors that have been highlighted in previous research as being potential influences on the process of retirement from sport. One of these is the timing of the withdrawal. Although most athletes know that their career in sport is likely to be short, retirement still often comes with shocking suddenness. According to transition theory, most adults have built-in social clocks by which they judge whether a particular event is 'on-time' or 'off-time' (Schlossberg, 1981). An event that is considered to be off-time, either early or late, carries social and psychological penalties. Swain (1991) suggests that it is important for the athlete to withdraw at the right time, a time when they believe that their best successes are behind them. This is supported by Thomas and Ermler, who state that "nobody wants to leave 'Disneyland' if they think the best is yet to come" (1988, p141). Other factors that have been mentioned are good health (Lavalley and Wylleman, 1999; Lerch, 1981), financial hardship, and inadequate sports facilities or services (Werthner and Orlick, 1986). Blinde and Greendorfer (1985) suggest that additional consideration should also be given to

other life transitions that could be occurring at the same time as retiring from sport, such as graduation, seeking for a new job, marriage, or moving to a new geographical location. Some of the problems that are occurring could be due at least partially to these transitions rather than solely their retirement from sport.

3.5 Conclusion

Previous research has used a number of theoretical approaches to analysing retirement from sport. This thesis is making use of the Taylor and Ogilvie (1994; 2001) model because it offers a multi-faceted approach to the retirement process. There are a number of factors that can influence an athlete's exit from competitive sport, both available resources and developmental experiences. Too frequently sport retirement has been examined as an event that would automatically cause trauma or relief, rather than as a process that each individual will perceive, and therefore react to, differently (Sinclair and Orlick, 1993). Rather than trying to generalise, it is perhaps more appropriate to highlight important factors that can influence the process and can therefore be used as predictors of difficult or negative adaptation. The literature is inconclusive as to whether retirement is inherently a negative experience. Previous studies have produced contrasting conclusions on the impact of factors such as the reason for retirement, the age and stage of retirement, and the degree of control and preparation the athlete has in the process. This thesis proposes to examine these issues through the experience of women in Scotland over the last 20 years.

Chapter 4: STUDY 1 – Characteristics of Retirement for Scottish Female Athletes

There has been a substantial body of research produced examining the retirement transition, but the majority of this has examined professional or full time athletes. Additionally, only a small number of studies have concentrated solely on the retirement experiences of female athletes. A number of more recent studies have started to examine potential cultural differences in the retirement process (Alfermann *et al.*, 2004; Stambulova *et al.*, 2007; Wylleman *et al.*, 2004). It has been suggested that it is important to acknowledge the diversity which could exist in terms of culturally specific characteristics and that aspects such as the characteristics of the sport systems, cultural traditions, and people's personalities within the country being examined should be taken into account when examining patterns of reactions to retirement (Stambulova *et al.*, 2007).

This study is therefore designed to collect information on the retirement experiences of elite female athletes in Scotland, through the application of a questionnaire intended to collect primarily quantitative data. Questionnaire sections were designed to examine what were felt to be the major elements of the Taylor and Ogilvie (1994; 2001) conceptual model of adaptation to retirement from sport, in order to explore the applicability of this model to female athletes in Scotland. An additional aim is to contrast the major findings of this study to the research on athletes from other countries and highlight the similarities and differences.

4.1 Research Design

A deductive research approach has been employed to examine the experiences of this subject group and make comparisons to the existing literature within this topic area. Gratton and Jones (2004) suggest that some of the advantages of using a questionnaire include enabling the collection of data from a geographically dispersed sample group with relative ease, ensuring anonymity which can improve the validity of the responses, and providing structured data that is easily comparable. The possible disadvantages of this particular method of data collection are that there is very little opportunity to expand upon the points or issues raised through the questionnaire, and potentially low response rates which can have a serious impact on the reliability of the study (Oppenheim, 1992).

4.1.1 Questionnaire Measures

The questionnaire was developed by drawing information from an extensive review of the related literature in the area of sport retirement and transitions. As well as basic demographic data about the athletes, questions sought to examine the cause of retirement, factors thought to relate to adaptation to retirement, the resources available to the retiring athletes, and the quality of adaptation to this particular career transition.

Demographic Data. A number of questions were used to collect information on the respondent's age, personal status, ethnicity, level of education, and occupation. This information was used to describe the sample.

Athletic Identity (Athletic Identity Measurement Scale [AIMS]; Brewer and Cornelius, 2001; Brewer *et al.*, 1993). The AIMS is a measurement tool which examines both the strength and exclusivity of identification with the athlete role, and has been used by previous researchers examining topics such as career maturity (Brown and Hartley, 1998), identity foreclosure (Good *et al.*, 1993; Murphy *et al.*, 1996), and sport career transitions (Cecic Erpic *et al.*, 2004; Grove *et al.*, 1997; Shachar, Brewer, Cornelius, and Petitpas, 2004).

The AIMS initially consisted of 10 items, which encompassed cognitive, affective and social elements of athletic identity (Brewer *et al.*, 1993). Although the AIMS was originally developed to be one-dimensional, factor analyses in later studies revealed that the AIMS was composed of a number of factors. Brewer and colleagues suggested a model composed of three factors; social identity, negative affectivity, and exclusivity (Brewer, Boin, Petitpas, Van Raalte and Mahar, 1993; cited in Li, 2006). Social identity represented the extent to which the individual viewed themselves as occupying the role of athlete, negative affectivity was the extent to which the individual experiences negative affect as a result of an undesirable outcome within the athletic domain, and exclusivity was used to describe the extent to which the individual's self-worth was determined solely by performance in the athlete role. Martin and colleagues expanded this by suggesting a fourth factor, self-identity, which represented self-referenced cognitions (Martin *et al.*, 1997). More recently Brewer and Cornelius (2001) re-examined the factor structure of AIMS, and developed a new seven-item scale found to be superior to previous models in their study with a large (N = 2,729) and diverse subject sample. They suggested that the new scale provided a better

reflection of athletic identity than the 10-item scale. A high correlation (.96; reported in Shachar *et al.*, 2004) has been shown between the new seven-item version and the earlier 10-item version.

This study uses the seven-item version of the AIMS. Each item is scored on a seven-point Likert-type scale anchored at ‘strongly disagree’ (1) and ‘strongly agree’ (7). The highest possible score is therefore 49, with the lowest possible score being seven. Higher scores indicate a stronger and more exclusive identification with the athlete role. Brewer and Cornelius (2001) reported high internal consistency of the AIMS ($\alpha = .81$).

As this study is examining the experiences of athletes who have already retired from their sport, it was necessary to use a retrospective version of the AIMS to examine the athlete’s level of athletic identity during their sporting career. Each of the items was modified to the past tense. For example, “I have many goals related to sport” was changed to “I had many goals related to sport” for the retrospective version. Retrospective versions have been successfully used by a number of previous studies. In their cross-national study of sport career termination in Germany, Lithuania, and Russia, Alfermann and colleagues used a retrospective shortened five-item version of the AIMS, translated into the relevant languages (Alfermann *et al.*, 2004). However, no explanation was provided as to why this shortened version was chosen and the study made no mention of any psychometric properties of the new scale. A retrospective version of the 10-item scale has also been used in studies of athletic retirement (Grove *et al.*, 1997; Lavalley *et al.*, 1997a). Lavalley and colleagues report acceptable internal

consistency with this version. More recently, Shachar *et al.* (2004) used a retrospective version of the seven-item AIMS in their study of career decision-making and adjustment difficulties among retired Israeli athletes.

In order to examine the change in athletic identity within participants between the time of retirement and completion of the questionnaire, a standard present tense version of the seven-item AIMS was also included. Changes in athletic identity were measured by subtracting the current athletic identity from the reported athletic identity at the time of retirement, in a similar method as was used by Lavalley *et al.* (1997a).

Reactions to Retirement. A number of aspects were examined to build up a picture of the retired athlete and their experience of this transition. Questions were developed to determine the age of the athlete upon retirement, the length of time between retirement and completion of the questionnaire, and whether the athlete had planned for their retirement. Athletes who had planned for their retirement were asked specific questions to determine what their planning consisted of and how long before their retirement this planning process started. In an open-ended question, athletes were asked to describe the major reason for their retirement. This open-ended method has previously been used by Allison and Meyer (1988) and Webb *et al.* (1998). Leaving this question open-ended ensured that athletes would not be guided towards a particular response, allowing a fuller analysis of the applicability of this element of the conceptual model. In addition to this, respondents were also asked to indicate whether they felt that their retirement was voluntary or involuntary/forced, to identify the perceptions of the respondents on

the type of retirement they experienced. The addition of this as a variable also enables its use within the statistical analysis, which is important as it has been identified as a major factor in adjustment to retirement within previous research. Respondents were also asked to indicate how much control they felt they had over their retirement, on a ten point Likert-type scale, anchored at 'no control' (1) and 'high level of control' (10).

The quality and relative difficulty of adaptation to retirement was measured through a number of questions. Two questions explore how difficult the respondents feel their retirement from sport was, and the feelings of loss experienced upon this transition. This is similar to the approach taken by Curtis and Ennis (1988) in their study of Canadian hockey players' disengagement from sport. Both of these questions were scored on a 10-point Likert-type scale, the first anchored at 'not at all difficult' (1) and 'very difficult' (10), and the second at 'no feelings of loss' (1) and 'considerable feelings of loss' (10). The level of adjustment required at the termination of the athletic career was measured by asking the respondents to indicate the degree of emotional, financial, social, occupational, and physical adjustment required following their retirement. Each of these areas of potential difficulty was measured on a 10-point Likert-type scale, anchored at 'no adjustment' (1) and 'considerable adjustment' (10). Examples of each of the adjustment areas were provided to ensure a high level of comprehension of the question. For example, physical adjustment was described as 'changes in body shape, adjusting to new level of exercise and new diet, etc'. The general structure of this item was adapted from the work of Grove *et al.* (1997). Finally, the participants were also asked to estimate the number of months

taken to adjust in each of the five areas of adjustment, with an open-ended question format. This question format has been previously used in the work of Grove *et al.* (1997) and Stambulova *et al.* (2007).

Additional Questions. The final set of questions examined the social support networks available to the participants and their current level of involvement in both their sport and other sports. Within the questions on support networks, both the informal social support received and formal support through sports governing bodies and other sporting organisations were investigated.

4.1.2 Pilot Study

An initial version of the questionnaire was used in a pilot study with retired female elite level athletes from countries other than Scotland. It was intended that this subject group would be as close to the target population in terms of competitive level and sporting career as possible. Feedback from these individuals was used to check that the format of the questionnaire was satisfactory, to clarify phrasing and to ensure content-specific relevance. The questionnaire was delivered, either by post or by email, to 25 female former elite athletes. Twenty replies, a return rate of 80 percent, were received within the time limits set for the study. The ages of the athletes range from 23 to 67 (mean = 34.55, SD = 11.772), and they represented a total of nine different sports (badminton, canoeing, diving, golf, rhythmic gymnastics, rowing, swimming, tennis, and track & field). The countries represented by these athletes were the Czech Republic, Canada, Denmark, England, Germany, Northern Ireland, and the United States.

As a result of the participants' feedback from the pilot study, a number of small changes were made to the questionnaire. The question investigating the degree of physical adjustment required upon retirement was an addition made due to comments from several pilot study participants who indicated that this was potentially an important area that the initial questionnaire did not examine. The importance of this has also been highlighted in previous literature (Blasco *et al.*, 1997; Kerr and Dacyshyn, 2000; Lavalley and Robinson, 2007; Ryan, 2000). A small number of basic demographic questions were removed following the pilot study, as it was felt that reducing the length of the questionnaire would encourage a higher return rate and these questions were not believed to be essential to the analysis.

The majority of the feedback from the pilot study respondents concerned the problems that were encountered due to formatting issues for those who responded by email. The questionnaire was designed to be completed on paper; however it was soon clear that the easiest way to access a range of potential subjects from a variety of countries quickly was to communicate by email. It was felt that electronic communication might still be the best method for the majority of potential participants for the full study; therefore the formatting issue was removed by the use of a web-based survey design programme to collect the data².

4.1.3 Procedures

The final version of the questionnaire contains 40 questions, with a mixture of closed 'tick-box' type questions and open-ended questions. A copy of the

² Programme used was Survey Monkey: www.surveymonkey.com

questionnaire can be found in Appendix A. Ethical approval from the researcher's institution was granted for the study. Three criteria were used for including participants within the study: (a) to be female; (b) to be retired from participation in international level competition (which was defined as 'elite' for the purpose of this study); and (c) to be of Scottish nationality. Diversity was sought in terms of relevant experience so that the participants differed by sport, age, and time since retirement.

The questionnaire was distributed to 123 retired Scottish female athletes. Contact details for retired athletes within the country were obtained through a mixture of personal contacts, sports governing bodies, and other sporting institutions. Snowball sampling techniques were employed, which have previously been used in research within this area of study (Allison and Meyer, 1988; Drahota and Eitzen, 1998; Perna, Ahlgren, and Zaichkowsky, 1999; Swain, 1991). Athletes identified through the above sources were asked to provide the names and addresses of any other female athletes they know to have retired who met the inclusion criteria for the study.

The questionnaire, along with an invitation letter, was sent to the participants either by email or by post. In the invitation letter, the study was explained to the participants and ethical issues were emphasised. In particular, the letter highlighted that participation in the study was entirely voluntary, and that the data would be treated with full confidentiality with subject anonymity within the results guaranteed. It was explained to the subjects that returned questionnaires would be stored securely and read only by the researcher. A copy of the letter can

be found in Appendix B. To encourage as high a response rate as possible, two reminder emails or letters were sent to non-responders, first one month and then two months after receipt of the initial invitation letter. After a collection period of eight months, the questionnaire was closed with a total of 92 returns, a response rate of 74.8 percent. The sample is generally representative of Scottish female athletes as a whole, due to a good range of sports being covered by the respondents and through a good response rate which reduces the potential effects of non-response bias (Gratton and Jones, 2004).

4.1.4 Analyses

A number of methods have been used to analyse the data. Descriptive statistics have been utilised to organise and describe the data. Bivariate correlations have been calculated to analyse the potential relationships between a number of the variables including athletic identity, control, retirement difficulty, feelings of loss, the level of adjustment required, and the time taken to adjust. In addition, chi square tests of independence were performed for comparisons of the categorical variables. The purpose of a chi-square test of independence is to determine whether the observed values for the cells deviate significantly from the corresponding expected values for those cells (George and Mallery, 2003). If the chi-square statistic is significant ($p < 0.05$), it is accepted that the observed values differ significantly from the expected values and that the two variables are not independent of each other.

Qualitative data analysis was performed on the responses to the open-ended questions. Answers were listed, coded according to their “meaning unit”, and then grouped into categories to be reported in the study (Weber, 1990).

4.1.5 Participants

A total of 19 different sports are represented by the participants of this study (Figure 2 below). Sixty three percent of the former athletes were involved in sports classified as ‘individual sports’, whilst 37 percent were involved in sports classified as ‘team sports’. The current age of the former athletes ranges from 20 to 67 (mean = 34.07, SD = 9.566). Forty percent are currently single, fifty one percent are currently married or co-habiting, and two percent are either divorced or separated. Six percent of the participants indicated the ‘other’ option to this question.

The participant sample is predominantly white, with ninety seven percent indicating this as their ethnic origin. This could be a reflection on the type of athlete currently participating in sport in Scotland, or perhaps more likely an indication of the people known to the researcher, bearing in mind the sampling methods used within the study. However, information from the 2001 Census indicates that only two percent of the overall population are non-white. (Registrar General, 2003).

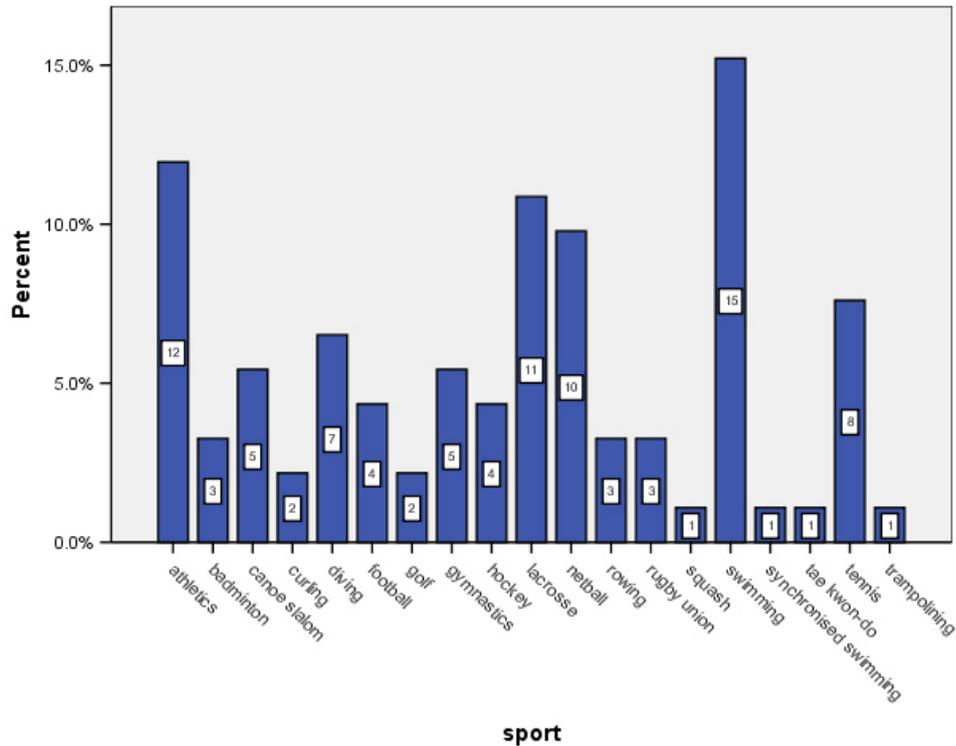


Figure 2: Main competitive sport

Number of cases = 92

Eighty two percent of the athletes are currently employed, two percent are unemployed, fifteen percent are students, and one percent are retired. Twenty one percent of the respondents finished their formal education between the ages of 16 and 18. Forty six percent finished between age 19 and age 23, nineteen percent aged 24 or over, and fifteen percent stated that they were still studying.

Figure 3 below provides an overview of the highest academic qualifications gained by the athletes. According to the 2001 Census, 19.5 percent of the population of Scotland are educated to university degree level or above (SCROL, 2001). Although this figure increases to 36.3 percent among those under 35 (General Register Office for Scotland, 2001), this still does not account for the high percentage of highly educated respondents in this study. 73 percent have attained this level of education. Previous research, such as that of Pawlak (1984)

and Vuolle (1978), have indicated that a high number of athletes within their sample have completed higher education and have made suggestions as to the links between high athletic attainment and attainment in other spheres of life. Although the current results may provide some further supporting evidence for these theories, it is important to consider the potential subject bias that might have been created through the snowball sampling techniques employed (Gratton and Jones, 2004).

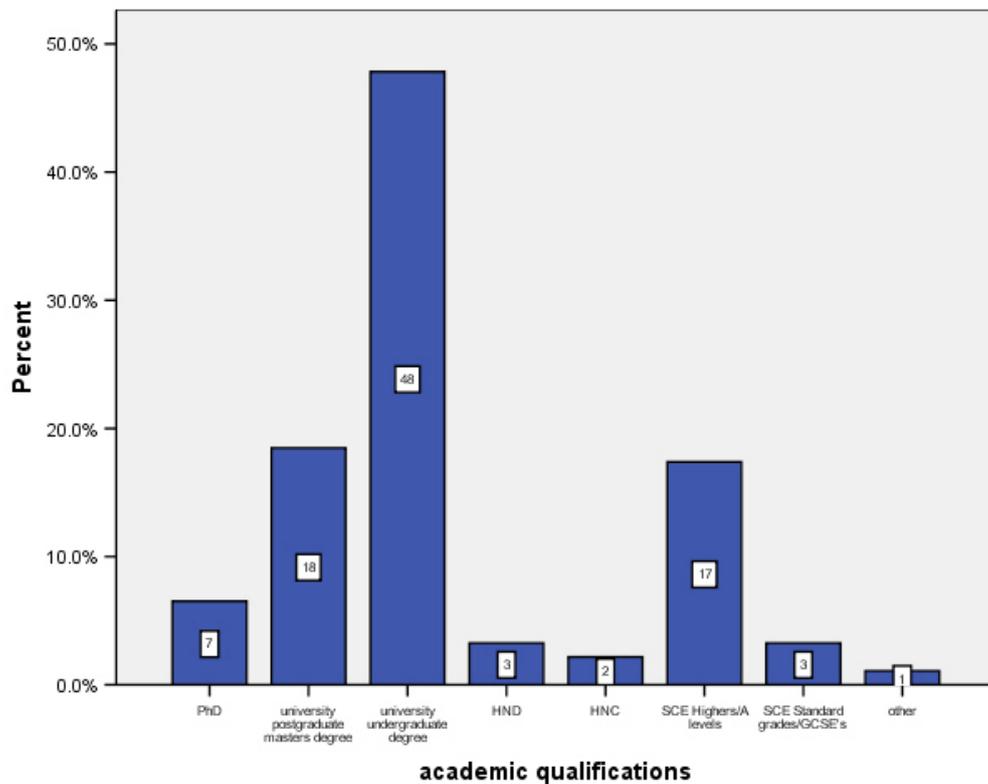


Figure 3: Highest academic qualifications gained

Number of cases = 92

The age that the former athletes became competitively involved in their sport ranges from 4 to 30 (mean = 12.76, SD = 4.882). The length of time that they were competitively involved ranges from 5 to 36 years (average = 15.23, SD = 5.913). Fifty nine percent of the former athletes participated at international level

for Scotland, and forty one percent at international level for Great Britain. The participants were asked to describe their most significant achievements during their competitive sporting career. Responses were categorised using content analysis. Sixteen of the respondents are former Olympic or Paralympic athletes, achieving two Olympic golds, two Olympic silvers, one Olympic bronze, and 15 Paralympic medals. Two other notable highlights are a swimmer who competed in five consecutive Olympic Games, and a hockey player who captained her GB Olympic team.

Seventeen of the former athletes competed in at least one Commonwealth Games, and the sample includes two gold medallists at this level. For seven of the former athletes their highlight was competing at World Championship level, whilst for a further three it was competing at European Championship level. Nine of the respondents were Scottish National Champions at senior level and for 27 their most significant achievement was representing Scotland in international events. There were also four respondents who competed at semi-professional or professional levels in their sport.

Thirty six percent of the former athletes were training full time when at the top level in their sport. Twelve percent of these were from team sports, whilst 88 percent were from individual sports. In the last decade the opportunities for female athletes in Scotland have increased, in part due to the introduction of the Lottery Fund Talented Athlete Programme (**sportscotland**, 2001). Full-time athletes spent between 14 and 40 hours per week training (mean = 25.53, SD = 6.797). They were asked to describe how their full time training was funded.

Answers to this open-ended question were coded using content analysis. All except one of the replies were coded into eight first-order categories. One reply, “a mixture of sources”, was unclassifiable. The majority of the respondents received funding from more than one source and this is included in the analysis. Results are presented in Table 1 below.

Table 1: Funding sources of full time athletes

Funding source	Percentage of respondents
Lottery funding	42
sportscotland	18
University	12
National Governing Body	6
Sponsorship	18
Competition earnings/race winnings	6
Self-funded	27
Parents	18

Number of cases = 33

Question involved multiple response options

Sixty four percent of the former athletes were training part time. Forty nine percent of these were from team sports, whilst fifty one percent were from individual sports. Table 2 below provides an overview of the activities that the part-time athletes were concurrently involved in.

Table 2: Overview of part time athletes' additional activities

	Percentage of respondents
Working	34
Studying	24
Both working and studying	42

Number of cases = 59

4.2 Results

The results are presented in four sections. The first section utilises descriptive statistics to describe the characteristics of the retirement transition. The second section presents the factors influencing adjustment to sport retirement. The third section examines the social support and formal support received by the participants, and includes an overview of the services that the former athletes felt would be of most benefit and interest to retiring athletes. The final section presents a qualitative analysis of the additional comments provided by the respondents on their retirement experiences.

4.2.1 Characteristics of the Retirement Transition

The length of time since retirement ranges from one to 31 years (mean = 6.76, SD = 7.099). To enable use within the statistical analysis, the data were divided into groups with cut-points at the 33rd and 67th percentiles. This presented three groups: two years ago or less (n=29), three to six years ago (n=36), and seven years ago or more (n=27). The former athletes' retirement ages range from 15 to 50 (mean = 27.36, SD = 6.827). This data was also divided into groups with cut-points at the 33rd and 67th percentiles. This presented three groups representing 'young retirement' (23 years and younger, total number = 31), 'average retirement' (24 to 29 years, total number = 29), and 'old retirement' (30 years and older, total number = 32).

Results indicated that athletes in team sports tended to retire at an older age than those in individual sports (Figure 4 below). This finding supports the earlier work

of Vuolle (1978) and Sugawara (1972). A crosstabs analysis using X^2 was performed. The observed test statistics were: $X^2 = 18.153$, $df = 2$, $p < 0.001$. Neither the level the athletes competed at³ nor whether they were full time or part time⁴ were found to have any influence on the age at which they retired.

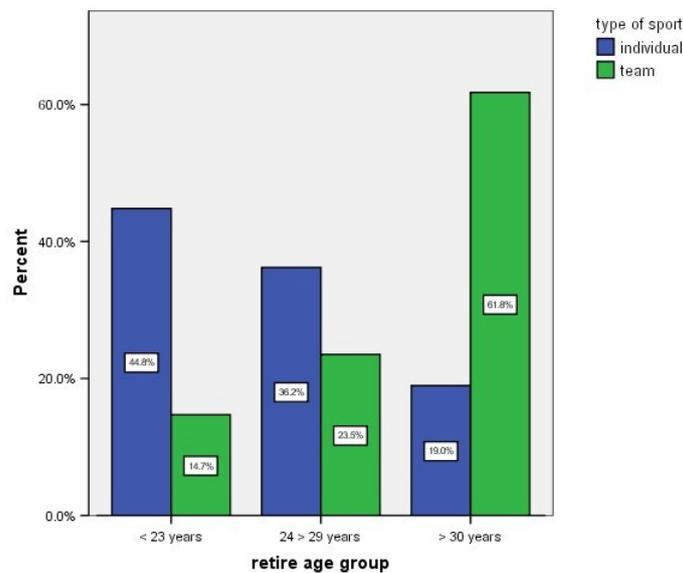


Figure 4: Relationship between type of sport and retirement age

Individual sport cases = 58, Team sport cases = 34

Reason for Retirement

Within sport retirement literature reasons given for retirement have been classified into four broad categories: injury, deselection, chronological age, and free choice (Lavalley *et al.*, 2002; Taylor and Ogilvie, 1994). The responses to the open ended question on the athlete's reason for retirement were coded using qualitative

³ Appendix C, Table 1

⁴ Appendix C, Table 2

content analysis. Results provide general support for this classification, although a small number of responses appear to fall outwith these four categories.

Thirty percent of the respondents indicated that ‘injury’ was their most important reason for retirement. The category ‘injury’ also includes illness and poor health, overtraining, and burnout. Interestingly, although it could be assumed through the majority of previous literature that retirement through injury would be categorised as a forced retirement by athletes (Crook and Robertson, 1991; Fortunato and Marchant, 1999; Ogilvie, 1987), eight of the 26 respondents in this study who indicated that injury was their main reason for retirement also indicated that they viewed their retirement as voluntary. One of these athletes explained that she retired because “her body couldn’t handle the stresses of injury anymore”, another that she was “concerned at the number of injuries”. Both of these examples can lead to the conclusion that athletes for whom an injury-related retirement was viewed as voluntary were generally describing the accumulation of small and recurrent injuries, rather than one career-ending injury.

Three percent of the former athletes in this study indicated that their most important reason for retirement was ‘age’. The responses of eleven percent of the former athletes can be categorised as ‘deselection’. This category includes non-selection: “I retired from the sport after my non-selection for the Canada Commonwealth Games”, “I got tired of hearing that I wasn't tall enough”; inability to compete at the required level: “no longer competitive on an international stage”; and failure to make the transition from junior to senior level:

“no longer able to compete at junior level, and not competent enough for full national squad”.

Forty six percent of the responses can be categorised as retirement through ‘free choice’. Within this category several groups have been identified. Seventeen of these athletes described changing priorities as the reason for their retirement: “I needed to move on in life, wanted to experience other things”. Nine of these athletes suggested that they had lost the motivation to continue their competitive careers, or had lost the enjoyment they gained from their participation: “I lost the motivation and drive to compete”. There is sometimes the anticipation with female athletes that at some point they will choose to or be forced to end their competitive sport career in order to start a family (Hastings *et al.*, 1989; Pedersen, 2001). In their study of active Olympic athletes and their views of retirement, Torregrosa and colleagues explained that “both in individual and team sports some female athletes were found to associate retirement from elite sport with having children” (Torregrosa, Boixados, Valiente, and Cruz, 2004, p39).

Although there are a number of examples of contemporary female athletes who have had children and then returned to their former level in their sport, such as long distance runner Paula Radcliffe who won the New York marathon 10 months after giving birth (newsvine.com, 2007), and tennis player Lindsay Davenport who returned to professional play only three months after the birth of her son (Clarey, 2007), there were eight athletes who cited having a family as the main reason for their retirement. Finally, there were six athletes within this category who suggested that they had achieved all of their aims or felt that they had

reached their peak in terms of their sporting performance: “I could no longer improve my own performance, and in fact I was becoming less effective. It was time”.

There were a number of responses which do not sit well within these four categories. Three athletes blamed their retirement from competitive sport on personal issues or problems: “I was going through a bad time personally when I stopped”. Four athletes said that a lack of funding or financial difficulties were responsible for ending their career: “problems with getting finances to compete in my sport”. Two athletes suggested that their sporting careers finished because they could not deal with the pressures that came with their involvement: “the pressure to perform and associated stress”. Although in theory all of these could potentially be classified as ‘free choice’, they are inherently negative reasons and therefore it is difficult to suggest that these athletes really freely chose to end their careers. It seems more likely that their careers were ended by the circumstances that they were in. Of these nine athletes, five classified their retirement as forced, so at least some of these cases would seem to support this interpretation.

Sixty seven percent of the respondents classified their retirement as voluntary, whilst thirty three percent classified theirs as involuntary or forced. A relationship was found between the level the athletes competed at and their type of retirement. Athletes who competed internationally for Great Britain were more likely to voluntarily retire from their sport (Figure 5 below).

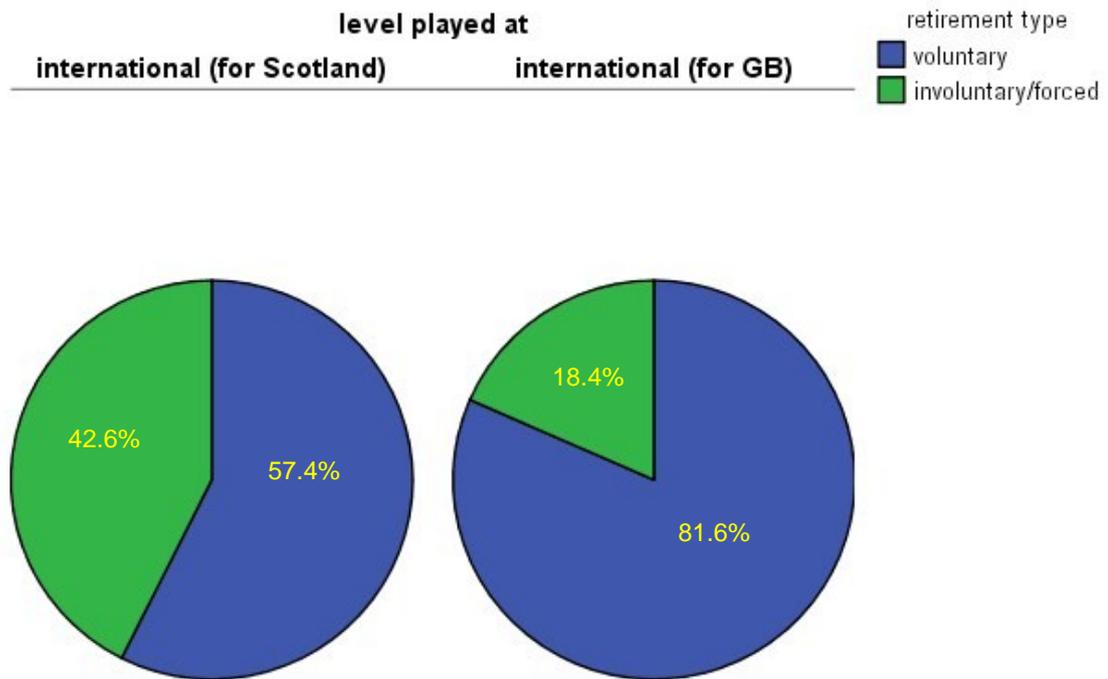


Figure 5: Relationship between level of competition and retirement type

International for Scotland cases = 52, International for GB cases = 38

$\chi^2 = 5.930, df = 1, p = 0.015$

One of the reasons that more athletes competing at the higher level might have chosen to retire is that they have achieved all of their goals and are therefore happy to draw a line under their sporting career. Some support for this was provided by the respondents who indicated that achievement of goals was their main reason for retirement. Earlier research suggests that athletes who achieve their sports-related goals tend to have higher levels of life satisfaction and an easier transition out of their sport career (Sinclair and Orlick, 1993; Werthner and Orlick, 1986). Athletes who were full time were also found to be more likely to retire voluntarily than athletes who were part time, however this result was not statistically significant.⁵

⁵ Appendix C, Table 3

Athletic Identity

Athletic identity has been identified by previous literature as a major factor in how an athlete experiences major transitions, including retirement (Brewer *et al.*, 1993; Lavalley *et al.*, 2002; McKay, Lavalley, Anderson, and White, 2006). Heyman (1986) and Crook and Robertson (1991) both suggest that high athletic identity is a risk factor in experiencing problems during all sports career transitions, and particularly upon retirement. Scores on the retrospective version of AIMS respondents (Figure 6 below) ranged from 14 to 48 (mean = 37.07, SD = 7.724). In order to enable use in statistical analysis with categorical data, scores on the retrospective AIMS were divided into extreme groups with cut-points at the 33rd and 67th percentiles, a method used successfully in the research of Horton and Mack (2000). The three groups formed represent 'low AI' (≤ 35 , total number = 31), 'medium AI' ($36 > 40$, total number = 24), and 'high AI' (≥ 41 , total number = 35).

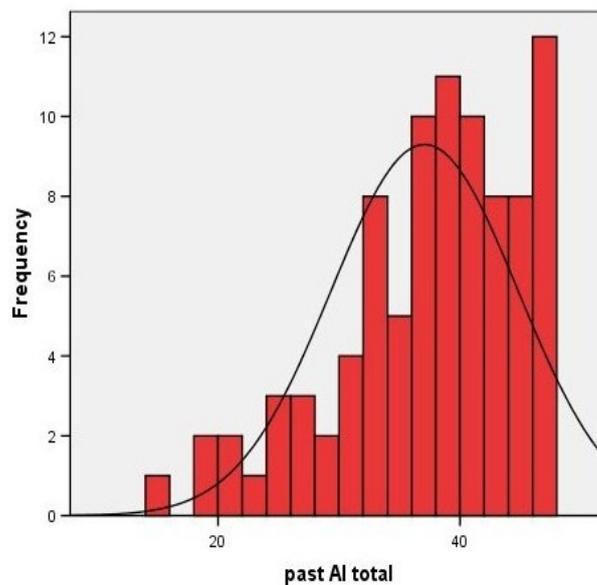


Figure 6: Scores on the retrospective version of AIMS

Number of cases = 92

Previous literature has suggested that athletes involved at a higher level in their sport, or spending more time in their sport, show a higher level of athletic identity (Brewer *et al.*, 1999). However, the results of this study do not provide support for this, with neither the competitive level of the athlete⁶ nor whether they were full time or part time⁷ found to have had an influence on their level of athletic identity.

Scores on the present version of AIMS (Figure 7 below) ranged from 9 to 43 (mean = 23.14, SD = 8.269).

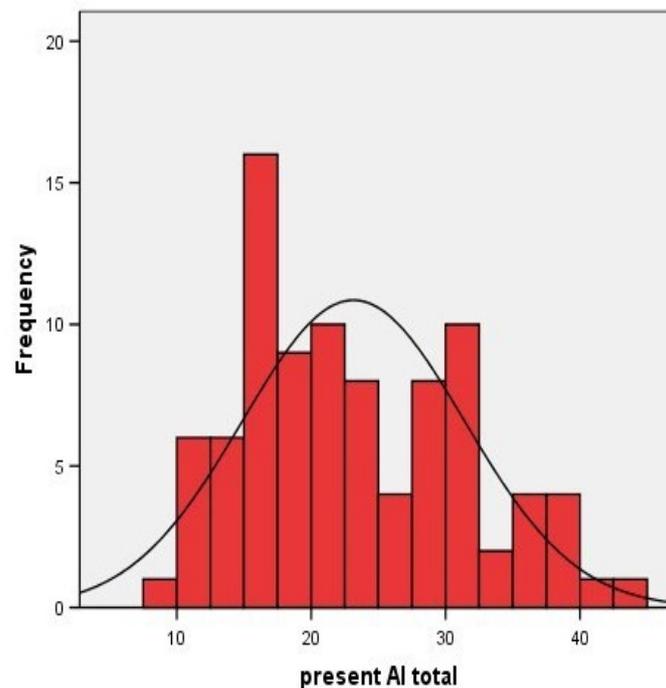


Figure 7: Scores on the present version of AIMS

Number of cases = 92

The change in athletic identity ranged from -2 to 34 (mean = 14.43, SD = 8.196). A paired-sample t-test was conducted to compare the means of the retrospective and present AIMS scores. The result was statistically significant ($t = 16.707$, $DF =$

⁶ Appendix C, Table 4

⁷ Appendix C, Table 5

89, $p = <0.001$) which indicates that the AIMS scores were significantly different for the two time periods as explored by the two versions of the scale. For the majority of respondents their identification with the athlete role was lower at the time of completion of the questionnaire than it was while they were competing. This is not an unexpected result as the majority of the participants are no longer as involved in sport as they previously were and have developed alternative identities.

Whether the athletes still currently had some involvement in their sport in some capacity was found to have an influence upon their present athletic identity score (Figure 8 below).

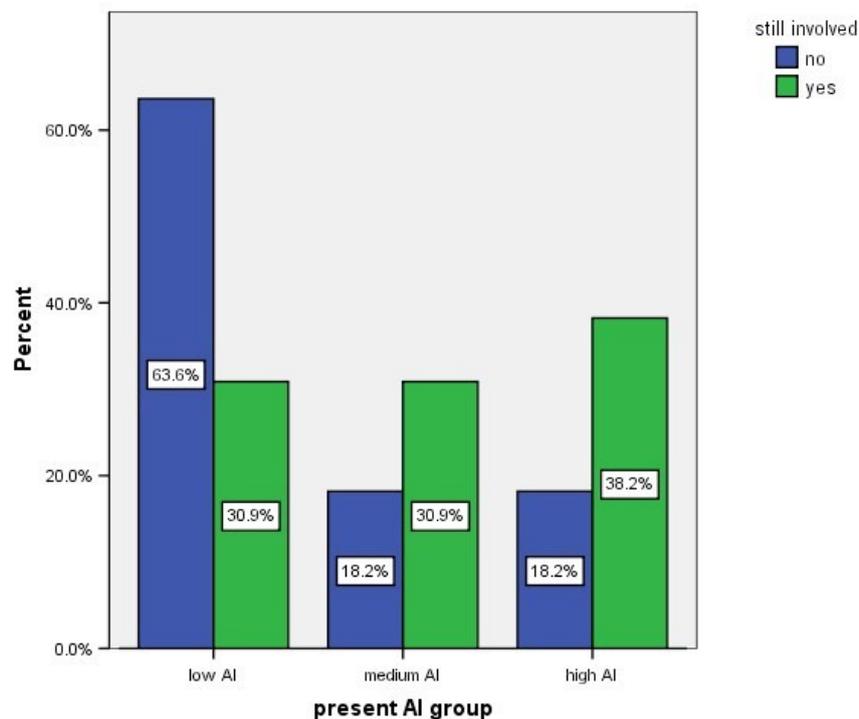


Figure 8: Relationship between current involvement and AI

Still involved cases = 68, not still involved cases = 22

$X^2 = 7.556$, $df = 2$, $p = 0.023$.

This result indicates that, as might be expected, those athletes who have still maintained an involvement in their sport have reported a higher level of identity with the athletic role. Similar findings on athletic identity were found by Shachar and colleagues (2004), in their study comparing athletes who maintain an involvement in a coaching role, to those who do not.

Feelings of Control

The level of control an athlete feels that they have over sport career transitions is another factor which can have an impact on how difficult they find the transition (Alfermann and Gross, 1997; Webb et al., 1998). The mean score for the respondents' feelings of control upon their retirement was 7.23 (SD = 2.414). In order to enable use in statistical analysis with categorical data, scores for control were divided into three response groups, with scores of 1-3 comprising 'low feelings of control', scores of 4-7 comprising 'medium feelings of control', and scores of 8-10 comprising 'high feelings of control'. Only nine percent of the respondents had low feelings of control over their retirement, whilst fifty percent reported high feelings of control. Athletes who retired voluntarily were generally found to express that they felt more in control of their retirement than those who were forced to retire (Figure 9 below). A relationship was also seen between whether the athletes planned for their retirement and the feelings of control they had over that transition. As might be expected, athletes who planned for their retirement from sport indicated that they felt more control over the event than those athletes who did not plan for the end of their sports career (Figure 10 below).

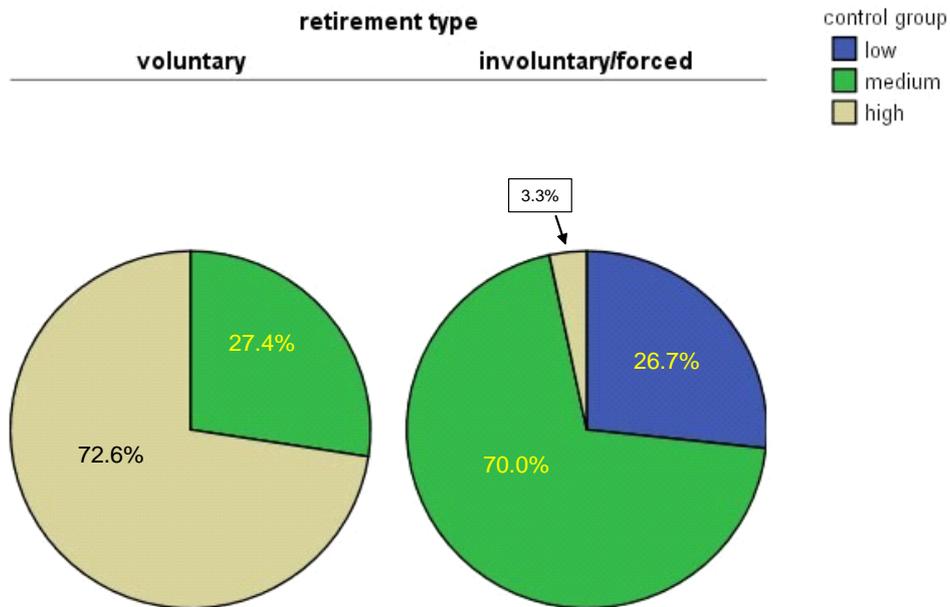


Figure 9: Relationship between retirement type and feelings of control

Voluntary retirement cases = 62, Involuntary/forced retirement cases = 30
 $\chi^2 = 44.797$, $df = 2$, $p < 0.001$

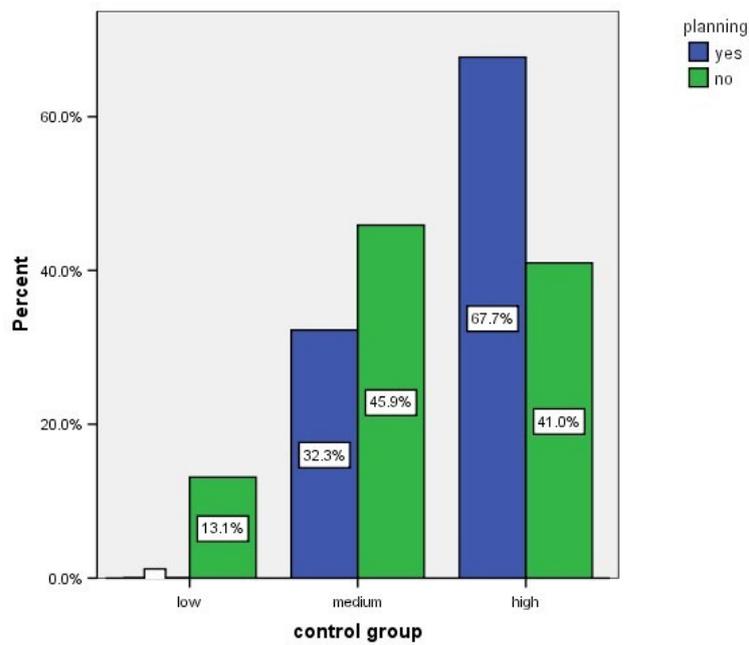


Figure 10: Relationship between planning for retirement and feelings of control

Planned for retirement cases = 31, Did not plan cases = 61
 $\chi^2 = 7.935$, $df = 2$, $p = 0.019$.

Pre-Retirement Planning

Another factor that has been highlighted as having an influence on retirement from sport is whether the athlete planned for the end of their sport career (Alfermann *et al.*, 2004; North and Lavallee, 2004). Only 34 percent of the respondents indicated that they did plan for their retirement, whilst 66 percent indicated that they undertook no pre-retirement planning.

Athletes who were full time in their sport were found to be more likely to plan for their retirement than those who were part time (Figure 11 below).

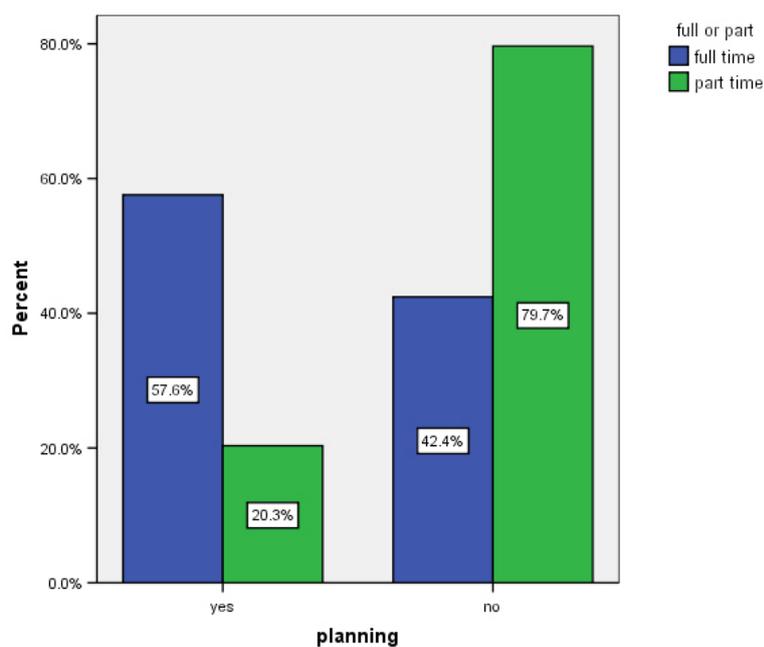


Figure 11: Relationship between planning and full or part time participation

Planned for retirement cases = 31, Did not plan cases = 61

$\chi^2 = 13.134$, $df = 1$, $p < 0.001$

A relationship was also seen between the competitive level of the athlete and whether they planned for their retirement, with athletes who competed

internationally for Great Britain being more likely to have planned for this transition than those who were Scottish internationalists (Figure 12 below).

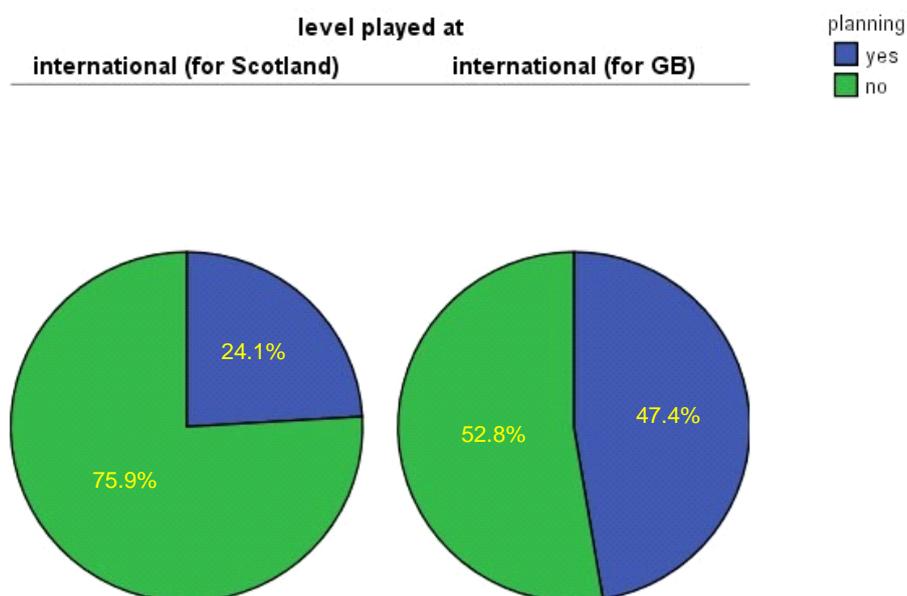


Figure 12: Relationship between planning and level of competition

Planned for retirement cases = 31, Did not plan cases = 61

$\chi^2 = 5.417$, $df = 1$, $p = 0.018$

The athletes who indicated that they undertook pre-retirement planning were asked to describe what that planning consisted of. The results are displayed in Table 3 below.

Table 3: Pre-retirement planning

Planning	Percentage of respondents
Applications for jobs or study	58
Developing social networks and contacts	26
Accessed reading materials about retirement	10
Attended pre-retirement workshops	7
Attended pre-retirement counselling sessions	3

Number of cases = 31

Question involved multiple response options

Only five of the respondents indicated that they used more than one form of planning, with two athletes combining job applications with accessing retirement reading materials, two athletes combining job applications with developing their

social networks, and one athlete combining job applications with attendance at pre-retirement workshops.

A number of the athletes provided responses which fell outside these categories. Three of these were concerned with planning their involvement with the sport after retirement, planning coaching courses and looking at other ways in which they could maintain contact. Two responses were concerned with psychological preparation for retirement, such as: “gradually developing a larger focus on other important aspects of my life”, whilst one was concerned with physical aspects: “considering the type of exercise I would be able to continue to do and other activities I could become involved with”. One final response indicated that the athlete was thinking about how she would deal with no longer being involved within her sport: “planned holidays for major training weekends and events to make sure I was not tempted to play”.

These athletes were also asked to indicate how long before their retirement they started to think about pre-retirement planning (Figure 13 below). Fifty eight percent of the athletes started to plan for their transition at least six months or more before their retirement.

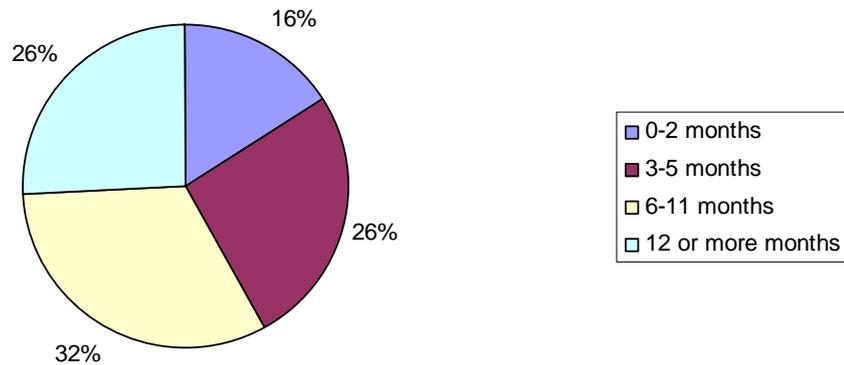


Figure 13: Time taken for pre-retirement planning

Number of cases = 31

Retirement Difficulty

The mean score for difficulty of retirement was 5.65 (SD = 2.739). To enable use in statistical analysis with categorical data, scores for difficulty were divided into three response groups, with scores of 1-3 comprising 'low difficulty', scores of 4-7 comprising 'medium difficulty', and scores of 8-10 comprising 'high difficulty'. Twenty five percent of the respondents did not find much difficulty with their retirement, forty six percent fell into the 'medium difficulty' category, and twenty nine percent had high levels of difficulty associated with their transition.

Feelings of Loss

The mean score for feelings of loss upon retirement was 6.64 (SD = 2.347). Scores for feelings of loss were also divided into three response groups, with scores of 1-3 comprising 'low feelings of loss', scores of 4-7 comprising 'medium feelings of loss', and scores of 8-10 comprising 'high feelings of loss'. Eleven

percent of the respondents experienced low feelings of loss upon their retirement, whilst forty nine percent fell into the ‘medium feelings of loss’ category, and forty percent experienced high feelings of loss.

Adjustment to Retirement

The mean scores for each of the adjustment areas are presented in Table 4 below.

Table 4: Areas of adjustment to retirement

Adjustment Area	Mean	SD
Emotional	5.52	2.720
Financial	2.54	2.259
Social	5.34	2.505
Occupational	4.00	3.130
Physical	6.64	2.510

Number of cases = 92

An overall adjustment score for each of the former athletes has been produced by adding their scores from each of these scales. Scores for overall adjustment ranged from 7 to 44 (mean = 24.06, SD = 8.599). To enable use in statistical analysis with categorical data, scores for each area of adjustment were divided into three response groups, with scores of 1-3 comprising ‘low adjustment’, scores of 4-7 comprising ‘medium adjustment’, and scores of 8-10 comprising ‘high adjustment’. An overview of the number of athletes in each category is provided in Table 5 below.

Table 5: Percentage of athletes in each category for areas of adjustment to retirement

Adjustment Area	‘Low adjustment’ %	‘Medium adjustment’ %	‘High adjustment’ %
Emotional	25	48	27
Financial	73	21	6
Social	26	53	2
Occupational	56	24	20
Physical	14	40	46

Number of cases = 92

Time Taken to Adjust

The results for the time taken to adjust in each of the five areas are presented in Table 6 below. Respondents were also given the option to indicate that they had not yet adjusted. The percentages of athletes choosing this option are detailed in the final column of the table.

Table 6: Time taken to adjust to retirement

Adjustment Area	Mean (in months)	Standard Deviation	Still Adjusting (%)
Emotional	10.1	11.337	22
Financial	1.3	2.871	3
Social	7.2	8.458	7
Occupational	3.6	6.735	3
Physical	12.2	11.886	16

Number of cases = 92

Current Sport Involvement

The questionnaire sought to explore whether the athletes were currently still involved in their sport in any capacity and whether they had any involvement in other sports. Seventy four percent of the former athletes are still involved in their competitive sport in some capacity. Table 7 below provides an overview of the areas in which they are currently involved.

Table 7: Current involvement in their own sport

Area of Involvement	Number involved (%)
Coaching	65
Recreational participation	37
Masters or club level competition	37
Administration	34
Judging or refereeing	24

Number of cases = 68

Question involved multiple response options

Of the former athletes who are not currently involved in their sport, twenty one percent stated that they did have plans to become involved in the future, twenty one percent that they were definitely not going to have any future involvement, and fifty eight percent were not sure.

Fifty eight percent of the respondents are currently involved in some capacity in another sport. An overview of their involvement is contained in Table 8 below.

Table 8: Current involvement in another sport

Area of Involvement	Number involved (%)
Elite level competition	11
Masters or club level competition	15
Recreational participation	70
Coaching	26
Administration	30
Judging or refereeing	4

Number of cases = 53

Question involved multiple response options

These results demonstrate that a high percentage of the athletes have maintained contact with the sporting world, either within their own sport or in a different activity.

4.2.2 Factors Influencing Adjustment to Retirement

Statistical analyses were conducted to assess factors thought to influence adjustment to retirement.

Sport Variables

Results indicated that athletes in individual sports reported higher levels of occupational adjustment upon their retirement (Figure 14 below). These athletes would appear to have more experienced more difficulty finding a new career and adjusting to new working hours than athletes in team sports did. Athletes in individual sports were also found to generally report higher levels of difficulty⁸ and more emotional adjustment⁹ with regards to their retirement; however these results were not significant.

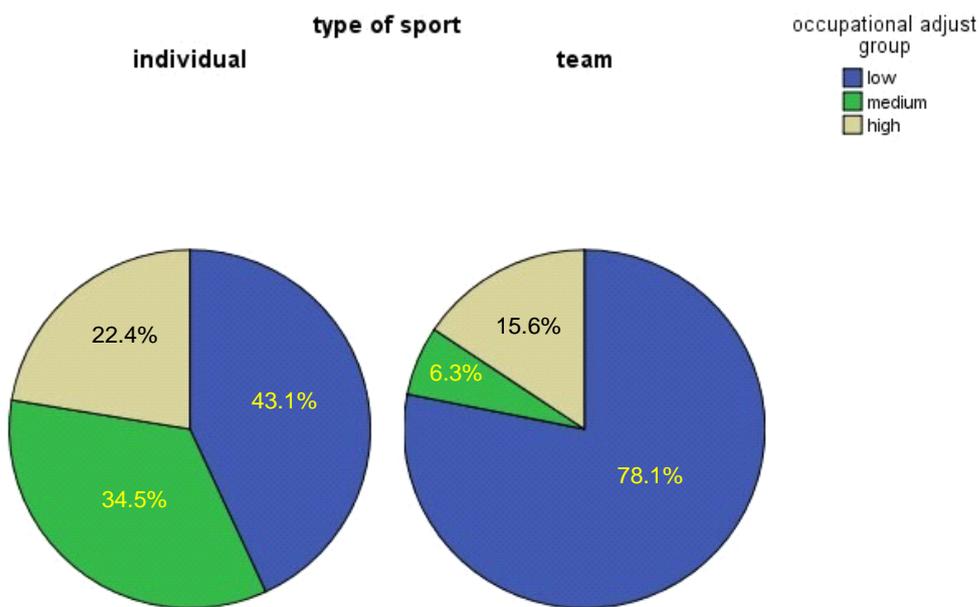


Figure 14: Relationship between type of sport and occupational adjustment

Individual sport cases = 58, team sport cases = 34
 $X_2 = 11.753$, $df = 2$, $p = 0.003$

Significant relationships were found between the level the athletes competed at and the amount of occupational ($X_2 = 12.369$, $df = 2$, $p = 0.002$) and financial ($X_2 = 13.184$, $df = 2$, $p = 0.001$) adjustment they experienced upon retirement.

⁸ Appendix C, Table 6

⁹ Appendix C, Table 7

Athletes who competed for Great Britain were found to be more likely to report more problems with changes to their financial status, concerns over money, and adjusting to a new career. These results are outlined in Table 9 below.

Table 9: Relationship between competitive level and occupational & financial adjustment

	Scottish International	GB International
	(%)	(%)
Low occupational adjustment	71.2	34.2
Medium occupational adjustment	17.3	34.2
High occupational adjustment	11.5	31.6
Low financial adjustment	86.5	55.3
Medium financial adjustment	13.5	31.6
High financial adjustment	0	13.2

Scottish international cases = 54

GB international cases = 38

Athletes who competed for Great Britain also reported higher levels of emotional¹⁰ and physical¹¹ adjustment upon their retirement than those who competed for Scotland, however these results were not significant. No relationship was found between time since retirement and adjustment to retirement. It might have been expected that athletes who have retired more recently may have reported higher levels of occupational and financial adjustment, as they potentially have had more opportunities for full time participation in their sport, however this hypothesis was not supported.

However a significant relationship was seen between whether the athlete was full time or part time and both financial adjustment ($X_2 = 14.246$, $df = 2$, $p = 0.001$) and occupational adjustment ($X_2 = 12.414$, $df = 2$, $p = 0.002$). Results show that the full-time athletes within the study were more likely to experience medium or

¹⁰ Appendix C, Table 8

¹¹ Appendix C, Table 9

high levels of both financial and occupational adjustment upon their retirement than the part-time athletes. These results are outlined in Table 10 below.

Table 10: Relationship between full or part time participation and occupational & financial adjustment

	Full time (%)	Part time (%)
Low occupational adjustment	31.3	69.0
Medium occupational adjustment	34.4	19.0
High occupational adjustment	34.3	12.1
Low financial adjustment	53.1	84.5
Medium financial adjustment	31.3	15.5
High financial adjustment	15.6	0

Full time cases = 33

Part time cases = 59

Full-time athletes also reported higher levels of physical adjustment upon their retirement than part-time athletes¹², however this result was not significant.

Type of Retirement

Results indicate that athletes whose retirement was involuntary reported higher levels of social adjustment than athletes who retired voluntarily (Figure 15 below). These athletes appeared to have more difficulty with aspects such as changes in social status, losing sporting contacts, and making new friends. Athletes who were forced to retire also reported that their retirement was more difficult¹³ and that higher levels of emotional adjustment were required¹⁴; however these results were not statistically significant.

¹² Appendix C, Table 10

¹³ Appendix C, Table 11

¹⁴ Appendix C, Table 12

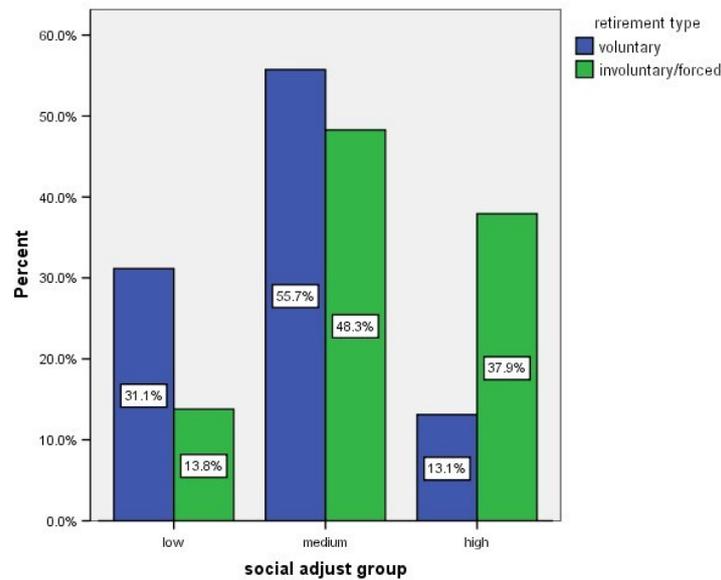


Figure 15: Relationship between type of retirement and social adjustment

Voluntary retirement cases = 62, Involuntary/forced retirement cases = 30
 $\chi^2 = 8.256$, $df = 2$, $p = 0.016$

Athletic Identity

(Table 11, p107 below)

Results indicate that athletic identity was positively correlated with retirement difficulty ($r = .428$, $p < 0.001$). Athletes with higher levels of athletic identity experienced more difficulty with their retirement. A positive correlation was also seen for athletic identity and loss ($r = .358$, $p = 0.001$), with participants who identified more strongly with the athletic role indicating larger feelings of loss upon their retirement. High athletic identity was also linked to a higher level of adjustment experienced during the retirement transition. Specifically, weak positive correlations were found with overall adjustment ($r = .385$, $p < 0.001$), emotional adjustment ($r = .376$, $p < 0.001$), social adjustment ($r = .359$, $p = 0.001$), and occupational adjustment ($r = .220$, $p = 0.038$).

Table 11: Bivariate correlations of adjustment variables and factors influencing retirement

	Difficulty	Loss	Emotional adjust	Financial adjust	Social adjust	Occupational adjust	Physical adjust	Total adjustment	Emotional time	Financial time	Social time	Occupational time	Physical time
Athletic identity	.428***	.358**	.376***	.176	.359**	.220*	.125	.386***	.258*	.148	.290**	.122	.136
Control	-.234*	-.220*	-.324**	-.115	-.275**	-.078	.052	-.226*	-.248*	-.090	-.141	.057	-.182
Retirement age	-.249*	.002	-.209*	.004	-.231*	-.168	-.144	-.236*	-.062	.152	-.089	-.088	.009
Time since retirement	.041	-.048	-.075	-.186	-.010	-.240*	-.347***	-.264*	-.082	-.241*	.043	-.179	-.071

Notes: * = p < 0.05
 ** = p < 0.01
 *** = p < 0.001

Relationships were also seen between level of athletic identity and the time taken to adjust to retirement. Athletes who identified more strongly with the athletic role took longer to adjust to feelings such as confusion, anger and loss (emotional adjustment time, $r = .258$, $p = 0.031$), and to changes in social status and developing new social circles (social adjustment time, $r = .290$, $p = 0.008$).

Control

(Table 11, p107 above)

Findings from the correlational analyses indicated that retirement difficulty ($r = -.234$, $p = 0.025$) and feelings of loss ($r = -.220$, $p = 0.035$) were negatively correlated with feelings of control over retirement. Athletes who indicated that they felt they had less control over their retirement found the transition more difficult and experienced larger feelings of loss. Feelings of control were also negatively correlated with levels of adjustment. Athletes who felt they had less control over their retirement experienced a higher level of adjustment overall ($r = .226$, $p = 0.032$). In particular, these athletes found it more difficult to adjust emotionally ($r = .324$, $p = 0.002$) and socially ($r = .275$, $p = 0.009$) at the end of their career. A weak negative correlation was also seen between feelings of control and time taken to adjust emotionally ($r = .248$, $p = 0.039$). Athletes who had less feeling of control took longer to adjust emotionally to the transition.

Age of Retirement

(Table 11, p107 above)

The results of the correlational analyses show a weak negative relationship between age of retirement and the difficulty of the transition ($r = .249, p = 0.017$). Athletes who retired at a younger age reported more difficulty with their retirement than athletes who retired at an older age. Retirement age was also negatively correlated with measures of adjustment. Athletes who retired at a younger age experienced higher levels of overall adjustment ($r = .236, p = 0.025$), emotional adjustment ($r = .209, p = 0.048$) and social adjustment ($r = .231, p = 0.029$).

Time since retirement was also negatively correlated with measures of adjustment. Specifically, athletes who retired more recently reported higher levels of physical adjustment ($r = -.347, p = 0.001$), occupational adjustment ($r = -.240, p = 0.023$), and overall adjustment ($r = -.264, p = 0.012$). These athletes also took more time to adjust financially at the end of their career ($r = -.241, p = 0.026$).

Retirement Difficulty

(Table 12 below)

Correlational analyses revealed moderate positive correlations between retirement difficulty and measures of adjustment. Athletes who found their retirement more difficult had higher overall adjustment scores ($r = .478, p < 0.001$). These athletes reported higher levels of emotional adjustment ($r = .662, p < 0.001$), social

adjustment ($r = .423, p < 0.001$), and physical adjustment ($r = .267, p = 0.011$).

They also took longer to adjust to their retirement in these three areas.

Table 12: Correlations of retirement difficulty and measures of adaptation

	Emotional adjust	Financial adjust	Social adjust	Occupational adjust	Physical adjust	Total adjustment
Retirement Difficulty	.662***	.111	.423***	.107	.267*	.478***

	Emotional time	Financial time	Social time	Occupational time	Physical time
Retirement Difficulty	.611***	.109	.345**	.251*	.426***

Notes: * = $p < 0.05$, ** = $p < 0.01$, *** = $p < 0.001$

Feelings of Loss

(Table 13 below)

Findings from the correlational analyses indicate that feelings of loss were positively correlated with measures of adaptation to retirement. A moderate positive correlation was seen with overall adjustment ($r = .440, p < 0.001$). Athletes who reported greater feelings of loss upon retirement had higher scores for emotional adjustment ($r = .579, p < 0.001$), social adjustment ($r = .387, p < 0.001$), and physical adjustment ($r = .273, p = 0.009$). These athletes also reported taking longer to adjust within these three areas than athletes with lesser feelings of loss upon the end of their career.

Table 13: Correlations of feelings of loss and measures of adaptation

	Emotional adjust	Financial adjust	Social adjust	Occupational adjust	Physical adjust	Total adjustment
Feelings of Loss	.579***	.136	.387***	.080	.273**	.440***

	Emotional time	Financial time	Social time	Occupational time	Physical time
Feelings of Loss	.435***	.078	.265*	.208	.304**

Notes: * = $p < 0.05$, ** = $p < 0.01$, *** = $p < 0.001$

4.2.3 Retirement Support

Social Support

Social support is another variable which has been found to have an influence on experiences of retirement (Gearing, 1999; Hurley and Mills, 1993). Respondents were asked to indicate the amount of support they felt that they received from a number of different sources when they retired, on a five-point Likert scale anchored from 1 – no support to 5 – a great deal of support. The responses are summarised in Table 14 below.

Table 14: Summary of social support received

	Mean	Std. Deviation
Support from team mates	2.64	1.245
Support from retired athletes	2.27	1.250
Support from coach	2.14	1.355
Support from governing body	1.37	0.861
Support from other organisation	1.37	0.866
Support from spouse	3.29	1.529
Support from family	3.47	1.296
Support from friends	3.45	1.133

Number of cases = 92

Results show that the highest level of support was provided from family and friends. Fifty four percent of the athletes indicated that their family provided

either some support or a great deal of support upon their retirement. Similarly, fifty two percent indicated that their friends provided either some support or a great deal of support. In comparison, support from official sources was rated much lower by the athletes, with forty eight percent indicating that they received no support from their coach, seventy nine percent that they received no support from their sports governing body, and eighty two percent that they received no support from any other sporting organisation. These latter findings are similar to those of Stambulova *et al.* (2007), who found that both French and Swedish athletes indicated very low levels of support from former coaches and sport officials.

Organisational Support

The questionnaire also examined the organisational support that was provided to the athletes before, during, and after their retirement. The athletes were asked to indicate whether they had received any support services from their sports governing body. Ninety two percent stated that they did not receive any support. Eight percent did receive support and details of the services received are contained in Table 15 below.

Table 15: Support services received from governing bodies

	Number of respondents
Career planning	2
Pre-retirement counselling	1
Financial assistance	0
Readings about retirement	0
Physiological and dietary detraining	1
Seminars with retired athletes	0
“Other”	3

Number of cases = 7

Question involved multiple response options

All three of the athletes who selected the “other” category all described help with coaching courses and opportunities to get involved in coaching, as shown in this example: “Scottish Disability Sport paid for me to do coaching qualifications”.

The athletes were also asked to indicate whether they had received any support from another sporting organisation, such as the Scottish Institute of Sport, British Olympic Association, or similar. Eighty three percent stated that they did not receive any support. Seventeen percent did receive support and details of the services received are contained in Table 16 below.

Table 16: Support services received from other organisations

	Number of respondents
Career planning	15
Pre-retirement counselling	1
Financial assistance	0
Readings about retirement	1
Physiological and dietary detraining	3
Seminars with retired athletes	1
Number of cases = 16	
Question involved multiple response options	

The final question in this section asked the athletes which services they felt would be useful. The results are summarised in Table 17 below.

Table 17: Useful services for athletic retirement

	Agree (%)	Disagree (%)
No services would be useful	11	89
Career planning useful	51	49
Pre-retirement counselling useful	40	60
Financial assistance useful	25	75
Readings about retirement useful	46	54
Physiological and dietary detraining useful	60	40
Seminars with retired athletes useful	33	67
Number of cases = 92		
Question involved multiple response options		

A number of respondents provided additional comments about services they thought might be useful for athletic retirement. It was suggested that services

should be provided on an individual basis: “review of the athlete’s circumstances and information provided accordingly”. Other comments focused on the importance of providing opportunities for athletes to maintain an involvement in their sport: “it would have been great to be more involved in the other side of my sport. I did help at one competition but it was like 'out of sight, out of mind’”, and on the psychological aspects of coping with retirement: “psychology seminars on how not to feel let down or a failure”.

4.2.4 Additional Comments

Respondents were asked whether they had any additional comments they would like to make about their retirement from sport. Responses to this open-ended question were qualitatively analysed and categorised using content analysis. Three broad categories of comments were developed: comments that highlight positive aspects of retirement, those that highlight negative aspects, and those that discuss issues connected with support for retiring athletes.

The comments focusing on the positive aspects of retirement covered four areas: planning for retirement, having other options alongside sport, their feelings about their retirement, and their continued involvement in sport. A number of respondents suggested that their retirement was easier because of the planning that they undertook. One athlete said “the transition has probably been easier because I had planned for a while”, whilst another focused on the importance of networking: “my networking during my sports career was vital to succeeding in my current job”. One swimmer retired twice, making a comeback after the first decision to stop. She talked about how this process actually assisted her:

I had to try one more time. That final year was great even though I didn't make my goals, but I really loved it and that whole year was a transition for me into retirement so by the time I retired I was ready and prepared to finally close that chapter and move on with my life.

Through the process of planning for retirement it has been suggested that there might be a conscious reduction in the athletes' investment in the sport role (Lally and Kerr, 2005). A lacrosse player's comment provides some support for this suggestion:

The retirement process for me was not sudden, but it was considered over a long period of time, and during that time there was a lessening of commitment (mentally) ... that in the end was part of the reason for retiring!

Connected to this theme of discussion is the suggestion that having other options available to them, and therefore other sources of identity, can assist with a smooth career transition. One Commonwealth Games competitor suggested her "transition from sports person to not was less traumatic than for others because it did not change the other big part of my life – university". For some athletes it was having another job lined up, or finding another alternative soon after their retirement which was important: "I was very lucky to fall into a job with the Commonwealth Games Council. Had I not been successful in gaining this job I may well have felt lost and disillusioned".

A number of the respondents chose to focus on the feelings and emotions that they felt when their sport career ended. Some did not find the decision to retire a difficult one, as explained by one diver: "I do not remember retiring being a difficult decision ... retiring for me was a logical step because I had really done

everything except go to the Olympics”. Coakley (1983) suggested that for some athletes retirement might actually be seen as a form of re-birth, focusing on the positive options rather than what could be seen as a negative event. The comments of one swimmer seem to support this: “I was looking forward to retiring, not because I didn’t want to swim but because I was looking forward to starting a new life”. Another emotion that was expressed was that of relief: “I wasn't enjoying competition towards the end of my career and in the end it was a relief to retire”.

Several of the responses stressed that having opportunities to maintain an involvement in their sport assisted with their career transition. For many this was in coaching, as described by this footballer:

As I was injured at the peak of my career and wanted to stay in the game, I started coaching at a very young age which kept me within the game, along with many of my team mates and friends. And I'm so glad I did.

Others spoke of involvement in other ways assisting them to adjust to being retired: “after I retired I was able to perform on a regular basis as a professional in the States for about 10 years ... this made a big difference”. Athletes also spoke about the importance of giving back in some manner to their sport: “I feel that I have had enough from the sport and can put some effort back into it in the form of coaching my own junior team”, as well as finding new and different pleasures within their sport: “I love my coaching now which is much more rewarding than competing”.

The comments on the negative aspects of retirement focused on three areas: the decision to retire from competitive sport, their feelings upon retirement, and

issues of identity. Some respondents spoke about the decision being taken away from them and the feelings that led to. This is demonstrated in the story of one diver: “I felt dropped. My coach moved on to others – great loyalty after all the bruises and even a cracked cheek bone and broken hand. See I haven't recovered yet”. Athletes who retired voluntarily talked about how difficult it was to make the decision to retire. As one Olympic Games competitor explained: “it was a hard decision and one I was scared to make as I didn't have a set plan of what to do when I retired”. This provides a good comparison to the earlier statements from athletes who talked about how having made plans for their retirement assisted them in their transition. Previous research has suggested that whether an athlete's retirement is ‘on-time’ or not can be a major factor in how difficult they will find this transition (Schlossberg, 1981; Swain, 1991). The experiences of a trampolinist provide some support for this:

I think that I gave up too early and I was blinded by the personal things that were happening in my life ... I realised this almost straight away after retiring but it just seemed harder and harder to go back.

Many of the comments in the negative aspects category focused on the feelings and emotions that came with retirement. Several of the athletes mentioned still missing the competitiveness of the sporting arena, as illustrated by this comment from one of the swimmers:

Whilst I now feel that my life is so far removed from that of an elite athlete and I am totally happy with it, I do find days when I wish I was still in the competitive sporting arena.

Two other emotions that figured fairly frequently were jealousy towards those team mates who were still playing, and feelings of loss. One team sport player described her emotions: “I felt a real loss like I'd lost a sense of belonging somewhere”. A comment from one of the rugby players talked about the fact that retiring was tougher than she thought it was going to be and that the thought processes took a lot longer to fade than she had anticipated. She finished with this statement: “I’m still thinking about 'that tackle' from my last competitive match for Scotland, one year on”. Athletes with higher levels of identification with the sport role seem to experience stronger feelings of emotions such as loss and jealousy upon their retirement. These findings relate to the suggestions of Stryker and Burke (2000) that how a person’s self identity is structured will have an influence on their social behaviour.

One of the comments focused on the coping strategies employed to help cope with their transition: “I found it easiest to cut myself off completely from tennis and the people related to it”. This particular response is an example of a denial coping strategy, in which the athlete is not facing up to the reality of their changed situation. Grove *et al.* (1997) have suggested that prolonged use of these types of strategies, highlighted as emotion-focused, can interfere with the use of more productive, problem-focused coping strategies and lead to additional adjustment problems. Johnson (1997) has suggested that female athletes tend to rely on these emotion-focused coping strategies to a greater extent than their male counterparts.

The final group of comments in this category were concerned with identity and in particular what is understood as social or public athletic identity. Public or social identity refers to an individual’s perceptions of others’ views of them as athletes

(Martin *et al.*, 1995; Webb *et al.*, 1998). Comments by the athletes in this study indicate that this aspect of identity can play a role in their perception of their retirement. One athlete described the difficulties she had with the fact that she felt other people still saw her primarily as an athlete, even after her retirement:

One of the hardest areas to deal with is that many people only identify you as an athlete and even 6 years on I meet people who say "are you still running" as if I only ever ran. Also, there is an expectation that I can still run the way I used to, and obviously I don't and people are quite judgemental on that.

A netballer found that one of the hardest things that she had to adjust to after her retirement was "coming to terms with having being seen as an athlete at the peak, now I feel like a has-been". On a similar note, another netballer talked about the response she felt she got from some of her former team mates once she decided to finish her career:

I felt that I was looked down on from a lot of people within the sport that had previously been friends. It was as if I was no good anymore because I was not playing to elite level, as if I could not even throw a ball anymore!

The comments that discussed provision of support for retirement focused on the need to provide support for this process, and the role that governing bodies need to play. A large number of the respondents seem to agree that there should be a process which can assist those who have devoted a lot to their sport to cope with the new and alien life they will now experience. Previous literature has highlighted the importance of this, linking the provision of intervention programmes to effective sport career transition (Fortunato and Marchant, 1999; Ogilvie and Taylor, 1993a). One hockey player focused on a particularly area in

which she felt support was required: “must have more help directly after a major competition in order to help both with retirement and the psychological effects these events have”, whilst a canoe slalom competitor highlighted a different issue:

It is very hard to find out things about life after retiring or find someone to talk to about it before you make the decision, because then you are letting people know you are thinking about it before you have actually decided.

A rower who competed in the Olympic Games cautioned that just providing some form of support programme was not enough: “the quality of advice is very important and often the current staff do not have this experience”. On a similar note, one of the tennis players highlighted the need for domain-specific knowledge: “I did seek help from a mainstream counsellor but only went to two sessions because I didn't feel they understood anything about the specific demands of sport”. It was not all negative, however, with another rower suggesting that “the level of support available to athletes on retirement now is much greater than even four years ago”.

The comments mentioning governing bodies focused on the role that they felt these organisations should play within this topic area. In many sports, particularly team sports, a number of athletes will often retire at the same time, at the end of a major competition cycle. One team sport player alluded to this, stating that “our governing body could have prepared us a lot better as a significant number retired at the same time”. The main area in which several of the athletes felt that the governing bodies could do better was in keeping former competitors in the sport in some capacity. One Commonwealth Games athlete discussed this in some depth:

A huge amount of knowledge and experience at an elite level left the sport and as far as I am aware no contact was ever made to try to retain this knowledge, or cascade it to up and coming athletes ... even if their experiences or key contacts could be logged in some way to benefit the sport it can only be advantageous.

One astute comment highlighted the main issues facing development in this area: “I think that it is very important to deal with this topic, but most people in the sport do not have the time to handle retired athletes”. With many sports governing bodies run primarily by volunteers, with a small number of fully paid staff, there is indeed a problem with finding people who have both the time and the required skills to deal with this area.

On one final note, one of the comments, which did not fit into the three categories developed, raises an important point. This player talks about one of the things that she regrets when she reflects on her lacrosse career: “I wish I'd bothered to keep a record of my 'capped' matches”. Issues like this often do not seem that important at the time, when the end of the career is not in sight and thoughts of a life outside of their sport are not present. When their sport is their life it can seem hard to believe that a time might come when they cannot remember every detail of their competitive career. However, this might well change once the end of the career becomes a reality and alternative identities are developed and can leave later feelings of regret.

4.3 Discussion

The first step of the conceptual model of adaptation to retirement from sport (Taylor and Ogilvie, 1994; 2001) highlights the importance of identifying the

causes of athletic retirement and the implication this can have on the adaptation process. The results of this study have provided general support for the suggestion that causes of retirement can be classified in four categories: injury, deselection, chronological age, and free choice, but highlighted that there were a number of responses which did not appear to sit comfortably within these. All of these were connected to personal circumstances which were intrinsically negative, effectively enforcing the end of their career. This seems to be suggestive of a potential additional category which needs to be taken into consideration. These findings support previous research by Werthner and Orlick (1986) and Mihovilovic (1968), who both identified reasons for retirement which fell outside of the four basic categories, including problems with sports governing bodies, financial problems, and family issues.

The dominant reason for retirement in the current study was 'free choice', with nearly fifty percent of the respondents falling into this category. In comparison, only a very small number of the respondents fell into the 'age' category. Mirroring these findings, nearly seventy percent of respondents indicated that their retirement was voluntary, some of these interestingly coming from the 'injury' category. The relatively high number of voluntary retirements within the study could potentially be a result of the elite sport culture for females in Scotland. With many high level competitors still requiring extra income, gained through additional employment, they have fairly restricted economic mobility during their competitive careers. They may not be in the position to be able to wait until they are 'forced' out of their sport, but may need to make decisions regarding their future careers at an earlier stage.

The only significant relationship found indicated that athletes who were forced into retirement reported higher levels of social adjustment. It has been suggested that forced retirement from sport can lead to feelings such as anger, loss, and depression, and in turn to the use of maladaptive emotion-focused coping strategies (Ogilvie, 1987). It is possible that athletes who are not using appropriate coping strategies might isolate themselves from the sporting environment in an attempt to cope with the negative emotions, thus removing one of their support networks and ultimately leading to a more difficult social adjustment. This is likely to be particularly the case with athletes whose retirement was not through their own choice and who may harbour feelings of anger towards aspects of their sporting environment.

The Taylor and Ogilvie (1994; 2001) model suggests that an athlete's reason for retirement will be a factor in the difficulty experienced upon the transition, and this has been supported by research suggesting that athletes can be particularly vulnerable to adjustment difficulties if their career termination is forced (Andrews, 1981; Fortunato and Marchant, 1999; Hurley and Mills, 1993; Webb *et al.*, 1998). The majority of the findings in this study do not provide further support in this area, with no relationship found between reason for retirement and retirement difficulty, feelings of loss, or the majority of the adjustment measures. These findings present some question on whether transition is actually more difficult for those athletes who are forced into retirement.

The second stage of the Taylor and Ogilvie (1994; 2001) model suggests a number of factors felt to be related to an athlete's adaptation to retirement. It suggests that one of the most fundamental issues is that of identity, both the level

of identification with the athletic role and the existence of a broad-based social identity enabling interaction with a range of life roles. This area was explored in this study through the use of the Athletic Identity Measurement Scale (Brewer and Cornelius, 2001). The mean score on the retrospective version of AIMS was 37.07, showing that in general elite female athletes in Scotland tend to identify quite strongly with the athletic role. Results indicated that factors such as type of sport, level of competition, and level of training did not have an influence on athletic identity, demonstrating that perhaps other aspects such as level of commitment and identity foreclosure might be more important in determining level of identification with the role of athlete (Murphy *et al.*, 1996).

It is evident from the results of the statistical analyses that in this study the level of athletic identity had an impact on how difficult the athletes perceived their retirement to be, with higher athletic identity levels leading to more difficulty upon retirement. These results support previous research suggesting an influential relationship between athletic identity and retirement (Crook and Robertson, 1991; Heyman, 1986; Hurley and Mills, 1993). Athletic identity was also linked to adjustment to retirement, with athletes who had a higher level of identification with the athlete role reporting higher levels of emotional, social, and occupational adjustment, as well as a longer time required to adjust emotionally. These results support the findings of Grove and colleagues (1997) who indicated a strong correlation between athletic identity at the time of retirement and the degree of emotional and social adjustment the athletes required.

Perception of control has also been highlighted as a significant contributor to the quality of an athlete's adaptation to retirement. Control over the time and

circumstances of retirement has been linked to enhanced psychological preparation for retirement (Webb *et al.*, 1998) and to an increased likelihood of positive post-sport career development (Murphy, 1995). In this study the mean score for control over retirement was 7.23, indicating that most of the respondents felt that they had a fairly high level of control over their retirement.

Results of the statistical analyses indicate that support was found for research such as that of Andrews (1981) and of Lavalley *et al.* (1997b), with a relationship found between control over retirement and the difficulty of and adjustment to that transition. Athletes who had less feelings of control over their retirement reported more difficulty, feelings of loss, and higher levels of adjustment. They also took more time to adjust emotionally to their transition.

A number of tertiary contributing factors were also examined in this study, including type of sport, level of competition, whether they are full time or part time athletes, and age of retirement. Results demonstrated that younger retirees experienced more difficulty with their retirement and reported a higher level of adjustment, particularly emotional and social adjustment. This provides contrasting evidence to the work of Cecic Erpic *et al.* whose research with retiring Slovenian athletes indicated that “the degree of difficulty experienced during the sports career termination process was not influenced by athlete’s age at the time of the career end” (2004, p55). A relationship was also seen between age of retirement and type of sport, with athletes in individual sports tending to retire at a younger age than those involved in team sports. Many of the individual sports within this study are classified as early specialisation. This refers to the fact that some sports require early sport-specific specialisation in training (Balyi and

Hamilton, 2000). It could be surmised that athletes who specialise in their sport earlier may be more likely to end their careers earlier as well. Additionally, it is possible that these athletes may be more likely to experience identity foreclosure, focusing primarily on their sporting performance during the adolescent period which is so important for identity formation and personality development (Kerr and Dacyshyn, 2000; Pearson and Petitpas, 1990). Higher levels of identity foreclosure have been linked with increased difficulties upon retirement (Murphy, 1995).

Results also suggest that respondents who retired more recently reported more occupational and physical adjustment and took more time to adjust financially to the transition. All of these factors could be linked to the changing structure of women's sport in Scotland over the past two decades. Opportunities are increasing for female athletes in Scotland to have full time careers in their sport, strongly linked to the advent of lottery funding, and this is likely to lead to a higher level of occupational, physical, and financial adjustment when their career is finished.

It is evident from the results that for Scottish female athletes, more time was required to adjust to finding a new career and adapting to new working hours for athletes involved in individual sports than for those in team sports. This could potentially be a reflection of individual athletes having a higher tendency to delay the development of a career outside of sport, due to the level of commitment and volume of training required from their sport. Level of competition was also found to have an influence, with athletes who played at a higher level in their sport experiencing a higher level of occupational adjustment when they retired from elite level competition. It is thought that full-time athletes are likely to have low

levels of career maturity in terms of a career outside of their sport, due to the nature of their sporting involvement (Brown *et al.*, 2000). In this study, results demonstrated that the full-time athletes required higher levels of adjustment upon their retirement from sport, both in terms of adjusting to a new career as well as changes in financial status, losing funding, and money worries.

The third stage of the Taylor and Ogilvie model (1994; 2001) suggests that adaptation to retirement will largely depend on the resources that they have available to overcome any difficulties that arise. Pearson and Petitpas (1990) suggest that a lack of social support during the retirement process can leave an athlete feeling isolated which in turn can lead to a distressing reaction to the transition. Respondents indicated that the highest level of support was provided from family and friends. In comparison, the level of support received from people connected to sport, including other athletes, coaches, and organisations including Governing Bodies, was substantially lower. Although the importance of formal institutional support has been highlighted in the literature (Fortunato and Marchant, 1999; North and Lavalley, 2004; Ogilvie and Taylor, 1993a), ninety two percent of the respondents stated that they did not receive any support from their sports governing body, and eighty three percent stated that they did not receive any support from any other organisations. Statistical analyses revealed that, in comparison to previous work (Reynolds, 1981; Werthner and Orlick, 1986), social support received did not seem to have an influence on how retirement was experienced for the athletes in this study.

Despite the evident importance of pre-retirement planning, a number of studies have found that relatively few of the athletes made sufficient preparations for the

end of their career (Drahota and Eitzen, 1998; Fortunato and Marchant, 1999). These previous findings were supported in the current study, with only thirty four percent of the respondents indicating that they planned for their retirement. A significant relationship was found for planning and whether the athlete is full or part-time. Full-time athletes would appear to be more likely to plan for their retirement than part-time athletes, which perhaps is a reflection of the fact that the majority of the latter already have careers running alongside their involvement in sport, whilst full-time athletes are generally required to make a complete change when they retire from their competitive careers. It might have been expected that athletes who had a voluntary transition out of their sport might have demonstrated a higher level of pre-retirement planning, with the knowledge that they were choosing to end their career. However, the results did not find this to be the case.

For those athletes who did undertake some form of pre-retirement planning, this was most commonly in the form of applications for either jobs or study in preparation for the end of their sport career. Spending time developing social networks and contacts was also utilised by a number of the respondents. The majority of those who planned for their retirement started to do so at least three months before their transition. Twenty six percent started to plan for their retirement 12 or more months before. No support has been found for previous studies suggesting that pre-retirement planning can influence the experience of retirement (Alfermann *et al.*, 2004; Stambulova *et al.*, 2007; Wheeler *et al.*, 1996). This could potentially be attributed to the fact that many of the athletes within this study already had a career outside of their sport, perhaps because few female athletes are able to earn a living from their sport in Scotland.

Within the model, social support refers primarily to informal support networks. Organisational support forms the focus of step five of the model which concentrates on interventions for athletes experiencing retirement difficulties. However effective retirement support should be provided both pre and post retirement, and this should be acknowledged within the model. Support provided prior to retirement should focus on transferable skills, social support networks, and the development of alternative career plans and goals (Alfermann *et al.*, 2004; Chow, 2002; Crook and Robertson, 1991). The process can be started with athletes at fairly early stages of their careers, highlighting lifestyle balance and a holistic approach to the development of the individual.

The model discusses the aspect of support in terms of financial planning and money management. This area was not found to be as salient within the current athlete sample, with over seventy percent of the respondents indicating a low level of financial adjustment was required upon retirement. Additionally, only twenty five percent indicated that they felt financial support upon retirement would be useful. As many of the athletes held another career alongside their sport, financial issues were often not relevant. Several of the respondents indicated that they were actually better off financially once they had retired and no longer had to pay out money for sport training and competition, as indicated by this response “took no time to adjust - had more money available by giving up sport”. Issues with lack of finances and financial pressures were highlighted in this study as one of the factors which could lead athletes towards making the decision to retire.

The fourth step of the Taylor and Ogilvie model discusses the quality of adaptation to retirement, suggesting that “retirement from sport will not

necessarily cause a distressful reaction ... the adaptation to retirement by athletes will depend upon the previous steps" (1994, p12). It also suggests that there is still some question about the proportion of athletes who will experience distress and in what ways that distress is manifested. The mean score for retirement difficulty in this study was 5.65, indicating that in general Scottish female athletes experience quite a bit of difficulty with their retirement. Nearly thirty percent of the respondents indicated that they experienced a great deal of difficulty with this transition. Similar findings were indicated regarding feelings of loss, with the mean score of 6.64 showing that in general the athletes felt quite substantial feelings of loss upon their retirement.

The questionnaire explored the manifestation of retirement distress by examining levels of adjustment across five areas: emotional, financial, social, occupational, and physical. The results indicate that Scottish female athletes felt that the area in which they needed the most adjustment was with physical aspects such as changes in body shape and adjusting to new levels of exercise and a new diet. Emotional adjustment, described as feelings of confusion, anger and depression, and social adjustment involving aspects such as changes in social status and making new friends, were also areas in which the athletes felt there was a reasonably high amount of adaptation required. However the mean score for total adjustment was 24.06, indicating that in general, the Scottish female athletes in this sample did not experience overly high levels of adjustment.

The athletes also indicated how long they felt it took them to adjust in each area and it is clear from the results that emotional adjustment and physical adjustment are the hardest, whilst financial and occupational adjustment seem to be of the

least concern to the current sample. This perhaps reflects the fact that over half of the respondents were part-time in their sport and therefore were likely to have careers outwith sport developing simultaneously. Additionally, only a very small number of the former athletes were either professional or semi-professional in their sport, which perhaps explains the fact that they did not need a lot of time to adjust financially to their retirement.

The more difficult the athletes reported their retirement to be, the greater the adjustment required for their transition. Feelings such as confusion, anger, depression, and loss, and changes in social status and making new friends were found to be areas of particular difficulty. Stephan and colleagues suggested the repercussions of physical changes occurring as a result of retirement “may contribute to further explain athletes’ post-sport career adjustment difficulties even when experiencing a successful social-professional transition” (Stephan, Torregrosa, and Sanchez, 2007, p74). Within the current study a relationship was also found between retirement difficulty and both ratings of physical adjustment and the time taken to adjust physically to the transition, providing some support for their findings. The results also indicate that the athletes who reported considerable feelings of loss upon retirement also reported higher levels of adjustment and more time taken to adjust, particularly in terms of feelings of confusion, anger, and depression, changes in social status and making new friends, and adjusting to new levels of exercise and a new diet.

The final step of the model examines possible interventions for career transitions, particularly in relation to the athletes who have a distressing reaction to retirement. In this study questions examined the support received from governing

bodies as well as other organisations. The majority of the support received from governing bodies was connected to coaching and support for the attainment of coaching qualifications. Support was also received in the form of career planning and assistance. Career planning also formed the majority of the support received from other organisations, which included the Scottish Institute of Sport and the British Olympic Association. Although 40 percent of the athletes indicated that they thought pre-retirement counselling would be useful, this is an area in which very few athletes appear to be receiving support at this moment in time. Similarly, nearly sixty percent indicated that physiological and dietary de-training support would have been helpful, but only a small number received assistance in this area. Only eleven percent of respondents indicated that they felt there were no services that would be useful or helpful, which emphasises the importance of this area.

4.4 Conclusion

The results of this study provide some strong support for the applicability of the Taylor and Ogilvie (1994; 2001) model to the experiences of Scottish female athletes retiring from elite level sport. The model discusses the importance of factors such as identity and perceptions of control in an athlete's adaptation to retirement. This study found a strong relationship between high levels of athletic identity and both retirement difficulty and various measures of adjustment. It is also evident that perceptions of control were negatively related to these aspects, with lower levels of control leading to increased problems upon retirement. The model also links the availability of resources such as social support and pre-retirement planning to how an athlete deals with their retirement from sport. However within the current study no relationship was found between social

support from various sources and reaction to retirement. The presence or absence of pre-retirement planning was also not found to be linked to measures of retirement adaptation.

The model highlights that distress is potentially more likely for elite and professional athletes, suggesting this could be linked to higher levels of investment and a higher likelihood that athletes have made sacrifices within their lives for their sport. Within this study, retirement was certainly found to be a difficult event for many of the athletes. This difficulty was linked to higher levels of emotional, social, and physical adjustment. One aspect in which this sample did not fit the model was in the areas of occupational and financial adjustment, which were not indicated to be particularly serious issues.

Responses from the athletes in the current sample indicate that retirement support is perceived to be an area of importance. This is also highlighted by the model. Despite this, only a small number of the athletes actually received any formal support when they retired. The sport system in Scotland would appear to place the majority of the responsibility in the transition to a post-sport career on the athletes themselves. That supports the view that culturally specific factors can potentially work as either resources or barriers in the transition process, echoing the findings of Stambulova and colleagues (2007).

Chapter 5: STUDY 2 - Influences of Athletic Identity on the Retirement Transition

Within sport retirement literature, athletic identity has been highlighted as having a major influence on whether an athlete experiences transition difficulties on retirement (Brewer *et al.*, 1993; Crook and Robertson, 1991; Hurley and Mills, 1993; Lavalley *et al.*, 2002). The duration and difficulty of the transition has been related to the degree to which an athlete continues to be identified with the role of athlete after retirement (Stambulova *et al.*, 2007). The results of Study One provided support for this, finding that athletes with higher levels of identification with the athletic role reported more difficulty and adjustment associated with their transition.

Due to the quantitative nature of the first study, it was not possible to gain an in-depth level of understanding of the retirement transition for Scottish female athletes. Therefore in this second study qualitative procedures have been selected to complement that quantitative approach. Qualitative data provides an insight into and an understanding of the athlete's experiences: "in order to understand why persons act as they do we need to understand the meaning and significance they give to their actions" (Jones, 1985, p46). The aim of this study is to examine the process of retirement in more depth, in particular analysing the influence of identity on the athletic career and on the transition into life after retirement. The hypothesis is that differences will be seen between athletes reporting high or low levels of athletic identification, and that athletes with a strong and exclusive athletic identity will be more likely to report a greater impact of their sport on other aspects of their life and more transitional difficulties upon retirement.

5.1 Research Design

A phenomenological approach has been adopted, to enable examination of individual differences and to capture the complexity of the retirement transition. Phenomenology is the “description of a ‘phenomenon’ as it presents itself in direct awareness” (O’Leary, 2004, p10). Individuals are central to the conduct of phenomenological studies, but it is their description of their experiences, rather than of themselves, that are the focus of phenomenology (O’Leary, 2004). A phenomenological approach has previously been used in studies about sport retirement and identity by Lally (2007), Lavalley & Robinson (2007), and Kerr & Dacyshyn (2000).

In-depth interviewing is an appropriate choice of method for this study as it is used to gain access to, and to get an understanding of, activities and events which cannot be observed directly by the researcher (Minichiello, Aroni, Timewell, and Alexander, 1990). Kvale (1983) suggests that the use of interviews may be the most effective and powerful technique for gaining insight into another person’s experience.

5.1.1 Participants

At the end of the first study questionnaire, respondents were asked whether they would be willing to participate in an in-depth interview on the topic of their retirement from sport and 71 percent indicated that they would. Using respondents scores from the retrospective version of AIMS (Brewer and Cornelius, 2001), an explanatory letter (Appendix D) was sent out to willing participants who fell into either the low athletic identity category (≤ 35 , $n=18$) or the high athletic identity

category (≥ 41 , $n=23$). Interviews were arranged with respondents upon their reply and this process continued until it was felt that saturation had been reached. Gratton and Jones (2004) describe saturation as the stage when any further data collection will not provide any additional information to what already exists. In total, 14 high athletic identity athletes and 15 low athletic identity athletes participated in the study. Table 18 below presents an overview of the basic demographic information.

Table 18: Overview of study participants

Name	Age	Sport	Years Involved	Retire Age	Retrospective AIMS Score	Reason for Retirement
LOW AI GROUP						
Donna	30	Athletics	15	27	20	Voluntary
Linda	39	Netball	15	32	33	Voluntary
Melanie	37	Golf	14	31	30	Voluntary
Naomi	35	Lacrosse	17	29	34	Voluntary
Penelope	38	Curling	21	37	27	Voluntary
Rachel	41	Athletics	12	24	31	Forced
Suzanne	35	Athletics	20	31	30	Voluntary
Tess	23	Trampolining	12	18	21	Voluntary
Violet	44	Diving	9	23	26	Voluntary
Ellie	34	Hockey	24	32	32	Voluntary
Gillian	25	Swimming	9	20	24	Forced
Lorna	23	Football	9	17	27	Voluntary
Nancy	37	Hockey	18	33	33	Voluntary
Rebecca	38	Hockey	16	32	33	Voluntary
Olivia	26	Tennis	12	23	31	Forced
HIGH AI GROUP						
Annabel	20	Gymnastics	9	19	42	Forced
Catherine	29	Athletics	12	27	46	Forced
Jenny	32	Athletics	15	28	44	Forced
Alice	40	Curling	21	40	41	Voluntary
Julia	31	Swimming	13	27	43	Voluntary
Megan	33	Gymnastics	16	21	44	Forced
Beth	36	Swimming	13	27	44	Voluntary
Emily	20	Gymnastics	10	18	42	Voluntary
Gail	20	Gymnastics	10	18	43	Voluntary
Katie	48	Hockey	27	47	41	Voluntary
Cassie	26	Canoe Slalom	17	26	45	Voluntary
Kath	32	Golf	13	26	42	Forced
Iona	41	Football	12	24	41	Forced
Isabel	31	Rugby	13	30	45	Voluntary

NOTE: All participants' names have been changed for confidentiality reasons.

Following the recommendations of Whitson (1976, cited in Koukouris, 1991a) cases that appeared to be unusual or of particular interest were included in the sample and were studied carefully. Participants ranged in age from 20 to 48 (mean

= 32.6, SD = 7.5) and had between 9 and 28 years of competitive experience (mean = 14.7, SD = 4.7). The average age of retirement was 27.1 (SD = 7.0). The AIMS (Brewer and Cornelius, 2001) scores for the high athletic identity group ranged from 41 to 46 (mean = 43.07, SD = 1.64). In comparison, the AIMS (Brewer and Cornelius, 2001) scores for the low athletic identity group ranged from 20 to 34 (mean = 28.80, SD = 4.46).

5.1.2 Instrument

A semi-structured interview was used to facilitate comparisons across the participants. In semi-structured interviews an interview guide is developed around a list of topics without fixed ordering of questions and is used to jog the memory of the interviewer about certain issues or concerns (Minichiello *et al.*, 1990). Structured interview guides have been criticised for their rigidity and failure to capture accurately participants' experiences (Lally, 2007). The content of the interview was therefore focused on the issues central to the research question, with the type of questioning allowing for greater flexibility than through the use of survey-style interviews.

The interview guide (Appendix E) was initially developed using the extant sport retirement research and knowledge of the pertinent issues for athletic retirement gained through the first study. Prior to commencing the main study, a pilot interview was conducted with an athlete who was categorised as having 'medium athletic identity' from Study One and therefore did not fit the criteria for the current study. After this interview minor adjustments were made to a number of the questions to ensure that the wording was non-leading and avoiding any jargon

which could lead to misunderstanding, following the guidelines of Smith (1997) and Kvale (1996).

The interview began with a topical life history approach, asking the participants to tell the story of their career in sport, from first involvement in their sport through to their present situation (Denzin, 1978). This ‘grand tour’ type question was used to relax participants and allow them to talk freely about their experiences, before looking in depth at more sensitive topics. This approach has been used by a number of researchers in work in this area (see for example: Kerr and Dacyshyn, 2000; Lally and Kerr, 2005; Stephan, Bilard, Ninot, and Delignieres, 2003).

Following this, subsequent questions focused on the respondent’s level of investment in their sport (“how important was hockey to you at that time?”), the impact of their sport career on other aspects of their life (“did your involvement in swimming affect your social life at the time?”), and progress made within careers outside of sport (“tell me what else was going on in your life as well as diving?”). Questions also examined the factors that led to their decision to retire (“tell me more about the period leading up to you making the decision to retire?”), and their experiences directly after retiring (“tell me how you felt directly after you finished playing netball?”). The final set of topics examined the adjustment of the athletes in various aspects of their lives, including social (“did your friendships change once you had retired?”), occupational (“how did your work life change after you retired from tennis?”), and physical (“what physical adjustments did you have to make when you retired?”). Throughout the interview, appropriate probes were utilised to “thicken” responses and clarify meaning (Patton, 1990).

The final section of questions sought to examine the support that the athletes received upon their retirement. Questions looked at informal social support networks (“did you have anyone you could speak to about your retirement?”) and formal support from sports governing bodies (“were you offered any support by Netball Scotland?”). At the end, respondents were offered the opportunity to expand further upon any of the topics discussed within the interview, or any issues they felt had not been covered within the discussion (“is there anything else you would like to tell me about your career or your retirement?”).

5.1.3 Procedure

Institutional ethical approval for the study was granted before commencement of the study and prior to their interview participants were given a consent form (Appendix F) to read and sign if they wished to continue. The consent form stated that the confidentiality of all participants would be protected and that they could stop the interview and request removal of their data from the study at any time, without having to provide a reason.

For each of the participants a convenient and suitable time and location was arranged. All except one of the interviews were conducted face-to-face, in a quiet location with only the participant and the researcher present. One interview was conducted over the telephone as the respondent was currently residing in another country. However, a number of studies have shown that interview responses do not vary significantly between telephone and face-to-face interviews (see for example: Bermack, 1989; Herzog and Rodgers, 1988). Two of the participants, twin sisters involved in the same sport, were interviewed together. Some distance was travelled to conduct this interview and it was not possible to interview them

separately due to time limitations. However their experiences appeared to be fairly similar and intertwined; therefore good quality data could still be collected within this format.

Before the start of the interview the guidelines from the consent form were reiterated. After this, with the participants' permission, a digital voice recorder was turned on before commencing the interview. The interviews ranged from 30 to 75 minutes (average length 49 minutes). The range in time can be attributable to two factors. Firstly, there was variety in the conversation styles of the athletes, with some being faster, others slower and more thoughtful. Secondly, some of the respondents had a greater number of important experiences to discuss than others. At the end of the interview, the digital voice recorder was turned off and a short debrief provided to ensure that the participants left the interview in a mental state similar to that of entry. This has been highlighted by Bogdan and Biklen (1982) as particularly important during interviews containing topics which may be the cause of distress to participants.

5.1.4 Qualitative Analysis

Data analysis drew on recommendations for coding and categorising data (Patton, 1990; Strauss and Corbin, 1990) and frameworks for using a case study approach to analyse data (Eisenhardt, 2002; Stake, 2000). All of the interviews were transcribed verbatim as soon as possible after they had taken place, yielding 193 pages of single-spaced text. After this the author listened to each interview recording while reading the transcript, with the objective being to become familiar with each case before making generalisations across the group (Miles and Huberman, 1994).

The data were systematically explored for content and meaning. The process was inductive, meaning that the categories came from the data rather than being pre-determined prior to analysis (Patton, 1990). During the first stage of coding, the data were broken down into “meaning units”. These are described by Strauss and Corbin (1990) as a statement or group of statements that describe a particular point or idea. Within each meaning unit the key points were highlighted and codes were developed, a process also described as ‘in vivo’ coding (Strauss, 1987). For example, this was how the following paragraph was broken down:

“Well I was upset at first [1], and then I was kind of like at a loss [2], because I didn’t know what to do with myself when I gave up, you just naturally went into the gym, so it was like what do I do now. It was so strange as well, it was weird [3]”.

CODES: [1] was upset at first, [2] was at a loss, [3] felt strange and weird.

Each interview was transcribed and coded before proceeding to the next one. However the construction of codes was a continually evolving process. As the study progressed and the author’s knowledge developed, new and old data were compared and codes were adjusted or collapsed as necessary. Every time the code list was modified, previously coded transcripts were re-visited and altered accordingly.

The second stage of analysis involved grouping these codes into themes, by determining what each code meant and what it represented. For example, the code “was at a loss” was placed in the theme “difficulty and distress”. Working through the data for a third time, these themes were then placed into a number of general dimensions, which became the main topics for discussion. For example, the theme

“difficulty and distress” was placed into the general dimension “emotional reaction to retirement”. In order to ensure reliability of the coding process, the author check-coded the transcripts, a process recommended by Miles and Huberman (1994). A couple of days after the coding procedure, the author re-coded blank copies of the transcripts. Comparisons with the original coded transcripts demonstrated code-recode reliabilities of 87 percent.

Once the data coding process was complete, the author worked through each transcript once more, this time noting items of significance and interest in terms of athletic identity and the retirement transition. This process was used to assist in determining content for the individual case studies, which were written by the author. The case studies have four main sections. After providing an overview of their career, athletic identity and factors leading to development of identity are examined, followed by the circumstances leading to their retirement. The third section examined the quality of their adaptation to retirement across a number of areas, whilst the fourth section looks at their post-career involvement in sport. Quotations were added throughout the case studies to support the interpretations being developed and provide what is described by Geertz (1973) as “thick description”.

Lincoln and Guba (1985) advocate that credibility should be established in qualitative research to establish what is commonly known as ‘internal validity’.

They suggest that:

The member check, whereby data, analytical categories, interpretations, and conclusions are tested with member of those stakeholding groups from whom the data were originally collected, is the most crucial technique for establishing credibility (1985, p314).

Therefore participants were sent a copy of their own case study, to ensure that they felt it accurately portrayed their experiences and that they agreed with the interpretations made. They were later contacted to discuss their perceptions of the accuracy of the case study and all participants responded favourably.

A 'collective' case study approach was undertaken. Stake (2000) uses the term collective case study to describe the use of "a number of cases in order to investigate a phenomenon, population, or general condition" (p437). He continues by suggesting that individual cases are chosen because it is believed that understanding them will lead to a general understanding of a particular phenomenon. Therefore, by examining the retirement experiences of participants with differing levels of athletic identity, it is anticipated that a broader understanding of the role of athletic identity on this transition will be acquired. The final stage of the data analysis involved establishing cross-case patterns, following the guidelines of Eisenhardt (2002). Categories have been selected based on the results of the content analysis and the research questions. Specifically, factors leading to identity development, aspects of the retirement process, reactions to retirement, and post-career involvement in sport have been compared between the two athletic identity groups.

5.2 Results

The data analysis yielded a total of 321 codes (a full list of codes can be found in Appendix G). These were grouped into 39 themes which in turn produced nine general dimensions. Table 19 below provides an overview of these general dimensions and the constituent themes within these.

Table 19: Overview of general dimensions and the constituent themes within these

General Dimension	Constituent Themes
Development of an exclusive identity	The importance of sport Prioritised over work and education Restricted social life Impact on personal life Developed identity at a young age
Development of a balanced identity	Maintaining a balance Having a career Prioritising education Keeping a social life
Pushed into retirement	Injury Lost desire Poor performance and selection issues Financial problems Problems with coach and/or system Anti-push
Pulled towards retirement	Change of priorities towards career and/or education Focus on personal and social lives Time to stop Anti-pull
Emotional reaction to retirement	Difficulty and distress Disappointment and regret Doubts about decision Positive emotions
Impact of retirement on social life	Maintained contact with friends in sport Cut off from sport Expansion of social circle
Development of career after retirement	Progression within career Continuation Easy transition to new job Problems with transition
Physical reaction to retirement	Continued to train Stopped training Injury legacy Physical changes
Post-retirement involvement in sport	Not currently involved Involvement as a coach Involved in organisational aspects Recreational involvement Involvement through work

Case study excerpts and direct quotations have been used to develop and illustrate the main points for each of the general dimensions. Full case studies for all participants can be found in Appendices H (low AI) and I (high AI). The final part

of this results section presents the athletes' responses on the questions regarding social support and support from governing bodies.

5.2.1 Development of an Exclusive Identity

The first two general dimensions provide a context for the rest of the study, illustrating the ways in which the participants developed their identities as athletes and highlighting some of the differences between those who developed an exclusive identity and those who did not. The first of these, 'the development of an exclusive identity', provides an illustration of the aspects that led to some of the athletes identifying strongly and exclusively with the sport role.

The importance of sport

This was the most dominant theme within 'development of an exclusive identity'. Athletes talked about how important their sport was to them and in particular how it dominated other aspects of their lives. Beth described swimming as being the primary goal in her life:

If you are swimming and competing at that level swimming has to be the priority, you cannot do it half heartedly because you won't be able to compete at a high level, so for me it was the be all and end all.

Several of the athletes talked about the belief that they had to commit everything in order to achieve success within their sport. Katie described what hockey meant to her:

I would have to say that it was more important than anything else to me, which is perhaps a sad reflection for the rest of my life. I think it had to have been for me to achieve what I managed to achieve ... for me to

get as far as I did it involved me really just putting everything into it.

The athletes also talked about making choices in life based on sporting demands. Athletes who have an exclusively strong commitment to the athletic role, perceiving self-worth from achievement in that arena, will do almost anything they can to continue that lifestyle: “you will do absolutely anything, you know, whatever it takes you are prepared to do it”. (Catherine). Megan described gymnastics as totally and utterly overruling the rest of her life, while for Cassie canoeing was the most important thing to her.

Prioritised over work and education

Participants who developed a strong and exclusive athletic identity also talked about prioritising sport over their career and over their education. Alice initially took up curling as a hobby that she could do at weekends. When curling became an Olympic medal sport her goals and ambitions changed. She gave up her career and took up a job in a bank which enabled her to give more time to her curling. Her work became organised around her sporting commitments. Curling became her major focus and was prioritised over other aspects of her life.

In their study of athletic retirement in Romania, Grigore and Burchel (1999) discovered that athletes found it difficult to excel both academically and in sport, and therefore often found themselves making a choice between these areas. Research has also suggested a relationship between higher levels of athletic identity and an increased likelihood of devaluing or ignoring the importance of education (Nelson, 1983). Within the current study, athletes with high athletic identity were more likely to report a negative effect on their education. Julia

described making the choice about her subject of study based on what would enable her to pursue success in the pool:

One half of me was, right am I going to go and do medicine, or am I going to go and do swimming and university, and that was quite a difficult choice, because ever since I was quite wee I was like I want to be a doctor ... but I guess ultimately I didn't want to do it enough and I chose the swimming option with a degree attached that I quite liked.

Cassie was another athlete who made major life choices based on what she felt was necessary to achieve in sport. For Cassie, sport was her career. She chose her university based on where she needed to train and then when turning full time did not give any consideration to other options available to her. Reflecting on her career, Megan realised the impact that gymnastics had had on her education and questioned the healthiness of this lifestyle: “now I've got children I think to myself, would I want that for my children? I don't know if it's a good balance”. Megan was not the only athlete to allow her sport to influence her education. Jenny made the decision to put her education on hold while she pursued success in athletics: “it was a case of, well you can always go back and study, but this is your window to do athletics, you can't come back to it later”.

Restricted social life

The literature suggests that often athletes are unable to build up some of the support networks that most people take for granted, due to the restrictions of their lifestyle (Hadfield, 2003a; Scanlan, Ravizza, and Stein, 1989). Athletes with an exclusive identification with the athletic role talked about the impact on their social life and friendships. Isabel could be single-minded about her sport: “I'm a

very, very focused person, sometimes too much so". Rugby therefore had a big impact on what was happening in the rest of her life. Due to its all-consuming nature, Isabel felt that her social life was also affected by her participation:

I think I sacrificed some friendships actually, there were some friends that I was in college with, and I won't get time, or I didn't make time to catch up with them, for probably about the seven years that I was playing rugby seriously, and as a result of that they are acquaintances ... but they are not friends, they are not people that I could call upon.

For Cassie and Annabel, moves made for their sport had an impact on their social circle. Annabel chose to move away from her primary school friends to attend a different school for gymnastics, meaning that her main social group was in her sport. She found that even her social circle within the sport became reduced, when many of her peers retired at around 14 or 15 and she chose to continue. The majority of Cassie's friends were also involved in her sport. She found it hard to maintain contact with school friends because of her move to Nottingham to train full time.

All of the friends that Megan had were within her sport and she struggled to develop a social circle at school as she was rarely able to attend social events. As her friends reached adolescence, Megan started to feel left out.

My friends were getting to that age where they couldn't fully understand and respect what I was doing ... they were starting to think, oh for god's sake she's not coming out again, you know, you could see the rolls of the eyes and then I just stopped getting invited which really hurt.

Impact on personal life

Athletes also talked about the impact of their sport on their personal life. Some of the athletes suggested that they put their personal life on hold, while others expressed concern over the impact their participation had on their family. For four years, Julia swam full time and viewed her swimming as her career, therefore it is not surprising that her involvement had an impact on the life of those people surrounding her, including her partner and her parents.

My boyfriend at the time, now husband, it was quite a lot for him as well to put up with and swimming turned into being a very big part of his life ... so from that side of things there were a lot of people that got dragged along.

While Rebecca believed that her involvement in hockey played a part in her divorce, Beth felt she had put her personal life on hold:

There have been times when I could potentially have had a relationship, but when I was swimming ... but because it's so intense and because at that time I was working full time as well, the time that you have to devote to boyfriends or whatever is very limited.

Developed identity at a young age

In early specialisation sports, such as gymnastics and swimming, athletes are encouraged to commit to an intensive training programme from a young age. These athletes are likely to develop a strong identity with the athletic role, potentially without taking time to explore alternative identities first (Kerr and Dacyshyn, 2000). Annabel, Megan, Emily, Gail and Julia all discussed the commitment they made to their sport as a young child, developing a lifestyle very

different to that of their school peer group. As Annabel described: “I have done it since I was like, well all my life really, so it is like a major thing for me, it was my whole childhood”.

5.2.2 Development of a Balanced Identity

This second identity theme illustrates some of the differences for the athletes in the study whose identity was more balanced.

Maintaining a balance

This was the most prominent theme within ‘development of a balanced identity’. Melanie suggested that although golf was an important part of her life, she was never willing to focus on it to the extent that it became only thing. “I suppose I wanted more of a mix in my life, as much as it was very important”. Throughout her golf career she was also involved in other sports, including hockey, at a recreational level. Sport never seemed to represent a career to her; it was something she did alongside the rest of her life.

I also played other sports in that time, all the way through I played hockey in the winter, which for me was healthy, I wasn’t one of these people who was single-minded.

Gillian deferred entry to university to spend a year training full time in her sport. But the seriousness and focus of full time training did not suit her: “It didn’t work for me at all, just swimming, I needed my brain ... I needed something else really”. Donna also talked about the importance of keeping things balanced: “I had friends outside athletics, I had interests outside ... some people can get totally taken up with it and I don’t feel it was ever like that”.

Having a career

The athletes who developed a more balanced identity during their sport career highlighted the importance of other aspects of their lives. The work domain was often prioritised. Nancy did make some sacrifices in other areas of her life for her hockey career and it demanded a lot of commitment from her. However the fact that she was able to balance her law career with her sport meant that she maintained a very prominent identity outside of her sport and a strong social circle that went alongside this. Nancy's employers were very supportive of her career and it was their willingness to provide her with job flexibility that enabled her to progress her career in law in parallel with her career in hockey.

I didn't get to an age when I retired that I was thinking, right I'm actually five or six years behind where I actually should be. I mean I went up through all my promotions and all the rest of it as I would have done, and I made partner in 2000 which was bang on schedule.

Several other athletes had full time careers that ran alongside their sport. Linda talked about the resultant balancing act: "just really having to work with the demands of having a full time job and also playing ... all of the training had to happen after hours". Rachel had always had ambitions of a career in the media and knew that she needed to have a fulfilling career away from sport:

I was never going to make any money out of athletics, and I would have been so unhappy if I hadn't had a successful career, and I think I always knew that as well. Because you can't be an athlete forever, you are working a long time.

Prioritising education

Greendorfer and Blinde (1986) found that the importance of sport and perception of ability declined substantially during the college years and that concurrent with this decline, there was an increase in importance of school work and social life. Several of the athletes highlighted the importance that they placed upon education and discussed prioritising this aspect of their life over their sport. Although football played a big role in Lorna's life, she also placed importance on other aspects, in particular her education. Lorna always had ambitions to attend university and therefore at times felt she needed to prioritise her school work over football.

I was a bit of a geek when I was at school. I always wanted to do well ... I remember I had a test, it was maybe in second or third year, and for a subject that I didn't really want to carry on, but I still wanted to do well and would be sitting worrying about it.

Lorna's prioritisation of education was echoed by Suzanne, whose focus shifted when she went away to university: "when I started at university I didn't have so much of a focus on athletics. I was always brought up to get your education, focus on your studies". Gillian had tried focusing simply on swimming for a year, deferring university entry, and found that this did not suit her. She subsequently started university and continued her training alongside this, and found that this more balanced lifestyle actually had a positive impact on her swimming as well.

Keeping a social life

Athletes with a more balanced identity maintained a diverse social circle during their career in sport. Naomi's social circle was quite mixed, with more friends

outside of her sport than within. She was able to maintain contact with her social circle throughout her lacrosse career and received a lot of social support from all of her friends:

It was a bit difficult at times to find the time to see friends outside the sport, but they were great and supported me through it, understood that I had to go home early or couldn't come out certain nights.

Tess highlighted the importance of having different groups of friends: "I didn't kind of isolate myself just to trampolining, because obviously you have to go to school, you have to have other friends". Ellie found she missed many events due to her hockey commitments. Despite this, she managed to maintain friends outside of hockey, who accepted the restrictions. Nancy lived in one city and travelled 150 miles every weekend to play hockey for a national league team. She had a good career developing in a law firm and was not willing to sacrifice this for her hockey. She also had two sets of friends, based in the two locations. During the week, she was able to maintain friendships built through her work.

5.2.3 Pulled into Retirement

This is the first of two dimensions that represent the factors that led to the participants' decision to retire. Models exist which offer a framework for understanding the retirement decision process for the general population. For example, Shultz, Morton and Weckerle (1998) examined the decision to take early retirement through the examination of what they described as 'push' and 'pull' factors. They describe push factors as considerations which induce someone to make the decision to retire, such as lack of enjoyment of the job or poor health. In

contrast, pull factors are generally more positive factors, such as the desire to pursue alternative activities or spend more time with family.

This framework has been successfully applied to the process of athletic retirement (Fernandez, Stephan, and Fouquereau, 2006) and provides a useful method of describing the process of decision-making for the athletes in the current study. Using this framework, the third general dimension, 'pushed into retirement' represents the reasons for retirement that were identified as 'push factors', while the fourth, 'pulled towards retirement' represents the 'pull factors'.

Alfermann (2000) highlighted that athletic career termination is rarely a single cause decision. Instead it is the combination of a variety of factors both inside and outside the sport domain. This was supported in the current study, with most of the athletes discussing a number of factors which led them to their retirement decision. In many cases, participants had both a negative factor pushing them towards retirement, alongside a positive element pulling them towards life after sport.

Injury

Injury was the most prominent theme within 'pushed into retirement'. For some athletes, their career was ended by one major injury, whereas for others it was the build up of smaller problems that led to their finish. Jenny's athletics career was shaped by problems with her Achilles tendons which lasted for over 10 years. They greatly inhibited her performance and limited the level of success her experienced in her career. Jenny achieved a fourth place finish in the

Commonwealth Games, but had underperformed in the event due to a flare up in her injury.

Finally getting a diagnosis for her Achilles problems, Jenny was able to experience what it was like to be pain free and was looking forward to being able to compete to her full ability in the events in the forthcoming season. However, she was finding training much harder than it should have been and was eventually diagnosed with an under-active thyroid. Her final season caused Jenny a lot of distress.

That season was horrendous in that every competition that I tried to go into I ended up in tears, because I just couldn't do what I wanted to do, and I just kind of remember thinking it's not worth this anymore, it's not worth being in tears every weekend.

Naomi and Suzanne both had ongoing injury problems which, although not career-ending, pushed them towards deciding to retire.

I had surgery on one, got over that, then had problems with the other one, and it was just like I can nurse this through but I needed to stop after that, everything was sort of hurting. (Naomi)

However, both also talked about the desire to move on to life after sport. For Naomi, she was looking forward to participating in alternative activities and planned to finish after the next major event within the competition cycle. For Suzanne it was the pull of her personal life, after her marriage the year before:

I think when I got to early 30s, I had got married at 29 and I felt like my career had ran its course, so to speak. I felt that I was going into a new part of my life.

Rachel also described both a push and a pull factor in her retirement decision. A knee injury which was never properly diagnosed reduced her ability to perform at an appropriate level. Over a two year period, struggling with her injury, Rachel started to think about the end of her athletics career. Opportunities were arising for her to develop her career and she realised that it was time to take her life in a different direction. Lavalley and Andersen (2000) suggest that planning for a career prior to retirement has been found to be one of the most effective transition-related coping strategies. In this case, Rachel had a career which was able to provide her with as much excitement and challenge as athletics had.

Several of the participants retired due to career-ending injuries. In these cases, there was no pull factor involved with all being forced to retire before they had reached their goals. Annabel initially refused to believe that her career was finished. After going through an operation on her foot she tried to continue in gymnastics, but over time it was evident that it was not getting any better and she was forced to make the decision to stop. Iona and Olivia both had similar experiences, playing through the pain caused by injury for several months before realising that they were never going to be able to return to previous levels of play.

Lost desire

A number of participants suggested that a major factor in their retirement was losing the desire to continue playing towards the end of their career. For a three year period, Donna found that her athletics career became quite stagnated, causing a lot of frustration. Through this period Donna also suffered from a number of injuries and periods of illness, and these combined with problems she was

experiencing with her coaching situation pushed her towards thinking about retirement.

In that last year I wasn't that happy and I was kind of on the verge of retiring, I sort of felt like I don't want to be here, I think that ultimately made me think I shouldn't be doing this anymore.

For Melanie and Nancy, changes within their personal lives reduced their desire to focus on sporting success. For both of these athletes, the alternative options started to become more attractive. Melanie was also affected by poor performances in major tournaments, while Nancy started to begrudge the 150 mile commute that she was making in order to play hockey every weekend.

Poor performance and selection issues

Another prominent theme was poor performance. Athletes talked about finding that they were no longer able to be competitive at the top level and also about poor performances leading to non-selection for major target events. Megan's competitive involvement in gymnastics began at age eight and from that age through to her retirement she was involved in Scottish national squads. The major disappointment within Megan's career was missing out on selection for the Commonwealth Games. Everything in Megan's gymnastics career had been building towards this event. She never managed to recover psychologically from missing out on selection. She knew that the Olympics were not within her reach and another four year competition cycle to the next Commonwealth Games was not a viable option for her.

Megan never officially stood up and announced that she retired. She simply drifted away from the sport: “I don’t think I ever made a true decision and that’s why I was never recognised officially as well because I never stood up and said”. For a while she attended some training sessions as a coach, but was struggling to handle being in the gym but no longer classed as a gymnast. After a while, she decided that the time was not right and that she still had more to give. She started training again, working up to the District Championships. In that event she suffered an injury to her ankle, which put a final end to her gymnastics career.

I came back for two pieces and I did a vault and I dislocated my ankle. And that was the last time I ever did gymnastics ... quite a horrible way to finish.

Another athlete from the high athletic identity group was also pushed into retirement due to non-selection. After one particularly tough winter training season Cassie failed to make the British team in the summer and this led her to the decision to stop. Cassie had started to explore alternatives to canoe slalom before her actual retirement, with the realisation that there needed to be something in her life after sport: “you still have so many years of life left to live and you have to start doing something”. In comparison to Megan, Cassie had explored some of the alternatives to canoeing and therefore was more prepared for the transition.

Iona retired after the ongoing impact of her knee injury meant that she was no longer able to perform at the level she wanted to. She felt that she was letting down her team-mates: “I wasn’t contributing enough to the team as well, so therefore I was as good as a man short in my opinion, so I just made that decision just to leave”. She did not have the difficulties that might have been expected

when she finished, but this can be explained by her immediate transition into coaching, maintaining her identity and involvement in sport.

Problems with coach and/or system

Werthner and Orlick (1986) highlighted problems with team selection and the organisation of sport as an important factor in decisions to retire, while research by Kerr & Dacyshyn (2000) and Lavallee & Robinson (2007) has revealed the importance of the coach-athlete relationship on the retirement transition. A number of athletes in this study also identified these as push factors.

After moving to Australia to live with her fiancée, Violet continued to train as she worked towards her ultimate target of reaching the Olympic Games. Although she attained the qualification standard for the British trials in an Australian competition, she could not afford to return for them and therefore did not make the Olympic team. When Violet returned to Britain she returned to training with her former coach. Things at her old club were different. While Violet had been away her peer group had retired and new divers were coming up through the ranks.

It just didn't feel right. I wouldn't say they weren't welcoming, but I just felt they were looking at me and saying well are you coming back to dive or are you just coming back to see who is around.

In diving terms she felt she was quite old. Her coach's attention had moved on to younger divers and she struggled to perform dives that she had previously been able to do. She felt as though the sport had moved on and left her behind while she had been away. With no clear goals or drive, Violet decided that she no longer had the desire to be involved in the sport.

Gillian and Rebecca also highlighted problematic relationships with their coach as the major reason for their retirement. Rebecca captained a Great Britain team at the Olympics that quite badly underperformed and she received the majority of the coach's negativity. The pressures experienced during the event led Rebecca to decide that she no longer had the desire to play international hockey:

The head coach was not a pleasant person at all so that kind of spoilt it big time. And I think the whole pressure of the situation was not coped well with ... the management gave us a lot of problems.

Gillian suffered from problems with her weight and disordered eating, which were exacerbated by the attitude of her coach:

My coach would always comment on it and it ended up that I was completely paranoid about it and had major issues with that and that probably contributed to my decline in performance.

She got caught up in a cycle of feeling negative about her swimming performances and losing self-confidence. One final poor performance, coupled with a negative reaction from her coach, was the final straw for Gillian:

I swam terribly, but I mean I was just feeling awful, you know, and I swam terribly and he said that basically I was an embarrassment and then that was it, I was in tears, and you know I just cut it off like that which was probably the worst thing that I could have done, but he didn't try and find out why I had swum badly or anything.

Penelope and Alice were both pushed towards retirement by dissatisfaction with the system in operation within their sport. A squad selection system put into place for the Olympics was thought to be detrimental for the team, not giving them the

best chance to repeat their previous success. Alice, a single mother of two, also felt a pull factor in the shape of the needs of her family. Penelope, a member of the same team, lost the desire to continue in the sport once her team mate had decided to finish. She wanted to retire when she still had some good memories of the sport.

Financial problems

A number of participants suggested that financial problems had a major influence on their decision to call time on their career. Kath described the constant worry over whether she had enough money for the next competition, for travel and accommodation, and the pressure to make the cut in tournaments in order to earn enough money.

In the European Tour the money wasn't overly great either at the time and it dropped pretty quickly as well if you were outwith certain places. And you were struggling to make your costs a lot of the time which is not the ideal life you want to be leading.

In her last year as a professional, these financial pressures, along with a series of poor performances, led Kath to lose her passion for the game and start to think about other aspects of her life.

Just thinking do I really want to be doing this now, got no money, you get to a certain age when you start to think, I've got no house, you know, other things, priorities, start coming into your life, that you don't have when you are 20 years old, 25 or whatever.

Catherine and Donna also highlighted the problems they experienced financially as one of the factors leading to their retirement. Donna's drop in performance had

led to her losing her lottery funding and in her last year of competition she was living off her savings and a small income from part-time work.

I was very much aware of the fact that I was spending all my savings and that I couldn't go on like that forever ... you were just kind of aware of it, thinking what is the point of this, why am I doing it, and then as well you are having more time away from getting a career, and you know eventually you are going to have to do something about it.

Similarly, Catherine was not receiving funding during the latter stages of her career and depending on her savings and on support from her family and partner. Despite this, she placed so much importance on athletic success that she was willing to spend whatever was required to try to achieve this:

Traipsing round trying to find good competitions, and if that meant that I would have to go abroad then I was prepared to pay it, I wouldn't think twice about it, and if that was going on credit cards then so be it.

Anti-push

Work by Mullet and colleagues expanded the framework developed by Shultz *et al.* (1998), suggesting the addition of two further categories (Mullet, Dej, Lemaire, Raiff, and Barthorpe, 2000). One of these was 'anti-push' factors, which they described as positive elements of a person's current situation which might lead them to decide not to make the change. A couple of anti-push factors arose from this study. Cassie was pushed towards retirement by her non-selection, but it took her a number of years to decide to finish because of the difficulty of moving outside her comfort zone. She wrestled with the idea of retiring at the end of each

season for several years. She had lost the desire to train at a high level and no longer had the same ambitions and goals.

It was like easy for me to keep canoeing, in your nice little safe bubble, it was just natural ... you are coming out of your nice safe environment where you know everyone and you know everything, I have been in that sort of bubble for so long and didn't do much with people outside canoeing and that was the hardest thing to have to overcome I think.

Julia could not decide upon the right time to retire. She talked about her desire to stop on a high, when her memories of her swimming career and her performances were still positive: "it was important for me to finish feeling good about my swimming. I know that that is not always possible, but I swam really badly in March and thought well, just keep going till the summer". Although Annabel knew deep down that her main chance for success had been taken away by her injury, she still could not face making the decision to retire. She held on, continuing to train, hoping that her foot might improve: "I wanted to finish on a high but then, I held on, I had an operation on my foot and I held on to see if it would be better but I held on for a year and it still wasn't any better".

5.2.4 Pulled Towards Retirement

Change of priorities towards career and/or education

Several of the athletes discussed the increasing importance of other aspects of their lives. Petitpas and colleagues suggest that "the choice to quit usually comes when the top athlete decides that the expected benefits of pursuing some other life activity outweigh the advantages of continued sporting involvement" (Petitpas, Champagne, Chartrand, Danish, and Murphy, 1997, p80). Changes were taking

place in Ellie's life. A promotion at work meant that her level of responsibility increased, making things more difficult to balance from a time management perspective. Ellie made the decision that she was going to retire after the 2004 Olympic Games. When the team failed to qualify, this simply brought her decision forward slightly.

It was a fairly easy cut off in terms of the next cycle, there wasn't much in the next year, it was the following year. So it was quite a good cut off point.

Linda was in a similar situation from a work perspective and decided that committing four more years to take her up to the next major championship was no longer an option. Both she and Ellie felt that they had achieved the goals they had for their sporting career, which was an additional pull factor that assisted their decision. Additionally, both of these athletes had a push factor which influenced their decision. Prior injuries had led them to question whether they wanted to continue participating at an elite level, with the physical repercussions that this could bring.

For Isabel, it was also the development of an alternative career that led to her retirement decision. While Linda and Ellie both had a lower level of identification with the athlete role, Isabel's level of identification during her career was strong and exclusive. However, towards the end of her rugby career she left the marketing company she worked for and set up in business with her brother. As the business picked up, Isabel was required to invest more of her time and started to derive more self-esteem and confidence from this arena. With the realisation that she would not be able to continue playing rugby at an elite level forever, she made the decision to retire and switch her attention to making her business a success.

When Lorna moved away to go to university, this was to mark the end of her involvement in elite level football. Lorna's priorities were changing and she placed her university education and the friendships she was developing at university higher than playing elite level football.

Time to stop

Once athletes had reached their goals, or perceived that they had done as much as they were ever going to be able to do, their attentions started to turn to what would come next. On their way home from the Commonwealth Games, Emily and Gail made the decision to end their careers in gymnastics. Emily described what was going through her mind.

Normally after a big competition like that you get such motivation, you want to get back into the gym, there are things you want to learn. But this time it was the first time in my life I didn't feel like that, I didn't know what I was working for next.

Gail also highlighted a physical reason to their retirement. They had been at the elite level of the sport for quite a number of years and were feeling the consequences of that: "our bodies had just taken so much pounding, from such a young age, that we used to get up in the morning and your body would ache".

Several of the athletes talked about the feeling that it was the right time for them to retire. Naomi felt that she had achieved everything that she felt she could within lacrosse and therefore the decision to retire was relatively easy. Julia and Beth both started their new careers before actually retiring from their sport. Whilst initially balancing their career with their swimming, both women reached the

point where they felt that the time had come for them to withdraw. For Beth, she could feel the pressure of younger athletes coming up through the system. She struggled to make the team for her final Paralympics and knew that she could not maintain this level. She wanted to withdraw from the sport before the decision was made for her. For Julia, the main factor was the realisation that she had already achieved the best she felt she could:

This is a good time to stop, there is nothing else on the horizon, there was no point in keeping going another four years to the next Commonwealth Games because realistically I knew that probably, finishing fourth and making the final was probably my ultimate, and actually winning a medal was just a stretch too far, so going on for the sake of it wouldn't have been worth it.

Focus on personal and social lives

For some athletes, it was the draw of their family and social lives that led to them making the decision to retire. Nancy met her husband in 1999, but for the first three years of their relationship they rarely saw each other. However, slowly this aspect of her life started to take a higher priority. She started to begrudge the travelling and the impact that was having on the rest of her life.

I think I was thinking about what I could be doing if I wasn't getting in the car ... we were a good team, successful team, half the games in the season I wouldn't actually touch the ball, and that had been the case all the way through, this wasn't something new, but it meant that you started to think can I not just play the really good games ... my love affair with actually playing for that team was starting to wane, maybe partly because I had been doing it for so long.

She felt that she was starting to have to make choices between hockey and the rest of her life and hockey was no longer coming out on top. Additionally, the social

side of the sport was changing for Nancy. The majority of her peer group had retired and she no longer felt the same degree of camaraderie and connection with the other players in the national team.

Research has suggested that in the time period from adolescence to adulthood, conflicting lifestyle alternatives begin to play an increasingly important role in the lives of young female athletes, having an impact on both their performance and their motivation (Bussmann and Alfermann, 1994; Johns, Lindner, and Wolko, 1990). Both Tess and Lorna talked about the pressures of adolescence on their sport and the feeling that they were missing out on aspects of life enjoyed by their peers:

That really put quite a lot of pressure on, going back into school on a Monday or a Tuesday or whenever, and they were all talking about what was going on at the weekend and would be like, oh you wouldn't know what we are talking about because you weren't here.
(Tess)

Anti-pull

Mullet *et al.* (2000) defined anti-pull factors as the risks perceived in the future situation. For some of the participants, it was fear about losing their identity. This was highlighted by Iona, who overcame this barrier through her continued involvement at her club as a coach. Jenny had no plans in terms of a career after athletics and felt some anxiety about what the future might bring. Gillian explained that she was scared to stop and therefore hung on to her swimming career for a lot longer than she should have. When she finally did retire, she experienced a huge transition crisis.

I forced myself to keep doing it because I felt that it was expected, because I felt there was some kind of pressure, also maybe because I was scared of stopping because it was such a big part of my life. If I had actually been honest with myself it probably wouldn't have reached that crisis point.

5.2.5 Emotional Reaction to Retirement

Difficulty and distress

A number of the athletes experienced a difficult and negative emotional transition. For almost two years before her decision to end her swimming career, Gillian felt that things went steadily downhill, both in training and in competition. Gillian developed some quite serious negative issues about her body and her weight fluctuated noticeably. She got caught up in a cycle of feeling negative about her swimming performances and losing confidence. One final poor performance, coupled with a negative reaction from her coach, led to the end of her career. Emotionally, Gillian struggled with the sudden end. She felt the loss of something that had been a major aspect of her life for a long time.

I would say I was a complete mess, I mean I was just, I would cry a lot, I just didn't know what I was thinking ... I didn't feel balanced mentally, I just felt completely lost, I didn't know what I was doing, didn't know what I wanted to do, didn't know how this had happened, how it had got to this stage, you know.

She also felt anger at the situation and at the part that her coach played in the way in which her career finished. To help her cope, she threw herself into another aspect of her identity. Immersing herself in a student lifestyle enabled her to forget about swimming.

I cut myself off completely and I went a bit off the rails in terms of I went out every night, you know, I just didn't really want to feel anything, just drinking a lot and you know my weight just shot up as is probably normal you know, because you are used to eating such a huge amount and doing all that exercise.

Although a number of years have passed since Gillian's retirement from swimming, she can still get upset when thinking about her career: "if I watch old videos you know of me swimming, I still get very emotional about it all, because I did love it so much when I swam, up until that point you know".

Megan, Annabel and Olivia were all forced to retire from their sport and had difficulties in dealing with the resultant transition. Megan could not recall much about her retirement from gymnastics, as she has blocked most of it out as a method of coping with what happened. However she did remember feeling directionless and lost, with no idea of what she was supposed to do next. Her identity was completely wrapped up within elite sport and she did not understand how she could go from this to suddenly no longer being involved in that environment. Another gymnast, Annabel, similarly described feeling lost. She found the experience of retiring upsetting and strange. Olivia was a tennis player, and retired at a similar age to Megan and Annabel. Having also developed a strong athletic identity at a relatively young age, Olivia described the depression that she felt upon her retirement, and how this impacted on everything else that she was doing at the time. The severity of her injury in the early stages meant that she had gone from being highly trained to struggling with everyday activities such as putting on socks and shoes. This physical impairment seriously impacted upon her feelings of self-worth.

Tess chose to retire so she could participate in the social life that her peers were enjoying. She described the period of time after retirement as very confusing. She missed trampolining, but at the same time thought that she wanted a different life. In order to cope with what she was feeling, Tess cut herself off from her sport and from her former social network. She blocked out all of her emotions concerning her retirement and immersed herself in her new environment.

Disappointment and regret

Several of the athletes experienced milder emotions when they retired. They described missing aspects of their previous lifestyle, as well as some feelings of regret or disappointment over goals not reached or potential not fulfilled. After her illness ended her career in athletics, Jenny felt quite low. Everything that she had worked for over a period of four years had gone. She found it difficult to watch the Commonwealth Games that summer, as she was still trying to deal with her non-participation. As the Commonwealths were being held in Britain, there were reminders everywhere.

You would go into Asda and because they were a sponsor there would be banners everywhere. If it had been in another country that wouldn't have been as bad, whereas that was quite in your face. I just remember not really watching any of it.

Jenny had to accept that she never quite fulfilled her full potential: "that's probably the one regret that I have because I would say I never really found out what I could throw pain free". Linda talked about missing the excitement and competition of international netball, while Isabel missed the adrenaline rush she felt when she played for Scotland. Iona described her decision to retire as

difficult, as she did not want to give up on her football career. She particularly missed the camaraderie of the team. Although she maintains a strong involvement as a coach, she is not able to replicate this aspect. Violet, who failed to reach the Olympic Games, expressed regret about some of the decisions that she made during her career. Rachel and Catherine both had careers cut short by injury, and talked about the disappointment they felt about not managing to fulfil their full potential. Nancy also expressed regret and disappointment about certain aspects of her career. Although she had very positive experiences playing for Scotland, she narrowly missed out on attending the Olympics for two successive Games:

You know that you are never going to be able to say ‘I was an Olympic athlete’. And that does detract whether you like it or not from everything that you have achieved, because you never quite got as high as you thought you could.

Doubts about decision

The decision to retire is not always an easy one and some of the participants described feelings of doubt about whether they had made the right choice. In some of these cases, this led to a return to competitive sport. Julia planned to retire from swimming at the end of the World Championship trials. Her job had started to demand more time from her and she realised that it was time to make a commitment to it. She was due to get married within a couple of months and her priorities were shifting towards her personal life and her new career. Julia also felt that there was nothing for her to continue swimming for. She had achieved what she felt was the best that she could.

In the initial stages Julia was standing on poolside coaching, watching those she swam with still training and believing that she could still have been part of that. Six months after her retirement she decided to return to the pool and start training again. She swam in one final race and by doing that realised that actually retirement was the right thing for her.

By doing that I realised, 'no I don't want to do this anymore'. The rest of my life is now more important and it was like not only did I not have time to do the training, or that, I just, I didn't want to ... I think I did need to do that and to do the race to actually think, 'what are you playing at, don't be so stupid, just accept it'. Got closure.

Megan's experience shared some similarities with Julia. Unable to accept that her gymnastics career was truly over, she started training again. A combination of her age and her break from elite training put her in a physically vulnerable position. She suffered an injury to her ankle in the first event she entered, which put a final end to her career. Ellie and Katie also returned to international play after their initial decision to retire. For Katie, this was a return to indoor competition, whilst for Ellie the Scottish national coach approached her and asked her whether she would re-consider her decision. However unlike Julia and Megan, both had successful returns and enjoyed their final opportunities to perform on the international stage.

Penelope made her decision to retire quite suddenly and as the new season started doubts began to creep in. She found it hard to watch matches and not be involved herself. At the time of the interview she was trying hard to develop a new concept of herself within the sport as a coach. Olivia is still struggling with the physical impact of her back injury and yet harbours some belief that she may be able to

return to play tennis sometime in the future. She is not yet willing to completely let go of her dreams.

Positive emotions

Positive reactions to retirement were also expressed by a number of the athletes. Emotions included relief, excitement, and happiness. Naomi was looking forward to getting on with other aspects of her life, and having free time to participate in other activities. She had reached a time where she felt that she had achieved everything that she felt she could within lacrosse.

It was a very easy decision, I absolutely knew. Because for me I also knew, I was never the star of the team, it took me a while to even get a place in the team, so that was as good as I was ever, ever going to achieve ... some people had a solid place in the A squad for over 10 years, whereas I just scraped in by my fingernails, so it was my Everest and it was as good as I was ever going to do.

The major emotion that Naomi experienced when she retired from lacrosse was relief, mainly because she was in pain. She did feel some regret that she could have been fitter or faster, if she had not been hampered by injury problems. Naomi also felt excitement about her future: “it was relief and also excitement, looking forward to some time off and to be getting other things, social life and stuff, back on track”. Naomi looks back upon her lacrosse career as a very positive experience with very happy memories. She fulfilled her ambitions within the sport and felt she gained some transferable skills that she has been able to use within her working life. Lorna also talked about the feelings of excitement that accompanied the end of her career. She was looking forward to the new life that

going away to university was going to bring her and felt that it was the right time to reduce her commitment to football.

Relief was an emotion expressed by several of the athletes. For some, this was due to negative experiences towards the end of the career and the feelings of relief that this was over. For example, Catherine's feelings were related to the pressure she placed upon herself: "there was a certain degree of relief of 'oh my god I can be a normal person now'", whilst Kath felt relieved that she was no longer under the same financial pressures that she had been when still playing.

For others, the feelings of relief were connected to no longer having to be involved in some of the more difficult aspects of their sport. For Rebecca, it was relief to be away from the politics of the sport, whereas for Melanie, it was the constant travel to tournaments across the country:

The first event of the year is normally through in Troon at the end of April and the weather is generally tough, and I remember seeing it being on in the paper and just being so relieved that I wasn't there.

For several of the athletes, their retirement just 'felt right' to them. It came at a time of their choosing and was often something that they had planned in advance. These athletes tended to have had fulfilling careers and were looking forward to moving on to the next stage in their lives. For Emily and Gail, it was a chance to live life as normal teenagers, whereas for Suzanne it was a chance to fully focus on her marriage and personal life.

5.2.6 Impact of Retirement on Social Life

Expansion of social circle

Retirement can be a chance for an athlete to expand their social circle and get involved in activities they had not previously been able to do. In the first couple of months after their retirement, twins Emily and Gail took the opportunity to enjoy the time and freedom that they now had: “I think because for so long we hadn’t really had much of a life, other than gymnastics, it was like right I am going to enjoy this. We went out and stuff” [Emily]. After so many years of a very strict lifestyle and specific focus, they were able to take a normal holiday and enjoy life as what Emily described as a “normal teenager”.

We had applied for university as well so we knew that was coming up. So we kind of went on holiday and just enjoyed some time without sport. We went to Alton Towers and all the things like that.

Ellie, Cassie and Jenny also talked about feelings of freedom. Cassie enjoyed the freedom and spare time that she now felt she had and was able to develop friendships outside of her sport. She enjoyed doing the day to day things that she hadn’t been able to do before, such as meeting friends after work or going shopping: “I actually have friends outside of canoeing and can socialise with people that aren’t involved”. Similarly, Ellie suggested that “it is nice to be able to go out and meet friends and do things at weekends that you couldn’t do before”. As Jenny developed her new career she started to make new non-sport friendships.

You do then become more of a normal person in the fact that it doesn’t matter if you want to go out, the regimented side of things has gone to a certain extent

because it is not like you have to be up and training the next morning every weekend, so you could do things that you wouldn't have done before.

Gymnasts Megan and Annabel slowly lost touch with the gymnastics world as they started to develop lives away from sport. At the time when she retired, Megan was still attending university. Therefore it was relatively straight forward for her to spend time with other people at university and develop friendships that she had previously not been able to put time into. Annabel started university after her retirement and began to develop a new peer group, who were far removed from her sport. In contrast, athlete Catherine maintained contact with some of her closer friends from athletics.

Maintained contact with friends in sport

For some of the participants, their social circle did not change hugely and still revolved around their sport. During her hockey career, all of Katie's friends were connected to sport. She felt that she did not have the time to make friends elsewhere. After she retired, she was able to develop some friendships through work. However, her main social circle still revolves around hockey. Her partner is still involved at international level and therefore their joint social circle is within the sport. Katie has also maintained a strong connection to hockey through her club. She is still involved in playing, as well as in an organisational capacity, therefore her social connection to the sport has barely changed.

Cassie was in a similar situation to Katie, with her brother and boyfriend both still involved in the sport. She also continued to live with other paddlers, as she had done before her retirement. For Lorna, becoming involved in university football opened up a whole new social circle within the sport, many of whom she has

stayed in close contact with since graduation. She found that being involved in some level of football helped to integrate her quicker into university life.

Rebecca has also maintained an involvement in her sport through continuing to play. Although her life after hockey became centred on her family, she still has a strong connection to the sport. She plays socially and her daughters are also becoming involved: “we are a hockey house, you know, and just constantly on the go”. Isabel felt that she needed to sustain contact with her social circle in sport, to maintain the group environment that this provided her. This was something unique that she could not get elsewhere. She also got involved in alternative activities and events, in order to develop new social networks.

Some of the participants maintained an involvement in the sport through either their work or an involvement in coaching. Penelope is coaching a junior team and has enjoyed being able to maintain some of her former friendships, within this different capacity.

I’m still seeing a lot of my curling friends at like junior weekends and things like that. It is funny because I came back after my, it was the third weekend, and it was nice because it is a wee coaching group now instead of like competing against these people.

However Penelope has not limited herself solely to her friendships in sport. During her curling career she felt that she had two sets of friends and referred to those outside of curling as her “summer friends”. She is planning to be able to see more of these friends throughout the year now that she has finished. Iona’s social life was very much still wrapped up in football and in her team after retirement, due to her transition into coaching. She did find some difficulties arose as a result

of her change of role: “it’s hard because as a player you were their best pal and then when you start coaching you are suddenly this other person”.

Alice explained that she had no time to develop a different social circle, due to the demands of their family. Her social life had always centred on her children and this did not change when she retired. She maintained contact with her social circle from curling, helped to do so by working within the sport.

Cut off from sport

Unlike the previous theme, some of the athletes chose to cut themselves off from their sport circle completely when they retired. Gillian did not want anything to do with her sport after retirement.

I vowed that I would never go near a swimming pool ever again. And it took me probably over a year to go back to a swimming pool, the first swim I had after all of that was probably about 14 months after I stopped.

Initially she had no contact with her coach, or with any of the other swimmers that she previously been so close to. Over time, she has regained some of the friendships she had with other swimmers, but for that first year she disconnected herself completely from her former social network. Rather than facing the feelings and emotions she was experiencing, Gillian found it easier to immerse herself in a different environment with people who had no connection to her life as an athlete.

I found it hard to speak about it then, easier just to forget about it, block it out. That’s I suppose why I didn’t want to be anywhere near a swimming pool, why I didn’t want to be near anyone I had swam with.

Tess had a similar reaction to the end of her trampolining career. For over a year after she finished, Tess did not have any contact with those people involved within her career: “I stopped, just stopped. Drew a line under it and I didn’t go into the sports centre for over a year”. She described this as trying to keep herself away from the sport. She kept herself busy and filled her time with other activities. “I don’t think I intentionally realised what I was doing, but I think subconsciously I was keeping myself away in case I was persuaded to come back”. Violet was another athlete who chose to walk away from her sport completely, developing a new social circle around a new activity.

Two of the athletes lost touch with their sport social circle due to their circumstances changing. Olivia lost touch with most of the friends that she had through sport after she got injured. She was no longer able to participate and although she tried to maintain a small involvement as a line judge she found this difficult. Her social circle began to revolve around her work instead, as she increased her time commitment to that area of her life. For Nancy, the separation from her previous social circle in hockey occurred due to the fact that they lived in Glasgow, and she was no longer making the journey down at the weekends.

When I retired it was like leaving a job and moving away, because I knew I wasn’t going to see these people week in week out, you manage to keep up to date with what people were doing in their lives, socially and work wise or whatever because you were seeing them once a week, and you just knew that you weren’t going to have that anymore.

Donna, Naomi and Rachel lost contact with most of the people they knew through their sport as they chose to no longer have any involvement. Donna explained that she had a few close friends with whom she stayed in touch, but lost contact with

those where the only thing they had in common was athletics. This was similar for Naomi, who found she had no reason to stay in touch with many of her former team-mates. While Donna and Naomi had maintained fairly balanced social lives whilst they had been involved in sport, Rachel's social circle had revolved around athletics. She had to spend time developing new social networks and friendships with people outside of the sport.

5.2.7 Development of Career after Retirement

Continuation

For quite a number of the athletes, retirement simply meant continuation of their career outside of sport. Rachel's occupational transition was relatively smooth as she was also developing her media career alongside her athletics. She found that she was able to spend more time focusing on developing a career that she found both challenging and enjoyable.

I was gaining another identity, I was doing this job that was really cool that was, at that time it was the radio, I was talking on the radio about things and that was also something that not a lot of people were doing, and I was just really, really enjoying it.

She felt that her retirement came at a good time for her from an occupational perspective: "if I hadn't have done what I did at that time, I wouldn't have achieved what I had in my job, I wouldn't have been able to get that going". She realised that a successful and fulfilling career outside of sport was important to her, as this was always going to last a lot longer than her athletics would.

Isabel and Olivia were in a similar situation. Before her retirement, Isabel's focus had already moved towards her new business, which was a new arena from which she could derive a sense of achievement and worth. Upon retiring, she threw herself more into her work. Olivia had started a new job not long before she was forced to retire from tennis and as she came to terms with the end of her career in sport she started to focus her energies into this. The job was something that she found interesting and challenging and therefore she was able to start to develop a new identity.

Melanie, Suzanne and Ellie had well-established careers that they had been running in conjunction with their sport. Their retirement transition was fairly straight forward, as they continued to commit time to their jobs. Annabel had held off starting university, in order to give her a chance to train for the Commonwealth Games. Once she made the decision to retire, she started her university course. This provided her with an opportunity to develop an alternative identity and assisted with her transition out of competitive gymnastics.

Progression with career

This theme represents athletes who saw their careers start to progress once they retired from sport. For some, it was a case of being able to put more time and energy into their work. For others it was a new career started before retirement that could finally be prioritised. A year before she retired from swimming, Beth started a new job, moving away from her role in administration. During the final year of her swimming career her focus started to move.

I wanted to change career from admin to begin a career of something that I really wanted to do ... I changed

job and I began to sort of focus more on my career, but actually still encompassing the needs of my sport.

After she retired, she started to assume more responsibility within her new role, taking on new tasks and getting involved in more projects. This represented a shift in her identity, something which had slowly started to happen prior to her retirement.

My role began to expand. Perhaps if I hadn't been an elite swimmer I probably would have expanded it a whole lot earlier, but I did put it on hold, and made sure it was manageable.

Julia was in a similar situation. Upon retiring, she was able to turn her focus towards her new job, to which she had not applied her full attention in her first year in the post due to her continuing commitments to her training. The increasing demands of her job diverted her attention away from the spare time she might otherwise have had due to no longer training.

Katie and Linda both had good careers, which they were able to progress once they had retired. During her netball career, Linda's career was somewhat affected by her involvement in sport. She explained that people within higher positions were expected to be able to work additional hours or stay on if there was a problem. With her training demands, this was not something she was able to commit to. Once she retired, she focused more of her energies on her career. She progressed into a managerial position and her level of responsibility increased. Once Katie had retired from hockey, she found that she put more energy and time into her career as a replacement. Her competitive tendencies still carried over as she strived to be the best she could be in this aspect of her life.

Easy transition to new job

There were a number of athletes who had to make a complete career change upon retiring from their sport. Although Donna had her degree, she had no occupation to go into and only a few ideas of what she might like to do.

It is quite a daunting prospect, of suddenly starting from scratch, being five or six years from having graduated and wondering what is going to come next, it is quite difficult. But for me I think it just got to a stage when I thought well I am just not happy anymore ... it is not worth just carrying on because you are worried about what is coming next.

However, she was lucky in that she found a job quite quickly and therefore the transition from an occupational perspective was not as difficult as it could have been. She felt that if she had not managed to get herself settled as quickly as she did, she would have experienced a much higher level of distress.

The weekend I retired I got a New Scientist magazine and the job I eventually ended up getting was advertised in that magazine. So within two months I had it which was really just lucky.

Kath had found herself in a similar situation. Also a full time athlete, she had to make a transition into a completely new career.

I started applying for a few jobs and I got the first one that I applied for, which was a bit of a result. So yeah, that was it, it was really quite an easy transition, I was quite lucky.

The transitions faced by Tess, Emily, and Gail were those faced by all young people in their late teens. Their sports careers came to an end at the same time as

they were finishing school. While Tess got herself a full time job which filled up time that had previously been spent on her sport, Emily and Gail had gained good grades in the small number of subjects they had taken despite the interruptions to their education and managed to gain places at university.

Problems with transition

In comparison to the examples within the previous theme, some of the athletes did not experience a smooth transition into a new occupation. Before her retirement, Cassie was aware that canoeing was going to finish at some point and that she would need something else to move on to. She also knew that she had no interest in going any further in the topic of her degree and therefore had to find a new area of interest. She started to develop some other interests through part time courses. In particular, she focused on sports massage, with the hope that this might open up new avenues for her after she retired. Despite having started to plan for the end of her canoeing career, initially Cassie had some difficulty in finding employment and spent a number of months applying for work.

I was like 26 and going for my first job and employers were actually just going, well she's got no experience kind of thing, they don't know what top athletes, what training they have, so I felt that I'd been misled in terms of the idea that you are very employable, because you have shown commitment and all the planning and all this stuff.

Jenny and Alice also had difficulty in finding a new career. Throughout her athletics career, Jenny had only worked part-time and having dropped out of her university degree before the end did not have a qualification to fall back upon. She spent quite a bit of time exploring potential alternatives, before picking up

some work as a strength and conditioning coach. Although not a long term career, it provided a good period of transition for her. She eventually moved into her current role as a sports development officer. The job searching process also took Alice a lot longer than she had anticipated it would.

I didn't appreciate how hard it was to actually get a job. I was like I'll do anything, I don't care, but you see my background was hotel catering, but I hadn't worked in it for years, any sports-area wise I had no sports degree, so people weren't interested, they just looked at the application form, saw no sports degree and binned it.

Catherine's focus on her athletics led to her neglecting any possibilities of future careers, something which she regretted once she retired.

In complete denial about my future, complete denial, not in the slightest bit even thinking about it, which I'm ashamed about, I should have, because I'm suffering now, still suffering from that I believe, just in terms of being 30 years old and, you know, not having a stable career.

Gillian's involvement in swimming had an impact upon her education. From being a top student with excellent time management skills, when Gillian retired she started to do only the bare minimum of work that was required of her and finished her degree a year earlier than she had originally planned.

I suppose in a sense I stopped seeing the value of sport, because I had had such a bad experience of it, and I just wasn't interested, I mean I barely passed my exams, I got the minimum, I did no work for it ... I got my degree, and I was just like, no, I'm leaving, and then I was just working different jobs, cafes, bars, that kind of thing you know.

5.2.8 Physical Reaction to Retirement

Continued to train

Athletes vary in their physical reactions to retirement. While some will decide to stop completely, others will continue some form of training either directly related to their sport or in a new activity. This theme is concerned with the latter. Lorna did not have any issues with physically adjusting to retirement, as she never actually stopped training: “I don’t think I ever stopped training all together. I always go running. Although I think there was a point last year where I thought, why am I running?” Even when she did not have anything to train for, Lorna still maintained a good level of physical fitness.

I guess I always kept myself reasonably fit, I never got to the stage where I did nothing, I have always been like that since I was a kid, never sat still at that age either.

Katie also continued to play at her club after retiring from international hockey. She found that a gradual reduction in training helped her to maintain reasonable fitness levels. As during her career she had tended to train fairly intensively, she was keen to ensure that this did not just come to a sudden stop. Julia also gradually reduced her training load prior to her retirement. Then for the first six weeks after retirement, on the advice of her coach, Julia did nothing to give her body a complete rest and a chance to recover. She found it difficult to get out of the training habit that she had developed.

I felt like I should still be going training, and I was feeling guilty for not going, even though I was really busy with work and doing other things ... I guess it is just a habit that your body and your mind get into,

because it was just like, I had to almost physically stop myself getting in the car and going to the pool.

Penelope and Jenny are no longer involved in their sport, but have still maintained a reasonable level of fitness through other activities. Throughout the summer after retiring, Penelope continued to attend the gym and to do the programme that had been set for her when she was still competing. Jenny continues to enjoy weight training and has also got involved in a number of other sporting activities.

Stopped training

In comparison to the previous theme, there were a number of athletes who stopped training once they had retired. One of the major disappointments that Nancy had upon her retirement was that she lost the motivation to train and found it very difficult to get to the gym or maintain any regular pattern of activity.

Some people said it took them a long time to down-train, being so used to going training that they couldn't not do it anymore, I became almost the opposite, which was I don't need to do this anymore so I won't. And I would pack my bag for the gym, I would take it to work with me, and I wouldn't go.

Although Nancy still attended training at the club in Aberdeen, she found that she used the excuse of being busy at work to turn up late to the sessions, something she would not have dreamt of doing during her elite hockey career.

It was almost like, well work has suffered because of hockey, and now I am going to give back. But my firm don't give a monkeys whether I am here at seven o'clock at night or am at training, the work will get done. But work is a convenient excuse, people won't question that.

A lack of motivation was the reason given by Linda, Rebecca, and Isabel for the change to their training habits. Linda found that her fitness levels dropped as a result. This reflected in her play, which she found very frustrating: “the frustration then was in your performance, you know, not getting to the ball first, not jumping higher than the player beside you”. Linda struggled a little with the changes in her body shape that came with her retirement. She found it quite difficult to adjust to not being able to eat anything she wanted. Rebecca described that one of the hardest aspects was the fact that she no longer had any objectives to work towards. Without any goals she found it difficult to find any motivation. For Isabel, it was the motivation for going to the gym that dropped upon retiring. She missed the camaraderie and banter that went along with training sessions in the gym with her team-mates. A number of months after retirement, she started to feel the effects of her lack of activity.

I was struggling to get into my jeans, and thought right, hang on a second, I had lost a bit of muscle bulk but was still the same weight, right that means it is fat.

Donna stopped training for a slightly different reason. After making the decision to retire, she carried on doing some training for a couple of weeks. However, she soon decided that there was no reason for her to be training anymore. She no longer perceived there to be any benefit or enjoyment in training and at that point stopped completely.

Injury legacy

Injuries sustained during the athletic career can continue to have an impact upon the person’s life after the end of their career. Olivia had been having long term problems with her back, which she had never got around to getting properly sorted

out. Then she slipped a disc which forced her to stop not just tennis, but all activity. Physically, Olivia was struggling to perform simple daily tasks, therefore participation in any sports activity was out of the question. Olivia had always been very active, through her involvement in both tennis and other sports. She found that she got really down, because she was not able to do anything.

I got really lethargic as well because I wasn't doing anything. I was trying to do things like go for a little run and stuff like that, so I was trying to do as much as I could, like I was going to a fitness class and cutting out the exercises that I couldn't do.

Megan and Annabel both sustained injuries that also meant the end of their competitive careers. Although not as serious as in Olivia's case, for both of these girls their injuries had an impact on their later activity levels. Both spoke about their injury preventing them from getting involved in another activity. The injuries sustained by Iona and Rachel did not prevent them from continuing in some form of activity. However, they have continued to have an impact up to the present day. Iona continues to undertake some training but still faces some restrictions: "I still struggle with my knee, every day. I continued to do some training, but my knee has limited what I can do". Rachel's knee injury continues to leave its mark 20 years after her retirement.

Physical changes

This last theme looks at the athletes' struggles to deal with the physical changes they encountered as a result of retirement. For Suzanne, her whole routine had changed and a combination of eating later in the evening and exercising less led to some changes in her physique.

I did put on a bit of weight, only something that I would notice myself really, it is only one size but to you it feels horrible, you don't feel right, and that was when I started to think that I would get back out and do a wee bit of jogging.

Although other people started to comment that they thought that she was looking much healthier, Suzanne struggled to deal with her changing body shape and found that it influenced her self-esteem. She eventually decided to re-establish her involvement in athletics to try to regain some of her fitness. Alice and Tess also both struggled with weight control after their retirement. Once Alice started her new career, she found it very difficult to find the time to do any form of physical training. As a result, she has gained over two stone in weight.

All I do is sit in a car and drive about the country. You know, I'm doing three thousand miles a month. So a culture shock from being very active, being you know, in that environment, and now sitting in the car all the time, I don't like that side of it, and I know I need to get into a routine of thinking right could I go to the gym.

Initially Tess lost a lot of weight when she finished training. Over time, she has continued to have some issues with the physical aspect of her retirement from sport as she has put more weight back on.

Some of the athletes noticed their body shapes changing once they stopped training. Cassie missed the feeling of being incredibly fit that came along with her canoeing career. She noticed the changes that occurred as she lost muscle mass and tone. Beth and Rebecca both talked about having to adapt their diet to fit in with their new lifestyles.

During her career, Catherine developed an obsession with weight and diet which has continued to have an impact post-retirement. She found it difficult to adjust physically to retiring and still felt daily pressure to go out for a run and to maintain that side of her identity. Gillian suffered from eating disorder issues while she was competitive, influenced by an insensitive coach. These issues continued to have an impact for her after retirement. Both of these athletes suggested that it takes time to develop new habits.

5.2.9 Post-Retirement Involvement in Sport

Not currently involved

This theme represents the athletes who had no involvement in their sport at the time of the study. Some had some aspirations that they might become more involved in the future. Megan got involved in coaching at her old club when she first retired from gymnastics. Although she found her own experiences had a positive impact on the type of coach that she could be, she experienced some difficulties working with the senior coach due to differing points of view.

We were just head to head all the time, because I always saw it from a gymnast's perspective, and I would look at them and think, she's shattered, absolutely exhausted, she's not taking it in, she's not understanding it.

Changing priorities within her own personal life made it fairly easy for Megan to cease her involvement. However, she hopes that when her family life dictates that it is possible, she will be able to revive her relationship with the sport.

That's something that I still hope I will get into, I still want to judge, because I don't want to turn my back on the sport, but it is just not the right time now.

At the time of the interview Donna had no involvement in athletics. However, she did indicate that she appreciated what she had got out of the sport and therefore was not going to rule out becoming involved again.

In the future maybe I will do something because I feel like so many people give up their time to do things like officiating, sitting on committees and all this, and I benefited from that for years, so I probably should go and do something.

Catherine and Jenny no longer have any involvement in athletics, but in comparison to Megan and Donna they have no interest in becoming so. Catherine's coping strategy was to walk away from her former sport. She feels a lot of resentment towards a system that she feels does not do enough to look after its athletes. She believes that athletes are pressured to commit exclusively to the athlete role and are not encouraged to maintain a balanced lifestyle. Similarly, Jenny feels that the sport had many flaws and is marred by internal politics. She felt that the athletes were not properly prioritised and therefore were not given the best chance to succeed.

When she first retired, Annabel was given the option to get involved in coaching. She helps out a bit in the gym, but still does not feel able to commit to a full involvement in the coaching side. Although she still has a love for the sport, and enjoys going to spectate at international competitions, Annabel has no desire to get involved in some of the other aspects of gymnastics. Rachel and Naomi were both prevented from having any ongoing recreational or competitive involvement

in their sport due to their injury problems. Rachel did not get involved in coaching either as she felt that the main strength she could have offered lay in being able to demonstrate, but this proved to be impossible because of her knee. Naomi has no interest in having any involvement in lacrosse from an organisational or coaching perspective. She took up the opportunity to resume involvement with tennis, one of the other sports that she had participated in at a social level whilst at school.

Involvement as a coach

One of the most common methods in which an athlete can stay involved in their sport is through coaching. Iona's football career was cut short by an injury to her knee and she moved almost immediately into coaching after deciding to retire. Initially, she found coaching a frustrating experience.

I can remember watching the game and thinking that I could do better as a player, do better than what was going on in the pitch ... I think it is difficult to stand on the sidelines as a young coach, I think I got really frustrated because I couldn't play, it drove me bonkers. I would be shouting and bawling at the players and I think it was because I knew that if I was fit then I could probably do better. I really missed playing for many, many years.

Linda and Penelope also moved into coaching quite quickly. It was something that Linda was not particularly happy about.

It almost came too soon and I was a wee bit resentful I suppose, because I think halfway through that season I thought I've gone from being an international player and now I'm a coach, I didn't have a lot of time to transition.

Penelope had not initially anticipated being involved as a coach. However in the summer period after her retirement she was approached by a junior team and decided to take up the opportunity. In comparison, Tess and Violet did not move immediately into coaching. Both had some time out of their sport initially after retirement. For Violet, this was a period of nearly 20 years. After returning initially to recreational participation, she started to get involved in other areas of the sport including coaching and judging. Tess re-visited her old club for the first time about a year after retirement. She now gets a great deal of satisfaction from her work with the athletes in the club. She feels that this is like some form of closure for her, finally being able to put that part of her life behind her and move forward with the next chapter:

It is so much more rewarding when they win than when it is yourself, so much more rewarding when you put all that time and effort into someone and they win competitions. You see how happy they are and think, I did that, I know what a special feeling that is and I'm so glad I could help them feel that.

Involved in organisational aspects

For athletes who are not interested in coaching, involvement in aspects such as club organisation, officiating, or committee representation are other options. Katie has maintained a strong connection to hockey through her club. She has taken on an organisational role on the committee, in the capacity of treasurer. Katie felt that she had an obligation to give something back to her club once she had finished playing at the higher level.

Even if I wanted to I wouldn't just stop playing after I stopped playing for the firsts, because I just think it is not right that the club have supported you and you have taken from the club ... I just think if you have got

the benefits from it ... that you have some kind of moral obligation to put something back in again.

Once she had retired from swimming, Beth started to take on a more active voluntary role within Scottish Disability Sport. She has a position on the management committee and has operated in a support role for current competitors. Similarly, Melanie took on the position of non-playing captain of the Scottish team after she retired, which was a chance for her to share her expertise and experience with the current top female players.

Olivia's situation was slightly different. Initially, she believed that at some stage she was going to be able to return to competitive sport. Over time, as it became clear that her injury may never fully heal, she started to accept that this may not be the case. As a way to keep herself in touch with her sport, Olivia took up line umpiring. Although this has been good for helping her to maintain contact with her tennis friends, she had found watching tennis and knowing that she was not able to take part very difficult.

Involvement through work

While the previous two themes discuss an involvement in sport that is part-time and alongside a career, there were a number of athletes whose sport became their work after retirement. Once Gillian got over what she described as “the traumatic experience” of how her swimming career ended, she started to swim recreationally and got involved in some coaching. Slowly she got back involved in the sport that she had formerly loved and rediscovered her passion through teaching.

That is the one thing I know now, I may not teach for the rest of my life, but I have to be involved in swimming, I want to work in swimming because I have got such a passion for it. I am so glad I have got the passion back, so glad, because I can go swimming by myself and I can really appreciate it.

Ellie, Alice and Julia all have jobs which involve them in coaching. Ellie coaches at a school, as well as working with her club side and being involved at Scottish under 18 level. After a long search for a job, Alice was offered a coaching position in curling within the Scottish Institute of Sport network. Once she started her job, Alice made the decision to stop all of her own participation in curling to assist her to develop a new identity as a coach: “I want to move on from curling, so I think it will be easier for me to get my head round it if I just stop completely, than play bits and bobs”. Julia’s career as a development officer involves a heavy commitment to coaching as one aspect. Kim is also working within her sport, in a job at the governing body.

Recreational involvement

A number of the athletes have continued to participate actively at a lower level in their sport. This includes club play, occasional race participation, and regular county or masters level competition. When she first retired, Rebecca had a break from hockey as the experience of the Olympics left her feeling quite negative about the sport. About four months passed before she felt any desire to pick up her hockey stick. She then returned to a small amount of club play, at a purely recreational level. Her family were her priority and her hockey very much had to fit in around this.

I will play for anybody who wants me to play for them, for enjoyment, and also trying to feed back a bit more,

keeps me fit too, it is a tick in the box for a session for the week, and hopefully teach others some concepts both on and off the pitch.

Rebecca feels that one of the most important things a retiring player can do is maintain their involvement with the sport even though they are no longer playing, and give back in some capacity.

There are a lot of girls and boys that are playing hockey at a very good standard now and they need role models, and if role models hide then who do they look up to, there is no-one to look at, so maybe take a bit of time out but then try and put it back in to the youth or you know, your club or wherever ... people have put a lot of finance into you and you know if you can put it back then that would be the big one for me I think.

Katie, Lorna, Isabel and Nancy are all still involved in playing at club level in their sport. When Lorna moved up to Aberdeen, she knew very few people. She got involved in a lower division team and this provided her with a new social circle. When Isabel decided to give up, she thought she would be giving up rugby completely. However she quickly discovered that she needed to have an involvement in a competitive sport and made the decision to return to her club. She now enjoys playing rugby at this level, mainly for the social side of the sport.

When I play these days I have managed to stop analysing everything I do in games, and if I throw a bad pass it is like, oh well, never mind, I don't need to make it any better, I'm as good as I am and I'm doing it for fun ... these days I'm really happy to help the younger players to, help them to progress, pass on my knowledge.

In comparison, Nancy knew when she ended her international hockey career that she would not be able to sever all links with the sport. She rejoined the club that

she had played for while she was at school and started playing in an outfield position. As a former goalkeeper, she found that this was like playing in a completely new sport.

I needed a different challenge. If I had come back and gone in goal ... I would have found it the most frustrating experience, because the people in front of me wouldn't have been anything like the level and I would have shouted at them, and they would have been thinking why is she shouting at me, and the whole experience wouldn't have been good.

Athletes in individual sports do not always have the same option to return to competitive club play as those in team sports. Some of these athletes chose to maintain some level of competitive involvement after retirement. Canoe slalom specialist Cassie has participated in a couple of small domestic races, while cross country runner Marlene initially returned to athletics as a method of weight control. As she started to lose some weight and regain self-confidence, she returned to her club and started to participate in a few recreational races. Melanie and Violet's involvement extends a bit beyond this. While Melanie continued to participate in county level golf competition as a method of maintaining an involvement with the social side of her sport, Violet re-discovered her love for diving through an adult class and now regularly competes in Masters events.

5.2.10 Support Through Retirement

The athletes were asked about the social support they received during and after the retirement transition. Several authors have highlighted the important role that social support can play within the adjustment process (Hurley and Mills, 1993; Lavalley *et al.*, 1997a; Pearson and Petitpas, 1990). Two aspects were discussed.

The first was the use of informal social support networks, whilst the second looked at more formal support received from the sports governing bodies.

Informal social support

Athletes received support through their retirement transition from a number of different sources. The most common was members of the family, including parents, siblings, and husbands. Twins Emily and Gail were in a unique position, in that they had a ready-made support system in each other. Retiring at the same time meant that they were able to support each other through the transition. Gillian's greatest source of support was her parents. Once she retired, her parents allowed her space to come to terms with what had happened:

They just realised that I probably had to not even speak the word swimming for a while, but in the time running up to when I stopped they saw all of the emotions that were coming out ... they didn't push anything, they obviously realised that I just needed to be completely away from it.

Megan, Jenny, and Rachel also turned to their parents for support. Megan's dad was also her coach throughout much of her career, therefore it was her mother that she turned to when she wanted someone to talk to about how she was feeling towards the end. Jenny and Rachel's parents had both been incredibly supportive throughout their athletics careers, therefore it was not surprising that this was who they turned to. Both of their careers had ended earlier than expected and the support that they received from their parents helped them to come to terms with what was going on and move on. In comparison, Annabel found it hard to talk to her parents, as she felt that they did not really understand what she was going through:

I don't think either of them knew how to support. I think it is kind of quite a personal thing. I felt, especially like my dad was just like, oh that's good, she's giving up, she's got a life, but you know that way to me it was more than that, I was like totally gutted, I didn't know what to say to them.

For some of the athletes who retired when they were slightly older, their partner played a more important role in their lives and therefore provided support. Linda had a fairly new partner at the time who was supportive of her decision to end her netball career. He helped to provide a new focus for her and made her transition smoother than it might otherwise have been. Both Catherine and Donna's partners had been involved in athletics themselves and therefore had a very good understanding of what they were going through. Donna's partner had already experienced the retirement transition himself and so was able to provide her with a lot of support and guidance. Catherine's partner had not been at as high a level as she had, but had provided a lot of support throughout her career:

For a number of the athletes, their support came from sources attached to their sport. Tess, Emily, Gail and Annabel all had good relationships with their coaches and found that they could talk through their feelings with them:

My personal coach was really good, because some people are scared to tell their coach when they are stopping but he was excellent and we did speak and he gave me options and everything. (Annabel)

However the major source of support within sport came from other athletes who were either going through the same process or had already retired. Catherine talked about the importance of a shared understanding:

You almost didn't need to say anything. One of my best friends now ... was a highly successful athlete who went to the Olympics, and she, it's almost like you don't need to talk about it because you know each other understands.

Penelope spoke to a few of her former team-mates when she was thinking about retirement, seeking advice about making the decision and how they had felt. She also had several conversations with another member of her team who was also thinking about retirement. Cassie, Donna, and Isabel also spoke to other athletes who were facing similar decisions to themselves.

Luckily another girl that I competed with, she retired a few months before me, and quite often over the last year or two we had discussed how we do think there are things beyond canoeing and that we were sort of considering different things, so I did have a friend that I actually talked to quite a lot and we were going through similar things. (Cassie)

Donna and Isabel both talked about their non-athletic friends being able to provide little in the way of support. They both suggested that friends not involved in sport did not really understand what they were going through.

If I did speak to other friends who didn't play the sport or who weren't retiring, it wasn't really a conversation, it was oh well, you'll figure something out, oh you'll have loads of time to do stuff. They didn't understand how important it was, or that it was still difficult even though it was your own choice. (Isabel)

Rebecca looked for support from a more official source. Struggling to deal with the aftermath of a poor final tournament and the issues with the coaching staff, she sought the help of a psychologist to help her to come to terms with her experiences.

I went through every emotion from crying to laughing to you know anger and everything, and it was a really positive healing process. And I think that if I hadn't done that then I would still be very, very angry and have all these emotions.

A number of the athletes did not speak to anyone else or seek advice or help when they retired. Katie, Nancy, and Iona suggested that they were not the type of people to seek support and did not feel that they required any. Ellie said that she was clear in her own mind that she had made the right decision and had no concerns about what was going to come next for her.

Sports Governing Bodies

Currently it would appear that there is currently very little offered to athletes in the way of support when they reach the end of their sports career. For the majority of the athletes in this study, retirement signified the end of their involvement with their governing body. Many of the governing bodies in Scotland are run by volunteers and their focus is to provide as much assistance as they can to the current athletes. This leaves little, if any, time or money for providing support to those formerly involved. Some of the athletes in the study were upset that they did not even receive any thanks or acknowledgement for their contribution to the sport. Annabel and Penelope both sent letters to thank their governing bodies for supporting them through their careers but neither heard anything back. Isabel expressed disappointment about the reaction of her governing body to the retirement of several of the squad, including her:

I kind of wondered if they would make some kind of announcement about our retirements, and they didn't, and that was a little disappointing in some ways. I felt that there was no closure. I didn't want a ceremony or

award or anything like that, but there was no recognition of thanks for your contribution.

Beth was one of the few athletes who did receive some support from her governing body, who helped to point her in other directions in terms of continuing roles she could have. These included coaching and attending competitions as a support member of staff. Beth was identified as an individual who had both the desire and the ability to coach. Her qualifications were paid for and she was mentored by one of the current coaches to further develop her skills. She is now involved in mentoring new coaches coming through the system, continuing the cycle. Linda and Alice also talked about their governing body actively trying to encourage athletes to maintain an involvement in their sport through coaching. Linda mentioned a programme set up in netball, in which more experienced coaches are asked to take on mentoring roles with younger coaches coming into the system. Megan and Suzanne found that the drive within their sport to retain and use former athletes' expertise was coming from clubs rather than from the governing body.

In many Scottish sports it seems that there are very few co-ordinated attempts to retain former athletes within the system. Some athletes will choose to pick up a role coaching or in another capacity, however many will choose to walk away. Penelope and Isabel suggested that people have to actively look for opportunities to become involved. Jenny and Ellie both talked about the failure of the governing body to harness the expertise that has walked out of their sport.

I think they missed out on an opportunity to retain a vast amount of experience and knowledge, because, and I don't just mean myself, probably maybe five or six of us all retired, and probably three or four of us in field events alone who had been British

Internationalist, been to the Commonwealth Games, who had retired and no contact was ever made. (Jenny)

Ellie felt that in addition to encouraging former athletes to contribute in a coaching capacity, opportunities could be presented for them to provide mentoring support to younger athletes, talk to squads about tournament preparation, and generally pass on their knowledge. Rebecca added to this, highlighting that many coaches did not have the experiences of big tournaments and this was therefore an area in which experienced athletes could be of assistance. Iona could see similarly diverse opportunities for former footballers: “I think the association should help people, help them to continue in the sport. Into administration jobs, into coaching jobs, development jobs, all these kind of things”. She continued by highlighting the need for female coaches within the sport:

The women’s game is sadly lacking female coaches, but there are not enough of them encouraged to stay. The association needs to help them with the coaching courses, because they are expensive and they are time consuming as well.

Isabel and Rachel both felt that they could have been utilised better by their former sports. Isabel owns an athlete management company and therefore had an extensive network of contacts that she felt they could have taken advantage of.

I think I could have offered lots of help, I could offer help to find sponsorship for the women’s team. I think I am a resource that should have been tapped into, if not for coaching then for the contacts that I have.

Rachel works in the media and has a reasonably strong profile. Despite this, she has never been approached by her governing body to see whether she could assist them.

I think they should have definitely contacted me and said, right athletics doesn't get the media coverage that we would like it to get, what can we do about that, how can we write a press release, when is the best time to contact the BBC to get this, just to sit down and have half an hour to talk to use my expertise, but they have never done it.

There were other areas in which athletes felt they could have received assistance from their governing body. Gillian, Penelope, and Naomi all suggested that a de-training programme would have been useful. Naomi and Penelope felt that advice on winding down in their training and developing a healthy lifestyle was important, while Gillian highlighted the importance of nutritional assistance. Kath suggested that full time athletes could benefit from career advice, while Cassie felt that she could have been given some assistance in clarifying what the process should have been: "who should you tell first, is there a sort of ethical order that you tell people in ... it is kind of a taboo subject until you decide you want to do it".

5.3 Discussion

In this discussion, cross-case patterns among participants' retirement experiences are examined, to explore the impact of athletic identity on this particular transition. Across each of the themes developed from the data, results of particular significance will be highlighted in reference to previous research in this area.

Identity development

Core feelings of identity are not invested equally in all roles and a person's identities exist within a hierarchy, with the most dominant and salient identity located at the top (Abbott *et al.*, 1999). The results of this study demonstrate that athletes who reported having high or low levels of athletic identity during their sport careers prioritised the main areas of their lives in different ways. Fernandez *et al.* (2006) found that the level of commitment required at the top level of sport led to the relegation of other aspects of life into secondary positions. Athletes with strong and exclusive athletic identities are likely to make sacrifices in some areas of their lives to enable achievement within the sporting arena. Many athletes make these sacrifices willingly:

For me if you really want to do that then that isn't a sacrifice, that's just part of doing that. And for me that was all I wanted to do at that point, so it wasn't an issue. (Jenny)

This provides support for the work of Lally (2007), who suggested that individuals who placed high self-worth in being an athlete tended to neglect other roles in life. In particular, their approaches to the areas of work and education were very different. Athletes who identified strongly with the sport role placed less importance on these roles, focusing their attention on their athletic careers.

The majority of the full-time athletes in this study reported high levels of athletic identity. This correlates with the findings of Ferrado (1979) and Vuolle (1978), who both demonstrated the higher importance placed upon sport by the athletes who saw this as their career. The exception to this trend was Donna, who although a full time athlete scored only 20 on the retrospective version of AIMS. Donna

spoke about the importance she placed on maintaining balance within her life. She explained that there were times when athletics threatened to become all-consuming and this was something which she did not enjoy. This seemed to particularly be the case when she was not performing well. At these times, Donna felt that she might be able to improve her performance by focusing more attention on her athletics training. However, often it seemed to have the opposite effect and led to further unhappiness.

Additional pressure may be placed on female athletes as they have to make career and family compatible, therefore they have to plan and manage three roles: sport, family, and job (Bussmann and Alfermann, 1994; Hawkins and Blann, 1996; Kakemizu, Ae, and Amagasaki, 1999). Rebecca, Alice and Penelope all had to juggle these three aspects through their careers. Penelope and Rebecca placed equal importance on all of these roles. However Alice appeared to make more choices based on her sport. Although family remained important to her, life centred on achievement on the curling rink and it was the work dimension that suffered as a consequence.

Retirement decisions

The results of this study support the assertion of Fernandez *et al.* (2006) that the push-pull framework for understanding the retirement decision making process (Shultz, Morton, and Weckerle, 1998) is appropriate for the study of athletic retirement. The majority of athletes in the current study had a number of factors contributing to their retirement decision and were generally affected by both push and pull. The findings also provide support for Cecic-Erpic, Wylleman and Zupancic's (2004) suggestion that non-athletic events play an important role in

the retirement decision of many athletes. Athletes in both the high and low athletic identity groups discussed the impact of non-athletic events related to either the family or career.

There was very little difference between participants of low and high athletic identity in terms of their reasons for retirement, with athletes in both groups reporting a mixture of push and pull factors leading them to their decision to finish their career. Generally, there were more voluntary retirements than forced retirements. Most of the athletes who were 'pushed' into retirement also mentioned pull factors which had an influence upon their decision. One variation was seen in the athletes who were pushed to retire due to injury. Research has suggested that when an athlete is injured, the time out that results provides them with an opportunity to reflect upon their career and exposes them to other potential lifestyle options (Hadfield, 2003b; Johns *et al.*, 1990). This would appear to have been the case for athletes with lower levels of athletic identity, who started to believe that the effort to return from injury was too great and that there were other options that were becoming more attractive for them. In comparison, athletes with high athletic identity did not appear to identify positives within a post-sport life. As a result they suffered more difficulties in their transition, as they worked to develop a new identity. The one exception to this was Iona, whose almost immediate transfer into coaching resulted in her maintaining an identity within the sport domain.

Sinclair and Orlick (1993) found that athletes who retired due to declining performance found the process much more difficult, linking this to a decrease in self-confidence which had an impact in other aspects of their lives as well.

Athletes with high levels of athletic identity whose poor performances led to non-selection and ultimately retirement reported negative emotions and transition difficulties, providing support for this finding. For example, both Megan and Cassie struggled with self-esteem and confidence after their selection failure and struggled to come to terms with the end of their careers. This supports the suggestion by Hale, James and Stambulova (1999) that poor performance in a role that has high perceived importance can impact upon feelings of self worth.

Athletes from both athletic identity groups identified issues with their coach as a factor in their retirement decision. Wylleman and Lavallee (2004) have suggested that athletes who have a difficult relationship with a coach who is less attentive to their needs will experience a less successful transition out of their sport. This would certainly seem to be the case for Violet, who cut herself off from diving for nearly 20 years after deciding to retire. She felt that her coach provided her with little support and did not present any options for her to maintain an involvement in the sport. Werthner and Orlick (1986) suggest that problems with coaches can lead to increased feelings of bitterness upon retirement whilst Shachar and colleagues found that athletes who had disagreements with their coach prior to retirement experienced more transitional difficulties (Shachar *et al.*, 2004). Comments from Rebecca and Gillian provide support for these findings, with both girls talking about anger towards their coaches. Rebecca sought out psychological support to help her deal with her experiences, whilst Gillian coped by cutting herself off from her sport completely.

A number of athletes in this study made a comeback to competitive sport after initially making the decision to retire. For some of these athletes, the comeback

came after an on-time retirement, as a result of an opportunity arising to return to the international arena. In these cases, the comeback was something of a 'swansong' and was a positive experience providing final closure to a successful career. Athletes who made their comeback because they felt they had made the wrong decision did not have as positive an experience, providing support for the assertion by Sinclair and Orlick (1993) that retiring twice can sometimes be more of a liability than an asset. This is illustrated perfectly by Megan, whose comeback resulted in an ankle injury which not only completely ended her gymnastics career but also had an impact upon her ongoing ability to take part in other activities.

There were athletes from both the low and high athletic identity groups whose retirement came about with the realisation that other aspects of their lives were becoming more important than their sport. For many this was the increasing importance of their career away from sport, a finding which is supported by Koukouris (1994). Athletes within his study were sensitive to the need to settle into a new career and therefore came to a time where they felt that it was time to finish in their sport. For athletes in the high athletic identity group, this represented a shift in their identity hierarchy towards the end of their career. This was a process seen by Lally (2007), who found that athletes who knew that their sport career was coming to an end started to decrease their level of athletic identity and pursue other alternatives before actually retiring. Several athletes in this study made plans to retire after a particular event and discussed their focus shifting towards other aspects of their life in preparation for this. Nancy, Ellie and Isabel all talked about increasing their focus on their careers outside of sport. Julia and Melanie started to prioritise their personal lives, as they began to plan for

children after retirement. Donna, Rebecca and Penelope did not enjoy the latter parts of their sports careers and began to turn their focus towards the future and what would come next for them.

Another method by which a reduction in athletic identity salience can be achieved is by a gradual reduction in the athlete's involvement in their sport. Examples are provided by two athletes within this study, both of whom had high levels of athletic identity during their careers. Katie and Beth both had long and successful careers within their sports and when they decided to retire their withdrawal was a gradual process. Beth slowly reduced her level of commitment to swimming, by cutting the number of training sessions she attended each week over a period of about a year. For Katie, it was a gradual reduction from the competitive arena, retiring first from playing for Great Britain, then for Scotland, and finally from high level club play. Cecic-Erpic *et al.* (2004) found that athletes whose retirement was a gradual process experienced less difficulties during this transition. Katie's retirement echoed this, as she experienced minimal difficulties. However, although Beth's transition was gradual it still caused her some problems. In particular, she found it hard to come to terms with the fact that she would never again compete in an international competition.

Vuolle (1978) and Parker (1994) both indicated that the athletes who retired having achieved their goals had an easier transition than those who did not, while Fortunato and Marchant (1999) suggest that athletes who do not manage to achieve all their sporting goals are more likely to experience feelings of regret and disappointment at the end of their career. These findings were replicated within the current study, in both the high and low athletic identity groups. Even those

athletes who had developed a more balanced identity, and had other domains which they rated as important to move their focus towards, still experienced difficulties if they did not achieve their goals before retirement.

Emotional reaction to retirement

Evidence from the results shows that this was the area in which the athletes reported the most difficulties upon retirement. While a few of the participants described positive emotions, the majority felt some level of difficulty and there were a number who experienced a lot of distress at the end of their career. Cross-case comparisons indicate a trend in terms of the role of athletic identity in this process. Athletes with a strong and exclusive athletic identity were more likely to report mild or serious emotional difficulties upon their retirement than athletes with lower levels of identification with the athletic role.

Previous research has described athletes who had distressing reactions to their retirement as experiencing feelings such as shock, loss, and depression (Blinde and Stratta, 1992; Grove, Lavalley, Gordon, and Harvey, 1998; Stephan *et al.*, 2003). Similar emotions were described by athletes within this study. All except two of the athletes experiencing strong negative reactions to retirement reported high levels of identification with the athletic role. Lavalley *et al.* found that higher levels of athletic identity led to higher levels of emotional adjustment, and suggested that this was because these athletes “develop a self-concept that does not extend beyond the athlete role” (1997a, p138).

Tess and Gillian both had low levels of athletic identity, but experienced strong negative reactions. Both of their retirements were what Schlossberg (1981)

described as 'off-time'. An event that is considered to be off-time, be it either early or late, is suggested to carry psychological penalties (Salmela, 1994). Blinde and Stratta (1992) suggest that athletes in these situations tend to isolate themselves from their sport and therefore from their social network, which can exacerbate the problems they are experiencing. The off-time nature of their retirement experiences might provide a reason as to why their experiences do not fit with the general trend seen in this study.

The appearance is that it is more common for Scottish female athletes to have a milder emotional reaction to their retirement. This was characterised by doubts about the retirement decision and about the future, some feelings of loss, disappointment and regret, and yearning for aspects of the sporting environment. In their study of elite hockey players, Curtis and Ennis (1988) described their reactions to retirement as being like a lament for their career. These athletes found the decision to leave difficult, described feelings of loss, and occasional longing for aspects of the athletic lifestyle. Orlick and Werthner (1987) add to this, suggesting that almost all high performance athletes approach the end of their sport careers with some feelings of uncertainty or doubt. The professional tennis players in Stier's (2007) study discussed mixed feelings, with contentment with their accomplishments being mixed with moments of sadness and loss. The biggest proportion of athletes in this study fell into this category, experiencing some initial difficulties, which did not last long as they were quite quickly absorbed into a new phase in their lives. Athletes described feeling very emotional during and immediately after their last match or competition. In her study of retirement from university sport, Lally had similar findings: "events marking retirement – the last practice, last warm-up, last game, last home game – were

difficult. Feelings of loss and sadness erupted during these moments” (2007, p93). Feelings of disappointment and regret were most commonly experienced by athletes who did not achieve all of their sporting goals. This supports previous findings (Parker, 1994; Werthner and Orlick, 1986). Even those athletes who made a good transition into their new lifestyle reported having times when they missed their involvement in sport and certain facets of their sports careers.

A number of previous studies have suggested that retirement from sport need not necessarily be associated with difficulties. Female athletes in Greendorfer and Blinde’s (1985) study indicated that they were looking forward to life after retirement. Similarly, female tennis players were found to express feelings of relief and a sense of opportunity upon deciding to retire (Allison and Meyer, 1988), while male athletes indicated that they felt relief (Parker, 1994) and looked forward to having time to pursue other activities (Curtis and Ennis, 1988). While not the most widespread reaction, a small number of athletes in the current study did report positive emotions upon their retirement. This reaction was associated with athletes who placed relatively less importance on the athletic role and had other life roles that were equally or more important to them. They saw retirement as an opportunity to close the door on that chapter of their lives and focus their attentions towards other areas. These athletes had generally achieved all of their goals within their sporting careers and reflected positively on their time spent involved in sport. There were two exceptions to this pattern. Catherine and Kath both had strong athletic identities, but described feeling relief that their career was finally over. Both of these athletes had negative experiences towards the end of their time in sport, which could be assumed to have had an impact on how they viewed their retirement.

Physical reaction to retirement

The physical transition that takes place upon retirement has been highlighted as a source of distress by previous research (Chamalidis, 1997; European Federation of Sport Psychology, 1999; Kerr and Dacyshyn, 2000; Ryan, 2000; Stephan *et al.*, 2003; Stephan *et al.*, 2007). Very few post-sport careers enable the former athlete to maintain the same high levels of physical activity and the resulting discrepancy in activity level leads to the body physically changing. In this study, participants from both athletic identity groups highlighted this to be a major area of transition, talking about problems with weight gain, muscle loss, and changes to the body shape. Athletes also struggled to change their nutritional habits in line with their new lifestyles. Pheonix, Faulkner and Sparkes (2005) suggest that the physical self is a key component of identity and self-esteem which can explain why athletes experience distress in their physical adjustment to retirement. This reaction was heightened for several athletes whose injuries continued to have an ongoing impact after retirement. In his case study of the retirement of an elite athlete, Sparkes (2000) describes similar problems arising when their body was no longer being able to physically do what it should have been able to.

Athletes who had lower levels of athletic identity were more likely to report lower levels of motivation to participate in any form of training after their retirement. In comparison, athletes with strong and exclusive athletic identities were more likely to have maintained high activity levels after their retirement or to have transferred into a new sport. Athletic identity has been linked in the literature to an enhanced sense of body image (Horton and Mack, 2000) and positive physical self-perception (Stephan *et al.*, 2007). This provides one explanation for these differing reactions upon retirement. Athletes with high athletic identity are more

likely to feel pressure to continue some form of training. Cessation of training could have a major detrimental impact on their self-esteem as sport and physical activity still play a central role in their identity. They would be more likely to be negatively affected by a reduction in physical ability or prowess.

Social and occupational adjustment

Compared to the areas of emotional and physical adjustment, social and occupational adjustment were not highlighted as being particular areas of concern. Most of the athletes noticed positive changes, as they found themselves with more time and freedom and saw their social circle expanding as a result. Athletes with higher levels of athletic identity were more likely still to have a social circle connected to sport after retirement, perhaps a reflection on the fact that their involvement in sport had a big impact on their social circle during their career. In comparison, athletes with lower levels of identification with the athletic role had more balanced social circles during their sports career and continued this after their retirement. These athletes were more likely to have reported severing social links with their sport, unless they had maintained a participatory involvement after retiring. Previous research has indicated that this can lead to feelings of social isolation (Brandmeyer and Alexander, 1981). However this was not the case in the current study as these athletes had strong social circles outwith sport.

Earlier research has suggested that athletes' transitions are made easier if they have other possibilities outside of sport into which they can channel their energies (Orlick and Werthner, 1987; Wheeler *et al.*, 1996). These findings are supported, with only a small number of the athletes in this study experiencing any difficulty with occupational adjustment upon retirement. The majority of the participants

were working throughout their time in sport and simply continued on as before after retiring. In some cases the transition was positive, with progression seen within the career as more time was focused on this domain. The opportunities for sports involvement for Scottish female athletes are such that it is only in a very small number of sports that full time participation is an option. For those that are full time, earnings are inevitably low and therefore a career after sport is financially a necessity.

There were some athletes who needed to begin a new career upon their retirement. The easiest transitions came for the athletes who started to make movements towards a new career before actually retiring and for those who knew what they wanted to do after their time in sport. These athletes could see a future for themselves in something other than sport and made positive steps towards developing new careers. A small number of athletes did experience difficulties in their occupational transition. Werthner and Orlick (1986) found that athletes who do not have something concrete and challenging to turn to after retirement described feeling as if they were 'in limbo'. Similarly, Petitpas *et al.* (1997) suggest that transition problems are likely to arise for athletes who have not made plans for the development of an alternative career. The results support these suggestions, with the athletes who did not make any career plans experiencing a difficult period of exploring the alternatives, resulting in worry and distress. All but one of these athletes had a strong and exclusive identification with the athletic role, which has been associated in previous work with delayed career development and exploration (Brown *et al.*, 2000; Murphy *et al.*, 1996).

Post-retirement involvement in sport

The results indicate that retirement did not mark the complete end of their involvement with sport for most of the former athletes. Sport remained an important element in their lives, through an involvement in areas such as coaching, administration, and recreational participation. Similar findings emerged from studies by Greendorfer & Blinde (1986) and Curtis & Ennis (1988). Athletes involved in team sports are more likely to maintain a recreational involvement in their sport than those in individual sports. This is perhaps simply because there are more opportunities for involvement in team sports through the club environment. This environment also enables athletes to maintain a social connection to their former sport and other athletes within it.

Shachar *et al.* (2004) suggest that having a strong athletic identity does not necessarily mean that the athlete is more likely to stay involved in the sport afterwards. This is partially supported in the current study, with athletes from the high athletic identity group less likely to be involved in recreational participation or coaching. However, they appear to be more likely to seek out opportunities to develop a career within the sports environment after their retirement. Lavalley *et al.* (1997a) suggest that athletes who transfer their involvement into another aspect of their sport immediately after retirement, may face difficulties when they finally cease their new role. This was clearly the case for Iona who did not have a particularly difficult retirement transition, but experienced difficulties upon reducing her involvement in coaching. The emotions she experienced mirrored those that many athletes experience upon their retirement from competitive play.

Retirement support

Lavallee and colleagues (Lavallee *et al.*, 1997a; Lavallee, Nesti, Borkoles, Cockerill, and Edge, 2000) suggest that confiding in other people may assist athletes in dealing with the emotions that they experience during the retirement transition. Scottish female athletes appear to be most likely to turn to either family members or other retired or retiring athletes when they are facing retirement. This supports the work of Thelwell, Weston and Greenlees (2007), who found that professional cricketers turned mainly to their team-mates for emotional support. Very few of the athletes turned to their coach for support. Klint and Weiss (1986) suggest that if a coach is reluctant to talk about retirement can contribute to transition difficulties. McGown and Rail (1996) found that female canoeists very rarely spoke to other people about their retirement. Several of the athletes in this study did not discuss their retirement with anybody else. For some this was because they did not feel they needed the support, whereas for others it was because they did not feel that they had anybody they could talk to who could understand what they were feeling. For this latter group, their emotional adjustment to retirement may have taken longer because they did not have people that they could turn to for support (Werthner and Orlick, 1986).

A couple of the athletes suggested that they found participating in the research process cathartic, as it was the first time they had been able to speak to someone properly about their experiences. Gillian had taken a long time to come to terms with her exit from swimming and felt that this might have been reduced if she had been given the opportunity to speak to someone at the time. Megan explained that she had blocked out most of the later stages of her gymnastics career rather than talking through her experiences with others.

Scottish sports governing bodies have been delivering very little support to athletes upon retirement up until now. Many of the organisations are not equipped to be able to deliver support in this area. For athletes who are currently supported by the Scottish Institute of Sport structure, there are support networks available. These will be examined in more detail in Chapter Seven. However athletes who are not within this structure are generally left to fend for themselves. Many of the athletes in this study did not feel that they required particular support upon retirement. However, nearly all of them talked about the need for their governing body to become more involved in retaining expertise within the sport. Very few of them were approached by their governing body to explore the areas in which they might have been able to get involved. Encouraging more athletes to give something back to their sport after retirement could help to improve the quality of provision to younger athletes coming through the system. This could also become a mechanism of support for former athletes, giving them the opportunity to maintain some of their sporting identity (Sinclair and Orlick, 1994).

5.4 Conclusion

The qualitative nature of this study has enabled a more in-depth look at athletic retirement for Scottish female athletes and the role played by athletic identity. It has provided confirmation of the finding from the first study that athletic identity has a major influence on both the experiences within the athletic career and the retirement transition. Athletes identifying more strongly and exclusively with the athletic role appear to be more likely to experience difficulties when they retire. This relationship is further emphasised for athletes who did not achieve all their goals or who made no plans for their life after sport. Sargent suggests that:

Whatever the reasons athletes have for retiring, they must recognise the need to carefully consider life after sport. This includes considering factors such as future employment, study, socialising, family, and friends. It is imperative that these aspects of life be considered before retirement occurs, rather than waiting until the last moment (2004, p28).

If an athlete considers their retirement to be off-time, they are likely to experience emotional distress regardless of their level of athletic identity. If an athlete does not feel that they are ready to retire then they are unlikely to settle well into post-sport life and are more likely to consider making a comeback. A return to sport in these circumstances is unlikely to be successful, as was seen in the case of Megan within this study.

Not all athletes with high levels of athletic identity will face difficulties upon their retirement. If an athlete has achieved their goals, feels that it is the right time for them to finish and has a good alternative to move on to, then they are less likely to experience retirement distress. Their emotional reaction is likely to be milder, with an initial lament for the end of an aspect of their life that they placed a great deal of importance on. These athletes recognise the potential positives in life after sport and are often looking forward to moving forward to new challenges.

Physical adjustment was an area of difficulty for many of the athletes, while adjustment in the social and occupational domains was deemed to be less of a challenge. Nearly all athletes will experience some level of bodily change as a result of their retirement, and this is an area in which coaches and governing bodies need to consider offering some form of guidance and support. Julia was the only athlete in this study offered detraining advice by her coach and as a consequence physical adjustment was not an issue for her.

Occupational adjustment was only necessary for those athletes who were full time in their sport and therefore did not have an alternative career progressing alongside their sport. Assistance is required for such athletes, as they face a period of career exploration and development that their peers may have already been through. Athletes should also be encouraged to continue with their education for as long as is viable during their sports career, in order to help provide them with alternatives upon retirement. As more sports become able to offer full-time opportunities to their athletes, this area is likely to increase in importance.

There is evidence that some athletes will require assistance upon the termination of their athletic career, in areas such as psychological support, detraining advice, and career guidance, among others. This support is not currently forthcoming from Scottish sports governing bodies. One programme that is available to some athletes is Performance Lifestyle, delivered through the Scottish Institute of Sport Network. Chapter Seven will examine this programme in more detail.

Chapter 6: LITERATURE REVIEW – Provision of Formal Support Services

As the conceptual model described by Taylor and Ogilvie (1994; 2001) outlines, appropriate interventions are required for athletes who experience or who are in danger of experiencing unhealthy sport career transitions. Ogilvie and Taylor (1993b) suggest that the prevention of crises at career termination is the responsibility of individuals involved at all levels and in all areas of sport including coaches, administrators, managers, physicians, and psychologists. Historically, the priority of the athletic establishment has centred on the recruitment, training, and performance outcomes of elite athletes. This system takes care of all of the athlete's needs while they were competing but often offers little in the way of support once they have retired (Crook and Robertson, 1991; Emrich, Altmeyer, and Papathanassiou, 1994; Gorbett, 1985; Thomas and Ermler, 1988). Ogilvie and Howe (1982) suggest that it is the exceptional coach or team manager who includes career termination assistance as part of his or her professional responsibility to his or her athletes.

Institutional support prior to, during, and after career termination has been related to effective transition (Fortunato and Marchant, 1999; Ogilvie and Taylor, 1993a) and over the last twenty years a number of education and career assistance programmes have been developed by sports institutions and governing bodies around the world (Gorely, Lavalley, Bruce, Teale, and Lavalley, 2001; Lavalley *et al.*, 2002). This chapter will identify the diverse forms of interventions that have been utilised for assisting sport career termination and examine their effectiveness. Following this the career assistance programmes that have been

developed in a number of countries including Australia, Canada, the United States, and Great Britain will be examined.

6.1 Career Transition Interventions

Career transition programmes are designed to develop social, educational, and work-related skills in elite athletes (Anderson and Morris, 2000). They should be multi-dimensional and can involve academic and career guidance and support, development of life skills, physical de-training programmes, and psychological counselling; all of which are important for the preparation of an athlete for life after retirement from sport. Academic and career related services that have previously been delivered to athletes include assistance with résumé preparation, communication skills and interview skills (Gordon, 1995), educational guidance and development of study skills (Brown and Bohac, 1997), and help with understanding the necessary steps involved in making well-informed career decisions (Murphy, 1995). Athletes often seek this type of assistance as many do not understand the job marketplace and the many opportunities that exist. Counsellors can assist athletes to choose and train for careers that may be satisfying for them. Their objective should be to give athletes enough information so that they can decide rationally between the alternative career choices and therefore leave them in an improved state of preparedness (Wolff and Lester, 1989). However, Ogilvie and Taylor (1993b) suggest that many sports organisations and particularly coaches do not support these types of interventions, as they fear a focus on life after sport may distract them from their competitive focus.

For athletes who have functioned primarily in the sport environment, programmes which help develop interpersonal and life skills and a fuller understanding of their own abilities and aptitudes can be useful (Heyman, 1987). Some interventions that have previously been delivered to athletes through career development programmes include public speaking and media training (Gordon, 1995), development of time management skills (Taylor and Ogilvie, 1994), development of transferable skills (Stankovich, Meeker, and Henderson, 2001), enhancement of coping skills, and social skills training (Murphy, 1995). Interventions can also help athletes to expand their social identity and develop new support systems outside of the sports environment, whilst assistance with money management and financial planning can help to provide athletes with financial stability at the end of their career (Stark, 1985). Petitpas and Champagne (1988) suggest that athletes should be encouraged to recognise the skills they have learned through their sports participation and apply them in other areas of life.

Athletes work their bodies very hard on a regular basis and the majority participate in a high level of physical activity for a large of years. It is not healthy for an athlete to cease this extensive physical training abruptly and a gradual reduction in the intensity and volume of training is the best way to retire (Werthner and Orlick, 1982). Sporting institutions have a responsibility for the health of their athletes and their programmes should include physical de-training schedules to reduce the physiological and psychological problems that an athlete can face upon retirement (McLaughlin, 1981b; Sheedy, 1990). This physical adjustment aspect of retirement from sport is often not included within intervention programmes (Botterill, 1982).

Many sport retirement programmes are geared primarily towards education and employment and fail to recognise or address the emotional needs and psychological problems faced by many athletes (Crook and Robertson, 1991). The difficulty for many people is to appreciate the need for psychological interventions for athletes. This can particularly be the case for professional athletes with what appear to be enviable lifestyles and high salaries (Broom, 1982). However the available evidence has clearly shown that adjustment difficulties are faced by many retiring athletes. Sinclair and Orlick (1993) explain that athletes suggested that it would be helpful to be given guidance on what emotions to expect, what coping strategies are most effective, and from whom they can seek support.

Two significant aims of counselling interventions should be to help the athlete preserve their sense of self-worth while they establish a new identity (Taylor and Ogilvie, 1994) and enhance their ability to not only cope with the transition, but also to grow through the experience (Sparkes, 2000). Counselling can help athletes learn how to cope with the loss of their competitive sport career and come to terms with the anger, sadness and frustration they may experience during this process (Werthner and Orlick, 1982)s. Other suggested benefits of counselling are the development of an increased sense of control over the situation (Murphy, 1995), assistance with dealing with the behaviour changes required to make a smooth transition (Sheedy, 1990), and reassurance that the feelings are natural, inevitable and temporary (Wolff and Lester, 1989). For the counsellor or psychologist to be effective in their intervention, they must first understand the athlete's perspective and the role that sport has played in their life. This

understanding can help them to identify specific problematic behaviours and provide the required level of support (Gorbett, 1985).

Interventions should be offered in both the pre and post-retirement phases. The emphasis within these two phases is generally slightly different. Pre-retirement programmes should focus on helping the athlete to accumulate transition resources such as transferable skills and social support networks (Alfermann *et al.*, 2004) and on the development of new career options and goals for post-sport careers (Baillie, 1993; Chow, 2002). Gorbett suggests that:

The philosophy of the pre-retirement counselling approach is based on that fact that positive actions taken before retirement will prevent or minimise social and emotional deprivations in retirement (1985, p288).

These programmes should aim to identify athletes who will potentially face problems when their careers end and develop strategies to assist these individuals (Crook and Robertson, 1991). The emphasis for post-retirement programmes should be on the provision of support for the emotional adjustment of the athlete at a time when he or she may be more open to receiving this type of assistance (Baillie, 1993). These programmes should help the athlete to make use of the transition resources that they have developed to help them to cope effectively with their transition (Alfermann *et al.*, 2004).

Interventions can be delivered either on an individual basis or in the context of supportive group sessions with fellow retired athletes or involving significant others and family members. In many cases a mixture of these approaches are used to maximise impact (Lavalley *et al.*, 2002). Former athletes are a valuable

resource in terms of their specific sport knowledge and own personal experiences (Gordon, 1995). Group sessions can provide a supportive and nurturing environment and as trust develops feelings of isolation can dissipate as the athletes share similar feelings, problems, and experiences (Gorbett, 1985). However Petitpas and Champagne (2000) caution that at times diversity issues within a group based on factors such as age, life experiences, work histories, and educational backgrounds can be overwhelming for some of the individuals.

Although the use of group sessions has benefits and can be cost-effective, it is often impossible to go into the details of individual athlete's lives. Individual counselling, in comparison, allows for identification of each individual's needs and provides a more secure setting for the athlete to air his or her concerns (Baillie and Danish, 1992). The length of time an athlete will require support for is as variable as their reaction to retirement. Ongoing support groups can continue to provide support for the emotional issues concerned with the transition and with other aspects of life in the non-sport world (Chartrand and Lent, 1987; Petitpas, Danish, McKelvain, and Murphy, 1992).

6.2 Intervention Programmes

Over the past fifteen years, a number of intervention programmes have been set up in North America to help athletes cope with the termination of their sporting careers. Programmes have targeted various groups including elite athletes, professional athletes, and college-based athletes. In 1989 the United States Olympic Committee produced a manual designed to help elite athletes understand issues related to career termination and assist them to develop a plan for their

post-sport career (Ogilvie and Taylor, 1993b). Alongside this the Career Assistance Program for Athletes (CAPA) was initiated by a grant from the US Olympic Committee (Pearson and Petitpas, 1990) with its intention being to provide support to retiring Olympic and National team level athletes during the transition process (Gorely *et al.*, 2001). CAPA is an example of a preventive programme with interventions initiated prior to the athlete terminating their career. The framework used was a lifespan development model (Danish and D'Augelli, 1980; cited in Petitpas *et al.*, 1992), which is based on the idea that athletes can increase their sense of personal competence through an understanding of the transferable skills they acquire through their sports participation.

CAPA workshops focused on three main topics: managing the social and emotional impact of the transition out of sport, increasing the athletes' understanding and awareness of personal qualities relevant to coping with transitions and career development, and introducing information about the world of work (Gordon, 1995). A central element of the workshops was to provide the athletes with a supportive environment in which they could address their concerns about leaving sport and beginning a new career and discuss common myths about the retirement process (Pearson and Petitpas, 1990). However, a large segment of time was also devoted to helping athletes identify the variety of skills they have learned through their sports participation and how these can be targeted at potential employers in new career areas (Murphy, 1995). The CAPA programme also hoped to help enhance athletes' confidence levels by improving their understanding of the career development process and helping them to recognise the life skills they possess that would aid them to cope with their transition (Petitpas *et al.*, 1992). Individual counselling was also provided to meet the needs

of athletes particularly at risk of experiencing difficulty in their transition out of sport (Pearson and Petitpas, 1990).

Initially concerns had been expressed that the programme might act as a distraction to the athletes' competitive focus. However feedback from athletes participating in CAPA seminars suggested that receiving assistance on planning for a second career after sport helped them to concentrate more fully on their sporting goals (Murphy, 1995). Participants also commented on the relief they felt when they realised that other athletes were experiencing similar feelings and emotions in relation to the end of their sporting career (Murphy, 1995). Pearson and Petitpas (1990), while noting the apparent successes of the CAPA programme, added that one of the main problems remained getting athletes to make use of the services being made available to them.

Whilst the CAPA programme is designed to assist elite athletes, professional sport management have been slower to recognise and accept the responsibility they have to assist athletes to prepare for the future. The majority of professional sports in North America have Players' Associations which generate pension and disability programmes to protect retirees (McPherson, 1978). A number of programmes offering pre-retirement guidance and post-retirement support have been established in sports such as football, baseball, and hockey as management realise that their responsibilities should extend beyond the end of the athlete's playing career. Many former professional athletes believe that this is an area in which Players' Associations could and should be much more active, believing that more could have been done to help ease their transitions out of sport (Gordon, 1995).

The Philadelphia Flyers were one of the first professional sport organisations to subsidise a voluntary programme of vocational and emotional counselling to assist its players plan for the future and learn to cope with the transition out of their professional hockey career (McLaughlin, 1981a). The National Hockey League Players' Association has also organised the establishment of career planning seminars to assist players in their retirement. In a study by Blann and Zaichkowsky (1986, cited in Baillie and Danish, 1992) hockey players rated the two most helpful of the programmes provided as seminars assisting players to relate their personal strengths and skills to appropriate careers, and sessions helping players to develop and carry out education and career action plans.

The first professional football team to initiate a career counselling programme were the San Francisco 49ers. Services were provided both to athletes who wanted to prepare for a career after their playing career and to those who wished to develop skills that could supplement their playing salary as well as providing a basis for a future career (Ogilvie and Howe, 1982). Although the programme was positively received by the players it was halted by the coach, who was concerned that it was acting as a distraction to the players' performances on their field. The National Football League offers career transition and continuing education services to its athletes (Lavalley *et al.*, 2002) and the Players' Association has offered career counselling services to their members (Ogilvie and Taylor, 1993a). For example, the SCORE Foundation (Sports, Careers, Options, Research, and Education) was a joint initiative between NFL management and the Players' Association, aiming to facilitate the career development of both active and former players (Shahnasarian, 1992).

As only a small percentage of American college athletes move on to play in professional leagues, it would seem important that college athletic programmes work to broaden the interests and talents of the athletes beyond those restricted to sport (Kleiber and Malik, 1989). However Bergandi and Wittig (1984) found that most athletic directors within North American colleges stated that they believed academic and personal counselling programmes were beneficial for student-athletes, but very few of the colleges involved offered programmes to this population. Student-athletes have needs and difficulties additional to those of non-athletic students and specific intervention programmes can help to give them a realistic view of their future and teach them to use the same goal-setting techniques that they use in sport in other areas of their lives (Brown and Hartley, 1998; Lanning, 1982). Programmes such as the summer transition programme run by Webber, Sherman and Tegano (1987) can contribute to athlete development, providing workshops on topics such as time management skills and assistance with preparing for the transition out of college sport.

Since 1991, the Olympic Job Opportunities Programme (OJOP) has assisted athletes in the United States, Australia, and South Africa who are committed to developing a professional career as well as achieving their sport-related goals (North and Lavalley, 2004). The principal goal of the programme is to develop and source career opportunities. Programme staff work with the athletes to identify their future career goals and subsequently contact companies who can provide them with a career opportunity and also give them the time off necessary for training and competition (Petitpas *et al.*, 1997). Alongside this the programme also provides career analysis services, personality aptitude testing, interview skills training, and résumé preparation advice.

The Olympic Athlete Career Centre (OACC), funded by the Canadian Olympic Association, was launched in Canada in 1985 to assist athletes in preparing for their life after sport (Gorely *et al.*, 2001). In particular the programme considers the emotional transition of the athlete and encourages attempts to identify new opportunities as well as developing a new appreciation for existing activities outside of sport (Baillie, 1993). Services provided by the programme included career planning, résumé preparation, and aptitude testing (Gordon, 1995). The OACC also aimed to act as a bridge between athletes and employers who are receptive to the special needs of an active athlete seeking part-time work while still training and competing (Jollimore, 1986). The programme worked to nurture the opportunities that arose from an athlete's marketability and name recognition before those advantages disappeared (Baillie, 1993). McGown and Rail (1996) concluded that programmes such as the OACC were not being used by a large number of athletes and many were still not making the preparations required for the end of their career. This finding is supported by Sinclair and Orlick (1993), who describe some of the main reasons for athletes not using these types of services as them not being aware of the services, not finding the services helpful, or the location of the seminars not being suitable.

The first coordinated efforts made in Hong Kong to support elite athletes' education and careers were made by the Hong Kong Sports Institute (HKSI) in 1990. There were three main dimensions to their work; assisting with athletes' education, developing athletes' non-sport careers, and liaising between retired athletes and current athletes. This latter dimension was achieved through the establishment of an alumni association and through the provision of job referrals

for former athletes. Retired athletes were also able to participate in support sessions up to one year after their exit from competitive sport (Chow, 2002).

The Lifeskills for Elite Athletes Programme (LEAP) was launched by the Australian Institute of Sport (AIS) in 1989 and renamed SportsLEAP in 1993. The main goal of SportsLEAP was to help athletes to achieve a balanced lifestyle. The programme provided assistance in three forms: direct assistance in finding employment through career advice; educational support through communication and networking with academic institutions; and personal development seminars (Gordon, 1995). The Athlete Career and Education Programme, initially developed by the Victorian Institute of Sport in 1990, was subsequently merged with SportsLEAP to provide a comprehensive and nationally consistent career and education service for elite athletes in Australia (Lavalley *et al.*, 1997a).

The stated aim of the Australian ACE programme is to provide elite athletes with the skills, resources and contacts needed to pursue their educational goals and careers outside of sport, working from a long-term developmental perspective. The services offered include career planning, educational guidance, business referrals, and a career transition programme (Gorely *et al.*, 2001). Educational sources including videos and books are also provided giving the athlete assistance on various personal and professional skills such as relaxation methods and interview techniques (Gordon, 1995).

In their examination of potential users of the ACE programme, Gorely *et al.* found that transition services were used by less than one percent of the athletes and suggested that “athletes might not consider retirement to be an issue until its

proximity draws near” (2001, p13). One of the challenges that the ACE programme must face is finding ways of increasing athletes’ motivation and interest in learning skills relevant for outside of sport and planning for the end of their competitive careers. Dagley suggested that ACE services could be improved through increased contact between staff and athletes. Athletes in his study also highlighted that ACE staff should “make it easier for athletes to become aware of the services available and how to get in contact and involved with them” (2003, p94).

UK Sport developed its own version of the Australian ACE programme, entitled the ACE UK Programme. Established in 1999 to provide elite athletes across the UK with career, education and personal development guidance, it was based on the idea that athletes with balanced lifestyles cope better with problems such as injury and retirement and have more confidence in their future after sport. Services offered to athletes included personal development courses on topics such as financial planning and job seeking skills, education guidance, career planning, and career transition support (North and Lavalley, 2004). In conjunction with the British Olympic Association it also offered the Olympic and Paralympic Employment Network (OPEN) programme, which creates links with companies in order to offer employment opportunities to athletes (UK Sport, 2001).

Nearly one third of eligible athletes were found to have used at least one of the specific elements available to them through the ACE UK programme (North and Lavalley, 2004). However, a review of the programme carried out by UK Sport (2001) found that only a small number of athletes had used the career transition services and only two percent had made use of the OPEN programme. Athletes

questioned the knowledge of the ACE UK advisors on the more specialised or technical education and career opportunities and described the OPEN programme as being underdeveloped with too few employers involved in the scheme. The review also suggested that there were not enough advisors for the programme to be able to provide a quality service to all of the eligible athletes (UK Sport, 2001). In February 2004 the programme was re-launched with its new title of Performance Lifestyle. This reflected the notion of an integrated lifestyle which enables the athlete to compete at the highest level. The delivery of this programme in Scotland will be the focus of Chapter Seven.

6.3 Conclusion

The need for some formal support structure is evident for athletes ending their careers in sport. Intervention programmes need to be both proactive and responsive to the needs of the athletes. They also have to overcome the issues of disinterest, denial, and resistance to interventions from both athletes and coaches. Coaches need to start to see that there is a need for policies and programmes to help athletes exit sports (Blann, 1992; Denison, 1996; Hawkins and Blann, 1996). Athletes also need to accept their portion of responsibility, in not falling into the trap of blocking out everything but their involvement in sport. Although a number of quality programmes are currently in place, in many countries athletes are still overprotected during their competitive career and then paid minimum attention when they retire. This gap in provision does not provide athletes with a realistic and efficient way of dealing with their career termination (Chamalidis, 1997). There is a general lack of research on the quality of these programmes and more

research is required to provide comparative data to help establish universal principles for effective interventions.

Chapter 7: STUDY 3 – A Study of Performance Lifestyle in Scotland

7.1 Background

sportscotland is the national agency for sport. It supports the best interests of Scottish sport by advising on sports policy, supporting governing bodies of sport, local authorities, and other partners in developing plans for sport, and investing both lottery and Scottish Executive funding in order to increase participation and improve performances in Scottish sport. In 1998 the document “Sport 21: Nothing Left to Chance” was produced, laying out the strategy for the development of sport in Scotland (Scottish Sports Council, 1998). Sport 21 set out to ensure that the opportunity to participate in sport and recreation was available to everyone in Scotland. The strategy also aimed to maximise Scotland’s sporting potential and to establish Scotland as a world class sporting nation. In 2003 this strategy was reviewed and updated within a new document “Sport 21: 2003-2007” (**sportscotland**, 2003). Scotland’s strategy for sport was further revised in 2007, within the document “Reaching Higher” (Scottish Government, 2007). This strategy paper sets out the long-term aims and objectives for sport until 2020 and plans for its delivery and evaluation.

The very best athletes in selected sports in Scotland are catered for through the Scottish Institute of Sport. The Scottish Institute of Sport was established in 1998 and currently supports over 200 athletes. The clear focus is on preparing Scotland’s best athletes to perform on the world stage. Through expertise in coaching, service, and support, the Scottish Institute of Sport strives to provide world-class athletes with the technical ability and physical capability to deliver

world class performances. They embrace a culture of winning and strive to create a high performance learning environment where innovation can thrive. The Scottish Institute of Sport is Lottery funded through **sportscotland**, with a budget of around £4.5 million per year. To date, Institute supported athletes have achieved an impressive array of medals at World Championships, Olympics, Paralympics, and Commonwealth Games¹⁵.

The Scottish Institute of Sport provides varying levels of support to a large number of sports. There are eight fully managed sport programmes, each with a full-time coach. These sports are badminton, curling, football, golf, hockey, judo, rugby, and swimming. Additionally, targeted support sport programmes provide unique tailored solutions to individuals and small groups of athletes outwith the fully supported programmes (Scottish Institute of Sport, no publication date).

Six Area Institutes of Sport in Scotland form an integral part of the Scottish Institute of Sport Network. Officially launched in 2000, they offer potential world-class talent access to essential support services locally to help improve an athlete's performances on their road to the world stage. The Network aims to provide athletes with individually tailored programmes designed to help to improve their performances, achieve selection to the Scottish Institute of Sport, and ultimately develop their potential to reach the top level in their chosen sport. The Area Institutes are partnerships between local agencies involved in the development of performance sport along with **sportscotland** and the Scottish Institute of Sport. Four are housed within Universities: the Central Scottish Institute of Sport at the University of Stirling, the Grampian Institute of Sport at

¹⁵ Interview with Matt Lock, Communications and Marketing Manager, Scottish Institute of Sport, 2nd July 2007

the University of Aberdeen, the Tayside and Fife Institute of Sport at the University of Dundee, and the East of Scotland Institute of Sport at Heriot Watt University.

The Scottish Institute of Sport Network's core services are delivered by specialist teams in the fields of coaching, sports medicine, sports science, strength and conditioning, and performance lifestyle. Complementary disciplines also support these central services. Each athlete receives a tailored, specific, flexible service which is well informed and well planned and which is geared to complement the expertise and the support they receive from other providers, including personal coaches and governing bodies of sport (Scottish Institute of Sport, 2005). One of the priorities is to ensure that there are no barriers between the services. Those involved in the delivery of all of these services are committed to working together across disciplines to put athletes at the centre of their work and to provide the best possible support for them (Scottish Institute of Sport, 2006).

Performance Lifestyle is an individualised support service specifically designed to help Scotland's athletes manage the challenges of their lives and create the environment necessary for success (Scottish Institute of Sport, no publication date). The lead statement for Performance Lifestyle is "minimising life's distractions to maximise performance".¹⁶ The programme supports athletes to plan, prioritise, and integrate their career, education, lifestyle, and sporting demands so that they can be successful both while active and in their life after sport.

¹⁶ Interview with Matt Lock.

The Performance Lifestyle programme offers a variety of services to athletes, depending on their individual needs. When an athlete is inducted into the Scottish Institute of Sport Network they complete a Lifestyle Profile/Needs Analysis with their adviser. This is a one-to-one session which will introduce them to the wide range of support that the programme has to offer. After this, the level of support through the programme depends on the needs of each athlete. The programme is dedicated towards four areas: Education Support; Employment Support; Lifestyle Support; and Preparation for Life after Sport.¹⁷

The aim of this study is to provide an evaluation of the Performance Lifestyle programme, focusing in particular on the services related to preparation for life after sport. The perspectives of a number of different groups with an interest or involvement in the programme have been sought to provide an analysis of the services currently provided to athletes through Performance Lifestyle. Following this, the study looks to suggest some ways in which the Scottish Institute of Sport Network can improve the services it provides to athletes facing transitions through comparisons to the delivery of Performance Lifestyle to other athlete groups in Great Britain.

7.2 Research Design

A qualitative approach has been adopted to explore perceptions of the delivery of Performance Lifestyle to athletes in Scotland. Semi-structured interviews were conducted to facilitate comparisons across the participants. With semi-structured interviews the content of the interview is focused on the issues that are central to

¹⁷ Interview with Susan Elms, Head of Performance Lifestyle, Scottish Institute of Sport, April 19th 2006.

the research question, but the type of questioning and discussion allows for greater flexibility than survey-style interviews (Minichiello *et al.*, 1990).

7.2.1 Participants

A total of 25 people were interviewed for this study, to collect the viewpoints of five different groups. Table 20 below provides a breakdown of the participants.

Table 20: Study participants

Participant Group	Number of Informants
Performance Lifestyle advisers	4
Former Scottish Institute of Sport athletes	7
Area Institute managers	4
Governing Bodies	4
Comparison programmes outside Scotland	6

Four Performance Lifestyle advisers were randomly selected from the contact list provided at the end of an exploratory interview with the Head of Performance Lifestyle. They varied in their level of experience, background, and length of time working for the Scottish Institute of Sport Network. All of the advisers contacted agreed to participate in the study.

Athletes from Study One who were identified as having been supported by the Scottish Institute of Sport were contacted to find out whether they would participate in an interview exploring their views on Performance Lifestyle. A total of 12 athletes were contacted, of whom seven responded. All seven respondents were invited to interview, in order to obtain a range of viewpoints. All of the athletes had exited the Scottish Institute of Sport after the change in the service from ACE to Performance Lifestyle. The sports represented by the athletes are

curling (2), athletics (2), hockey (2), and swimming (1). Names have been changed to ensure anonymity.

There are six Area Institute managers in Scotland and four of these were randomly selected to participate in the study and contacted by telephone. They varied in terms of the length of time they had been working for the Institute, from less than one year to eight years. The selection also hoped to gain the perspective of managers from both large and small Area Institutes. All four managers contacted agreed to participate in the study.

Governing bodies were chosen based on their relationship with the Scottish Institute of Sport network. The sports chosen represent the following programme structures: fully managed sport programme (swimming), targeted support programme (gymnastics), and buying services (women's football). In addition, athletics was selected as it has chosen to change its relationship with the Scottish Institute of Sport, therefore it was felt that it could add an extra dimension to the analysis. Within each of the governing bodies, a key informant was identified and subsequently contacted. All of the key informants contacted agreed to participate in the study.

In addition to the above, a number of key informants from other Performance Lifestyle programmes within Great Britain were contacted. These were: the English Institute of Sport, the English Cricket Board, the Welsh Rugby Union, and the Professional Rugby Players Association.

7.2.2 Instruments

Interview guides for all groups were developed following the review of literature in the area of athlete support. Information developed through Study One and Study Two also informed the development of the questionnaires. Questionnaire data from former athletes in Study One indicated that the most commonly used support service by Scottish female athletes up until this time has been the development of employment and education opportunities. These athletes also indicated that they felt pre-retirement counselling, retirement readings, and physical and dietary detraining programmes would have been useful. This information about the perceptions of useful services was used to help direct some of the questions towards Institute staff and governing bodies. In addition, a number of specific sources were used, including the Scottish Institute of Sport Website, Annual Reports, and Athlete Satisfaction Survey findings. Interviews with the Head of Performance Lifestyle¹⁸ and the Communications and Marketing Manager¹⁹ also helped to shape the interview questions. Reviews of website material were also used prior to the interviews with staff from the governing bodies and the comparison programmes.

The interviews with the Performance Lifestyle advisers were designed to find out more information about the programme and their views on the strengths and weaknesses of what is currently being delivered. A copy of the interview guide can be found in Appendix J. The interviews with the former athletes aimed to find out how much they made use of the programme both during and at the end of their career, and their opinions on the service as a whole. A copy of the interview guide can be found in Appendix K. The interviews with the Area Institute managers

¹⁸ Interview with Susan Elms.

¹⁹ Interview with Matt Lock.

were aimed specifically at the delivery of the programme at Area Institute level. A copy of the interview guide can be found in Appendix L. The interviews with the governing bodies varied between the sports. These interviews examined their views on the delivery of Performance Lifestyle to athletes in their sport and the strength of the relationship. Finally, interviews with the comparison programmes focused specifically on finding out details about their programme and the pertinent issues they faced.

7.2.3 Procedure

For each of the participants a convenient and suitable time and location was arranged. All of the interviews were conducted face-to-face, in a quiet location with only the participant and the researcher were present. Before the start of the interview the researcher provided an overview of the study's aims and objectives. After this, with the participants' permission, a digital voice recorder was turned on before the commencement of the interview. The interviews ranged from 20 to 95 minutes in length.

7.2.4 Qualitative Analysis

All of the interviews were transcribed and then to prepare for the analysis, each transcript was read while the corresponding interview was played on audiotape. This was done to re-familiarise the researcher with the interview and to take note of any verbal inflections, emphases, or affective cues that would not be evident on the transcript.

For the interviews with Performance Lifestyle advisers, former athletes, and Area Institute managers, themes were then developed from the first transcript of each subject group using an inductive content analysis procedure. These themes served as the framework for the inductive analyses of the remaining transcripts in the group. Using the constant comparative method, quotes from each subsequent transcript were compared to the existing framework. As a result some categories were redefined, some were combined, and some were abandoned outright. Throughout the analyses the overall themes were under constant revision (Patton, 1990). A full list of the themes developed for each can be found in Appendix M. As the interviews with the governing bodies and the comparison programmes were primarily ‘fact-finding’, the salient points were simply used to build a picture for each.

7.3 Results

The results of the qualitative analysis are presented in five sections: Performance Lifestyle advisers, Scottish Institute of Sport athletes, Area Institute Managers, governing body staff, and Performance Lifestyle programmes in Britain.

7.3.1 Performance Lifestyle Advisers

There are currently nine Performance Lifestyle advisers working alongside the programme manager in Scotland, with two of these working full-time. Advisers were recruited and selected who had a large amount of life experience in various different backgrounds which could be utilised in their work with the athletes. The range of backgrounds includes former elite athletes, physical education teachers,

social workers, sport psychologists, and those from education and careers backgrounds. Every lifestyle adviser goes through an accreditation process, currently run by UK Sport. In terms of ongoing training, advisers attend a UK-wide Performance Lifestyle conference each year, at which people are brought in to talk about the research they are conducting and the potential implications. There is also an appraisal system in place giving advisers an opportunity to raise any training issues or requests they have.

Programme Description

The advisers highlighted that one of the most important aspects was ensuring that the focus of the Performance Lifestyle service was, first and foremost, the performance of the athlete. Perceptions of a service of this type are often that it is about finding athletes suitable educational courses or employment. The decision of the Institute system to change from the original programme, called Athlete Career and Education (ACE), to the new label of Performance Lifestyle was an attempt to make this distinction and clarify the purpose of this support service. As one adviser explained:

Our job here is delivery of medals, that's the job, it's not to make them study, or make them get a job, but it's very clearly to look at the distractions that are out there, and giving the athletes the ability to control those distractions, and to make decisions about the distractions they can't control (adviser 'A', p2).

Some athletes may require assistance in attaining some academic flexibility, as their studies are interfering with their sporting performance. For others, it might be about finding a suitable part-time job, as they find that having only their sport to focus on detrimental to their progress in their sport.

The advisers described *Education Support* as being about negotiation and communication with schools, colleges and universities to enable the athlete to continue with their studies as long as is feasible. It is also about communicating with parents about their child's educational options:

Getting the parents and the youngsters to think about how they can approach education differently to allow them to fit in with what they want in terms of their sport programme and then taking that to the school and persuading the school to allow that as well (adviser 'D', p2).

All of the advisers commented that *Education Support* dominated their work. As a large number of the athletes are either school or university age, this is not particularly surprising. The majority of the athletes they are working with understand the importance of education, therefore for the most part the advisers are facilitating this aspect of their lifestyle, ensuring that they can maintain a balance with their sport and seeking viable alternative arrangements if required. Within the Area Institutes the advisers are required to work very closely with the parents, who still play a very important part in the young athletes' lives. Some of their role involves providing support to parents, particularly for those who have not had a child involved in elite level sport before. These parents require information on what is involved for their child and how they can best support them.

Employment Support includes negotiation with employers for flexibility for the athlete and getting the employers to recognise that the things that make a good athlete can also make a good employee. This area also includes career planning, helping an athlete to discover their own strengths and interests and matching these

to possible career aspirations. The area of *Lifestyle Support* involves support for other aspects of the athlete's lifestyle that can impact upon their performance. This includes integration planning to enable the athlete to combine the demands of sport with other personal aspirations, and training and development programmes which can include workshops on nutritional cooking, time management, handling finances, or dealing with the media.

Preparation for Life after Sport includes both planning for the end of the sports career and dealing with issues related to both planned and sudden career transitions. Planning for life after sport is taking place to some extent throughout the time that the athletes are in the Scottish Institute of Sport Network. This starts indirectly with young athletes, talking about putting alternative plans into place, because life after sport can happen at any time. Having that security blanket can actually give the athletes confidence and allows them to focus on their sporting goals. As one adviser explained, they usually approach it from an educational perspective:

Get the qualifications, put them in the bank, and then they are there, nobody can take them away from you, and whatever happens you can always go back and pick up from there (adviser 'C', p6).

From the same perspective, they are also getting the athletes to plan ahead, to ensure that their sporting goals and long term career goals can work side by side:

Lets look at the next five years, what are your sports aims, what would your career aims be, you know, how do you see those two fitting together. Let's look and see if there are any potential clashes, say Commonwealth Games at the same time as you are going to be doing your finals or that sort of thing (adviser 'B', p5).

Performance Lifestyle advisers work with older athletes who are starting to think about the end of their sport career to identify and develop their transferable skills. They organise work experience opportunities to allow them to try a few things out and also work with the athlete to build their CV.

The Institute has an exit process that kicks in when an athlete chooses to leave, is deselected, or exits due to long-term injury. The first part of this exit process is a letter from the Scottish Institute of Sport Director or Area Institute of Sport Manager, explaining that they will receive an exit medical and that they have the option of an exit interview with their Performance Lifestyle adviser. If there is an ongoing medical issue then they get access to medical and physiotherapy services until it is resolved. Outside of this, Performance Lifestyle is the only service athletes can still access once they have exited. For athletes in the Scottish Institute of Sport, athletes will normally touch base three months after the exit interview, then again at six months if they have had contact at three months. These athletes are given the opportunity to work with the programme for up to a year after their exit. Area Institute of Sport athletes can access Performance Lifestyle support for up to three months after their exit, as long as they contact the adviser within the first month.

At times, the advisers find there is some cross-over into other areas, such as counselling or psychology. In these situations, there is a network of specialists that the athletes can be referred to. Some advisers with appropriate backgrounds, for example with counselling backgrounds, are likely to deal with more of these issues than others. However, in general, these are seen to be outwith the remit of the Performance Lifestyle programme.

Issues Identified

At present the athlete-staff ratio is relatively high. On average, the part-time staff work with about 25-30 athletes, while the full-time advisers are working with between 100 and 140 athletes. These include both active athletes and those who have been deselected from the Scottish Institute of Sport Network. There is an identified need for an increase in staff within the Performance Lifestyle programme. Reducing the athlete-staff ratio would improve the service quality and the depth of contact. As identified by one adviser, “we need more people, because the quality of the service is very much dependent on the amount of time you can spend and invariably people slip through the net” (adviser ‘A’, p10). The full extent of the programme has not yet been realised because they do not have the resources to make a complete impact. Performance Lifestyle staff are often unable to provide services proactively to all their athletes, leaving the athletes responsible for making contact after the initial meeting. A question has to be raised as to whether all athletes will be willing to take this step.

An increase in staff numbers would enable the development of larger scale projects and organisation of increased numbers of group workshops. “We would like to do more on the education side of things, so workshops and that kind of thing ... at the moment we only maybe do three or four in a year” (adviser ‘D’, p8). An example of what is planned for the near future is a workshop for parents, providing an arena for them to ask the questions and get the answers they need about their children as athletes and the issues they face. This is particularly important for those parents who were not involved in the sport environment themselves. Large scale projects to bring athletes from different sports together are also suggested to get some cross-sport mixing and sharing of experiences, to

help the athletes to develop a sense of belonging to their area institute and to take more pride in what they are doing. An example of this type of project comes from the Central Scotland Institute of Sport, where athletes from a selected number of sports attended a training camp in Club La Santa in Lanzarote.

Performance Lifestyle is not as well integrated into some of the sports, particularly at Area Institute level, as it ideally needs to be. This is generally linked to the attitude of the coach, as described by one adviser; “some sports don’t buy in and I think that comes from the coach ... if the coaches don’t recognise the value of the programme then they don’t encourage the athlete to use it” (adviser ‘D’, p3). While some coaches will seek out Performance Lifestyle for their athletes, others struggle to grasp the concept of it. Better education of coaches will assist Performance Lifestyle to become further imbedded in the programme of these sports and improve the usage levels of their athletes.

Some of the advisers expressed concern that a lot of their work is on a reactive, rather than proactive, basis at the present time. This is a reflection of their high workload and therefore linked to the previous issue of the athlete-staff ratio. One of the advisers explained the importance of proactive work:

I have different strategies ... for some people I will just turn up when I know they’re going to have a pitch session or a gym session or whatever ... and quite often you find that there is something that they want to talk to you about, but they’re just not always good at coming to you (adviser ‘B’, p7).

A very small percentage of athletes appear to buy-in to the exit services offered by the Performance Lifestyle programme, particularly at Area Institute level.

Although there are some athletes who will walk away and have no need to use the service, there are others who may need it and, although not willing to seek help themselves, might accept some assistance if it came to them. An athlete may face adjustment issues five or six months after their exit and at that stage have no outlet to help them as they have never picked up on the programme and have no other avenue in which to seek help. As one adviser explained:

I think we could do something there to make it easier for athletes to access them if they run into difficulties, because it may not be three months after, it could be six or nine months after, but it's still very much a kick back from what they've been asked and expected to do (adviser 'A', p10).

Another adviser suggested that the programme doesn't have the resources it requires to meet all of the demands transitioning athletes may have. Advisers spend their time working with active athletes and the door is left open for athletes who have exited to return for help if they wish.

The advisers suggest that the strength of the service athletes receive prior to their exit, and the resultant relationships that have been built, have an impact upon whether those athletes will access Performance Lifestyle services on their exit from the Scottish Institute of Sport network:

If you have only met the adviser once three years ago and you haven't been near them since, then you get deselected and get told you can contact Performance Lifestyle, I think the chances of you doing that are pretty slim (adviser 'C', p4).

This indicates there has to be an emphasis on offering a quality service to all the athletes, so that a trusting relationship has been built and the athlete fully understands and is involved in the programme.

7.3.2 Athletes

Four of the seven athletes interviewed utilised the Performance Lifestyle service while they were active Scottish Institute of Sport athletes. Claire and Lisa attended some workshops offered by Performance Lifestyle, which included media training, time management skills, and nutritional cooking. Claire talked about her thoughts on what she was offered:

The media training session was really useful, because it is not something that you have any experience of really. The nutritional cooking wasn't as good, maybe better for the younger swimmers away from home for the first time, but I guess I felt I knew most of it anyway. In general though it is good to be offered a chance to develop other skills I guess.

Judith also spoke about being offered the opportunity to attend a workshop on media training. However, the service that she made the most use of was employment support. She had just finished university and needed some help to find part-time work that would enable her to maintain a full training schedule. Initially she had hoped that she could be found something linked to her degree, but this did not end up being the case:

I ended up working at the bank for a while, which I got through the West of Scotland Institute who developed that relationship ... in terms of career wise it wasn't completely useful, because although I liked the idea of doing something more relevant to my degree at the time on a flexible basis, there was nothing around.

Rhianna used more direct assistance from Performance Lifestyle. In the build up to the Olympic Games she curled full time and therefore had to stop work. Performance Lifestyle assisted her in attaining financial assistance for childcare, which as a single parent she found very beneficial. Rhianna's view of Performance Lifestyle was that aside from the financial assistance, there was not much more they could offer her. She felt that they were very focused on career and education matters, neither of which were relevant to her situation. Similar views were expressed by Sally and Diana, two of the athletes who did not use any support during their time in the Institute:

I can remember that there was some support on offer, but I didn't need it. I didn't need education help, I had already done my degree, and I was settled in my job so careers stuff wasn't relevant to what I was doing. So I couldn't really see how they could help me, there wasn't anything there. (Sally)

Nicola's view of Performance Lifestyle support during her time as an Institute athlete was quite negative. She described an initial meeting she had with her adviser:

I remember having a conversation ... at this point of time I was playing hockey, I was working full time at a reasonable level, and I was also doing a masters degree in construction law part time. I remember me telling him all about this and then he said right that's all very interesting but what else can you be doing to expand your horizons ... it was almost like he had his little checklist, and I'm not sure to this day exactly what else they were expecting me to be doing.

In Nicola's case, she was not in need of Performance Lifestyle support due to her personal circumstances. However, the experience she had in her initial consultation made it less likely that she would consider returning to seek their

assistance at a later stage. The athletes were asked if there was anything that they felt that they would like to have seen offered by Performance Lifestyle. Athletes who had not made use of the service could see no areas in which it could have been helpful. They did highlight that they felt the service could probably be of great benefit to athletes with different personal circumstances:

My life was so busy, I was sorted. I think that everything they were talking about was more relevant to younger athletes, not to people so far through their career like me. (Nicola)

Nicola's thoughts were echoed by Sally, who felt that many of the Performance Lifestyle services might have been of use earlier in her career, but that these services did not exist at that time. Perhaps young athletes now coming up through the system will have more positive views on all of the aspects of Performance Lifestyle and how it helped them.

In general, the athletes appeared to view Performance Lifestyle being predominantly concerned with careers and education and demonstrated a lack of knowledge and understanding of the extent of what the programme can offer. This was particularly the case for the athletes who did not need or make use of the service during their time in the Institute, and who therefore failed to realise the extent of the service and areas in which they could be helped. Emphasis should therefore be placed on educating the coaches and promoting the service. As Claire pointed out:

I guess there maybe could have been other courses I could have done, a lot of it is that you don't know what you need until the opportunity is there, if you know what I mean.

Several of the athletes expressed disappointment that their exit was not better recognised by the Scottish Institute of Sport as a whole. For example, Diana described her exit:

I just made the decision that it was time. Made the decision, told the Institute, and I never even got a response from the head coach, who was just new but it doesn't matter, he knew who I was. So I didn't get any response, and that kind of made me think, well, they didn't care.

Rhianna and Lisa also talked about what they felt was a lack of acknowledgement of the time that they had given to their sport and to the Institute in particular:

I didn't get a letter to say, really sorry you're retiring, or anything. So that was quite disappointing actually ... I have done a lot for the sport and I'm not wanting anything from them, but from the Institute's point of view, they call on me to help them promote things, so just a bit of acknowledgement in some form would have been nice. (Rhianna)

The four athletes who used Performance Lifestyle support during their time in the Institute also made use of the exit service on offer. All four made the use of the continued support after exiting the Institute system in their transition into a new career. Claire started her search for a new career prior to her retirement and utilised Performance Lifestyle for interview skills and help with work opportunities. She knew the area that she wanted to move into and so therefore felt she simply needed some assistance in helping her to make the transition. Judith was deselected before she decided to retire, due to poor performance. She continued to train for some time after her deselection before finally deciding to end her career. She was aware that she had up to one year of continued

Performance Lifestyle support and made use of this once she had retired. In the end, she did not actually need very much assistance:

I spoke to the lifestyle adviser person a few times, looked at CV's and stuff like that, but in the end I was lucky (in job hunt) ... perhaps if it had been a bit longer I might have drawn on their support further.

Lisa had also had performance issues during her career which had led to being deselected for a period of time. By the end of her career she was an Institute athlete, but initially did not utilise any support services as she had some quite negative feelings about the system.

I think there are people who are in positions in both the Institute and probably Scottish Athletics who aren't there necessarily for the best of the athletes. They are probably getting paid an awful lot of money, and I say I hold my hand up and say I am very cynical, but I am cynical because of the experiences I have had.

However, some months after her retirement, when she had still not identified a new career area, she returned to seek assistance from Performance Lifestyle. Through renewing contact with the adviser she had worked with previously she identified a potential career in strength and conditioning.

Rhianna also used career support when she retired. She was at a loss as to what she could move into: "I used to have a career in tourism but I didn't want to go back there, it had been too long, but I wasn't sure how to move forward either". After a period of job searching with the assistance of her adviser, Rhianna was offered a coaching job within the Institute network and was able to move forwards.

Nicola did not look for any support upon her retirement as she felt she did not need any assistance. She had a good career in law that had continued to develop alongside her sport and therefore had an easy transition:

I suppose the stage I was at, I couldn't really have seen where the support might have been applied, everything was already in place. It wasn't like cutting the umbilical cord and there you go, make your own way in life. I already had a pathway, I wasn't at the extreme end of that, life was pretty much going to continue as it was.

Sally also had a good career to turn to at the end of her time in hockey. However, in comparison to Nicola, Sally experienced some psychological and emotional difficulties upon retirement. Her experiences during her final tournament had been particularly negative and she struggled to deal with how she felt at the end. As she had had no contact with Performance Lifestyle during her time in the Institute, this was not an avenue she felt she could turn to when she was experiencing problems:

I think there was support that could be accessed through the Institute, but I was never offered it and I didn't have contact with anyone from before, there was nobody I felt I could just go and speak to ... no-one came to me and said what are you thinking, do you need any help, or whatever.

To help her come to terms with what had happened, Sally independently sought the advice of a psychologist. This is an area in which she could have been helped by a referral from Performance Lifestyle, had she known that this service was available to her. Diana also felt that she could have benefited from being able to speak to someone at the end of her career, about her decision to retire and the

feelings that went along with this. However, she had never developed a relationship with her Performance Lifestyle adviser:

I hadn't spoken to her in the seven years I was in the Institute or anything, and anyway it was more about how you could get time off work, she was always there to help but I had never had any problems, so I had had no contact with her and I wasn't going to suddenly start talking to her about me not curling.

These last two cases highlight the importance of developing a relationship with athletes while they are in the system, in order for them to feel that they are able to access support afterwards if required.

All seven athletes felt that it was important for support to be provided to retiring athletes. Judith, Sally and Claire felt that it was an area that could be improved. Judith felt a meeting with Performance Lifestyle when an athlete is exiting the Institute should be more strongly encouraged:

Not as like a mandatory thing but as something that is actively encouraged, saying well what are your plans and what are you thinking of doing and is there any way we can help you.

Claire added to this, suggesting that the programme needed to be more proactive in this area of support, as athletes do not necessarily know what they can get or who they can turn to. She felt that more information on retirement would have been useful:

Even just to, to speak to people who have actually done it, to tell you this is how you'll feel and it's quite normal ... and I guess just kind of dealing with how you feel and all that would be quite good.

Several of the athletes felt that some form of detraining advice and support would have been useful upon their retirement. Rhianna and Lisa suggested that provision of a detraining programme would have benefited them, while Nicola would have liked to have been offered some form of continued link with the strength and conditioning element of her training:

If I could have had some form of tangible link to the training element, because I couldn't keep myself going with that, but I didn't know that was going to be the case at the time. I think if they had managed to keep me linked in some way, there would have been a knock on benefit for the likes of the SHU or even the Institute, in terms of me being available, for example mentoring and aspects like that.

7.3.3 Area Institute Managers

Strengths of the Performance Lifestyle Programme

The direction of Performance Lifestyle in Area Institutes is determined by the managers, therefore the level of their support for the programme is important. In general, the Area Institute managers were very positive about the role played by the Performance Lifestyle programme. They felt that it had an unquestionable impact on their athletes: “if somebody decided Performance Lifestyle wasn't worth investing in any longer and it was taken out I think we'd very quickly see the difference” (manager 'C', p4). As a lot of the athletes at Area Institute level are still in education, it is perhaps not surprising that the managers highlighted the area of *Education Support* as particularly important. For example, as one participant described:

It's been a fantastic help in terms of working out school timetabling to allow them to train more during the day, or indeed to study during the day to free them

up to do their training before and after school (manager 'D', p1).

At Area Institute level there is currently an education policy agreed with local authorities. This policy identifies the level of support that would be expected for all athletes who are students within their schools, including issues such as flexible learning, additional learning support, and adjustments to timetabling.

The managers viewed the area of *Employment Support* as less important for the majority of their athletes due to the stage that they are at within their careers. However, they did highlight that workshops developing skills such as writing CVs, interviewing techniques, and development of transferable skills could all benefit the athletes in the future.

There are things we do a wee bit of, things like time management, interview skills and so on, but we have not done as much of that as I thought we would do, of those and other Performance Lifestyle courses, we should try to offer more (manager 'A', p1).

One of the Area Institutes has attempted to develop some employment links for their athletes, developing opportunities with a bank for flexible working hours. This is something they perceived should be expanded, although there was suggestion that this could be addressed through the Scottish Institute of Sport rather than the Area Institutes.

In terms of *Lifestyle Support*, the managers highlighted the amount of time spent by their advisers on social and family issues with their athletes. They felt that this was an area in which if they did not have the support of Performance Lifestyle, they themselves would have to spend a lot more time talking through issues with

both athletes and parents. Similar to the advisers, managers talked about the importance of dealing with parents, and the important role that Performance Lifestyle played in this relationship. They felt that it was important for athletes and parents to have someone to talk to who was not directly related to the selection process within the system.

Preparation for Life after Sport was pinpointed as being the least important area of support for Area Institute athletes. They felt that any required planning would be taking place already through the other areas of support. They believe that at this stage in the athlete's career they should be encouraged to commit to their education to develop their base for the future, at a time when they are not yet elite within their sport. When athletes are deselected from an Area Institute, they are entitled to up to three months continued support through Performance Lifestyle. However, for many deselected athletes, this can be simply a blip in performance and they will continue to train, aiming to get back into the system at a later stage. Therefore the perception is that deselection support for these athletes is generally not as important. However, for some athletes their deselection may mark the end of the road for them in terms of elite sport involvement, as they have reached as far as they are capable of doing. In these instances, support may become vital.

Issues Identified

In a similar vein to the advisers, the main issue identified by the Area Institute managers was the high athlete-staff ratio. It could be argued that these might perhaps be an indicator of a lower level of importance placed on this programme in comparison to other services. Anderson and Morris (2000, p78) suggest that "many countries that have developed programmes have generally not

implemented them with the conviction that is necessary to create the necessary impact”. Through the interviews there was a general feeling from the participants that many people still have a view of Performance Lifestyle as being a ‘soft’ service area and therefore potentially of less importance. This viewpoint was highlighted in one interview:

There is some resistance to increasing (Performance Lifestyle) staff numbers. There is still a feeling that if we had the money available to spend on support services let’s spend it on something where we get a much more obvious return (manager ‘C’, p4).

Another manager suggested that the Institute system was targeting recruitment in areas other than Performance Lifestyle, in which a greater need had been identified. Managers further suggested that the high workload of their advisers meant that they could not encourage them to be proactive in contacting athletes. They let athletes know that the service is there and what it can do to help then leave it to the athletes to make contact:

Why should you spend the same amount of time chasing athletes that are ignoring phone calls, that aren’t getting in touch, as opposed to athletes that are desperately seeking the service? It makes sense to deliver to the athletes that are seeking the support (manager ‘D’, p5).

The managers, like the advisers, were concerned at the low uptake of the exit services offered to athletes. Some of the issues could be linked to athletes receiving information regarding their option to have an exit interview in the same letter as the information regarding their exit from the Scottish Institute of Sport network. This could be a particular issue for athletes who are deselected, as one manager described, “I think they see deselection as a rejection of them and they

pull away from anything associated with it” (manager ‘A’, p5). Similar to the advisers, they highlighted the importance of an ongoing relationship in this process:

If the athlete has built a relationship with Performance Lifestyle then it is more likely at the exit stage that the adviser will be proactive to speak to them just after receipt of the letter of deselection to see if there is any support that they need at that stage. If the relationship hasn’t been built up then there is no relationship to try and support at that particular time (manager ‘D’, p5).

The Area Institute managers talked about the lack of integration of some of the sports, in the same manner as the advisers did. They felt that this varied greatly in different sports, with the better relationships generally occurring with fully integrated sports in which the coach was employed by the Area Institute. One manager talked about their attempt to involve some of the club and personal coaches of athletes through offering a specially designed workshop. However they received no response from these individuals. Success has been seen where the Performance Lifestyle adviser has worked closely with the coach and developed links with that individual and the sport. Coach support of the process is important because if the coach doesn’t feel that something can support the athlete then the athlete won’t access the service.

The managers talked about the possibilities of links with governing bodies to deliver Performance Lifestyle to athletes not currently receiving any support. This is either because their sport is not supported or because they are at the level below Institute support. However, they have some concern that there is a fine line between supporting and over-supporting athletes. All of the managers felt that athletes need to be in control of their own career and take some responsibility for

it. They felt that there was the danger that providing too much support could have a negative impact:

There is an expectation that everything is going to be laid on for them. I don't think that is the way we should operate. I think that we have to make the athletes accountable, like you will only get that if you do X, Y, and Z (manager 'B', p7).

7.3.4 Governing Bodies

Swimming: A Fully Managed Sport

Swimming is one of the eight fully managed sport programmes within the Scottish Institute of Sport. The programme supports swimmers with world class potential as well as those already competing successfully on the world stage. Young athletes with potential are catered for by the Area Institute system, as are second tier senior athletes. Top level seniors are catered for by the Scottish Institute of Sport. The Scottish Institute of Sport employs a full time national coach for swimming and works closely with Scottish Swimming in the delivery of a performance plan for the sport.

The Performance Director of Scottish Swimming suggested that the most important area of support that Performance Lifestyle provides is in education.²⁰ For the younger athletes, this is in areas such as organising transport between training and school, timetable flexibility, and replacement of Physical Education with study periods. Many of the senior swimmers balance their swimming with university study. Top swimmers now often plan their education plan around the Olympic cycle, factoring in time out around major competitions or deferring their

²⁰ Interview with Ally Whyke, Performance Director, Scottish Swimming, July 17th 2007.

start. This is another area in which Performance Lifestyle has been of assistance. Identifying universities which will provide appropriate levels of support is an ongoing issue for which Performance Lifestyle support is described as crucial:

The flexibility varies between courses and between universities. Some universities provide more flexibility than others, prioritise things in different ways. The more academic institutions tend to be less flexible. And there is nothing formalised across different institutions.²¹

Once swimmers have left education, they face the issue of finding appropriate flexible employment. This was an area that the Performance Director felt that Performance Lifestyle could be of more assistance. He talked about the development of an employment network, to provide suitable employment solutions for his athletes:

At the moment I think swimmers have to make their own judgements and moves on what they want to do. Lifestyle advisers will help them but what they do need is a bit of connection, some form of employment network, which would certainly be of help.²²

Exit support was seen as one of the less important areas. The Performance Director felt that senior swimmers generally sort things out for themselves, planning their retirement for a particular time and having their next step already in mind. He linked this area back to the employment network, in terms of support to find viable new careers and also highlighted that athletes who have unplanned retirements are likely to require more assistance with their transition:

²¹ Interview with Ally Whyke.

²² Interview with Ally Whyke.

Maybe the ones who don't know what they want to do are the ones that need to be in touch with the lifestyle people to help them do that. On the other hand the ones that do know maybe need the contacts to help put them in the right direction.²³

The one area of retirement that was highlighted as important was physical adjustment and the provision of detraining support. This is an area which is provided for through the coaches within the programme. The coaches at the top level within swimming generally accept the responsibility they have in this area. In general, as the majority of these coaches are employed through the Institute Network they demonstrate more buy-in to the provision of athlete services than individual coaches outwith the system, perhaps a reflection of their level of understanding.

Scottish Swimming is responsible for the delivery of performance programmes to the athletes below the Institute Network and they have carefully considered the provision of support services to these athletes. However there is a concern that they might be trying to spread resources too thinly if they try to do this. There is an additional concern that selection of athletes to benefit from these services at too early a stage could lead to missing out on those with potential talent who have not yet demonstrated their full ability.²⁴

Gymnastics: A Targeted Support Sport

Gymnastics is one of the targeted support sports within the Scottish Institute of Sport. The best gymnasts in the country who meet the criteria established by the

²³ Interview with Ally Whyke.

²⁴ Interview with Ally Whyke.

Institute are provided with support services. In addition, gymnasts identified as having future potential are supported through the Area Institutes.

The National Development Manager at Scottish Gymnastics felt that education was the most important area in which Performance Lifestyle could provide support.²⁵ The majority of gymnasts are still at school and need help in maintaining a balance between training and education. She also felt that there was a lot of work in educating schools about the demands of elite level training and finding flexible solutions that enables athletes to achieve in both arenas. The reality of gymnastics is that most of the athletes have self-deselected themselves by the age of 16 and move back into a lifestyle with their school peers fairly easily. Employment support is therefore only required by a very small number of gymnasts and retirement support is not as much of an issue as in some other sports.

One of the areas that the National Development Manager hoped the Institute might be able to introduce was group sessions to all gymnasts looking at topics such as nutrition. However this was not a possibility due to the individual nature of the programme. Only selected athletes are able to receive Institute support under the current structure. She also felt that there was a lot of work still to be done to get the coaches to buy fully into the support services on offer. She feels that this is something that both the lifestyle advisers and the governing body can get involved with.

²⁵ Interview with Paula Jardine, National Development Manager, Scottish Gymnastics, August 9th 2007.

From a governing body perspective, there is nothing formally in place to provide lifestyle or transitional support to gymnasts outwith the Institute system. Although they recognise that this is potentially an important area, they do not currently have the resources to look into making this possible. At the moment, the emphasis is very much on individual coaches and parents to provide support to the gymnasts.

Women's Football: Buying Services

Women's football is not currently a sport that is part of the Scottish Institute of Sport's support programmes. At present, the Scottish Football Association buy a number of services from the Institute for their athletes. This includes sports science and strength and conditioning support. This is a scenario that the Head of Girls' and Women's Football hopes may change in the future:

We do work with the Institute and we do buy some services from them, but we would like to be a much more integral part of their structure than we are.²⁶

One of the areas in which they are not currently receiving support is in lifestyle management. This is an area which they feel is of vital importance, but at the present time the Scottish Institute of Sport is not able to meet the demand.²⁷ As the demands on the top players in Scotland continues to increase, and the clubs push towards the development of semi-professional and professional opportunities for female players, this area is likely to increase in importance. Players need to be given advice about lifestyle balance. Many employers of the national team players are still unwilling to provide them with the flexibility they require to fulfil their

²⁶ Interview with Sheila Begbie, Head of Girls' and Women's Football, Scottish Football Association, August 7th 2007.

²⁷ Interview with Sheila Begbie.

international commitments. Support structures in this area would be particularly valuable.

Information on areas such as nutrition and injury management are provided to the players through the buy-in of experts, however, outside of this, any support that the players receive comes through the national coach. While she sits down and works with the players, looking at their lifestyle and providing some guidance, this is fairly ad-hoc and informal. Likewise, any retirement support comes from the same source. Prior to a player retiring, the national coach will work with them to try to help them to plan for the next stage of their life.²⁸

Athletics: Moving to a New Structure

In 2006 Scottish Athletics made the decision to withdraw from the Scottish Institute of Sport's fully managed sport programme (Woods, 2008). Athletes still have access to support services, but the process is managed by athletics rather than directly by the Institute. Athletes who are on the World Class Podium programme can access the Scottish Institute of Sport, while athletes on the World Class Talent Programme and Commonwealth Games athletes can access the Area Institute Network.

Access to Performance Lifestyle is now managed by the Scottish Performance and Talent Development Manager. She meets with the athletes, discusses their needs, and then refers them to Performance Lifestyle when appropriate: "The lines of communication are a bit different now. Before they would go direct to the athlete,

²⁸ Interview with Sheila Begbie.

now they come through me or the personal coach”.²⁹ She feels that this leads to a more proactive approach and better communication between all parties concerned.

The main area of concern for athletes is in flexible employment support. Although Performance Lifestyle has managed to set up links with some employers willing to provide flexibility, there are still athletes who face problems. One example of a scheme set up was with B&Q, who over four years leading up to the Beijing Olympics have offered support in the form of reducing athletes’ hours down over the period, while still paying the original wage. However even this arrangement had some problems, with athletes sometimes given manual work which could potentially cause injury or fatigue, impacting upon their training.

Although a lot more of the work in the area of Lifestyle Management is being carried out by the Scottish Performance and Talent Development Manager, she does not feel that people in her type of position should necessarily go through Performance Lifestyle qualifications, as this is not their area of expertise:

You can dilute the areas you are good at. I always like to be able to call on the skills of those who are the specialists in that field. You need to know a bit but you need to know when to call someone else in.³⁰

The one area in which she is not able to provide support to athletes is retirement. As her job is focused on performance, this is something that falls outside of her remit. This is an area in which she feels Performance Lifestyle could be of particular assistance, although a more proactive approach might be of more benefit:

²⁹ Interview with Aileen McGillivray, Scottish Performance and Talent Development Manager, UK Athletics, August 16th 2007.

³⁰ Interview with Aileen McGillivray.

My understanding is that they have an exit interview and then told to get in touch if they want. I think it would be better to pick up the phone from time to time and say ‘are you sure you don’t need me?’ ... I don’t think many (athletes) approach lifestyle off their own back, and that will be true after retirement as well. Athletes are not good at asking for help.³¹

7.3.5 Performance Lifestyle Programmes across Britain

Performance Lifestyle is delivered by a number of other bodies within Great Britain. These include the English Institute of Sport, and three professional sports: English rugby, English cricket, and Welsh rugby. In this section, an overview of each of these programmes is presented focusing on how they compare to the Scottish Institute of Sport.

English Institute of Sport (EIS)

The English Institute of Sport delivers support services to high performance athletes from nine regional multi-sport hubs and a network of satellite centres. Performance Lifestyle is one of a range of services that are delivered (English Institute of Sport, no publication date). The key difference in structure in comparison to the Scottish Institute of Sport is that in England all of the governing bodies manage their own sports and buy into EIS services that include Performance Lifestyle. This results in the way in which Performance Lifestyle is delivered being dependent on what the governing body perceives to be important. Service Level Agreements are drawn up between the governing body and the EIS highlighting the level of service that will be delivered to the athletes in that sport. Another area of concern for the EIS programme is that there are no full time advisers. Instead, the structure is designed so that Athlete Support Managers have

³¹ Interview with Aileen McGillivray.

a variety of remits, including delivery of Performance Lifestyle. There is no standardised structure, so the balance of these individuals' work varies across the regions.

Although there is a reasonably good model working in some sports, in many cases the governing bodies do not have a good understanding of what Performance Lifestyle is. Therefore they will simply request a reactive service as and when required by the athletes. Ideally Performance Lifestyle would like to work closer to the governing bodies, working out the areas of concern for the athletes in that sport and then setting up an appropriate level of service with a mixture of group workshop and one-to-one activity.³²

Similar to the Scottish Institute of Sport, Performance Lifestyle at the EIS also has a high athlete to staff ratio in most areas, although the number of athletes actually making use of the service varies considerably. The sports in which Performance Lifestyle has been most successful have been those in which a good relationship has been developed by the coach. Coaches who are more open to Performance Lifestyle offers are more likely to direct their athletes to utilise this service.

The areas of career development and retirement are not particularly well developed as they are resisted by both athletes and coaches:

No athlete likes to talk about retiring at any stage in their career ... so I think the career development aspects of what we do is possibly the most challenging part, trying to get the athletes to see that that's round the corner whether you like it or not. Trying to plan for

³² Interview with Joanna Harrison, Athlete Support Manager, English Institute of Sport, July 24th 2007.

that is not particularly encouraged by the coaches which makes it difficult as well.³³

For other governing bodies, Performance Lifestyle is the only exit strategy that they have for their athletes. When they reach the stage of retirement, the athletes are simply directed towards picking up Performance Lifestyle, rather than the governing body taking on any responsibility for them themselves. Similar to Scotland, very few of the athletes are utilising the Performance Lifestyle post-retirement and those that are had already developed a relationship with the programme prior to their exit.³⁴

As in Scotland, a big area of concern is the lack of some form of employment network. There are however some examples of good practice within specific sports. One of these is hockey. A member of staff has been employed with the specific remit of speaking to businesses and generating an employment scheme for the players:

Hockey have put money in the pot solely for them, to look at flexible working opportunities for athletes because they believe that the best lifestyle for their senior players is to combine their training with some work. They've experienced a massive drop out rate of athletes who've said they don't feel their life is moving forward.³⁵

The underlying problem for Performance Lifestyle at the English Institute of Sport is that the money is controlled by the governing bodies. Due to time demands on staff and a lack of resources and support in some areas, many of the sports have not had the type of quality experience that would lead them to decide

³³ Interview with Joanna Harrison.

³⁴ Interview with Joanna Harrison.

³⁵ Interview with Joanna Harrison.

to invest more in the programme. They want to see a measurable impact and do not perceive that Performance Lifestyle can deliver that at present.³⁶

Professional Rugby Players' Association (PRA)

Performance Lifestyle is delivered, under the title of Player Development, to professional rugby players in the 12 English Premiership teams through a programme funded partially by the governing body, but primarily through the Players' Union (the PRA). Rugby players subscribe to membership of the PRA and can then access Performance Lifestyle services. Four areas of support are provided by the programme, with a focus on individualised provision according to a player's needs. Life after Sport includes both the preparation for the end of the rugby career and also post-retirement support. Areas such as the identification of education and training opportunities are highly prioritised. The second area, Personal and Professional Development, is concerned with the development of transferable skills, while the third, Wealth Creation and Risk, is about financial management. The final area is Life Balance and looks at all other aspects of the players' lives and any personal issues that may arise (Professional Rugby Players' Association, no publication date).

There are currently three Player Development Managers, each of whom looks after four of the Premier League Clubs. Player Development Managers try to make proactive contact with players where possible and currently between 55 and 60 percent of the players access the service. Relationships vary with the different clubs:

³⁶ Interview with Joanna Harrison.

Some clubs we have got very good relationships with, others are still a little bit suspicious and that is primarily because of the turnover of the coaches, because if you get a new coach coming in you have got to re-educate them.³⁷

As the programme is driven by the PRA, Life after Sport is the most important aspect. This is one of the major differences between this programme and that run by the Scottish Institute of Sport. Life after Sport is in effect the reason that this programme exists. The PRA believes it is crucial that a player's employability upon retirement is strong and that the impact of the transition is reduced where possible through appropriate preparation. The long term plan of the PRA is to have a member of staff in place to focus specifically on transition support.³⁸

In terms of education the picture is similar to other Performance Lifestyle programmes, in that links with establishments are developed on a needs basis, identifying colleges or universities willing to provide flexibility. Work also needs to be undertaken with the clubs to develop an agreement to have allocated time for study within the week. Some moves have been made to set up some form of employment network, to provide players with work experience and job opportunities. This has included developing alumni links and holding networking events:

We also held a networking evening where we invited rugby friendly companies to meet current and past players. That worked really well and that is an activity that we want to continue to do.³⁹

³⁷ Interview with Tim Nicholls, Head Player Development Manager, Professional Rugby Players' Association, July 25th 2007.

³⁸ Interview with Tim Nicholls.

³⁹ Interview with Tim Nicholls.

The alumni links that are being set up enable current and former players to communicate with each other and hopefully provide opportunities for personal and professional development. However they have highlighted that more work needs to be undertaken to identify a bigger range of rugby friendly organisations to further develop employment links.⁴⁰

England and Wales Cricket Board (ECB)

There are 18 first class counties in England and Wales with full time, professional playing staff. Each of these counties has an academy which caters for elite players under the age of 18. There are currently one part time and three full time Performance Lifestyle advisers who are working with between one and four counties each (England and Wales Cricket Board, no publication date). Performance Lifestyle is built into the Academy programme, through a series of workshops and individual sessions. Individual sessions are also held with professional players as required, with over 50 percent of these players currently accessing the service. The programme is promoted during pre-season meetings, regular adviser attendance at games for visibility, through the website, and through a Performance Lifestyle magazine. The programme focuses on three main areas; career, education, and lifestyle. Players can receive support both during and after their cricket career and retirement support is not seen as a separate programme, but rather as a continuation of the other areas with a slightly different angle. There is no limitation on how long a player can continue accessing the service after retirement, with support ongoing until it is no longer required.

⁴⁰ Interview with Tim Nicholls.

As the programme is partly funded by the Professional Cricketers' Association (PCA), there is an emphasis on retirement support similar to that seen in the PRA programme. Retirement is viewed as being a big issue for many cricketers, perhaps linked to the intense nature of the cricket season in which players may be away from home with the team for weeks at a time.⁴¹ This view is supported anecdotally in the work of David Frith, who told the story of more than 100 players who committed suicide from all levels of the game across the world:

One conclusion which does seem beyond doubt is that cricket has a suicide casualty list far in excess of that of any other sport (2001, p13).

The cricket season lasts for six months and therefore the off-season presents some players with opportunities to develop their education or gain work experience. Others will choose to continue playing in the Southern Hemisphere during this time. Developing appropriate links with education was once again highlighted as a problematic area. One of the counties has developed links with a local university, but they were not able to replicate this across other regions. They feel that universities are not able to offer enough flexibility:

Even though Further and Higher Education establishments say that they are here for flexible learning, in reality it's not straight forward, it's still your traditional, you know, two semesters, three semesters, three terms, and assessment will always be at a certain time of the year, that always clashes with the cricket season, and institutions are unfortunately very inflexible.⁴²

⁴¹ Interview with Heidi Coleman, former Performance Lifestyle National Lead, England and Wales Cricket Board, 2nd August 2007.

⁴² Interview with Heidi Coleman.

Employment links have been developed through the Placement and Learning Access Network (PLAN) which is delivered by the PCA (The Professional Cricketers' Association, no publication date). This is a work placement programme that provides experience for cricketers in the commercial world whilst still continuing to play professional cricket. The biggest challenge for Performance Lifestyle is managing players' expectations and getting them to be realistic, as suitable placements are not guaranteed.

At the current time, similar to other Performance Lifestyle programmes, the ECB use a referral system for issues of a counselling or psychological nature. This included a confidential helpline set up by the PCA for players who wish to speak to a professional counsellor and therapist in confidence. This is an area in which Performance Lifestyle would like to get more involved in the future. The target is to up-skill advisers in the area of counselling support, as they are felt to be the best placed to provide support. Often players who might talk to an adviser with whom they have developed a relationship will not take up the referral that is given to them instead.⁴³ This viewpoint is supported by the work of Dagley (2003), who suggested that the separation of career counselling from general counselling was not supported by the literature.

Welsh Rugby Union (WRU)

Welsh Rugby was the first professional sport to make the decision to provide Performance Lifestyle support to their players. In comparison to the previous two professional sports discussed, the funding for the programme in Welsh Rugby comes entirely from the governing body. There are currently four regional teams

⁴³ Interview with Heidi Coleman.

with full time professional players and then a structure of nine Premier League clubs below this who are semi-professional. Each region also has an academy, supporting young players coming through the system (Welsh Rugby Union, no publication date).

At present there is one Performance Lifestyle Manager delivering support to the players. Academy Managers have also received some training in Performance Lifestyle and deliver some support. The majority of the work of Performance Lifestyle is with the academy players, focusing in particular on the areas of education and personal development. Performance Lifestyle has carried out a lot of work developing relationships with staff in particular institutions in Wales, identifying opportunities for flexible learning:

We have a situation in Wales in that three of the universities are willing to be very flexible, whereas the other one because of the traditions won't do part-time stuff or flexible learning. Their structure doesn't support it.⁴⁴

The number of professional players currently accessing Performance Lifestyle is quite small. Many of the professional players still do not have an understanding of what the service is and what it can offer them. Part of the problem is that some of the coaches are not supportive and will not let Performance Lifestyle do presentations to their players about the programme. This is starting to change as younger players progress through the system and word of mouth starts to spread. Although the structure is set up for retirement support, this is not a particularly big area of work at the moment as the older players closer to retirement are not utilising the service.

⁴⁴ Interview with Alun Davies, Performance Lifestyle Manager, Welsh Rugby Union, 8th October 2007.

Similar to the philosophy of the Scottish Institute of Sport, the WRU programme recognises that the programme has boundaries and has a referral network of counsellors that can be utilised. The programme acknowledges that a major aspect of the job is about counselling skills, but it is not about being a counsellor. The programme does not want to have that label attached as it is felt that it would be detrimental to uptake by players.⁴⁵

7.4 Discussion

The Scottish Institute of Sport is currently the only body in Scotland providing any form of support to retiring athletes in Scotland, through the Performance Lifestyle programme. The delivery of services to athletes both in the Scottish Institute of Sport and in the Area Institutes ensures that many of Scotland's top athletes are assisted in finding a balance between their sport career and the rest of their lives and are able to seek help and advice when their career is coming to an end.

The area of *Education Support* was highlighted as being important by advisers, Area Institute managers, and the governing bodies. At school level this is well catered for, with an education policy agreed between Area Institutes and local authorities. However there is currently nothing similar operating at Further and Higher Education level. The development of links with Further and Higher Education institutions could improve the Performance Lifestyle programme's ability to encourage athletes to invest in non-sport sources of self-identification, identified as an important aspect in assisting them to deal better with transitions

⁴⁵ Interview with Alun Davies.

(McKay *et al.*, 2006). Currently, there seems to be varying levels of support within Universities and Colleges for elite level athletes, with no over-arching policies in place. For example, the definition of flexible study options varies between institutions and in many what is deemed as flexible study is not actually particularly flexible. Athletes can currently be guided towards particular institutions and courses that might be able to cater for their specific needs, however this is on a fairly ad-hoc basis. Education was one of the areas perceived by a number of the participants from Studies One and Two as being important for provision of support. Former athletes highlighted the difficulties that can be faced when trying to balance academic and sport career development. Identification of viable flexible education opportunities can help athletes to feel more secure about their future career opportunities.

This issue was identified not only by the Scottish Institute of Sport, but also by the other providers of Performance Lifestyle in Great Britain. However one organisation which has made some headway in the development of educational links is the Professional Footballers' Association. The PFA Education department provides advice and guidance for the provision of educational and vocational courses, in preparation for a second career, for all of its members (Professional Footballers' Association, no publication date). The PFA have combined with a number of universities to provide some degree courses on a flexible learning basis. Courses on offer include Sports Science, Physiotherapy, Management Studies, and Sports Journalism. They are offered at times which are accessible for current players as well as those who are no longer playing. The first course that

was developed was physiotherapy, after identifying demand for part-time opportunities in this area of study.⁴⁶

Closer relationships between the Scottish Institute of Sport Network and Further and Higher Education institutions could lead to the development of policies to assist athletes with the continuation of both their sporting and academic careers without unnecessary conflict. If the Scottish Institute of Sport Network could get to the position where they had a member of staff within Performance Lifestyle dedicated to issues of Further and Higher Education major improvements could be made in developing these relationships and improving these issues for student-athletes. Future developments in this area would require the assistance and support of the Further and Higher Education establishments, perhaps through bodies such as Scottish Universities Sport⁴⁷ and British University College Sport⁴⁸ in the first instance.

For older athletes, more importance is placed on the area of *Employment Support*. This was highlighted by all of the participants in this study. It was also the key issue identified by former athletes through the questionnaire in Study One. Although athletes are already using this area of support, it was highlighted as an aspect in which they felt they could receive a better service. Up until now, the majority of the support has been in exploration of career alternatives and development of job hunting skills. Assistance with finding appropriate employment, both for during the sport career and at its end, has been slightly more limited. The development of some form of employment network could assist both

⁴⁶ Interview with Pat Lally, Head of Education, Professional Footballers' Association, 23rd August 2007.

⁴⁷ See www.susport.org.uk.

⁴⁸ See www.ucsport.net.

with the provision of flexible employment opportunities for part time athletes and with finding appropriate employment post-retirement. Flexible employment during the career could be particularly useful for those athletes within sports that do not attract large amounts of government funding, as well as athletes at slightly lower performance levels, such as those aiming for the Commonwealth Games. These athletes could potentially benefit hugely from links which could assist them to find suitable employment within companies which will be sympathetic and supportive towards their status as an athlete. Many athletes, particularly those in full time training, will need to develop a new career at the end of their time in sport. Some of these individuals would benefit from employment links to get them started in the career of their choice.

Whilst attempts have been made in the past to set up links with individual companies, what this area requires is the correct level of investment to be able to provide opportunities across a range of companies to suit a range of athletes. This would also require an investment in terms of staffing, as to build up the required relationships takes time. Whilst the British Olympic Association made some attempt of provision in this area through their Olympic and Paralympic Employment Network (OPEN) programme, the level of investment was not high and ultimately the programme did not achieve what it set out to do. In the professional sports, Performance Lifestyle programmes have attempted to use the former players to develop a network and employment opportunities for the current players. This was particularly evident in the cases of English and Welsh rugby.

There is one organisation within Great Britain which has worked to develop good links in employment for its athletes. This is the Jockeys' Association of Great

Britain, who fund a scheme called the Jockeys Employment and Training Scheme (JETS) (Jockeys Employment and Training Scheme, no publication date). As well as sourcing and financing education opportunities, this scheme matches up potential employers with former jockeys, advertising jobs to the relevant people and advertising their members to businesses linking into the scheme. There is no time limit placed on the scheme, so jockeys can return for assistance for the programme as often as they need to post-retirement. Many of the businesses working with the scheme are linked to the equine industry, but this is not a requirement and the programme is continually looking to expand their links to as wide a range of industries as possible. They also regularly bring former jockeys back to speak to apprentices, talking about their careers and how the scheme can help.⁴⁹

One possible option is to develop links with recruitment consultant agencies, such as Drake Beam Morin⁵⁰ or Adecco⁵¹, that could provide the expertise within this area and help to develop links. UK Sport, as the overarching body for all of the Performance Lifestyle programmes in Great Britain, has started to explore these possibilities. Alongside this, they have also started to expand upon links with the FTSE 100 companies that are sponsoring Olympic sports, to see if this can be extended into the provision of employment opportunities.⁵² However, with nothing formal yet in place, there are commercial companies in the marketplace that some of the athletes may choose to utilise, such as Careers after Sport.⁵³

⁴⁹ Interview with Lisa Delany, Manager, Jockeys Employment and Training Scheme, 25th July 2007.

⁵⁰ See www.dbmcareerservices.com.

⁵¹ See www.adecco.co.uk.

⁵² Interview with Phil Gallagher, Performance Lifestyle Consultant, UK Sport, 23rd August 2007.

⁵³ See www.careersaftersport.com.

Although Performance Lifestyle does provide services to athletes exiting the Scottish Institute of Sport Network, this is not emphasised in the same way as it is by the programmes run in English rugby and English cricket. The difference is almost certainly due to these programmes being funded to a certain level by the Professional Rugby Players' Association and the Professional Cricketers' Association respectively. These Players' Unions are able to have different priorities to bodies such as the Scottish Institute of Sport and tend to be more interested in the long term welfare of their members. Their programmes are also better resourced than Performance Lifestyle in Scotland and the level of uptake that they have seen for their Life after Sport programmes has been substantially higher. With smaller numbers of players to work with, it is easier for them to establish a strong relationship with these players while they are still actively involved, which encourages continued contact after retirement. Nearly all of the participants of this study highlighted this as one of the major factors in whether an athlete would continue to use the service after their exit.

One suggestion for improving the uptake of exit services within the Scottish Institute of Sport Performance Lifestyle programme is automatic entry into the exit pathway to ensure that there are no athletes who fall through the gap and do not receive the support that they require. After the initial exit interview they may not need to access other services, but hopefully the link is then there for future access if it is required. This will also ensure that the pathway is open for athletes to access referrals to services such as counselling throughout their exit period if this is required, remembering that issues requiring these types of services may not appear immediately but can occur at any time. Although there is a network of external counsellors and psychologists the athletes can be referred to, this proves

difficult if the athlete does not make contact with the programme in the first instance. Performance Lifestyle needs to work to maximise the usage of the exit services, however this is different to forcing the service on athletes who are not willing to seek the assistance, as this is unlikely to be beneficial. Sinclair and Hackfort (2000) suggest that it is important to recognise that some athletes will not utilise services either because they do not perceive a need or because the services offered do not meet their specific needs.

For those athletes who can plan their exit from sport, it would be valuable to develop a workshop which would give them some idea about what to expect and how they are going to feel. Within this workshop they could spend time talking about what is normal in terms of feelings and actions, which can help to lessen the impact and reassure the athlete. This type of workshop could also be useful to athletes who have just experienced a career transition that they were not anticipating, to help them to understand some of what they are experiencing. There is an opportunity to bring in former athletes to assist with this process and lend strength to these workshops. For them to be able to provide their own personal examples of the retirement process would be invaluable. In Study One, 46 percent of respondents felt that readings about retirement would be beneficial, while 33% indicated that seminars with other retired athletes could have assisted them when they retired. These findings provide support for the provision of workshops dealing with career transitions.

There are other areas in which the experiences of former athletes could be utilised. Workshops in which former athletes talk to active athletes about their sporting careers would be beneficial. This would be very useful in answering the questions

they have, coming from a source they will trust as it is someone who has ‘been there’, as well as help advisers to develop common themes that can be used to improve support to current athletes. Athletes can hear about how to do things, and also about things to avoid, maybe helping them to avoid making the same mistakes. Additionally, these types of sessions can also be very good therapy for the ex-athletes who are able to give something back to their sport and talk about their experiences.

The *Preparation for Life after Sport* area of Performance Lifestyle would appear to be under-resourced when compared to the rest of the programme. Arguably athletes are not getting the services upon their exit that they deserve, considering the level of commitment asked of them while they are involved in the system. The problem stems from the fact that the Scottish Institute of Sport system is performance focused and all of the service providers are under pressure to assist in the production of elite performance over and above everything else. This leads to consideration of whether assistance to athletes retiring should be the responsibility of the Scottish Institute of Sport, or whether there is someone else who is better placed to deliver this support. As the Head of Performance Lifestyle commented,

It’s a bit of a moral maze really ... if you bring up the issue of whether the Institute has a responsibility, the response is often it’s not to do with performance, therefore it’s not our problem.⁵⁴

Perhaps the performance focus of the Scottish Institute of Sport means that the responsibility for athletes who are no longer producing results should lie elsewhere. One possible option for the future could be the British Athletes

⁵⁴ Interview with Susan Elms.

Commission (BAC). The BAC acts as the unified voice of all Olympic, Paralympic and World Class funded athletes. In effect, it is the equivalent of the Players' Unions in the professional sports. It communicates their views to the major decision makers within British sport, and promotes athlete representation within their sports and works to provide all athletes with a pathway to pursue and resolve any problems they encounter within their sport (British Athletes Commission, no publication date). At present UK Sport fund the BAC, but it is hoped that it can become an independent body at some point in the future.⁵⁵

There is no coordinated structure to helping an athlete to finish their involvement with the Scottish Institute of Sport network. While an athlete is within the Institute Network, they have a group of service providers who work in tandem with their coach to put together their programme based on their needs. However at the moment, outside of the medical aspect, Performance Lifestyle is the only programme made available to exiting athletes. There can be a complete cut off from coaches, which can cause difficulties for some athletes as the coach-athlete relationship is often a very powerful one. At the moment the advisers can try to educate the athletes on the fact they are going to have to detrain but there is not necessarily a formalised programme provided. Athletes should be given a more comprehensive exit plan that should cover everything, including nutrition, psychology, and physical de-training aspects. A structured programme to taper down from full training to what a normal person might consider a healthy lifestyle would help with athletes at all levels. The coach, medics, strength and conditioning team, and nutritionist should all be involved in the exit process. In other words, there needs to be a team approach, out of which an action plan specific to the individual can be designed.

⁵⁵ Interview with Phil Gallagher.

7.5 Conclusion

Compared to ten years ago, many elite athletes in Scotland are receiving a lot more support and assistance both during their athletic careers and when those careers reach a close, through the Performance Lifestyle programme. The programme is highly respected and provides invaluable support to athletes across the Scottish Institute of Sport network. Structurally, the Scottish Institute of Sport programme is ahead of both the English Institute of Sport and the Welsh Rugby Union, with more staff, and better links to the sports and to the coaches. However, the programmes offered by the Professional Rugby Players' Association and the England and Wales Cricket Board are better developed, with more resources, money, and a better staff to athlete ratio.

Although the programme does cover retirement, it is definitely a weaker aspect, largely due to lack of resources. In terms of the entire Scottish Institute of Sport network, athletes at the end of their competitive careers and athletes deselected from the system are a low priority. With the majority of the services outwith Performance Lifestyle, there is no contact with an athlete once they move out of the system and generally no assistance provided during any period of adjustment. One of the problems stems from the fact that the Scottish Institute of Sport receives funding based on performance and on results. Therefore it may be hard to justify expenditure on athletes who are no longer going to contribute to performance targets. One possible counter-argument is that the provision of better support to athletes at the end of their career can act as a tool to promote programme uptake.

There is a core framework and an underlying philosophy across all of the groups delivering Performance Lifestyle across Great Britain, but it is delivered differently in each case. For example, it is very different when driven by the Players' Unions compared to the governing body or an Institute. Across the country, Performance Lifestyle is not being properly resourced, therefore it struggles to get the desired levels of credibility or recognition and cannot develop further in the way it wants to. Performance Lifestyle needs a formal structure, some form of industry standard. One example would be for it to be linked to the British Association of Sport and Exercise Sciences (BASES),⁵⁶ in a similar way to sectors such as Sport Psychology and Strength and Conditioning. This could provide all of the Performance Lifestyle advisers with a professional umbrella, helping to clarify what 'Performance Lifestyle' is. This would give the industry more credibility, with potential entrants requiring both the academic qualifications and also the practical competence, signed off by BASES. This process would also make the process of hiring staff easier, as there would be an industry standard for candidates to conform to.

⁵⁶ See www.bases.org.uk.

Chapter 8: Conclusion

This thesis is the first piece of research to examine the retirement experiences of Scottish female athletes. Three separate studies were undertaken. Study One was designed to address the first research question, ‘What factors influence the retirement transition for Scottish female athletes?’ The second objective of this study was to explore the applicability of the Taylor and Ogilvie (1994; 2001) conceptual model of athletic retirement to this athlete group. The results of the study provide support for the use of this model to assist in our understanding of the retirement transition. The findings highlighted the importance of athletic identity, reason for retirement, and perceptions of control in predicting the level of difficulty and adjustment that an athlete may experience upon their retirement. This corresponds with the major elements of the model. The most significant finding was the affect that athletic identity had on the retirement process, with those identifying strongly with the athletic role reporting significantly higher levels of difficulty, emotional adjustment, and social adjustment.

However there were aspects of the model which were not found to be important for Scottish female athletes. Within the current study no relationship was found between social support from various sources and reaction to retirement. The presence or absence of pre-retirement planning was also not found to be linked to measures of retirement adaptation, but this could be due to the small number of athletes in this study having undertaken any form of planning rather than a reflection of how important this area is. The model presents a dichotomous interpretation of adjustment, suggesting either a healthy career transition or retirement crisis. However this is not representative of the range of responses to

the retirement process seen within the current study. The suggestion is therefore for a continuum to exist between these two 'extreme' responses.

The results suggest that most female athletes will experience some degree of difficulty upon their retirement from sport. Athletes in this study experienced particular difficulties in dealing with the negative emotions they experienced upon retirement and with the changes that occurred from a social perspective, replicating findings in previous research with male athletes. Considerable physical adjustment was also reported. This provides support for the suggestion of Stephan *et al.* (2007) that this aspect should be included as a factor in the Taylor and Ogilvie model.

One area in which this sample did not fit the model was in occupational and financial adjustment. Individual sport athletes were found to experience higher levels of adjustment in these areas than team sport athletes, but in general these were not indicated to be particularly serious issues. The experiences of Scottish female athletes differ quite substantially from the male professional athletes previously studied. This reflects the lack of opportunities to make money out of sport for female athletes in Scotland. Scottish female athletes find it almost impossible to make such sums of money that they will not need to develop some form of alternative career after retirement. Therefore they tend to be more likely to develop those careers concurrently with their sport. Many previous studies focused on full time athletes. This study shows that even when people have parallel educational or employment careers, adjusting to the loss of the athlete role can still present difficulties.

The results of the quantitative study suggested that the level of the individual's athletic identity had a strong influence on how they coped with retirement. This led to the formulation of the second research question, 'How does level of identification with the athletic role affect the retirement transition?' A collective case study approach was used to analyse the role played by athletic identity. The findings are that athletes with a strong and exclusive athletic identity are more likely to experience difficulties when they retire. In comparison, athletes with lower levels of athletic identity generally experience some mild negative emotions after initially retiring, followed by a relatively smooth transition into their life after sport.

Exceptions to the above trends demonstrated that timing and reason for retirement are important mediating factors in this relationship. Athletes rarely have just one reason for retirement. The findings provide support for the push/pull framework for analysing decision-making (Mullet *et al.*, 2000; Shultz *et al.*, 1998). An athlete whose retirement does not come at a time of their choosing and cannot see positives in life after sport is likely to experience more transitional difficulties, regardless of their level of athletic identity. A high level of athletic identity does not necessarily mean that the athlete will definitely experience retirement difficulties. The results provide some support for the concept of identity reduction prior to retirement suggested by Lally (2007). Athletes who started to invest more of their time and energy into alternative areas of their life prior to retirement were more likely to experience an easier transition out of sport.

Many of the athletes in this study experienced 'relocation' within their sport, as they maintained some form of role which often meant a fairly high level of

involvement. Being able to maintain some aspect of their identity in sport can, in some cases, ease transitional difficulties. However if this transfer occurs immediately, there is a danger that the athlete may experience some difficulties when they finally move away their sport completely.

Work by Marcia (1966) suggests that one's sense of identity is determined largely by the choices and commitments made regarding certain personal and social traits, and considers how much one has made certain choices, and how much he or she displays a commitment to those choices. A well-developed identity therefore gives a sense of one's strengths, weaknesses, and individual uniqueness. In comparison, a person with a less well-developed identity is not able to define his or her personal strengths and weaknesses, and does not have a well articulated sense of self. Some of the findings of Studies One and Two illustrate Marcia's concept of identity foreclosure, where an individual has not fully developed their whole identity due to the salience of one social role. The suggestion is that those athletes who have the most difficulty adjusting to the identity changes they experience upon retirement have not developed a well articulated sense of self, committing to a narrow identity as an athlete and not experiencing the stage of identity crisis. These athletes appear to be more likely to cite 'push' rather than 'pull' reasons for the termination of their sports career, which is also linked to lowered perceptions of control over their exit.

Some discussion can also be drawn from social identity theory (Tajfel, 1982). This theory posits that through a process called self-categorisation, a person will classify or name themselves in a particular way in relation to other social categories or classifications. It describes identity as a person's knowledge that

they belong to a particular social class or group. Evidence from the current study provides some level of support for this theoretical stance, with descriptions from the participants illustrating that they have categorised themselves within the culturally defined role of athlete. Social identity theory describes accentuation of the perceived similarities between the self and other in-group members, and an accentuation of the perceived differences between the self and out-group members. This accentuation occurs for all the attitudes, beliefs and values, affective reactions, behavioural norms, styles of speech, and other properties that are believed to be correlated with their self-categorisation. This was illustrated in the case of several of the participants in Study Two, who highlighted a lack of understanding from those outwith their social group.

Study Three was designed to address the final research question, ‘What formal programmes are available to support female athletic retirement in Scotland?’ In this study the Performance Lifestyle programme offered by the Scottish Institute of Sport was evaluated and comparisons were made with the delivery of Performance Lifestyle to other athlete groups in Great Britain. Governing bodies of sport in Scotland are not currently in a position to provide support to former athletes. Financially and structurally the majority do not have the resources. Performance Lifestyle is a very valuable source of support for athletes who are part of the Institute Network. The programme does deal with the issue of the end of the career, but it is definitely a weaker aspect, largely due to lack of resources.

Through the comparisons made to other Performance Lifestyle programmes within Great Britain, the Scottish Institute of Sport programme would appear to be ahead of both the English Institute of Sport and the Welsh Rugby Union, with

more staff, and better links to the sports and to the coaches. However, the programmes offered by the Professional Rugby Players' Association and the England and Wales Cricket Board are better developed, with more resources and money.

Although research supports the need for retirement support programmes, the sporting world in general tends to see this area as an adjunct to other services for athletes. There is some question as to who should be responsible for assisting athletes who are at the end of their career. The main remit of the Scottish Institute of Sport is to improve performance and deliver medals on the world stage. Therefore commitment of resources to athletes who are no longer able to assist with these targets is likely to remain relatively low.

The findings of Studies One and Two taken together highlight that individuals who have a strong and exclusive identification with the athletic role are at risk of experiencing a difficult and distressing reaction to retiring from competitive sport, requiring a period of adjustment in several areas of their life. One of the most productive approaches to assisting these athletes is primary prevention, in which young athletes are encouraged to develop balanced identities by promoting investment in non-sport sources of identification. It should be the goal of programmes such as Performance Lifestyle to work with young athletes and their coaches to promote balance between sporting and non-sporting components of an athlete's life from an early stage in their career. Results show that athletes who experience an unexpected and 'off-time' retirement are also likely to experience problems upon transition. For athletes in this scenario, it is anticipated that additional support may be required.

Coaches have an important influence upon their athletes and many young athletes can spend as much time with their coaches as their parents (Miller and Kerr, 2002). Coaches require education about the importance of encouraging their athletes to maintain a balanced lifestyle. The work that coaches can do with their athletes can have an important influence on the skills that individual will have to deal with transitions throughout their sports career. One way of educating coaches could be through coach education training and Continuing Professional Development courses. In addition to the development of technical knowledge, coaches can be educated in areas such as identity development and transferable life skills. Coaches should be encouraging athletes to maintain non-sport friendships, balance time spent on education and on sport, and maintain some level of independence in terms of decision-making and career planning. Strong decision-making skills are transferable to other life domains and can help an athlete's sense of competence to extend beyond their sport (Bardaxoglou and Vanfraechem-Raway, 1997). This is essential for them to achieve a successful transition at the end of their sports career.

Although the majority of governing bodies are not in the position to be able to provide support to former athletes, the main area in which they could assist is in the provision of more recognised pathways back into the sport. At the present time many athletes are not given enough encouragement to give something back to their sport and former expertise is not being properly utilised. One suggestion is the idea of a 'retirement pack' for athletes leaving the sport. This pack would include the different options that the person has for maintaining an involvement in the sport, including areas such as coaching, refereeing, or committee positions. Governing bodies can be encouraged to analyse a person's strengths and

weaknesses in relation to this, working out what they would be most suited to and what they are most interested in, to guide them into the most appropriate areas to be able to give something back to the sport. The pack could provide key contact details. Former athletes could also be given information on physical and nutritional detraining through this medium.

Another suggestion is getting athletes getting close to retirement involved in other aspects of their sport prior to their exit, to give them experience of the other opportunities for involvement they could have and hopefully develop some commitments that they would continue after they finish their competitive career. One final idea is to get former players involved in mentoring younger athletes, utilising their expertise and providing role models for future generations.

This thesis has been the first piece of work to examine the retirement experiences of female athletes in Scotland and to analyse the support mechanisms currently available to these athletes. While many female athletes do not face the same financial and occupational difficulties that male professional athletes have been found to experience, the findings indicate that this transition can still result in emotional, social, and physical difficulties that are as problematic as those for those athletes whose sport is their paid career. This thesis has re-affirmed the findings from earlier studies that athletic identity plays a central role in the experience of this career transition and has also highlighted the importance of two further elements, namely reason for retirement and notions of control over the exit process. It is evident from the findings of all three studies that there is a demand from the athletes for support through this transition, but current support services

are not able to fully meet the requirements due to both financial and cultural constraints.

Limitations and Future Research

Whilst the mainly quantitative method and good sample size in Study One furnished the research with several strengths, there are some limitations that need to be taken into consideration.

Firstly, the main sampling method used was that of snowball sampling, which can lead to some question about generalising the findings to other populations. Studies within this area of research have often been hampered by low response rates, leading to questions of response bias (see for example: Greendorfer and Blinde, 1985; Kleiber and Malik, 1989; Pawlak, 1984; Reynolds, 1981). Often the issue has been linked to the difficulty of getting access to appropriate participants through official organisations. As the world of Scottish sport is relatively small compared to other countries that have been studied, it was felt that a fairly representative sample could be gained through the methods employed. One of the main intentions of Study One was to examine the applicability of an existing theoretical model, and Gratton & Jones (2004) state that populations developed through non-probability sampling methods such as snowball sampling can still be used to generalise to theory.

Criticism may also be targeted at the retrospective research design. Limitations of the retrospective approach include the possibility that memory decay or events occurring post-retirement may influence the participants' responses (Bennett, Lowe, and Honey, 2003). Even if athletes have retired within the last 10 years,

memory selection could play a role in the results obtained. However, within this area of research retrospective designs are still relied on extensively because of the difficulties related to obtaining a viable sample of former athletes retiring at the same time.

The final limitation of Study One is that the quantitative design has limited the level of detail obtained on a number of the aspects. These have left avenues for further investigation within the subject group of Scottish female athletes. These include detail about the possible effects of socialisation and other developmental factors on the retirement process, the coping mechanisms utilised by the athletes to help them to cope with their transition out of sport, the ease of transition into a post-sport career, the possible effects of type of retirement upon transition difficulty, and links between levels of commitment to sport and adjustment difficulties.

The qualitative approach taken within Study Two complemented the predominantly quantitative first study and enabled the author to produce a more comprehensive picture of retirement as experienced by Scottish female athletes. The large sample size and collective case study approach further strengthened the study, enabling findings to be generalised across the population and highlighting the similarities and differences in the experiences of high and low athletic identity groups. However, the limitations of the approach taken need to be considered.

In a similar vein to the first study, a retrospective approach was used. There are a number of issues with this type of approach. Participants' recall of events and emotions can be influenced by their overall career, their psychological state at the

time of the interview and their current level of life satisfaction (Lally, 2007). Nearly all of the subjects in the study talked about being satisfied with their current situation, indicating no long lasting effects. Over time, the majority have gradually moved away from their athletic identity, and some even alluded to the fact that they can no longer understand the intense and all-consuming involvement that they once had. Future studies need to look to the possibilities of using a longitudinal approach.

Study Three made comparisons to other Performance Lifestyle programmes being delivered across Great Britain. Results would appear to suggest that some improvements could be made in the support services provided to female athletes in Scotland. Further analysis is required to determine the actual breadth of support offered, some of the barriers to offering formal support services, as well as the extent to which athletes may not be actually be using some of the options that are currently on offer to them. One suggestion is that “retiring athletes themselves may also present obstacles to intervention” (Taylor and Ogilvie, 2001, p490). It would also be useful to develop a better understanding of where the Scottish Institute of Sport programme sits in relation to comparable programmes across the World. Examples of appropriate comparisons include the Australian Institute of Sport ACE programme⁵⁷, New Zealand Rugby Players’ Association⁵⁸, and Cricket New South Wales⁵⁹.

⁵⁷ See www.ausport.gov.au/ais/scholarships/ais_athlete_career_and_education.

⁵⁸ See www.nzrpa.co.nz.

⁵⁹ See www.cricketsw.com.au/nswca.

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Appendix A: Questionnaire (Study 1)

Female Athletes' Experiences of Sport Retirement

This questionnaire contains 40 questions and should take no more than 20 minutes to complete. Most of the questions require you to tick a box, and some require answers of a few sentences. The information you provide will be used for statistical purposes and will be treated as confidential and anonymous. If there are any questions that you cannot answer or do not want to answer please leave them blank.

Section A: Sporting Biography

1. What was your main competitive sport?

2. At what age did you become competitively involved in this sport?

3. How many years were you competitively involved in this sport?

4. Please describe your most significant achievement(s) in your sport.

5. What is the highest level of competition you have participated at in your sport?

- County/Regional
- National
- International (for Scotland)
- International (for GB/UK)
- Other (please specify)

6. At your highest level in your sport, were you...?

- Training full time Training part time

Section A[i] (full time)

7. If full-time, roughly how many hours per week did you spend training for your sport?

8. How was your full-time training funded?

Section A[ii] (part time)

9. If you were training part-time, were you also...?

- Working
- Studying
- Both working and studying
- Other (please specify)

Section B: Identity as an Athlete

10. Please think back to when you were still competing. For each of the following statements indicate your level of agreement as you felt at the time immediately prior to retiring from your sport (1=strongly disagree, 7 = strongly agree).

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
I had many goals related to sport	<input type="checkbox"/>						
Most of my friends were athletes	<input type="checkbox"/>						
Sport was the most important part of my life	<input type="checkbox"/>						
I spent more time thinking about sport than anything else	<input type="checkbox"/>						
I considered myself to be an athlete	<input type="checkbox"/>						
I felt bad about myself when I did poorly in sport	<input type="checkbox"/>						
I would have been very depressed if I had been injured and unable to compete in sport	<input type="checkbox"/>						

11. Please indicate your level of agreement with the following statements for how you are feeling at the present time (1=strongly disagree, 7 =strongly agree).

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
I have many goals related to sport	<input type="checkbox"/>						
Most of my friends are athletes	<input type="checkbox"/>						
Sport is the most important part of my life	<input type="checkbox"/>						
I spend more time thinking about sport than anything else	<input type="checkbox"/>						
I consider myself to be an athlete	<input type="checkbox"/>						
I feel bad about myself when I did poorly in sport	<input type="checkbox"/>						
I would be very depressed if I were injured and could not compete in sport	<input type="checkbox"/>						

Section C: Reactions to Retirement

12. At what age did you retire from elite level competitive sport?

13. How many years ago was this?

14. Please describe your most important reason for retiring from elite level competitive sport.

15. Would you consider your retirement from elite level competitive sport to be:

Voluntary Involuntary/Forced

16. How much control did you feel you had over your retirement?
(score on scale where 1 = no control and 10 = high level of control)

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

17. Did you make plans for your retirement prior to it happening?

Yes
No

Section C[i] (yes planning)

18. What did your pre-retirement planning consist of? (please tick all that are appropriate)

Attending workshops	<input type="checkbox"/>
Accessing reading materials	<input type="checkbox"/>
Attending pre-retirement counselling	<input type="checkbox"/>
Developing social networks and contacts	<input type="checkbox"/>
Applications for jobs/study	<input type="checkbox"/>
Other (please describe)	

19. How long before your retirement did you start to think about pre-retirement planning?

0 – 2 months before	<input type="checkbox"/>
3 – 5 months before	<input type="checkbox"/>
6 – 11 months before	<input type="checkbox"/>
12 or more months before (specify number of years/months)	

Section C[ii]

20. How difficult did you find it to retire from elite level competition in your sport?
(score on scale where 1 = not at all difficult and 10 = very difficult)

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

21. How much loss did you feel when you retired from elite level competition in your sport? (score on scale where 1 = no feelings of loss and 10 = considerable feelings of loss)

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

22. Is there anything you particularly miss about elite level competitive sport?

23. For each of the following areas, rate the degree of adjustment required following your retirement from elite level competitive sport (score on scale where 1 = no adjustment and 10 = considerable adjustment).

Emotional (feelings such as confusion, anger, depression, loss, etc)

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Financial (changes in financial status, losing funding, money worries, etc)

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Social (changes in social status, losing sporting contacts, making new friends, etc)

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Occupational (finding a new career, adjusting to new working hours, etc)

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Physical (changes in body shape, adjusting to new level of exercise and new diet, etc)

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

24. For each of these areas, estimate the number of months it took for you to adjust following your retirement from elite level competitive sport. If you have not yet fully adjusted, please indicate this.

Emotional adjustment

Financial adjustment

Social adjustment

Occupational adjustment

Physical adjustment

Section D: Support Networks

25. Rate the amount of support you received from each of the following at the time of your retirement from elite level competitive sport (score on scale where 1 = very little and 5 = a great deal).

	1	2	3	4	5
Team mates/other athletes	<input type="checkbox"/>				
Other retired athletes	<input type="checkbox"/>				
Coach	<input type="checkbox"/>				
Sports Governing Body	<input type="checkbox"/>				
Other sports institutions (such as Scottish Institute of Sport, British Olympic Association, etc)	<input type="checkbox"/>				
Spouse/partner	<input type="checkbox"/>				
Other family/relatives	<input type="checkbox"/>				
Friends	<input type="checkbox"/>				

26. Were any of the following services provided either prior to or after your retirement from elite level competitive sport by your SPORTS GOVERNING BODY? (tick all that apply).

- None
- Career planning/information on jobs and education opportunities
- Pre-retirement counselling
- Financial help/advice
- Readings on how other athletes have dealt with retirement
- Physiological and dietary detraining programme
- Seminars with other retired athletes
- Other (please describe)

27. Were any of the following services provided either prior to or after your retirement from elite level competitive sport by ANOTHER sports institution (such as Scottish Institute of Sport, British Olympic Association, etc)? (tick all that apply).

- None
- Career planning/information on jobs and education opportunities
- Pre-retirement counselling
- Financial help/advice
- Readings on how other athletes have dealt with retirement
- Physiological and dietary detraining programme
- Seminars with other retired athletes
- Other (please describe)

28. Which of these services do you think it would be most useful for sports institutions to provide? (tick all that apply).

- None
- Career planning/information on jobs and education opportunities
- Pre-retirement counselling
- Financial help/advice
- Readings on how other athletes have dealt with retirement
- Physiological and dietary detraining programme
- Seminars with other retired athletes
- Other (please describe)

Section E: Current and Future Sport Involvement

29. Are you still involved in your main sport in any of the following capacities? (tick all that apply).

- Coaching
- Recreational participation
- "Masters" level/club level competition
- Administration
- Judging/refereeing
- Other (please describe)

30. If not, do you think you might be in the future?

- Yes No Not sure

31. Are you involved in any other sports in any of the following capacities? (tick all that apply).

- Elite level competition
- Coaching
- Recreational participation
- "Masters" level/club level competition
- Administration
- Judging/refereeing
- Other (please describe)

32. Are there any other comments you would like to make about your experiences of retiring from elite level competitive sport?

Section F: Personal Details

33. What age are you?

34. Are you...?

- Single
- Married / cohabiting
- Divorced or separated
- Widowed
- Other (please specify)

35. Which of the following best describes your ethnic background?

- White
- Black – African
- Black – Caribbean
- Black – Other
- Indian
- Pakistani
- Bangladeshi
- Chinese
- Other (please describe)

36. At what age did you finish your formal education?

- 15 or under
- 16 to 18
- 19 to 23
- 24 plus
- I am still studying

37. What is the highest academic qualification you have attained?

- PhD
- University postgraduate masters degree
- University undergraduate degree
- HND
- HNC
- SCE Highers/A-levels
- SCE Standard Grades/GCSEs
- No academic qualifications
- Other (please specify)

38. Which of the following best describes your current occupational status?

- Employed
- Unemployed
- Student
- Retired
- Home-maker

39. Would you be willing to participate in a follow-up interview to help provide more in-depth information on retirement from sport?

Yes No

Additional personal questions

40. If you are happy to participate in the follow-up study, please complete your contact details below. This information will remain confidential.

Name
Address
Phone
Email

Appendix B: Letter to Participants (Study 1)



**UNIVERSITY OF
STIRLING**

DEPARTMENT OF
SPORTS STUDIES

Orla Gilmore
Graduate Assistant

University of Stirling
Stirling, FK9 4LA

Email:
orla.gilmore@stir.ac.uk

Dear Participant,

I am a PhD student at the University of Stirling, investigating sport career transitions. The attached questionnaire aims to determine a number of facts about Scottish female elite level athletes' experiences of retiring from a range of different competitive sports.

The questionnaire is likely to take between 20 and 30 minutes to complete. There are no right or wrong answers. In most cases it is simply a matter of ticking a box. There are, however, a number of opportunities for you to say more about certain issues. Try and answer all of the questions if possible, as accurately as you can. If you have any questions regarding any part of the questionnaire, please do not hesitate to contact me.

PLEASE NOTE THAT THE COMPLETED QUESTIONNAIRE WILL BE TREATED WITH ABSOLUTE CONFIDENTIALITY. INFORMATION IDENTIFYING THE RESPONDENT WILL NOT BE DISCLOSED UNDER ANY CIRCUMSTANCES.

Thank you in advance for your co-operation and assistance, without which this study would not be possible. I look forward to receiving your completed questionnaire.

Kind Regards,

Orla Gilmore
PhD Candidate
University of Stirling

Appendix C: Crosstabs Results (Study 1)

Table 1: Relationship between retirement age and competitive level

	<i>International for Scotland (%)</i>	<i>International for GB (%)</i>
Retire age < 23 years	35.2	31.6
Retire age 24 – 29 years	29.6	34.2
Retire age > 30 years	35.2	34.2

International for Scotland cases = 54, International for GB cases = 38

Table 2: Relationship between retirement age and whether the athletes was full or part time

	<i>Full time (%)</i>	<i>Part time (%)</i>
Retire age < 23 years	33.3	33.9
Retire age 24 – 29 years	36.4	28.8
Retire age > 30 years	30.3	37.3

Full time cases = 33, Part time cases = 59

Table 3: Relationship between retirement type and whether the athletes was full or part time

	<i>Full time (%)</i>	<i>Part time (%)</i>
Voluntary	75.8	62.7
Involuntary/forced	24.2	37.3

Individual sport cases = 58, Team sport cases = 32

Table 4: Relationship between past AIMS score and competitive level

	<i>International for Scotland (%)</i>	<i>International for GB (%)</i>
Low AI	36.5	34.2
Medium AI	23.1	26.3
High AI	40.4	39.5

International for Scotland cases = 52, International for GB cases = 38

Table 5: Relationship between past AIMS score and whether the athlete was full or part time

	<i>Full time (%)</i>	<i>Part time (%)</i>
Low AI	34.4	36.2
Medium AI	21.9	25.9
High AI	43.8	37.9

Full time cases = 32, Part time cases = 58

Table 6: Relationship between difficulty and type of sport

	<i>Individual sport (%)</i>	<i>Team Sport (%)</i>
Low difficulty	19.0	35.3
Medium difficulty	46.6	44.1
High difficulty	35.4	20.6

Individual sport cases = 58, Team sport cases = 34

Table 7: Relationship between emotional adjustment and type of sport

	<i>Individual sport (%)</i>	<i>Team Sport (%)</i>
Low emotional adjustment	22.4	31.3
Medium emotional adjustment	46.6	50.0
High emotional adjustment	31.0	18.8

Individual sport cases = 58, Team sport cases = 34

Table 8: Relationship between emotional adjustment and competitive level

	International - Scotland (%)	International - GB (%)
Low emotional adjustment	28.8	21.1
Medium emotional adjustment	50.0	44.7
High emotional adjustment	21.2	34.2

International for Scotland cases = 54, International for GB cases = 38

Table 9: Relationship between physical adjustment and competitive level

	International - Scotland (%)	International - GB (%)
Low physical adjustment	19.2	7.9
Medium physical adjustment	40.4	39.5
High physical adjustment	40.4	52.6

International for Scotland cases = 54, International for GB cases = 38

Table 10: Relationship between physical adjustment and whether the athletes was full or part time

	Full time (%)	Part time (%)
Low physical adjustment	9.4	17.2
Medium physical adjustment	34.4	43.1
High physical adjustment	56.3	39.7

Full time cases = 33, Part time cases = 59

Table 11: Relationship between difficulty and retirement type

	Voluntary retirement (%)	Involuntary/forced (%)
Low difficulty	25.8	23.3
Medium difficulty	50.0	36.7
High difficulty	24.2	40.0

Voluntary retirement cases = 62, Involuntary/forced retirement cases = 30

Table 12: Relationship between emotional adjustment and retirement type

	Voluntary retirement (%)	Involuntary/forced (%)
Low emotional adjustment	27.9	20.7
Medium emotional adjustment	50.8	41.4
High emotional adjustment	21.3	37.9

Voluntary retirement cases = 62, Involuntary/forced retirement cases = 30

Appendix D: Letter to Participants (Study 2)



**UNIVERSITY OF
STIRLING**

DEPARTMENT OF
SPORTS STUDIES

Orla Gilmore
Graduate Assistant

University of Stirling
Stirling, FK9 4LA

Email:
orla.gilmore@stir.ac.uk

Dear Participant,

I would like to thank you for taking the time to complete my questionnaire. At the end of the questionnaire you indicated that you would be willing to take part in a follow-up interview. I would be very interested to hear more about your experiences of retirement from elite level sport.

The interview is likely to last somewhere between 45 minutes and 1 hour. I am happy to travel to a location that is suitable for you. All interviews need to be conducted by the end of November this year.

Please note that it is my intention, with your permission, to tape record the interview. All information that you provide will be treated with absolute confidentiality and only the researcher will have access to the tape recording of the interview. Information identifying participants will not be disclosed under any circumstances.

I hope that you are still interested in participating in my study and look forward to hearing from you to organise a mutually suitable time for the interview.

Kind Regards,

Orla Gilmore
PhD Candidate
University of Stirling

Appendix E: Interview Guide (Study 2)

Can you start by telling me the story of your (sport) career?

- Probes:
 - Early sporting influences?
 - Biggest achievements?
 - Low points?

How important was (sport) to you at that time?

- Probes:
 - Anything they particularly miss?
 - Anything they don't miss?

Did your involvement in (sport) have an impact on other areas of your life?

- Probes:
 - What else was going on in their life?
 - Impact on social life?
 - Progress in another career?

Can you tell me about your retirement from (sport)?

- Probes:
 - Factors leading to retirement?
 - Making the decision?
 - Timing?
 - Planning?
 - How did they feel?

What impact did retirement have on the rest of your life?

- Probes:
 - Impact on friendships?
 - Impact on work life?
 - Coping strategies?
 - Present and future sport involvement?

What support were you provided by people around you when you retired?

- Probes:
 - Did they seek advice from anyone?
 - Did they talk to anyone about their decision?
 - How supportive were your family/friends?

Did your Governing Body provide any support when you retired?

- Probes:
 - Is there anything that might have been useful?

Appendix F: Consent Form (Study 2)



UNIVERSITY OF
STIRLING

DEPARTMENT OF SPORTS STUDIES

RESEARCH VOLUNTEER CONSENT FORM

The purpose of this study is to explore the retirement experiences of Scottish female athletes.

If you volunteer to be part of this study you will be asked to participate in an interview about your experiences of athletic retirement. You are consenting to your interview being recorded, transcribed, and analysed. You will be given an opportunity to comment on the analysis to ensure that you are happy with the interpretation of your experiences. Your participation in this study is entirely voluntary and you have the right to withdraw at any time. The information you provide will contribute towards a PhD project and in any publication of this work, your name and specific details will be removed to guarantee anonymity.

I hereby consent to participate in this study. I understand my role within this study and my right to withdraw without necessarily giving a reason for doing so.

Name _____

Signature _____

Date _____

Appendix G: Qualitative Analysis Coding (Study 2)

Major Theme	Constituent Themes	Contributing Codes
Development of an exclusive identity	The importance of sport	<p>Would have done anything to make it It had to be priority if I was to be successful Sacrificed so many things Everything I did was for my sport It was a big commitment Totally overruled the rest of my life You become completely absorbed in it I didn't consider the alternatives It was always on my mind I didn't have a healthy balance It was how I defined myself It was everything to me It was more important than anything else</p>
	Developed identity at a young age	<p>Been doing it since I was really young It was my whole childhood It was my life as I was growing up</p>
	Prioritised over work and education	<p>Was in complete denial about future Couldn't make it as an athlete and work Worked a few hours as a distraction Juggled work around my sport Gave up my career for sport Easy job allowed me to focus solely on sport I was skint and I didn't care Could always go back and study later Studies were secondary Chose my degree based on what was best for my sport Education suffered because I was so tired all the time</p>
	Impact on personal life	<p>Put personal life on hold Would miss family events for training Neglected my personal life Felt guilty because of the effect on my family It was the life of everyone around me as well Sport played a part in my divorce</p>

	Restricted social life	<p>Only had a small number of friends Hard to maintain contact with other friends All my friends were involved in sport Couldn't have a normal social life Friendships were sacrificed</p>
Development of a balanced identity	Maintaining a balance	<p>Life was reasonably well balanced Sport wasn't all consuming Was never 100% focused on it Wanted more of a mix in my life Wasn't a single minded person Didn't isolate myself just to sport Was never willing to be really selfish It was not the only thing that mattered Was not willing to make sacrifices It didn't take up huge amounts of time</p>
	Having a career	<p>Had to juggle demands of working and playing Training happened after work hours Career progressed at the same time Work commitments took priority Had an exciting job Career wasn't impacted by my sport I was lucky to have a supportive employer Had a successful career as well</p>
	Prioritising education	<p>I was brought up to focus on studies I kept a balance with sport and university Wasn't allowed to sacrifice my education Education was very important to me University took up a lot of my time</p>
	Keeping a social life	<p>Still had a good social life Sport was a very sociable thing Big social circle out of sport</p>
Pushed into retirement	Injury	<p>My body was falling apart Injury was impacting the rest of my life Lots of niggling injuries Injury got worse and worse</p>

	<p>Was in pain for a long time Body ached from the pounding it had taken Was worried about long term health Impact of illness on body Got injured and my chance was gone Injury wasn't going to get better Was dictated by injury Injury was a horrible way to finish Was forced to stop everything</p>
Problems with coach and/or system	<p>Wasn't happy with the coaching set up Realised I was with the wrong coach Wasn't valued by my coach Problems with coach's attitude Sport system put me off Didn't enjoy the politics in the sport Bad experience in final tournament</p>
Financial problems	<p>Couldn't afford to keep going Had spent too much money already Major financial pressures Needed to earn some money</p>
Poor performance selection issues	<p>No longer competitive at that level Wasn't performing to my potential Was struggling with my game Wasn't contributing enough to the team Couldn't cope with the pressures Didn't make the team Life stopped when I wasn't selected</p>
Lost desire	<p>Didn't want to be there anymore Didn't have the motivation Wasn't fun anymore Didn't care anymore Stopped wanting to do it My love of the sport had diminished No longer wanted to do the travelling Could not continue to commit the time</p>
Anti-push	<p>Hadn't planned for it</p>

		<p>Would have been easier just to keep going Wanted to stop on a high Held on to see if injury got better</p>
Pulled towards retirement	Change of priorities towards career and/or education	<p>Started a more challenging job Began to focus more on career Was missing out on job opportunities Job becoming more demanding Started university and it was tough University life took over Time for a new challenge Wanted to try other things</p>
	Focus on personal and social lives	<p>Wanted to spend more time with friends and family Got married and priorities changed Was thinking about having a family Didn't want to miss any more of my children's lives Needed to put more time into personal relationship Peers had already retired Lure of teenage life Peer pressure There is more to life than sport</p>
	Time to stop	<p>Career had run its course Not worth carrying on Looking forward to getting life back Needed a break Having to make choices between sport and life Felt it was too serious Timing was right for me It was as good as I could achieve Had achieved all my goals Wanted to see what else I could be good at Have many years of life left to live</p>
	Anti-pull	<p>Daunting prospect Scared of stopping so let it reach crisis point Scared of losing identity</p>
Emotional reaction to retirement	Difficulty and distress	<p>Felt strange and weird Was at a loss</p>

	<p> Couldn't get to grips with it Confusion Felt very low Sense of emptiness Went off the rails Was a complete mess Felt totally and utterly lost Felt bitterness Had no direction Was really depressed Felt angry Was like someone ripped my heart out Left part of me behind Feels like you have become a nobody Felt I had lost everything I was Blocked it all out Didn't want to feel anything </p>
Disappointment and regret	<p> Was upset at first Was disappointed Hard to let go of aspirations Difficult to let it go Still miss it Some regrets for what could have been Found life a bit meaningless at first Didn't feel part of it anymore Found it hard to watch afterwards </p>
Doubts about decision	<p> Was difficult as could have continued on Realised it was the wrong decision Decided to try again Had some doubts Still think I might be able to return Tried to come back from injury Drawn back into competition Have twinges of wishing I could still be out there </p>
Positive emotions	<p> Big weight off my shoulders Felt relief that it was over Enjoyed my last game Was looking forward to rest of life </p>

		<p>I'm a happier person now Easy to accept Felt good to finish on a high note Excited about future prospects I was quite happy with it</p>
Impact of retirement on social life	Maintained contact with friends in sport	<p>Have bonds with other athletes that will always be there Still don't have many friends not involved in sport Closest friends still those in sport Still see sport friends because of work Brother and boyfriend still involved, so still have links Didn't really change at first Friends are there who were there before Wouldn't say social life is better</p>
	Cuff off from sport	<p>No reason to be in contact with other athletes Lost touch with a lot of people because couldn't be involved Would be nice to get back into that arena Cut it off completely Struggled to deal with spare time initially Friendships changed completely</p>
	Expansion of social circle	<p>Enjoying the freedom I now have More of a social life now Developed friendships at work Have friends outside sport now Had to pick up elements of social life from before sport Life filled up with other things Became more of a normal person Went a bit crazy doing teenage things Good to get your life back Have to focus on family</p>
Development of career after retirement	Progression within career	<p>Began to take on new tasks at work Tried to do better at work than had before Re-directed competitive tendencies into work Focused more energy on work Progressed within job Upped the number of hours I worked Moved jobs before retiring</p>

	Continuation	Kept a balance during sport career which helped Continued on as before Career was something I really wanted to do Exciting job to fall back on Helped that I had a job I enjoyed University gave me something to keep me busy Retired at same time as graduating
	Easy transition to new job	Lucky to get a job I wanted very quickly Not as stressful as it could have been Picked up a new job Got the first job I applied for Started a new job and got really into that Explored the options Started applying for jobs
	Problems with transition	Still suffering from not being in stable career Not happy with position in career Hadn't appreciated how hard it would be to find a job Struggled to get work Couldn't find a job I wanted to do Scared about what was going to do Fell into work without a plan Took time to work it all out Retirement impacted my work Stopped working at university and did bare minimum to scrape a pass
Physical reaction to retirement	Continued to train	Felt like I still needed to do something Continuing training helped Never really stopped training Feel guilty if don't train Pressure on a daily basis to train Can't imagine not doing exercise in some form Maintained some identity through continuing to train Always kept a reasonable fitness level Took time to get used to cutting back Gradually de-trained
	Stopped training	No enthusiasm for training Don't have time to train Lost motivation to train

		<p>Disappointed by my attitude to training now Used work as an excuse not to train Hard as don't have any goals Didn't feel good about myself Just stopped and that was it Body needed a rest Whole routine changed immediately</p>
	Injury legacy	<p>Still got problems with injury Couldn't even do everyday things at first Felt really lethargic Had to work out what body was capable of Still struggle every day with my knee Your mind knows what to do but your body can't do it</p>
	Physical changes	<p>Body shape completely different Miss the body I used to have Changes were the biggest shock Had taken physique and fitness for granted Miss the healthy and fit feeling Hated how it felt Put weight on Weight decreased first and then increased Pressures to be thin continued Changing diet was difficult Eating problems from time in sport continued</p>
Post-retirement involvement in sport	Not currently involved	<p>Other aspects of the sport do not interest me Didn't want to coach as couldn't demonstrate Can't play as find it too difficult Never even went back to watch Stopped and walked away No interest at all in playing That chapter is closed Sport is not important to me anymore Fell too resentful of it If exit had been better might still be involved Nothing can replace it No immediate aspirations to get back involved Can't give up enough time to coach Needed to leave and not think about it for a while</p>

	<p>Need to focus on my family just now Another sport has taken over Got involved with new activities</p>
Involvement as a coach	<p>Heavy involvement in coaching Took on more coaching responsibility Thrown into coaching earlier than I would have liked Coaching helped fill the void Coaching wasn't planned but opportunity arose Coaching now more gratifying than performing Want to become the best coach that I can be Developing an identity as a coach Really struggled when I later gave up coaching</p>
Involved in organisational aspects	<p>Went to competitions as a staff member I go and support the current team Want to get into judging when the time is right Took up umpiring to stay involved Involved in the running of the club Getting used to being on the sidelines I want to put something back into my sport</p>
Recreational involvement	<p>Continue to compete in some low level competitions Continued playing but in a different position Enjoy playing for fun and social Just something enjoyable now Want to be a role model for younger athletes Want to pass on my knowledge It wouldn't have been right to walk away Sport became time away from my family and new baby I like the structure that sport gives me</p>
Involvement through work	<p>Work now related to sport Working for the governing body Re-discovered love of sport through teaching Working as a development officer now</p>

Appendix H: Low Athletic Identity Case Studies (Study 2)

NANCY

Nancy was introduced to hockey when she was at school. Her two best friends at school were also involved, so in the early stages it was as much a social activity for them as anything else. While she was still at school Nancy played in Scottish junior squads. She played in her first senior international when she was 18 years old, which was the start of a 15 year international career. Whilst her experiences with Scotland were very positive, those with Great Britain were less so. Twice Nancy was in the squad for the Olympics and then failed to make the final team for the event.

At the time you are at your lowest point because of the effort you have put in, what you have given up to get there, and you know that you are never going to be able to say I was an Olympic athlete. And that does detract whether you like it or not from everything that you have achieved, because you never quite got as high as you thought you could.

Athletic Identity

Nancy's score on the retrospective AIMS was 33, indicating a relatively low level of athletic identity. Nancy made sacrifices in other areas of her life for her hockey career and it demanded a lot of commitment from her. However the fact that she was able to balance her law career with her sport meant that she maintained a very prominent identity outside of her sport and a strong social circle that went alongside this. This provides one explanation for the fact that Nancy did not have a strong and exclusive identification with her role as an athlete.

Nancy's involvement in hockey had an influence on her choice of university. She had considered doing Physical Education, which seemed a natural progression with her sporting involvement. However there was pressure from her parents to prioritise her education.

I suppose probably more parental pressure to pick a degree of choice rather than the degree to justify what was going on in the sport ... I ended up doing a law degree at Aberdeen.

Throughout her senior hockey career, Nancy lived in Aberdeen but played for a high level team based in Glasgow. This had a major impact on her life. Her university experience was different to most, as she would spend every weekend in Glasgow. However, this was not something that she saw as a particular issue.

My university life definitely suffered as a consequence of my hockey, but then I didn't have a comparison. It wasn't like I want to do this but I also want to do that, I never tried it to know what I was missing.

After graduating from university, Nancy started a full time position as a lawyer. During this time she described herself as having two jobs, one during the week in Aberdeen and the other at the weekends in Glasgow. She also had two sets of friends, based in the two locations. Nancy's employers were very supportive of her career and it was their willingness to provide her with job flexibility that enabled her to continue her career alongside her hockey. As her involvement in the higher levels of her sport increased, she required larger amounts of time off from the law firm.

There was one year I reckon I was only in the office for 4 and a half, 5 months, and they gave me paid leave the whole time, they never queried it or questioned it. And I don't think there are many organisations who would do that now.

One of the most important outcomes from this support was that Nancy was able to progress her career in law in parallel with her career in hockey.

I didn't get to an age when I retired that I was thinking, right I'm actually 5 or 6 years behind where I actually should be. I mean I went up through all my promotions and all the rest of it as I would have done, and I made partner in 2000 which was bang on schedule.

Circumstances of Retirement

Nancy met her husband in 1999, but for the first three years of their relationship they rarely saw each other. However, slowly this aspect of her life started to take a higher priority. She got to the stage where she was trying to manage her relationship around whether she was going to make it back up to Aberdeen on a Saturday night after the match or not. She started to slowly begrudge the travelling and the impact that was having on the rest of her life.

I think I was thinking about what I could be doing if I wasn't getting in the car ... I would play the game, we were a good team, successful team, half the games in the season I wouldn't actually touch the ball, and that had been the case all the way through, this wasn't something new, but it meant that you started to think can I not just play the really good games ... my love affair with actually playing for that team was starting to wane, maybe partly because I had been doing it for so long.

She felt that she was starting to have to make choices between hockey and the rest of her life, and hockey was no longer coming out on top. Additionally, the social side of the sport was changing for Nancy. The majority of her peer group that she had come up through the levels with had retired and she no longer felt the same degree of camaraderie and connectivity with the other players in the national team. Nancy made the decision before the European Championships that she would retire at the end of the tournament.

I had retired at the right time, because I was still enjoying the playing and the competition but I wasn't enjoying the travelling ... I always remember people saying to me stop when you are enjoying it, don't let somebody else make you stop. In other words I didn't want to phone call to say actually we think you're too old, you're not capable anymore.

Quality of Adaptation

Emotional

Nancy described her final tournament, and particularly the final match, as being very emotional.

We were standing there in the circle at the beginning of the game, knowing that was going to be your last international. I remember just saying we are going to do this ... but then at the end of the game just being in pieces, because it was almost like this letting go of something, and you really weren't sure how it was going to affect you going forward.

In the first few months after retirement, Nancy needed some time to get used to the spare time that she found she had available, particularly at weekends.

You are thinking, this is what people do. B and Q, going for a coffee, garden centres, into town shopping. And I didn't adjust to that for ages. I found it all a bit meaningless, filling in time, and thinking is this all there is.

Social

When Nancy retired she lost contact with a lot of her hockey friends due to the fact that they lived in Glasgow, and she was no longer making the journey down at the weekends.

When I retired it was like leaving a job and moving away, because I knew I wasn't going to see these people week in week out, you manage to keep up to date with what people were doing in their lives, socially and work wise or whatever because you were seeing them once a week, and you just knew that you weren't going to have that anymore.

However, her social circle in Aberdeen was able to develop as a result of her retirement and Nancy enjoyed the freedom of being able to spend the weekends with these people.

Occupational

As Nancy's career progressed at the rate that she would have expected it to despite her hockey commitments, she experienced very little in the way of occupational adjustment. She did comment that she would probably have retired earlier if she had not been able to maintain that balance:

I would have retired earlier because of the work aspect, if I hadn't been able to run the two parallel, because I think from a financial point of view it would have got too difficult. If my employers had been saying to me ... you are going to have to start taking unpaid leave, and you have got a mortgage, you have got your lottery funding but that is not going to cover the equivalent of what your salary was at that point in time.

Physical

One of the major disappointments that Nancy had upon her retirement was that she lost the motivation to train and found it very difficult to get to the gym or maintain any regular pattern of activity.

Some people said it took them a long time to down train, being so used to going training that they couldn't not do it anymore, I became almost the opposite, which was I don't need to do this anymore so I won't. And I would pack my bag for the gym, I would take it to work with me, and I wouldn't go.

Although Nancy still attended training at the club in Aberdeen, she found that she used the excuse of being busy at work to turn up late to the sessions, something she would not have dreamt of doing during her elite hockey career.

It was almost like, well work has suffered because of hockey, and now I am going to give back. But my firm don't give a monkeys whether I am here at 7 o'clock at night or am at training, the work will get done. But work is a convenient excuse, people won't question that.

Post-Career Involvement

Nancy knew when she ended her international hockey career that she would not be able to sever all links with the sport. She rejoined the club that she had played for while she was at school and started playing in an outfield position. As a former goalkeeper, she found that this was like playing in a completely new sport.

I needed a different challenge. If I had come back and gone in goal ... I would have found it the most frustrating experience, because the people in front of me wouldn't have been anything like the level and I would have shouted at them, and they would have been thinking why is she shouting at me, and the whole experience wouldn't have been good.

Conclusion

Although she was heavily committed to her sport, Nancy managed to maintain a reasonable work-sport balance and was able to progress her career in law in parallel with hockey. Her transition out of the role of elite hockey player was made easier, both by the fact that she was not heavily invested in her sport to the exclusion of other roles and also because she had an important role into which she could direct her attention and time once she had finished. She experienced some emotion at the end of her career, perhaps a testament to both what it had meant to her and the fact that she knew that it was going to result in a major change to her social circle. Additionally, she felt some disappointment that her career never quite reached the heights that she hoped it might.

TESS

Tess's involvement in sport started at the age of three in a recreational gymnastics class. She was introduced to trampolining at a summer activities session at age five and her background in gymnastics led to early success within the sport. Tess was involved in trampolining for 12 years. She was the Scottish champion throughout all of the age groups and competed in four consecutive junior World Championships, medalling each time. She did have some regrets about her career. Although she medalled in all four of the World Championships she attended, she never won the event.

So that was one thing, I always wanted to win it. I am left thinking about little stupid things, especially that one where I was so close... I would obviously loved to have won the World Age Groups once after being so close so many times.

Athletic Identity

Tess's relatively low retrospective AIMS score of 21 reflects that perhaps her identity as an athlete was not exclusive. She managed to maintain some balance between her school life, social life, and her trampolining which is a potential mediating factor. Additionally, trampolining did not take up a huge amount of time for her, particularly in comparison to the training loads in other sports. Tess was at school all the way through her trampolining career. She talked about missing a lot of school due to the competitions and training camps that she attended. This had an impact both on her education, and also socially in terms of developing her social circle. She talked about feeling that she had missed out on many aspects of adolescent life, although also highlighted missing some of these things as a positive.

So I mean I feel like I totally missed out on a lot of things, but at the same time I missed out on all the bad stuff as well, I missed out on all the hanging out on the streets and missed out on all the drinking and getting in trouble with the police, so I think I missed out on both sides.

She didn't feel that her school were particularly supportive of her sporting commitments. Although she was given assistance with the work that she missed, she suggested that the school did not recognise any of the athletes within the school.

Considering that I was in the paper every single weekend... pupil of Hunter High School, every single week, you'd have thought that they'd have bought into that a bit but they didn't really bother.

Tess felt that her social life was affected by her trampolining, as her regular absences from school removed her from her main social circle. Despite this, Tess worked hard to maintain friendships both within school and her sport, attempting to maintain some level of balance within her life. Tess's main coach played a very influential role in her career. She described her coach as a 'father figure', which was particularly important to her as her father was not around much during her childhood. She discussed the ways in which her coach shaped her both as a trampolinist and as a person, influencing the development of her character and of basic social skills. Her mother was also a very influential person, providing a lot of support, both financially and resource-wise, during her career. Andrea was mainly self-funded, supported by her mother and her club, and receiving a small amount of lottery funding during the latter stages of her career.

Circumstances of Retirement

Tess chose to retire from trampolining at the age of 17. She decided she wanted to have the life that her friends had and felt that she was missing out on many normal teenage activities, such as socialising, boys, drinking, and clubbing, through being an athlete.

I think I was kind of stupid enough to let, eventually let all the pressure get to me of my friends going out. By this point I was like 17 and it wasn't a case of going and hanging out on the streets, all my friends were going to the pub, going to the dances, getting boyfriends and just having a normal life, and I just really felt like I was missing out on something.

She described that first of all she started to smoke, and to slowly involve herself in the adolescent lifestyle of her friends. Her involvement in the sport started to decrease, and then soon after stopped completely. Tess did not feel that it was a difficult decision at the time. One of the hardest aspects of the retirement process for Tess was telling her coach that she wanted to stop. This was a very emotional experience, which was perhaps reflected in the fact that looking back she realised that it was the wrong decision and that it was far too early.

Now when I think about it, I obviously wasn't ready to leave, but at the time I was stubborn and wanted my own life and my own independence and to do my own thing, and trampolining I felt just got in the way of that, it had taken over my life for long enough.

Quality of Adaptation

Emotional

Tess described the period of time after retirement as very confusing. She missed trampolining, but at the same time she thought that she wanted a different life. Tess talked about missing the competitive side of the sport: "I miss the competing though because that was my favourite bit, because I used to win all the time, it used to make me feel great, I miss that". Adolescence is an important time in terms of identity development and at this period of time, Tess's focus was drawn to other aspects of her teenage life. She felt that she both missed the sport, and at the same time enjoyed the new freedom that she had. Tess did not fulfil all of her ambitions within the sport and therefore harboured regrets about her career and what she might have been able to achieve if she had not finished when she did.

That's the biggest mistake I think I've ever, ever made because I could probably have made it an awful lot further. Now I look at Catherine, who competed at the same time as me and it was always like that between us, one would win, then the other would win, and now she is away to the World Championships and qualifying for the Olympics.

Occupational

Tess left school and got a full time job, developing alternative identities and filling up time that had previously been spent on her sport. She explained that at the time she could remember saying that she was glad that she didn't have to go training, but reflectively feels that she doesn't think that this was honestly the case, and that she allowed herself to get buried within her new life and things escalated from there.

I did my own thing, got a boyfriend, went to the dancing, went to the pub, just normal 17, 18 year old things, what you do. And as well I started working. I got a full time, I actually left school and I got a full time job and I didn't have time to go in.

Physical

Initially Tess lost a lot of weight when she finished training. Over time, she appears to continue to have some issues with the physical aspect of her retirement from sport as she has put back on weight over time and still struggles to have control over this aspect.

Social

Once Tess had decided to retire, she initially cut herself off from the sport completely. For over a year after she finished, Tess did not go near the sports centre or have any contact with those people involved within her career: "I stopped, just stopped. Drew a line under it and I didn't go into the sports centre for over a year. Didn't come into training, didn't come into the sports centre at all". She described this as trying to keep herself away from the sport. She kept herself busy and filled her time with other activities.

I don't think I intentionally realised what I was doing, but I think subconsciously I was keeping myself away in case I was persuaded to come back, and now I think to myself, I wish I had come in a wee bit earlier and then maybe I would have come back, do you know what I mean.

By cutting herself off from the sport, she also cut herself off from a major element of her social network which also played a part in her reaction to the termination of her career.

Post-Career Involvement

About a year after retirement, Tess returned to visit her old club and coaches. "I just came back in to say hello, and then I kind of just stayed. That was like 5 or 6 years ago. I have just been there ever since". Asked by her former coach whether she wished to stay and help out with the younger competitors, the next stage of Tess's involvement in the sport started as a coach. Starting as an assistant, Tess undertook her coaching qualifications with the help of her club and has developed into one of the main coaches at the club, with a view to taking the reins as head coach once her former coaches have retired.

Tess thought about making a comeback into competitive trampolining, but found that it was just not the same. Although the moves and the ability were still evident, the desire to train and be the best had gone.

When I first started coaching for a long time, probably about a year or so, I would still get on the trampoline and play games or whatever with the kids, and then I thought to myself this isn't doing you any favours, it's like torturing myself, leaving you thinking what if, I could still do this.

Tess explained that she now gets a great deal of satisfaction from her work with the athletes in the club. She feels that this is like some form of closure for her, finally being able to put that part of her life behind her and move forward with the next chapter:

It is so much more rewarding when they win than when it is yourself, so much more rewarding when you put all that time and effort into someone and they win competitions. You see how happy they are and think, I did that, I know what a special feeling that is and I'm so glad I could help them feel that.

Conclusion

Tess initially settled into a post-sport life without any involvement in trampolining, but was not completely happy. She missed her sport and, although she felt that she had perhaps made the wrong decision, she also felt that it was too late to go back. Over time this changed again. Tess returned to the sport, got re-involved and developed a new identity linked to the sport. She has been able to finally close the door on her earlier lifestyle as an athlete:

I have had closure, I don't really remember when it was, probably that day when those three kids won the competition and I kind of had closure and said I am not a trampolinist anymore.

PENELOPE

Penelope started curling when she was 13 years old. She moved fairly quickly to the stage where she qualified to represent Scotland, and was involved in the sport at an international level for 14 years. She attended three Olympic Games, winning a gold medal in 2002. Penelope talked about the opportunities that arose for her and the rest of the team as a result of their Olympic win.

For about 6 months to a year we were at loads of things, we started the Balmoral run, just little things ... it was all the people you met in that space of time. It was just fantastic, what we did, the awards we won as a team for what we had done. There was a service in St Pauls Cathedral and all these people saw us and they knew who we were, because so many people had watched it.

Athletic Identity

Penelope scored 27 on the retrospective version of AIMS. Curling was a very important aspect of her life, but it is probable that the lower salience of her athletic identity was due to the high importance she placed on her family and her role as a mother. Penelope felt that her participation in curling had some impact on her family, and in particular caused her to miss out on certain aspects of her children's lives. However, she made sure the impact on her daughters was kept to a minimum and that they did not miss out on anything because of her career in sport. Penelope was a Scottish Institute of Sport athlete who received funding for the periods of training leading up to both the 2002 and 2006 Olympics. Her employer was very supportive, providing her with flexibility which enabled her to change her working hours to suit her sporting demands.

Even when I went full time in curling I was still employed, after all it was only for 2 months, so I took some unpaid leave, they gave me some leave, I took some unpaid, and I got funded.

Penelope's experiences in the latter stages of her career were fairly negative. After a very positive and successful Olympics in 2002, Penelope was involved in a new squad selection system for the 2006 Games. She described the system that was used as flawed, and as not giving the team the best chance to repeat their previous success.

Another low point obviously was the 2006 Olympics, it was just awful. You always look back on something you have been to before, and I just felt that it was so badly managed, corrupt, for want of a better word.

At one point she did consider not taking up her place in the Olympic team, as a stand against a system that she did not agree with, but in the end felt that it was not worth sacrificing the experiences she would gain from attending.

With 2006 I considered not going just because of things that had happened, but I thought do I throw all that away, throw away my chance, and then have to sit and watch it on TV at home. But I was in two minds, it was the closest I'd been to walking away from it.

Circumstances of Retirement

The experiences of the Olympics in 2006, and the resultant outcome, were factors in Penelope's decision to retire from curling. The disappointment of not being given the best possible chance, along with the knowledge that the same system was going to be put in place for the next Olympics, played a part in the decision-making process. She had lost faith in the people who were running the sport and no longer wished to be part of it. The decision of an important member of Penelope's team to retire was also an influence. Penelope felt that it would be better to make the choice to retire when there were still positive memories of a successful career.

We've had our Olympics, and I thought I don't want to curl just for the sake of curling... I was getting fed up getting beat in finals and things like that and I thought I don't want to scrape about in curling and just go there for the sake of it. I thought maybe you should just stop when you are on a high, when I can remember myself as a good curler.

Penelope felt that it was time for her to prioritise her family. She also believed it was important that she be in a position to be able to support her children and ensure that they had financial security.

As it goes on and on you think, I can't continue this. I mean, they are going to start high school next year, I just can't keep training loads and not working, and missing out on the important schooling years.

She did not feel that it was a particularly difficult decision, as she felt that she no longer had the desire to compete at the top level in the sport with all of the commitments that this entailed. Although she made the decision fairly quickly, she felt it was the right one for her:

It wasn't a huge decision, I mean I made it quickly, because my partner was like, are you sure, and I was like yes I'm not up for it anymore, so I fired off the email and I never thought twice about it. I did get an email back from the assistant coach and it was really nice, saying that she would miss me and everything, and when I read that I was like, mmm, maybe I shouldn't have, but most of the time I am like, yes, I have made the right decision.

Quality of Adaptation

Emotional

When she first finished, it was the end of the season and therefore initially things were not much different to what they would have been. The season was just about to re-start at the time of the interview and Penelope was anticipating that she may have some feelings of regret once the competitions started and she realised that she was no longer involved in the sport. Penelope spoke to quite a few people about her decision to retire, seeking advice and guidance from others. As well as the social support of her partner, she also spoke to one former team mate who had already experienced retirement and another who was also considering finishing her career. She felt that discussing her feelings with others who had an understanding of what she was experiencing was useful in helping her to confirm her decision in her own mind.

Social

Penelope talked about missing some of the people that were involved in curling, and the relationships that she had built up with other players who she would now not have the same level of contact with.

Every year you spend a lot of time in these people's company, and although you don't necessarily keep in touch all the time you always catch up in curling season, so I think I'll miss that.

She has managed to maintain some contact with people within curling through her ongoing involvement in the sport, coaching a junior team. Penelope has enjoyed being able to maintain some of her former friendships, within this different capacity.

I'm still seeing a lot of my curling friends at like junior weekends and things like that. It is funny because I came back after my, it was the third weekend, and it was nice because it is a wee coaching group now instead of like competing against these people.

During her curling career she felt that she had two sets of friends and referred to those outside of curling as her “summer friends”. Penelope was looking forward to being able to see more of these friends throughout the year now that she had finished.

Occupational

Once she had retired, Penelope increased the number of hours that she was doing at her work. Initially she found this quite challenging, as it was the first time in some years that she had worked four days a week.

Physical

Penelope did not find physical adjustment to be a major aspect for her. Through the summer she continued to attend the gym and to do the programme set for her. Once her gym membership ran out, she discontinued this involvement. Although she accepts that her fitness levels are not as high as they once were, this is not something that causes any form of distress.

Post-Career Involvement

As her children are still involved in curling, Penelope always felt that she would maintain some involvement within the sport. Although she had not initially anticipated this involvement to be as a coach, in the summer period after her retirement she was approached by a junior team and decided to take up the opportunity.

It wasn't something I thought, oh I am going to put myself out there to be a coach, the opportunity came and I just thought why not. I wouldn't like to have just walked away completely, I am still doing club curling, so you are still in the ice rink, and I think I had to do that because they (her daughters) are curling, so I think if I had walked away from it then they would eventually have thought, can't be bothered with this.

Conclusion

Penelope always knew that she had other aspects of her life that were of high priority and would take over once she had finished in curling. Because of this, she did not feel that curling left much of a gap and experienced a fairly smooth and quick transition out of the sport.

I knew I had work, I knew I had my kids, so I could always make myself busy if I was really missing curling. So I think if you know that you have got all that stuff then you don't need to be looking for something to fill your time, I mean I was doing curling on top of all the things that I was still doing.

Although the experiences of the latter part of her career were not wholly positive, she felt that she had got a lot out of the sport and was looking forward to the opportunity to put something back in.

LORNA

Lorna started playing club football when she was 10 years old, but had been brought up with an involvement in the sport from a young age. She had been actively encouraged to play by her parents and started out playing in the back garden with her brother. Her mother had played football when she was younger and was therefore a particular influence. Lorna progressed through development squads and elite squads, but never managed to make the break through into the senior national team. She had ambitions to play football in America, but this became less important to her when she started university.

Long term I always had a dream in the back of my head, that maybe I would go to America to play, but then once I started university it took my mind off that and I started to focus on getting university out of the way and doing that side of things. It is very easy for your focus to shift, you can't put 100% into both, can't be both a footballer and do the other things.

Athletic Identity

Lorna scored 27 on the retrospective version of AIMS, indicating that she did not appear to have an exclusive identification with the athletic role. Although football played a big role in Lorna's life, she also placed importance on other aspects, in particular her education.

I was a bit of a geek when I was at school. I always wanted to do well ... I remember I had a test, it was maybe in second or third year, and for a subject that I didn't really want to carry on, but I still wanted to do well and would be sitting worrying about.

This said, Lorna's life was structured around her sport and was how she was identified by other people. Lorna felt that her commitment to football had a positive influence on her education, improving her focus and her time-keeping skills. She had a fairly mixed social circle, with football friends from her club and school friends, very few of whom were involved in sport.

Circumstances of Retirement

When Lorna moved to go to university, she stopped playing football for her club. Although she did not realise it at the time, this was to mark the end of her involvement in elite level football. She started to play with the university football team, but did not get back involved in top level club football.

I don't think I consciously decided but I think I realised as I was going through university that I wasn't playing club football. I went along a couple of times ... but I guess I never really felt motivated to do it anymore.

Lorna's priorities were changing, and she placed her university education and the friendships she was developing at university higher than playing elite level football.

I think (it was) because I had so many other things. I liked spending time with my mates at the weekend, whereas going to play football again would have meant I would have had training several evenings and games at weekends, and add that to the university football and I was thinking when would I go out, when would I actually get to see my mates. I guess at that point that was more important.

After finishing her degree she moved up to Aberdeen to work. When she first got there, she attended a few sessions at the local Premier League team. However, she did not enjoy the experience and it made her realise that she no longer had any interest in playing football at that level.

Quality of Adaptation

Emotional

Emotionally, Lorna's retirement was not difficult. Her attention had moved to other aspects of her life and she did not regret making the decision to stop playing at the elite level. Although she had fleeting moments whilst playing at university when she thought she might like to challenge herself at a higher level, these were never strong enough for her to make the sacrifices that she would have had to make.

Social

Lorna still felt that football was important to her during her time at university, but for different reasons than before. Becoming involved in university football opened up a whole new social circle for her, many of whom she has stayed in close contact with since graduation. She found that being involved in some level of football helped to integrate her quicker into university life. Because she had developed a new social network, she did not miss the football friends that she had left behind.

Occupational

Lorna had to work to help finance her degree, and this was one of the reasons that she could not commit more time to football. Most of her time was taken up with her university studies, and she wanted to be able to spend any spare time that she had with her friends.

Physical

Lorna did not have any issues with physically adjusting to retirement, as she never stopped training. Even when she did not have anything to train for, Lorna was still running and maintaining a good level of physical fitness.

I guess I always kept myself reasonably fit, I never got to the stage where I did nothing, I have always been like that since I was a kid, never sat still at that age either.

Post-Career Involvement

Lorna missed the structure that weekly participation in club football gave her. When she moved up to Aberdeen, she knew very few people. She got involved in a lower division team and found that her involvement both provided her with the structure she desired and a new social circle.

I didn't know that many people, but just from being involved in the football since the summer I already know 15 or 20 girls I didn't know before, and it is a good bunch of girls, I now play 5's with them on a Monday as well, and at the weekend I had them all over for the Scotland game.

Lorna was not sure what her future involvement in football will look like. The option to return to top club level still exists, as her current team have an affiliation with the Premier League team. However, she is pretty sure this is not an option that she is likely to consider.

The guy has already asked if I would be interested, but I am not bothered, I know I wouldn't enjoy it. Football has changed its importance and what it gives me isn't a goal to work towards, it just gives me enjoyment from playing. So I am not looking to do anything further with it.

The one thing she is sure about is that she will continue to have some form of relationship with the sport.

I think I will probably always play at some level, even if I stop playing for a club in a year or 2, or 5 years or whatever, I'll probably still play fives or something like that, because if you have done it all your life it is difficult to get into a different mind set.

Conclusion

Lorna experienced a smooth transition out of elite level football. With changing priorities, she found it relatively easy to divert her attention towards other aspects of her life and away from football. She has continued to have an involvement in sport, first in the university team and now with a team in the lower division. Football remains fairly important to her, but mainly due to the social benefits that it offers her.

The social side has been really important. I always feel good when I play football, I feel fit, and feel good about myself. So there is that side of it too. And I look forward to the game at the end of the week, so I like the structure that that gives your week.

MELANIE

Melanie grew up in a town where the main leisure activity was golf. Her involvement in the sport started as a youngster, however she was quite a late developer in terms of getting started in elite competition. Melanie had two spells of playing for Scotland, returning for a short period after initially retiring.

Athletic Identity

Melanie suggested that although golf was an important part of her life, she was never willing to focus on it to the extent that it became only thing. "I suppose I wanted more of a mix in my life, as much as it was very important". This is supported by her retrospective AIMS score of 30, which is suggestive of a medium to low level of identification with the athletic role. Throughout her golf career she was also involved in other sports, including hockey, at a recreational level. Sport never seemed to represent a career to her; it was always something she did alongside the rest of her life.

I also played other sports in that time, all the way through I played hockey in the winter, which for me was healthy, I wasn't one of these people who was single-minded.

Melanie was never a full time amateur player and worked throughout her career. She had to balance her sporting requirements with her job. The demands in her sport were fairly high during the summer, when she would have competitions every weekend and practice during the week.

It was quite hard because you basically use every single day of holiday to play your sport, just juggling it all. The nature of golf, it is very much travelling all round Scotland and Britain, so it's weekends, a lot of the big events are at weekends which suits people who work, but it is a lot to juggle.

Circumstances of Retirement

After a number of years of playing at representative level, Melanie made the choice to step out of elite level golf. She felt that she was not playing particularly well and no longer had the desire to commit huge amounts of time to her sport: Her priorities were changing, with marriage coming up the following year and a subsequent shift in emphasis towards her personal and social life.

I just thought, you know I have kind of had enough with all the traipsing round the country and going to all the events. I probably just took the pressure off myself a wee bit and thought, I'll go to certain things but just for fun, I stopped going to the British and stuff.

Three years later, Melanie won the Scottish Championships and as a result was given the opportunity to return to representative play. She was at the event with her friends and therefore it was fun, enjoyable, and more like a holiday. She felt that this was probably the main reason that she did so well.

Just had a fantastic week, played really well, got the buzz back a wee bit because I played well. And then I went on to win it which of course throws you back into the whole being selected again, for Europeans which I had never been to before.

Although Melanie enjoyed the opportunity to once again represent Scotland, she never saw this as leading to anything further or even being a new beginning for her golf career.

Had it happened 5 years before when I was originally played for Scotland, then I would have said that that was the stepping stone up to aim to play for Britain, that is the stage where you would then get picked up for GB squads, but because it happened when it did it was a bit like a swansong, it was like I'm back, no I'm away again.

Melanie and her husband had started to plan their future family and she was actually pregnant when she played in the European event.

I suppose we got to that point, I was 31, 32, thinking about having a family and all that kind of thing. I think you get to the point where you don't really want to do it anymore.

Quality of Adaptation

Emotional

Melanie described her retirement as feeling completely right. She felt that she had been lucky to have had the second opportunity on the international stage. Her priorities had changed and golf simply held a lot less importance: "getting married and all that is a huge thrill in your life ... golfing isn't the be all and end all anymore after that". She enjoyed the extra time that not participating in the golfing circuit gave me and highlighted feeling relief when the first competitions of the year started and she was not standing on the tee.

Social

The arrival of Melanie's daughter dictated to some extent the direction that her social and personal life moved in. Her continued play in county golf enabled her to maintain her golfing social contacts and her social life outside of her sport continued on as it had before.

Occupational

Melanie's retirement did not present her with any occupational adjustment issues. She worked full time through her golf career and continued to do so after she retired.

Physical

Melanie did not report any issues of physical adjustment. During her career, she never felt that she had worked as hard physically as she could have and post retirement she continued her involvement in golf and other sports which assisted her transition.

Post-Sport Life

Melanie continued participating in county level golf competition after her retirement. It has enabled her to maintain an involvement with the social side of her sport.

Even up until this year I have continued to play, even with having the two kids, with the timing of when they were born I have managed to keep playing my county stuff every year. And that was just very much for the team camaraderie aspect of it.

However, she has found that the psychological pressures she used to struggle with in international play have started to filter down, and of late have been influencing her play at county level.

I love the team thing, want to be part of the team, but can't bear to go out there and not contribute. Historically I always was very much one of the mainstays and it's really, really hard to struggle with your game to a point that you are miserable about it, it's horrible.

Melanie has also held the position of non-playing captain of the Scottish team, which was a chance for her to share her expertise and experience with the current top female players. It was both an opportunity to for her to give something back to her sport, and get back in touch with the elite level of the sport.

I could really relate to what was going on in the girls heads, how they were feeling, it was really good. And when you say to them that you understand, you really do, and hopefully they get that as well.

Conclusion

Golf has taken on a different meaning for Melanie now that she has retired. Melanie's retirement from the sport was timely and she did not experience any adjustment difficulties through her transition. Her life was very quickly filled up with other activities and she did not express any regrets or desire to attempt to return to elite level golf at any stage.

I guess golf is different to some other sports, you can keep playing club golf, I go and play with my mum and we just chat and we play, it is a walk, it is fresh air, it is really enjoyable actually because there is none of the mental stuff going on.

VIOLET

Violet's relationship with sport started at age 14, with an involvement in swimming and gymnastics. She was introduced to diving through the coach of her local club. She competed internationally under his guidance for a number of years, during which the highlight was representing Scotland at the Commonwealth Games. After moving to Australia to live with her fiancée, Violet continued to train as she worked towards her ultimate target of reaching the Olympic Games. Although she attained the qualification standard for the British trials in an Australian competition, she could not afford to return for them and therefore did not make the Olympic team. After over two years in Australia she returned home to Britain and retired from diving shortly after this.

Athletic Identity

Violet described diving as being a very important activity for her, but one that was something she could enjoy alongside the rest of her life. Violet's score of 26 on the retrospective AIMS provides support for this, suggesting lower levels of identification with the athlete role. During her diving career Violet worked full time. Diving and work took up all of her time, leaving little time for a social life. Her social circle was predominantly other divers and the majority of her social events were connected to the sport. Violet also had an interest in horse riding, but chose diving over this because her parents could not afford to let her ride every week. In comparison, her diving career had very few financial implications for her parents.

Violet moved to Australia in the year after the Commonwealth Games with the intention of marrying her fiancée. Although her personal relationship did not work out, Violet preceded to spend two years living and training in Western Australia. During her time abroad, she maintained her training, working with a different club, and continued to commit quite a large amount of her time towards her sport. She compared her experiences to those in Britain, where she had had a coach who used bullying tactics to achieve results.

It was a more positive coaching experience out there, maybe because I was older, it was much softer and kinder, but still achieving the same results if you like.

Circumstances of Retirement

When Violet returned to Britain she returned to training with her former coach. At that stage she was not sure what her targets were within the sport. It was a long time until the next major event and as she had been away from the British diving scene for some time she was not sure how she matched up to her competition. Things at her old club were different. While Violet had been away her peer group had retired and new divers were coming up through the ranks.

It just didn't feel right. I wouldn't say they weren't welcoming, but I just felt they were looking at me and saying well are you coming back to dive or are you just coming back to see who is around.

In diving terms she felt she was quite old. Her coach's attention had moved on to younger divers and she struggled to perform dives that she had previously been able to do. She felt as though the sport had moved on and left her behind while she had been away. With no clear goals or drive, Violet decided that she no longer had the desire to be involved in the sport.

I think I was quite glad to stop in a way because ... I probably couldn't do the dives, I had hurt myself a few times trying to do the big dives ... it just didn't feel right so I walked away.

Quality of Adaptation

Emotional

Violet described retiring as a strange feeling and to fill the gap got back involved with the other sport of her younger years, horse riding. However, there was never a time when Violet regretted her decision to retire or thought about returning to diving: "as soon as I walked out the pool and I had stopped that was it, didn't ever think about going back. So it must have been the right decision".

Social

Violet quickly developed a new social circle, around horse riding. She joined her local riding club and nearly everything that she did was centred on horses and people linked to this world. Initially, she did not maintain any contacts with people from her former sport.

Occupational

There was no adjustment required on an occupational front for Violet, as she simply continued to work full time as she had done previously. Diving had not had a particularly big impact on her work and therefore she felt little change in this area.

Physical

Violet did not have many issues physically adjusting to retirement. Her training loads had started to change in the later periods of her diving career, after her time spent in Australia and then returning to the United Kingdom, creating something of a detraining period. By getting involved in another sport after retiring she maintained a reasonable level of activity.

Post-Career Involvement

After being away from diving for nearly 20 years, Violet decided to get back involved in some adult lessons, her decision driven by her motivation to lose some weight. Rekindling her love of the sport once more, she joined a club and then started to compete in Masters events. Alongside her own participation, Violet also got involved in other areas of the sport including coaching and judging. She is currently quite heavily involved in the coaching and organisational side of her club.

Conclusion

Violet experienced a relatively trouble-free transition out of diving. She quickly developed her involvement in an alternative activity which filled the gap that was left by her diving. Initially she had no desire to maintain any contact with her sport and this was not encouraged in any way by her former coach or club. Violet did not have a particularly high level of identification with the role of athlete and therefore was able to let go of this aspect of her life without too many issues. Over time she has developed a new involvement in the sport and with this a new diving-related identity.

NAOMI

Naomi's involvement in sport started when she was at secondary school. She was given the opportunity to participate in many sports and found that she had a particular ability in lacrosse. Her first taste of international play came in the Scottish schools team, which was followed by play in the under 21s and the Scotland B squad. It took her some time to make it into the full Scottish team, but she did finally manage to achieve her dream of playing for Scotland in the World Cup.

Athletic Identity

Naomi's score on the retrospective AIMS was 34. Although lacrosse was important to her, her identification with the role of athlete was certainly not so strong as to dominate other roles within her life. In particular, she maintained a balance within her social life and throughout her time playing lacrosse, her career as a physiotherapist remained very important. Naomi's career as a physiotherapist progressed at the same time as her career in lacrosse. She played throughout her university degree and then continued play once she was

qualified. In the first couple of years after graduation her lacrosse took something of a backseat as she pursued her first full time job down in Oxford. After this, she returned to Scotland and lacrosse came to the forefront as she pushed for a place on the World Cup squad.

Throughout her career, Naomi was able to fit her sporting commitments in with her full time job. The demands of her sport were not particularly high, and although at times her social life was slightly curtailed, her life never became unbalanced. When there was a clash between her sporting and work commitments, work often took precedence: “my weekend work commitments meant that sometimes you maybe couldn’t play in a club match because I had to work at weekends”.

At quite an early stage of her career, Naomi suffered quite a serious knee injury requiring surgery. Although it interrupted her lacrosse career for nearly a year, at the time it did not have a huge psychological impact as she was able to concentrate her attentions on her fledgling physiotherapy career.

Lots of other things were happening anyway... it gave me a chance to do other things, get into mountain biking, do some other stuff... it wasn’t like I was sitting twiddling my thumbs.

Naomi’s social circle was quite mixed, with more friends outside of her sport than within. She was able to maintain contact with her social circle throughout her lacrosse career, and received a lot of social support from all of her friends: Her parents were also very supportive of her career, providing financial assistance and attending many of her matches and major events.

It was a bit difficult at times to find the time to see friends outside the sport, but they were great and supported me through it, understood that I had to go home early or couldn’t come out certain nights. A lot of my friends did other sport, they were really good squash players or things like that, so they knew and they understood.

Circumstances of Retirement

The major factor that led to Naomi’s retirement was ongoing problems with her Achilles tendons. She planned to retire after the World Cup, or before it if she did not get selected for the event.

I had surgery on one, got over that, then had problems with the other one, and it was just like I can nurse this through but I needed to stop after that, everything was sort of hurting. When I got selected I was determined to get myself as fit as I reasonably could, but it was clear in my mind that that would be the end. I didn’t have a number in my head, it wasn’t an age thing, as to when I would stop. It was mainly the physical.

Naomi was also looking forward to getting on with other aspects of her life, and having free time to participate in other activities. She had reached a time where she felt that she had achieved everything that she felt she could within lacrosse and therefore the decision to retire was relatively easy.

It was a very easy decision, I absolutely knew. Because for me I also knew, I was never the star of the team, it took me a while to even get a place in the team, so that was as good as I was ever, ever going to achieve ... some people had a solid place in the A squad for over 10 years, whereas I just scraped in by my fingernails, so it was my Everest and it was as good as I was ever going to do.

She did however suggest that the decision may have been more difficult if she had been 100 percent fit and able to continue to compete effectively on the international stage.

Quality of Adaptation

Emotional

The major emotion that Naomi experienced when she retired from lacrosse was relief, mainly because she was in pain. She did feel some regret that she could have been fitter or faster, if she had not been hampered by injury problems. Naomi also felt excitement about her future: “it was relief and also excitement, looking forward to some time off and to be getting other things, social life and stuff, back on track”.

Social

Naomi has maintained contact only with those within lacrosse that she was close to. There were many players that she lost contact with, particularly as she maintained no involvement in the sport after retiring. As she had a broad social circle during her lacrosse career, this was not an area in which much adjustment was required.

Occupational

During her lacrosse career, there were times when Naomi was unable to take up opportunities to undertake extra courses or study due to her commitments within her sport leaving her little spare time. This was something that she was able to pick up on once she had retired. Other than this aspect, her working life was not particularly affected by her retirement. She had not based her job choice around her sport and stated that if a particularly good job opportunity had arisen while she had still been playing then that would have been her priority.

Physical

Naomi came to the end of her lacrosse career looking forward to a rest and then a change of activity. Her initial priority was to allow herself to completely recover physically from the World Cup and to allow her Achilles problems to settle.

Initially I stopped all activity, because everything was sore, so I just stopped. I probably didn't do any exercise other than probably go for a swim a couple of times a week, barely that. I walked to work and things like that, but really nothing too strenuous or competitive for quite a while... for me it was total rest and recovery, lots of recovery, which was what I both needed and wanted, it was perfect, and then it was great because the choices were all open to me, what did I want to do next, and what can I try now.

Post-Sport Life

Naomi has maintained very little contact with her former sport. She had no interest in having any involvement from an organisational or coaching perspective and the issues with her Achilles prevented her from continuing to play even at a recreational level.

I shouldn't think I'd ever get involved again, it is like a good chapter closed. Apart from like supporting internationals here, easy support if you like, but happy to do that. But I can't see me getting involved in any other way again.

She took up the opportunity to get back involved with tennis, one of the other sports that she had involved at a social level whilst at school.

I always knew that I wanted to take up tennis again, I had played at school but haven't played since and always loved watching it, so I thought it was something I could do for the fun of it.

The injury issues that she had during her lacrosse career have continued to have an impact in her post-sport life. She is no longer able to participate in activities which involve any form of prolonged running, and is keen to ensure that she does not exacerbate any problems which could jeopardise her ongoing sporting activities.

Conclusion

Naomi looks back upon her lacrosse career as a very positive experience with very happy memories. She fulfilled her ambitions within the sport and felt she gained some transferable skills that she has been able to use within her working life:

I think the experience of playing in a team with different groups of individuals has helped at work, in my management role, managing different personalities and recognising the traits that will cause your team of employees problems. And also the knowledge of what a sense of achievement feels like on a bigger scale.

Although her retirement was dictated by injury problems, she felt fairly happy with the timing of the end of her career and had a fairly problem-free transition into her life after sport.

GILLIAN

Gillian remembered loving swimming from an early age and the enjoyment she felt from being in the water. Her early memories include persuading her parents to let her join the local swimming club and get more involved in the sport. Gillian started swimming competitively when she was 12 years old and was involved at a competitive level for eight years. Gillian represented Scotland in international competition on several occasions during this period. However she failed to make the team for the Commonwealth Games, which had been her main ambition towards the end of her career.

Athletic Identity

Gillian's retrospective AIMS score of 24 indicates that she felt she had a relatively low level of identification with the athlete role during her swimming career. In terms of her identity hierarchy, the role of athlete was evidently not particularly prominent compared to other identities within her life.

Like most swimmers, Gillian spent a substantial number of hours training each week. At junior level she was still at school and on average trained between 16 and 18 hours per week. After she finished school, Gillian deferred entry to university to spend a year training full time in her sport, moving to a different club with a more serious swimming focus. But, as she describes, the seriousness and focus of full time training did not suit her: "It didn't work for me at all, just swimming, I needed my brain... I needed something else really". Gillian suggests that once the training got more serious, her own enjoyment of the sport decreases, and this in turn had an impact upon her results.

Through her year as a full time swimmer, Gillian described her life as being focused on the one element: "it was all swimming, swimming, swimming, so I was socialising with swimming people then as well". However, once she started university, her identity started to diversify again, as she started to socialise with university friends and her identity as a student developed. The balance of Gillian's swimming and the rest of her life improved and during her first year of her degree she achieved some of the best results of her swimming career. During this period, Gillian also saw a positive impact of her sporting involvement on her education.

My swimming was really good for time management and I think that that is something that I have picked up as a sort of life skill, because I swam, or because I was so involved in sport.

Gillian suffered quite a few issues with injury, particularly during the latter stages of her swimming career. She found that she lost a lot of motivation after she got injured and found it increasingly difficult to pick herself back up after an injury.

It just seemed to be injury after injury, you know, shoulders, back, hip, all sorts, and you know that is quite difficult to get over when your training's broken up ... I think I just got disheartened. I actually started to think about what my body would be like when I was 50 as well, you know, if I was putting it under so much strain already.

Circumstances of Retirement

For almost two years before her decision to end her swimming career, Gillian felt that things went steadily downhill, both in training and in competition. Through that two year period Gillian developed some quite serious negative issues about her body and her weight fluctuated noticeably during that period.

My coach would always comment on it and it ended up that I was completely paranoid about it and had major issues with that and that probably contributed to my decline in performance.

Gillian got caught up in a cycle of feeling negative about her swimming performances, feeling steadily worse and losing confidence in herself. One final poor performance, coupled with a negative reaction from her coach, was the final straw for Gillian:

I actually stopped swimming in a very bad way because my last competition was in June, it was Scottish Nationals, and I did, I swam terribly, but I mean I was just feeling awful, you know, and I swam terribly and he said that basically I was an embarrassment and then that was it, I was in tears, and you know I just cut it off like that which was probably the worst thing that I could have done, but he didn't try and find out why I had swum badly or anything.

Gillian's relationship with her coach had a big impact on her decision to retire from the sport. She talked about her decision to change clubs in the middle of her career:

In hindsight, I was probably with the wrong coach and it has a lot to do with whether you are compatible with your coach. At the time it seemed right, it was one of the best clubs, and it was in Edinburgh, and I was at university in Edinburgh, it meant I could stay at home and it all kind of linked up.

Her relationship with her coach deteriorated as her performances got worse, as she felt that she was not valued by him and that he did not understand what she was going through. She did not feel that he was someone that she could go to about the issues that she was having with her body image and the disordered eating that was linked to this.

Quality of Adaptation

Emotional

Emotionally, Gillian struggled with the sudden end to her swimming career. She felt the loss of something that had been a major aspect of her life for a long time.

I would say I was a complete mess, I mean I was just, I would cry a lot, I just didn't know what I was thinking... I didn't feel balanced mentally, I just felt completely lost, I didn't know what I was doing, didn't know what I wanted to do, didn't know how this had happened, how it had got to this stage, you know.

She also felt anger at the situation and at the part that her coach played in the way in which her career finished. Although she accepts that some of this came from a personality clash and the fact that he was not a good fit for her in terms of the type of coach he was, she could not help but feel anger and hatred towards him.

Gillian also felt regret and disappointment. Although as a child she had harboured few thoughts about getting to the top in the sport, towards the end she felt she had had a good chance to reach the Commonwealth Games and represent her country on a multi-sport stage.

I had the talent and the potential to make the Commonwealth Games team, and that is something I suppose that ran through my mind, but then I started to think, did I actually want it bad enough, and I'm not sure that I did, because, obviously there were all these other issues there as well.

Social

Gillian's reaction to the end of her swimming career was to cut herself off from the sport and from anything that was connected to it.

I vowed that I would never go near a swimming pool ever again. And it took me probably over a year to go back to a swimming pool, the first swim I had after all of that was probably about 14 months after I stopped.

Initially she had no contact with her coach, or with any of the other swimmers that she previously been so close to. Over time, she has regained some of the friendships she had with other swimmers, but for that first year she disconnected herself completely from her former social network. Rather than facing the feelings and emotions she was experiencing, Gillian found it easier to immerse herself in a different environment with people who had no connection to her life as an athlete.

I found it hard to speak about it then, easier just to forget about it, block it out. That's I suppose why I didn't want to be anywhere near a swimming pool, why I didn't want to be near anyone I had swam with, nothing like that.

Gillian did not feel that she was able to speak to many people about her career ending. She received support from her parents, who had realised that things had not been going well for her before she was ready to admit this herself. The circumstances of her retirement also had an effect on them:

My mum and dad were furious at my coach, which is understandable I think, they could see how upset I was. They were very angry and they would still, I mean my dad in particular would still sort of make negative comments about my coach and how I was treated.

Occupational

Retiring from swimming had a major impact on Gillian's university degree. From being a top student with excellent time management skills, Gillian started to do only the bare minimum of work that was required of her and finished her degree a year earlier than she had originally planned.

I suppose in a sense I stopped seeing the value of sport, because I had had such a bad experience of it, and I just wasn't interested, I mean I barely passed my exams, I got the minimum, I did no work for it... I got my degree, and I was just like, no, I'm leaving, and then I was just working different jobs, cafes, bars, that kind of thing you know. Not involved really in sport at all.

Gillian found that having to rely on a lot of financial support during her swimming career put a lot of pressure on her and this was something that improved drastically once she had retired.

I like the feeling of knowing that I am supporting myself, you know, and I don't have to rely on anyone to pay for anything for me, I like being independent and I think that was another consideration that I started to realise, it would be different if I had been getting funding, but you start to think how long can you go on for.

Physical

To help her cope, she threw herself into another aspect of her identity. She found that immersing herself in a student lifestyle enabled her to forget about swimming.

I cut myself off completely and I went a bit off the rails in terms of I went out every night, you know, I just didn't really want to feel anything, just drinking a lot and you know my weight just shot up as is probably normal you know, because you are used to eating such a huge amount and doing all that exercise.

Post-Career Involvement

As Gillian got over what she described as “the traumatic experience” of how her swimming career ended, she started to swim recreationally and got involved in some coaching. Slowly she got back involved in the sport that she had formerly loved and rediscovered her passion through teaching.

That is the one thing I know now, I may not teach for the rest of my life, but I have to be involved in swimming, I want to work in swimming because I have got such a passion for it. I am so glad I have got the passion back, so glad, because I can go swimming by myself and I can really appreciate it because I love just being in the water and it is just for the love of the sport.

Conclusion

Reflecting on her career, Gillian felt that although she retired at a young age, she probably held on too long and should not have allowed her career to reach the crisis point that it did.

I think I knew that I didn't want to do it anymore but I forced myself to keep doing it because I felt that it was expected of, or because I felt there was some kind of pressure, also maybe because I was scared of admitting that I didn't, of stopping because it was such a big part of my life.

She felt that if she had stopped a little earlier, she might not have cut herself off from the sport in the way that she did. Her retirement was off-time and caused a lot of emotional, occupational, and physical difficulties. Although Gillian did not have a high and exclusive identity with the athlete role, the circumstances of the end of her career meant that the transition was a difficult and drawn out one. She said that if she had had a chance to repeat her career, she would not have changed clubs when she did, but would have stayed with her former coach. She still felt that this earlier decision was one that had a big impact on the rest of her career.

Although a number of years have passed since Gillian's retirement from swimming, she still finds that she can get upset when thinking about her career:

Sometimes I still, if I watch old videos you know of me swimming, I still get very emotional about it all, because I did love it so much when I swam, up until that point you know.

SUZANNE

Suzanne started running when she was nine years old, introduced to the sport by one of her school teachers. She joined her local athletics club when she was 11, choosing to focus on cross country and distance events. Up until the age of 18 running was a big focus, but when she moved away to university her studies took priority over her training. After graduating from university and starting her first full time job, Suzanne re-focused on her athletics. The highlights of an injury-stricken career were the opportunities she had to represent Scotland on a number of occasions. The injury problems that she experienced in her career began at the age of 23, at a time when her career was on the ascendancy.

I did bounce back, and I did have another 8 years of hard training after that, but I definitely do feel that something changed with that injury, it wasn't quite the same again after that.

Athletic Identity

Suzanne scored 30 on the retrospective version of AIMS. She did not appear to have an exclusive identification with the athletic role. Suzanne developed her career in teaching alongside her athletics and this was a major contributor to her identity hierarchy.

The major area that athletics had an impact on was her social life. Most of her social network was connected to her sport and social events were limited to non-race weekends. She did not maintain contacts with many university friends due to their circumstances; something which she found helped her training schedule.

Socially, I suppose I was lucky in that both of my good friends from university both went abroad to work, so I did have some friends from school but it was quite easy for me to opt out of the social scene, because I didn't feel anybody was totally relying on me.

Circumstances of Retirement

Suzanne got married and her priorities started to change. Her focus began to move away from athletics as she started to look towards the future.

I think when I got to early 30s, I had got married at 29 and I felt like my career had ran its course, so to speak. I felt that I was going into a new part of my life.

The continual cycle of injury and recovery was also taking its toll on Suzanne. As her priorities started to change her motivation to work to return from injury was waning.

Although I had some really good blocks of time it would always be interspersed with injuries and niggles, hips and knees were the worst, and I think that was what really finished me off in the end to be honest ... I think mentally it just eventually takes its toll on you.

Several months after her marriage, Suzanne developed a small injury which would normally have meant only a small break from training. However, with her reduction in motivation, she found that even when she was physically well she did not want to get back into her routine. This was the final event which led to Suzanne announcing her retirement from athletics.

I think at first that I did feel guilty, because I knew that once the niggle was away that I had no excuse. I think I then started making arrangements, like I need to get this schoolwork done, and I would make sure I was doing something rather than just sort of sitting about, so that I didn't have to think about it.

Quality of Adaptation

Emotional

With her changing priorities, Suzanne did not find her retirement from athletics particularly difficult. She did not miss competitive racing, even when she went to watch races. She never felt at any stage the urge to get back involved in that side of her sport.

Social

Suzanne stayed in contact with many of her friends from athletics. After retiring, she was able to further develop friendships with people at work. She also enjoyed spending more time with her husband.

Occupational

Occupationally, Suzanne did not have any adjustments to make when she retired. She continued to develop within her teaching career as she had previously done.

Physical

This was the biggest area of adjustment for Suzanne. Her whole routine had changed and a combination of eating later in the evening and exercising less led to some changes in her physique.

I did put on a bit of weight, only something that I would notice myself really, it is only one size but to you it feels horrible, you don't feel right, and that was when I started to think that I would get back out and do a wee bit of jogging.

Although other people started to comment that they thought that she was looking much healthier, Suzanne struggled to deal with her changing body shape and found that it influenced her self-esteem. She eventually decided to re-establish her involvement in sport to try to regain some of her fitness.

Post-Career Involvement

Suzanne returned to athletics after a few months, as a method of weight control. Initially she did not want to return to her former club, as she was concerned about what other people would be thinking.

Initially I ran just on my own, so that nobody knew, so they couldn't see how poor I have got. I know that there are reasons, that I am not training anymore, but I can't help but worry about what others are thinking, and feel I have to try to justify where I am at.

Through this, Suzanne started to lose some weight and regain some self-confidence. She slowly returned to have an involvement in her club, where her sister was the head coach. She has also participated in a few recreational races, but has kept her involvement at a level where it is not having an effect on her social and personal lives.

I will do the women's 10K this year, but it is like my aim has changed, I'm doing it just to do it now. I tend to, if I'm going to do a race now, I'll enter quite a big race, because then I know that I can kind of be lost in the crowd. I know if it was a small race I would feel more exposed and I would be worrying about what other people were thinking of me.

Conclusion

Suzanne chose to retire at a time that felt right in terms of what else was happening in her life. She had very few difficulties upon retirement, the main issue being dealing with the physical changes her body experienced. Suzanne had a fairly balanced identity when she was running and found it fairly easy to transfer her energies from athletics into other areas of her life. She reflects positively on her athletics career and what it has given her.

I would say it has probably been the biggest influence in making me the person that I am, and it has given me a real strength to cope with whatever life kind of throws at you ... it has been probably the thing that had shaped me. I do think running has made me a tougher person.

LINDA

Linda's involvement in netball started at primary school. Her interest was then driven forward by a Physical Education teacher in secondary school, who encouraged her to join the netball club where she herself was a member.. Linda's first experience of international netball was at age 17, following which she then represented Scotland in the sport for a period of 15 years. The high point of Linda's career was captaining the Scotland team in the World Championships. Linda's career also gave her fantastic opportunities to travel to several different countries and meeting people from many different cultures. The camaraderie of her team and opportunities to develop new friendships are something that she continued to miss after the end of her career.

Athletic Identity

Linda described netball as being extremely important to her, to the extent that her social circle was predominantly made up of other netball players. However her retrospective AIMS score of 33 possibly reflects the fact that it was not an exclusive identity. This is perhaps due to the fact that she held a full time job outwith her sport which commandeered an important position within her identity hierarchy.

During the early part of her international career, Linda was studying at college. From the age of 21 she balanced holding a full time job with playing elite level netball. Compared to some other sports, the time commitment required for netball was not overly onerous. All of the commitments, aside from international tournaments, fell outside working hours. Linda was self-funded throughout her career, typical for a minority support. She received a lot of support from her parents, who provided financial assistance in the early stages and provided social support throughout her career.

In the middle of her career Linda suffered a serious knee injury, which was a contributing factor to her final decision to retire:

You had this big challenge to get back to a decent level of fitness after the operation... to be honest I think I did, but I think that was the turning point as well, the effort of having to get yourself back up to that sort of fitness. I mean I did get to the World Championships after having ruptured my cruciate but after that Championship that was when I decided I would give up.

Circumstances of Retirement

Linda's knee injury played a role in her decision to retire from netball. Although she recovered from the injury and regained her previous fitness level, she continued to experience some physical problems with her knee. This led to some question in Linda's mind about whether she wanted to continue participating in an elite level in the sport, with the physical repercussions that this could bring.

Just even basic things like kneeling down became difficult and is still difficult you know, and you start to think what sort of pressure you are putting on the rest of your body, you know you can see the signs on one knee but what is happening with the rest.

In addition to this, Linda was starting to realise that other aspects of her life were becoming increasingly important to her. Linda made the decision that she was going to retire at the end of the World Championships. Part of her decision was connected to the fact that she did not feel she could commit four more years to her sport, through to the next ones.

Realising that you do have relationships, you do want to spend time with family and friends and things like that as well... now I want to have a bit of a life where I can try other things and do different things.

Quality of Adaptation

Emotional

Initially, Linda found retirement quite difficult. The season re-started and she found it hard not being part of things anymore.

When people were going up for trials and things, you weren't going up and you were starting to think, have I gone too early, and it was actually quite a difficult time... you were part of that group and now things are going on and you maybe see that group there and you feel like you are an outsider.

It was only after the first couple of internationals had been played that she managed to get used to the idea that she was no longer part of it anymore and was therefore able to provide support and encouragement to the new generation of players.

Social

Linda viewed the changes to her social life as generally positive. She found that she had more time available and was able to accept social invitations that would previously not have been possible. Her social links with her work colleagues strengthened, but she also maintained contact with friends within netball through her continued links with her club. Therefore, she felt that her social life had benefited from her retirement.

Occupational

During her netball career, Linda's career was somewhat affected by her involvement in sport. Once she retired, she focused more of her energies on her career. She was able to stay longer at work whereas previously her sporting demands had not allowed this. She progressed into a managerial position and her level of responsibility increased.

Physical

When she first retired from international play, Linda continued her involvement in club level netball. However, she did find that her motivation for training was greatly reduced and so therefore her fitness level quickly dropped. This reflected in her play, which she found very frustrating: "the frustration then was in your performance, you know, not getting to the ball first, not jumping higher than the player beside you". Linda struggled a little with the changes in her body shape that came with her retirement. She found it quite difficult to adjust to not being able to eat anything she wanted. This was also linked to feelings of guilt about not training and no longer maintaining good levels of physical fitness.

Post-Career Involvement

Linda is now involved in coaching at her club. Initially, she was quite resentful of the change as not long after her international retirement the club coach left and Linda was thrown into the coaching side earlier than she had anticipated it happening.

It almost came too soon and I was a wee bit resentful I suppose, because I think halfway through that season I thought I've gone from being an international player and now I'm a coach, I didn't have a lot of time to transition ... but in the end it was something that I wanted to do and looking back I had to start somewhere so I suppose starting with your own club is as good as anywhere.

However, for the first six months, Linda had found it quite difficult to fill the gap that was left in her life. She found that when she took over her coaching role this helped to fill the gap, giving her a new focus and sense of direction in sporting terms.

Linda's coaching commitments have expanded beyond her club. She has recently become involved in coaching a development squad, which required a big increase in terms of time commitment. With her changed lifestyle, this was something which she found she had to consider carefully: "You have gone from almost giving up your whole life to thinking now do I want to give up the odd weekend".

Conclusion

Linda's retirement from sport is an example of a fairly smooth transition. She planned to retire at the end of a competitive cycle and her career finished on a high with her captaincy of the Scottish team. Linda experienced some initial difficulties with the gap that finishing up in her sport left. However she did not have an exclusive identification with the athlete role and found that she was quickly able to fill the gap with increased responsibility at work, an improved social circle, and a coaching role within her sport.

REBECCA

Rebecca started playing hockey at school when she was 12 years old. The main sports at her school were athletics, swimming, and hockey, and she made her sport choice based on her desire to play within a team sport environment. She worked her way through the Scottish age group squads and got her first full cap at the age of 18. During her career she played internationally for both Scotland and Great Britain. She played in two Olympics, the second of these as team captain after returning to play after having her first child. Initially she had not planned to return to the top level of her sport after giving birth.

I never really set out to go to the Olympics again and I really didn't have a thought, I had done it, I was not really that concerned about it.

At first she simply worked to regain some form of fitness, aiming to get back involved in some level of club hockey. However, she was encouraged to return to the international set up by the Great Britain coach and realised that she was not ready to end her career.

Athletic Identity

Although she had described hockey as "being her whole life", Rebecca scored 33 on the retrospective version of AIMS. With a full time job and a good social network, it is possible that other aspects of her life held equally important places within her identity hierarchy. Whilst she was playing hockey, Rebecca worked full time for an insurance company. In the lead up to the Olympics on both occasions she received funding to train full time, a time which she very much enjoyed: "that was an excellent time, loved it, really, really loved it". It was a period of time in which the support of her parents and her partner were crucial, particularly the second time when she needed assistance with looking after her daughter. The first time she received paid leave, the second time she was asked to take it unpaid.

Personnel was slightly different, my boss was slightly different and he didn't push for me to get paid particularly, but they felt that they had already done that, although they did allow somebody to go and watch the Olympics with leave paid which I thought was a bit ironic.

During her hockey career, Rebecca got divorced. She believed that her involvement in hockey had a part to play in this event.

I wasn't around at all and my husband decided that he was going to do other things and that was fine and we just drifted apart, I just wasn't there.

Circumstances of Retirement

Rebecca retired after her second Olympic Games, however this was not something she had planned before the event. Although she enjoyed being a part of the event and talked about leading out the team as captain in the first game against Australia as one of the major highlights of her career, the team did not play well and there were serious issues with the coaching set-up which made the experience less than enjoyable. The pressures experienced during the event led Rebecca to decide that she no longer had the desire to play international hockey:

The head coach was not a pleasant person at all so that kind of spoilt it big time. And I think the whole pressure of the situation was not coped well with ... the management gave us a lot of problems. And I think with that it was, I'm not putting up with this, I am not doing this anymore, I'm too long in the tooth for nonsense like that now.

By the time she was approaching their last game in the tournament, Rebecca knew that this was to be the end of her international hockey career.

I remember actually saying out loud, at half time – we were one-nil down – this is my last 35 minutes of international hockey girls, as it is for some others, let's get it right. So at that point I definitely knew.

As she had already been out of the Scottish international scene due to her pregnancy, Rebecca decided to retire from all international hockey. She felt that she had had her fair turn and that it was the time for someone else to have their opportunity.

Quality of Adaptation

Emotional

Upon the final whistle of that last match, Rebecca first felt disappointment about the poor performances of the British team, but this was closely followed by feelings of relief that it was all over. She was in a fairly positive emotional state: “when I came back it was very much thank goodness, I'm happy, I've done what I set out to do, I'm content, and that was it”.

Social

Socially, Rebecca's life after hockey became centred on her family. Her children were her priority focus, with her second child coming along less than two years after her retirement. “I saw a little bit more of family, I was able to do a couple of weekends away with family that we wouldn't normally have”.

Occupational

Rebecca changed career a couple of years after her retirement, something that was influenced by the birth of her second child and increasing demands from her work. She was also to continue an involvement in her sport through her new post, coaching hockey at school level.

Physical

Rebecca described that of the hardest aspects was the fact that she no longer had any objectives to work towards. Without any goals she found it difficult to motivate herself to continue to train. In order to deal with this, she started to focus on smaller aspects of fitness

Now I think about really silly things like getting into my jeans, and maintaining my size, they have become my objectives. I also think pitching up to do a hockey session, if I was 16 stone then it wouldn't be a particularly good advert.

Rebecca found that she experienced major changes in her body shape once she retired from hockey. Similar to other athletes, she talked about having to adjust to changing her diet to correspond with her new activity levels:

I didn't think that body shape would change quite so much. And then all of a sudden you are having to think twice about having that extra biscuit or, I wasn't that big on biscuits, but you know having that extra portion, because the portions you had when you were training were massive.

Post-Career Involvement

When she first retired, Rebecca had a break from hockey. She explained that the experiences of the Olympics left her feeling quite negative about the sport.

I was pretty much scunnered by the whole thing to be honest with you, I just thought this person is going out to destroy people's attitudes and basically people's concepts, so I had a little bit of a break.

About four months passed before she felt any desire to pick up her hockey stick. In the intervening period she maintained an involvement in the sport through work with a junior development squad. She then returned to a small amount of club play, at a purely recreational level. Her family were her priority and her hockey very much had to fit in around this.

I will play for anybody who wants me to play for them, for enjoyment, and also trying to feed back a bit more, keeps me fit too, it is a tick in the box for a session for the week, and hopefully teach others some concepts both on and off the pitch.

Rebecca feels that one of the most important things a retiring player can do is maintain their involvement with the sport even though they are no longer playing, and give back in some capacity.

There is a lot of girls and boys that are playing hockey at a very good standard now and they need role models, and if role models hide then who do they look up to, there is no-one to look at, so maybe take a bit of time out but then try and put it back in to the youth or you know, your club or wherever ... people have put a lot of finance into you and you know if you can put it back then that would be the big one for me I think.

Rebecca's elder daughter now plays hockey, something which she is very supportive of as she can see the positive impact that sporting involvement can have. Rebecca hopes that someday she and her daughter might be able to play on the same team and also feel that she may be able to assist her daughter by passing on her knowledge, if she reaches the higher level of the sport in the future.

Conclusion

Although the circumstances through which Rebecca's retirement arose were not particularly positive, she felt that it came at a good time in her life and never regretted her decision to retire. She never had a strongly exclusive athletic identity, and other aspects of her identity quickly grew in importance once she had finished. Much of her new life centred on her family: "baby two came along two years after that (retirement) so I have got two girls now and a great family life". Therefore although Rebecca could see her social identity as an athlete starting to diminish, this was not something that she found particularly difficult.

If there is an opening of a pitch or something like that then people will still call me. There will come a stage when I will be old news, and people will say, who? And that's fine, it's not far away probably.

RACHEL

Rachel's involvement in athletics started when she was 11 years old. She achieved success at an early stage in the Scottish Schools Championships and from age 12 was involved in the Scottish international set up at junior level. She started as a hurdler and then later on in her career moved on to focus on long jump. After a year on a scholarship in an American University, Rachel returned to complete the rest of her academic studies on a university scholarship in Scotland. Her main aim within her career had been to compete at the Commonwealth Games, something she never managed to achieve.

Athletic Identity

Rachel scored 31 on the retrospective version of AIMS. Although athletics was very important to her, it was not an exclusive identity. Throughout the majority of her athletics career Rachel was at university and she developed a clear focus of what she wanted to do with her life outside of athletics. Although she described that her studies were always secondary in priority to her athletics, she also indicated that she knew that her degree was not going to be the primary tool to get her into her occupation of choice.

I knew that I wanted a good job at the end of it but I think perhaps also what was unique about what I did was in journalism you don't even need a degree ... so the level of the degree didn't matter, I just wanted a degree and it was all a means and an end to doing my athletics training.

Once she graduated she moved straight into a career within the media and for two years worked full time alongside her sport. Nearly all athletes at that time had to work, as lottery funding did not yet exist. Therefore athletics was in some senses less of a career then compared to the opportunities available to athletes now.

Throughout her athletics career, Rachel received a lot of support from her parents. Involved in sport themselves, they were very understanding and appreciated the opportunities that being involved in athletics could provide her. However they were also realistic about the life that Rachel could have within athletics and ensured that she developed alternative options through her education. Rachel depended on the financial assistance that her parents provided while she was an athlete and was always eager to try to produce results to repay their investment.

Circumstances of Retirement

The final few years of Rachel's career were very much impacted by an injury to her knee. Even after going through surgery, Rachel struggled to regain her previous form.

I was about 23, 24, I kind of had to make the decision, was I going to try and endure this, it was expensive, getting physiotherapy treatment and whatever, and travelling around to get treatment, and trying to endure the disappointment of never getting to where I wanted ... or did I need to knuckle down and earn some money.

Over a two year period, struggling with her injury, Rachel started to think about the end of her athletics career. She was continually assessing her progress with athletics and started to see that success in major championships was becoming unlikely. At the same time, opportunities were arising for her to develop her career and she realised that it was time to take her life in a different direction.

Quality of Adaptation

Emotional

Rachel felt that her transition out of sport was quite smooth, partly because she had an alternative direction which she felt was equally as interesting to pursue. She did have some feelings of regret that she was retiring at what she perceived to be a young age, and some disappointment that she had not been able to properly achieve within her athletics career. Rachel did feel that the decision was perhaps slightly easier as in many senses it was made for her, dictated by the injury problems she experienced.

Social

When Rachel first retired, she missed the camaraderie of her fellow athletes and being part of the team.

When I knew that they were getting on the bus to go down south I just missed that and I wasn't part of that, I knew they were all going, they were all going to have a great time.

Her social circle had revolved around her sport and so time was spent developing new social networks and friendships with people outside of athletics. Most of these came through her work and the alternative identity that she was developing.

Occupational

As Rachel was also developing her media career alongside her athletics, her occupational transition was relatively smooth. She found that she was able to spend more time focusing on developing a career that she found both challenging and enjoyable.

I was gaining another identity, I was doing this job that was really cool that was, at that time it was the radio, I was talking on the radio about things and that was also something that not a lot of people were doing, and I was just really, really enjoying it.

She felt that her retirement came at a good time for her from an occupational perspective: “if I hadn’t have done what I did at that time, I wouldn’t have achieved what I had in my job, I wouldn’t have been able to get that going”. She had realised that a successful and fulfilling career outside of sport was important to her, as this was always going to last a lot longer than her athletics would.

Physical

Adjusting to retirement physically was something that did not present Rachel with particular problems. The only problems she experienced were ongoing issues with her knee, which still causes her bother 20 years after retirement.

I mean as I sit here just now it is hurting, and I know that even if I am on the beach with the girls and we do a wee long jump competition in the sand, when I take off it hurts.

Post-Career Involvement

Rachel’s career in sports media helped her to maintain some form of contact with the sporting world, which she felt was a big aspect of who she was. However, she has maintained no involvement at all in athletics. Once she had retired, she did not once go back to watch any events or get involved in any other aspects of the sport. One of the reasons that she did not get involved in coaching was ongoing problems with her knee injury. She felt that the main strength of what she could have offered lay in being able to demonstrate, but this proved to be impossible with her knee.

Even the most basic kind of take off drills would hurt ... so to me there was no point in going back, because technically I have never done any coaching badges or exams and I certainly don’t want to get into that.

Conclusion

Rachel’s transition out of sport was quite smooth. She had other aspects of her identity which were important to her and that she could turn her attention to. Although she did not choose the timing of her retirement, she did not find it to be a particularly challenging time.

If I had had the choice I would have kept training and competing definitely but I didn’t have the choice, but it was, you know, a less painful blow because I had a lot to fall back on which I guess other people don’t.

Rachel does not regret the circumstances of her retirement, although she was disappointed that she was not able to fulfil all of her ambitions with the sport.

I don’t regret the way that it happened, because to be honest if I was an athlete now I would maybe have got more into the athletics and then had to give that up when I was 30 and then had no career to fall back on. I see how I could have designed things to have a more successful athletics career but that could have been to the detriment of my real job.

ELLIE

Ellie started playing hockey in her first year at high school. In the early years of her career she was also involved at an international level in show jumping and finally made the decision to focus solely on hockey.

Show jumping financially was a massive, massive expense. And although I probably could have done it full time professionally, I would probably have needed to do it down south, and it would have been a big decision. And at that point the hockey was going well and I loved doing that.

She got involved in Scottish level hockey at age 14 and then played at an international level for over 20 years. During her hockey career Ellie represented Scotland in three Commonwealth Games, and Great Britain in two Olympics. After the British team failed to qualify for the Athens Olympics, she made the decision to retire from international hockey. However three months after this she was asked by the National coach to return to the Scotland squad for what was a crucial year for the team. Her second retirement occurred two years later, primarily due to a chronic back injury.

Athletic Identity

Hockey took up substantial amounts of time for Ellie and provided her with some fantastic opportunities. However, it was not the only important thing within her life. With a full time career running alongside her sport, the role of athlete did not appear to be an exclusive one. Her retrospective AIMS score of 32 supports this.

During her career Ellie worked as a Physical Education teacher. In the lead up to both Olympics, she was supported financially to train full time. She was very fortunate in that her employer was very supportive of her hockey commitments.

They got cover in and obviously my job was kept open for me. For example they gave me the time off for the Olympics and they got cover in, supply, and as I say I just came back when the hockey programme had finished.

Hockey had a big impact on Ellie's life from a social perspective. She missed many events due to her sporting commitments and her training demands meant that even things she could do were restricted. Despite this, Ellie managed to maintain friendships outside of hockey, who accepted these restrictions.

They were very, very good because quite often I couldn't go out drinking, still went out with them but couldn't drink, or we were going for a meal and whereas they would maybe have gone for a Chinese or whatever you would need something different, so they were really understanding.

Circumstances of Retirement

Well before the tournament, Ellie made the decision that she was going to retire after the 2004 Olympic Games. When the team failed to qualify, this simply brought her decision forward slightly.

It was a fairly easy cut off in terms of the next cycle, there wasn't much in the next year, it was the following year. So it was quite a good cut off point.

Changes were taking place in other areas of Ellie's life. A promotion at work meant that her level of responsibility increased, making things more difficult to balance from a time management perspective.

Less than three months after she had announced her retirement, the Scottish national coach approached her and asked her whether she would re-consider. A couple of important years were coming up for Scotland and they were in need of experienced players within the team. At this stage, Ellie's back had already been causing her problems, so she knew that it was only ever going to be a short term arrangement.

It was all for the build up to the Commonwealths again, and I knew in my heart of hearts and they knew that it was only going to be for that short spell.

Ellie's second retirement came after the Scottish team failed to qualify for the World Cup. At that stage her back had deteriorated further and was starting to have a big impact on everyday life. Ellie was becoming concerned about it from a long term perspective.

I also had to play my final year pretty much on pain killers, so from that respect, from a health point of view, it was like I have got to draw the line somewhere. I mean my back is still sore and it gets dodgy at school, even

demonstrating to the kids, so there was an element of thinking about the longer term, and got to be sensible.

Quality of Adaptation

Emotional

Ellie was completely sure that she had made the right decision regarding retirement. She was fairly emotional at the end of her last game, but otherwise felt pretty happy with the direction that her life was taking. There was no point at which Ellie regretted her decision or contemplated a comeback.

Social

Socially, Ellie did not experience big changes once she retired. She has maintained contact with most of her hockey social circle. There were aspects of her social life outside of sport that she was able to pick up again or further develop, which only served to enhance her social network. Ellie certainly enjoyed the freedom that no longer being a hockey player gave her: “it is nice to be able to go out and meet friends and do things at weekends that you couldn’t do before”.

Occupational

There was no occupational aspect to Ellie’s transition out of elite level hockey. Ellie had worked for her employer for over 14 years and continued to do so after retirement. She found that she was able to commit more time to her sport once she had retired.

Physical

Due to the manner in which Ellie’s involvement in sport finished, her retirement occurred in stages. First, retirement from playing for Great Britain, and then two years later retirement from playing for Scotland. She spent one further season playing for her club, before drawing a line underneath all competitive play. Ellie explained that she still misses playing hockey, however she finds it easier to accept because there is a physical reason that she is no longer playing, linked to the limitations of her back injury. She highlighted physical adjustment as the biggest aspect for her. She felt that getting used to the changes in diet and training habits took her at least two years.

Post-Career Involvement

Ellie is still very much involved in the sport. She coaches her own club side, at school through her job, and is also involved in coaching at Scottish under 18 level. Ellie felt that her transition out of competitive hockey was made easier by her continued involvement, as there was no cut off from the sport or her social network. Ellie has also developed a social involvement in a number of other sports, including golf.

Conclusion

Ellie experienced several stages to her retirement and found the most difficult aspect for her was finishing playing at club level, as this was the biggest change for her. She had a very successful hockey career in which she achieved all of her goals. In addition to this, she was able to maintain a good career outwith hockey at the same time. All of these factors assisted her in a smooth transition out of the sport. Her lower levels of identification with the athlete role meant that a major identity shift upon retirement was not required.

OLIVIA

Olivia started playing tennis when she was seven years old, introduced to the sport by her mother. She played competitively throughout her childhood, involved in national squads and in British tournaments. After reducing her involvement during her time at university, tennis once again became an important aspect of her life after graduation. After achieving some success and making plans to turn full time, problems with her back forced a premature end to her career.

Athletic Identity

Olivia was involved in a number of sports during her childhood and sport and physical activity played a very important part in her life. However, her identity was not exclusively attached to tennis, as indicated by her score of 31 on the retrospective version of AIMS. Olivia placed a lot of importance on education and during her time at university tennis took something of a back seat as she focused on what was a fairly intensive

course. After university her level of commitment to tennis increased once more, although she still participated regularly in other activities.

Circumstances of Retirement

Olivia had been having long term problems with her back, which she had never got around to getting properly sorted out. Then, while playing squash she slipped a disc which forced her to stop not just tennis, but all activity. Physically, Olivia was struggling to perform simple daily tasks, therefore participation in any sports activity was out of the question. She attempted to return a couple of times, which only served to highlight how serious the problem was: "it did take me a few occasions before I finally realised that it was going to take some time". Over time, Olivia came to realise that she was possibly never going to be able to return to competitive level tennis.

Quality of Adaptation

Emotional

Olivia struggled emotionally with the fact that she was no longer able to participate, feeling depressed and lost.

It was difficult going to work and things because I just got really frustrated that I couldn't do anything outside work and it felt like I had lost everything that I was, everything that I did outside my work.

These difficulties only started to ease once she had accepted that her career was almost certainly over and was able to turn her attention to other things. Initially other people within the sport continued to believe that it would only be a matter of time before she returned, which did not help her to come to terms with what was happening.

There were a few people, particularly ones within the county, who were just not understanding how difficult it was. It almost made it harder because they were saying, oh well hopefully you will be better for this thing next month, and it was trying to get them to see that it was not going to be a short-term thing. It made it harder for me to deal with.

Social

Olivia lost touch with a lot of the friends that she had through sport, as this had been their only connection therefore there was no occasion through which she would see them. Her social circle began to revolve around her work instead, as she increased her time commitment to that area of her life.

Occupational

Olivia had started a new job not long before she was forced to retire from tennis and as she came to terms with the end of her career in sport she started to focus her energies into her job. It was something that she found interesting and challenging, and therefore she was able to start to develop a new identity for herself connected to this.

Physical

Olivia had always been very active, through her involvement in both tennis and other sports. She found that she got really down, because she was not able to do anything.

I got really lethargic as well because I wasn't doing anything. I was trying to do things like go for a little run and stuff like that, so I was trying to do as much as I could, like I was going to a fitness class and cutting out the exercises that I couldn't do.

Post-Sport Life

Initially, Olivia believed that at some stage she was going to be able to return to competitive sport. Over time, as it became clear that her injury may never fully heal, she started to accept that this may not be the case. However, it is not something she has completely written off: “It is in the back of my mind that I might be able to ... but I’ve got no aims or goals linked to any of that at the moment. I’ve got no real thought in my head that it will happen”.

As a way to keep herself in touch with her sport, Olivia took up line umpiring. Although this has been good for helping her to maintain contact with her tennis friends, she had found watching tennis and knowing that she was not able to take part very difficult.

Conclusion

Although Olivia did not have a strong and exclusive identity in tennis, the circumstances of the end of her career made it very difficult to cope with. She was forced to retire much younger than she had anticipated and had no control over what was happening. The injury she suffered meant that she was not only unable to play tennis, but in fact was able to do very little physical activity whatsoever. The repercussions of this were very negative and it took her some time to come to terms with what was happening to her.

DONNA

Donna started athletics at the age of 12, when her father saw an advert in the newspaper for an open day at her local athletics club. She experienced success in Scottish Schools and the Scottish Junior Championships. After Donna graduated from university, she turned full time in her sport, running at senior international level of six years before deciding to retire.

I felt that if I wanted to make it to being an elite athlete I needed to make the decision to invest more time and if I was going to go full time in employment I didn’t really think I could manage to make it as an athlete, so I thought well I’ll give it a year and see how it goes.

She represented Scotland in the Commonwealth Games and European Championships, and then Great Britain at the World Championships and the Olympics. Although she reached several finals, she never won any medals at major championships which was ultimately a disappointment for her.

I would like to have got a medal at the Commonwealth Games and the European Championships and the year that I did them my best time would have easily got a medal at them and I think that was the big frustration, feeling like I didn’t run well at the time and if I had run well I would have got medals at them.

Athletic Identity

Donna scored 20 on the retrospective version of AIMS. Her life when she was an athlete appeared to have been reasonably balanced. Although athletics was the most important factor in Donna’s life and at the forefront of what she did, she had undertaken a university degree and had friends and interests outside of athletics.

I think my life was reasonably balanced, in that I had friends outside athletics, I had interests outside ... some people can get totally taken up with it and I don’t feel it was ever like that.

In the early years of her career, Donna participated in athletics alongside a number of other activities, including other sports and music. As her ability within athletics began to emerge, this started to take precedence and other activities dropped off. Athletics did not appear to be ‘all-consuming’, although she did suggest that sacrifices were made for it, particularly socially. There were often events that she was unable to attend and the time she had to spend with her friends was somewhat limited. Despite this, Donna’s social life was fairly balanced during her athletics career. Her friends outside of the sport were very supportive and understanding of the restrictions she had socially due to her sporting commitments.

She did choose to put her career on hold for her athletics after she graduated, but suggested it was not that hard a decision as she did not know exactly what she wanted to do. She did not seem to have any regrets about doing this and did not suggest that she would have changed this if she could.

Donna described times when she felt that athletics was starting to take over other things that were going on in her life, a feeling that she did not enjoy. This was a particular problem when she was not performing well.

Your whole life can get taken over by it, especially when things aren't going so well. When things are going well I think you are less worried about the other aspects of your life, when things are going badly you start to over-analyse everything.

Circumstances of Retirement

For a three year period, Donna found that her athletics career became quite stagnated, causing a lot of frustration. In an attempt to re-invigorate her career, Donna moved down south for a year to train with a new coach.

I wasn't really happy down there, didn't have the family and friends support I would have had up here, and then ultimately thought do I want to be stuck down here for the next 5 years or however long it would be until I retired and really felt like it was not really worth that.

Donna moved back home and started to train with a new coach, a set-up which once again did not work well for her. Through this period Donna also suffered from a number of injuries and periods of illness, and these combined with the problems she was experiencing with her coaching situation pushed her towards thinking about retirement.

In that last year I wasn't that happy and I was kind of on the verge of retiring, I sort of felt like I don't want to be here, I think that ultimately made me think I shouldn't be doing this anymore.

Initially she had planned to work through until the next Olympics, however as her situation continued to worsen she ended up giving up before the trials realising that she had completely lost any desire she had for competition.

I just thought no that's it, I don't want to go to the trials, I know I am not going to make it at all, I don't want to put myself through it, I just want to stop. And that was it, I just stopped.

Donna was also experiencing financial pressures which had an impact on her decision to retire. A drop in performance had led to her losing her lottery funding, and in her last year of competition Donna was living off her savings and a small income from part-time work.

I was very much aware of the fact that I was spending all my savings and that I couldn't go on like that forever ... you were just kind of aware of it, thinking what is the point of this, why am I doing it, and then as well you are having more time away from getting a career, and you know eventually you are going to have to do something about it, you can't keep going forever so you have to have a time that you say right that's it, enough is enough.

Quality of Adaptation

Emotional

The major emotion that Donna felt when she stopped was that of relief. She realised that she had known for some time that she was coming to the end of the line with her athletics career and was glad that it was finally over.

I think I just it just felt like a big weight off my shoulders, like that's it, I have made my decision and have given up, that's me. I almost felt quite happy, I think because I knew it had been coming for at least a year.

The only negative emotions that she experienced were attached to the disappointment she felt about not reaching her ultimate goal of a medal in a major event. She could not help but think about the 'what if' scenarios, and found it quite difficult to let go of her dreams. Despite this, Donna found that she was able to watch the Athens Olympics on television without distress. She was already moving on within her life and the other aspects of her identity were increasing in importance.

Social

Once Donna had retired, she lost contact with a lot of the friends that she knew through her sport. She had a few close friends with whom she stayed in touch, but lost contact with those in which the only thing they had in common was athletics. As throughout her athletics career Donna had maintained contact with many friends outside of the sporting arena, she did not find that there was a large adjustment required from a social perspective. Donna found that she enjoyed the new social freedom that retirement afforded her.

Although it has been three years since I gave up I still do appreciate the fact that if you friends say, we were thinking about going away for the weekend, do you fancy coming, you don't have to think, I can't go because I am training, you know, it is just nice just to have freedom to do what you want when you want.

Occupational

Initially, Donna found it quite a difficult time, as although she had her degree, she had no occupation to go into, only a few ideas of what she might like to do.

It is quite a daunting prospect, of suddenly starting from scratch, being 5 or 6 years from having graduated and wondering what is going to come next, it is quite difficult. But for me I think it just got to a stage when I thought well I am just not happy anymore ... it is not worth just carrying on because you are worried about what is coming next.

However, she was lucky in that she actually found a job quite quickly, and therefore the transition from an occupational perspective was not as difficult as it could have been. She felt that if she had not managed to get herself settled as quickly as she did, she would have experienced a much higher level of distress.

The weekend I retired I got a New Scientist magazine and the job I eventually ended up getting was advertised in that magazine. So within two months I had it which was really just lucky.

Physical

After making the decision to retire, Donna carried on training for a couple of weeks. However, she soon decided that there was no reason for her to be training anymore. She no longer perceived there to be any benefit or enjoyment in training, and at that point stopped completely. Although she recognised that her body shape was changing as a result of finishing athletics, it was not something that caused Donna any particular distress.

Post-Career Involvement

At the time of the interview Donna had no involvement in athletics and no immediate aspirations to get involved. However, she did indicate that she appreciated what she had got out of the sport and therefore was not going to rule out having some role in the future.

In the future maybe I will do something because I feel like so many people give up their time to do things like officiating, sitting on committees and all this, and I benefited from that for years, so I probably should go and do something.

Conclusion

Although the end of Donna's career came earlier than she had originally thought it would, with the circumstances as they were she felt that she had perhaps hung on slightly longer than she should have, still reaching for her dream of the 2004 Olympics which was sliding out of her grasp. The last year of her career caused her some amount of distress, however her transition out of the sport was actually accompanied by positive emotions and feelings of relief. She was fortunate to find an alternative career fairly quickly after stopping training, which assisted her transition. She was not exclusively invested in the athletic role, which meant that letting go was not as difficult as it might have been.

Appendix I: High Athletic Identity Case Studies (Study 2)

KATIE

Katie was a late developer in hockey, as she did not play hockey while she was at school. At that time, she participated in a number of other sports including athletics and lacrosse. Her involvement in hockey started at university, when she became involved in the university team as a method of weight control. She gained her first cap for Scotland at the age of 23. Katie was involved in international hockey for 13 years, participating in two Olympic Games during that time. The pinnacle of her career was winning a bronze medal in the second Olympics that she attended. Some time after announcing her retirement from international play, Katie was invited to attend trials for the Scottish indoor team. This triggered a return to elite level hockey, which lasted a couple of years, after which she retired for a second time.

Athletic Identity

Hockey was more important than anything else to Katie. She felt that she would not have been able to achieve everything that she did within her sport if she had not put everything she had into it. Katie scored 41 on the retrospective AIMS, providing support for the idea that she identified very strongly with the athlete role. During the time that Katie was involved in hockey, the sport was transformed. The volume of training increased dramatically, as did the level of commitment.

You were looking at more volume wise of training sessions for either Scotland or Great Britain, and more structured physical training as well that you had to fit in, and it became more difficult to combine that with working full time.

During her career Katie felt that she neglected her husband, as she prioritised her hockey above her personal life. This played a part in her later divorce. Although her husband was supportive of her hockey career, Katie suggested that not having been supported would not have stopped her from pursuing her goals in the sport and theorised that her husband was probably well aware of this. Katie was able to balance her hockey commitments with her career as a lawyer, primarily because of the support given to her by her employer. She did suggest that if the demands of hockey had been any higher, this would not have been a possibility.

Circumstances of Retirement

After representing Great Britain in her second Olympics, Katie made the decision to retire from that level of hockey. This was not a particularly difficult decision for her. She was 34 and perceived that it was unlikely she would be able to make the next squad four years later. Additionally, the demands placed upon players were continuously growing and it was becoming increasingly difficult to balance these with her career in law. At that time, Katie continued to play internationally for Scotland. Three years later, at the end of a Scottish competitive cycle, she announced her retirement from all international hockey. She described this decision as being a lot harder than the first one and as a function of age.

The decision in 1995 was harder on the basis that I think I would still have been selected if I had continued to make myself available ... I think [it] was to do with age, I suppose I am always conscious of my age and I'm more kind of worried, not about the way I feel but more about what other people think about it.

At that time, Katie continued to play hockey at quite a high club level. Therefore, a number of years later, she was able to accept an invitation to return to international hockey to play on the Scottish indoor team. She enjoyed the opportunity to become involved in the national set-up once more. She captained the team for the World Indoor Championships, and retired after that tournament. At that time she was suffering some problems with her back and felt that it was time to step down completely from elite level hockey.

The final step in Katie's hockey retirement was finishing play with her club first team. This was the only transition that she felt had been slightly out of her control. With the coach deciding to field an upcoming

player in the same position, Katie found herself relegated to the second team before she felt it was time for that transition.

It was just that the decision, probably because it wasn't in my control, that was the only time probably in my hockey retiral plan that things didn't go as I would have wanted them to. So ironically it was at the lowest level, at club level, that caused the most problem.

Quality of Adaptation

Emotional

Katie found that she missed the camaraderie of being part of the team and did not particularly enjoy the feeling of being on the outside: "from having been so involved with it and it being your whole life to then being on the outside and looking in, it is completely different". Part of her coping strategy was her gradual reduction in involvement with hockey. She felt that she dealt better with her retirement because her exit was a gradual process.

I don't think I would have coped very well if I had just cut off and not gradually reduced my involvement, particularly if I had just stopped after the '92 Olympics, I think I would have just found it much more difficult.

Social

During her career, all of Katie's friends were connected to sport. She felt that she did not have the time to be able to make friends elsewhere. After she retired, she was able to develop some friendships through work. However, her main social circle still revolves around hockey. As her current partner is still involved in the sport and she is still playing at a lower level within club hockey, only a small transition was required.

Occupational

Once Katie had retired from hockey, she found that she put more energy and time into her career as a replacement. Her competitive tendencies still carried over as she strived to be the best she could be in this aspect of her life. She also got involved in a number of additional activities, including a language night class.

Physical

Katie found that her gradual reduction in training helped her to maintain reasonable fitness levels. As during her career she had tended to train fairly intensively, she was keen to ensure that this did not just come to a sudden stop.

Post-Career Involvement

Katie has maintained a strong connection to hockey through her club. She is still involved in playing, principally at second team level although she was recently part of the squad that played in the European Cup. She had also taken on an organisational role on the committee, in the capacity of treasurer. Katie felt that she had an obligation to give something back to her club once she had finished playing at the higher level.

Even if I wanted to I wouldn't just stop playing after I stopped playing for the firsts, because I just think it is not right that the club have supported you and you have taken from the club ... I just think if you have got the benefits from it, played Europe, and it's promoted you to Scottish level, that you have some kind of moral obligation to put something back in again.

Conclusion

Katie had a 25 year involvement with international hockey and had some difficulties in letting go.

If it has been such a large part of your life it is just something that you have to accept. You know, life goes on, but it is a part of you, it has always been an important part, and it is very difficult to let it go.

However, she found that it became easier as time passed and it became more apparent that she was no longer capable of playing elite level hockey. Katie gradually reduced her involvement in hockey, retiring in stages from the international game, which assisted her in dealing with her transition.

BETH

Beth started to swim at the age of three, primarily because she had a disability and her consultant recommended swimming as being beneficial for her rehabilitation. She competed in her first international competition when she was 15 years old and then spent 11 years competing on the international stage. Her biggest achievements were a gold medal at the World Championships and swimming a personal best at her final Paralympics.

Athletic Identity

Beth described swimming as being the primary goal in her life. Beth's retrospective AIMS score of 44 provides support for this, indicating that she had a fairly strong identification with the athletic role.

If you are swimming and competing at that level swimming has to be the priority, you cannot do it half heartedly because you won't be able to compete at a high level, so for me it was the be all and end all.

Beth was self-funded and she worked full time to finance her swimming. She had chosen a job that would bring in enough income that she was able to swim and that was a good fit with the demands of her sport.

When I was swimming I did admin, nice and simple, you went in, you did your admin, and you walked away, that's it. So for the majority of my swimming career I did something that was easy, didn't challenge me, so my career was on hold really.

She received support from her employers, who allowed her some level of flexibility in her working hours to enable her to combine her work and her sport. She also relied heavily on the support of her parents during the early years of her career.

If I didn't have the support of parents I wouldn't have been an international swimmer ... I decided at the age of 11 that I wanted to go to the Paralympics and they supported me in every way to make sure that that was an achievable goal ... they were instrumental in actually making me an athlete.

The training hours required for international level performance had a knock on impact on activities outside of swimming. Beth described still taking part in social activities, but for the most part these centred on her sport.

I'm sure there were things that I didn't go to because of my swimming, but a lot of my social friends were swimmers as well, so at the time I was swimming they were swimming, so I did have a social life but it was just based around swimming.

Circumstances of Retirement

Beth planned to retire after the 1996 Paralympics in Atlanta. She knew that this was going to be her last major event as it had been a struggle for her to even make the team. Younger swimmers were starting to take her place and she knew that this would become an even larger problem in subsequent events. Beth had a successful final event and almost immediately started to slowly reduce her level of commitment in the sport.

After '96 I gave up morning training ... I went from training 8 or 9 times a week and I continued to train 5 times a week for the next year just because it was what I did, you know. So I gave up the mornings but still did the evenings, but what I began to do is if somebody said, do you fancy going out tonight, I would say yes, whereas before I would say no.

Over time five training sessions a week became three, as Beth continued to reduce her involvement in the sport. She also undertook some coaching qualifications, with the aim to become involved in coaching.

Quality of Adaptation

Emotional

Although Beth had planned for her retirement, she still found it quite a difficult and upsetting experience. In particular, she found it hard to come to terms with the fact that she was no longer involved and would never again compete in an international competition. She returned to the European Championships the year after her retirement as a staff member and recalled the emotions she felt whilst watching the event in which she would have been.

Watching the 100 back ... was quite emotional because I was thinking, well if I was in that race I might have got this position and seeing my competitors still swimming and meeting them all. That sort of twinge of I wish I was there but I knew I had had enough and I knew that to get selected for the team would mean even more than I was doing and I just couldn't give anymore.

Social

Beth felt that her swimming career had impacted upon her personal relationships. Her high level of identification with the athletic role meant it was likely that this part of her life would be prioritised over other areas. This would seem to be the case here, as she felt she had put her personal life on hold:

There have been times when I could potentially have had a relationship, but when I was swimming a) I didn't have time and b) it was a distraction, so it would be quite quickly stopped ... because it's so intense and because at that time I was working full time as well, the time that you have to devote to boyfriends or whatever is very limited.

When she retired, she felt that she was behind her peers in this aspect of her life, emotionally still in her teens.

Occupational

A year before she retired from swimming, Beth started a new job, moving away from her role in administration. During the final year of her swimming career her focus started to move slightly more towards her new career.

I wanted to change career from admin to begin a career of something that I really wanted to do ... I changed job and I began to sort of focus more on my career, but actually still encompassing the needs of my sport.

After she retired, she started to take on more responsibility within her new role, taking on new tasks and getting involved in more projects. This represented a shift in her identity, something which had slowly started to happen prior to her retirement.

My role began to expand. Perhaps if I hadn't been an elite swimmer I probably would have expanded it a whole lot earlier, but I did put it on hold, and made sure it was manageable.

Physical

Beth had some difficulty in adjusting to alterations in her body shape that arose from the changes in her training. Over time she had adapted to high carbohydrate diets to meet her training dietary needs and it took her some time to adjust her diet to fit with her new lifestyle.

My body shape, what it used to be and what it is now, is completely different and that's what annoys me, because I'm not, I don't have, I can't eat anything I want and keep the weight off. I still eat as if I am a competing athlete but I'm not so I put the weight on.

However, she felt that by gradually reducing her involvement in the sport and maintaining a small training load, she was managing to control her weight. She compared this to other swimmers who had retired and completely removed themselves from the environment.

I see quite a number of athletes, past swimmers that I knew competed at the time I did who have since retired and said, that's it, I'm never going in another pool ever again, and then they just balloon.

Beth enjoyed the new freedom that being retired gave her at training. Free of the pressures of competitive swimming, she found that she could simply enjoy swimming, choosing how difficult she wanted her sessions to be.

Post-Career Involvement

Once she had retired from swimming, Beth started take on a more active voluntary role within Scottish Disability Sport. She has a position on the management committee and has operated in a support role for current competitors. She received quite a lot of support from her local area disability sport organisation, who highlighted the different opportunities for involvement that were available to her within her sport and helping her to give something back to her sport.

Beth was given financial assistance to undertake her coaching qualifications, and was then placed within a mentoring scheme to further develop her skills as a coach. Over time she increased the level of involvement and responsibility she had within coaching, and ultimately has taken over as the main disability swimming coach for her local area.

Conclusion

Although Beth's retirement was planned, at what she felt was a good time in her life, and a gradual process, she still experienced some emotional and physical difficulties through her transition. She had a strong and exclusive identification with the athlete role and it took her some time to develop other aspects of her identity once she had retired. A gradual reduction in her training schedule and the development of an exciting and challenging new career assisted her transition into a post-sport life. Beth has maintained a considerable involvement in her sport and her social identity remains strongly linked to swimming.

EMILY & GAIL

Twins Emily and Gail started recreational gymnastics when they were four years old. They started competing at age six and competed in their first National Championships when they were 10. They represented Scotland and Great Britain in international competition for a period of eight years. Gail competed in two Commonwealth Games, while Emily competed in one Commonwealth Games and one Olympic Games. Both girls suffered from injury issues which caused them to miss out on participating in major events. After feeling that they had achieved everything that they could in their gymnastics careers, Emily and Gail made the decision to transfer to diving to begin a second elite sport career.

It was like, I am happy and content with that. There were so many young kids coming up, and the way my body was feeling, it was like it is my time, I know it is. Didn't want to hang on and then maybe be forced out by an injury, which would be a bad way to finish. I mean I knew in myself that that was it. [Emily]

Athletic Identity

Both Emily and Gail scored highly on the retrospective version of AIMS, scoring 42 and 43 respectively. They described gymnastics as being extremely important to them and talked about their social identity as gymnasts.

Everyone would identify us as gymnasts, people would be like, oh yeah you are the gymnasts aren't you. Around school and college, we were known as gymnasts. And we weren't there a lot, so it was like you are the gymnasts that never come to school. [Gail]

Training was prioritised over everything else in their lives. They agreed reduced timetables with their school in order to be able to commit to a full training schedule and on top of this missed a substantial amount of school due to training camps and competition.

Obviously we had training camps, and we went to competitions, we used to go to Lilleshall for training camps and whatever, so we did miss a hell of a lot of school. [Gail]

After their GCSE's, Emily and Gail took a year out of education to concentrate on the build up to the Olympics. After this, they returned to college part-time to undertake A-Levels.

We didn't want the 3 or 4 A Levels that everyone else was doing, so we literally just picked up one, we did one AS to start with, just something to do, and then after we did that we picked up a bit more, so we ended up with one full A Level and one AS. To be honest we did a lot of self-teaching. [Emily]

Circumstances of Retirement

On their way home from the Commonwealth Games, Emily and Gail made the decision to end their careers in gymnastics. Emily described what was going through her mind.

Normally after a big competition like that you get such motivation, you want to get back into the gym, there are things you want to learn. But this time it was the first time in my life I didn't feel like that, I didn't know what I was working for next. I knew the Beijing Olympics was never really going to happen, with all the youngsters coming up. But there was another 4 years till another Commonwealth Games.

Gail also highlighted a physical reason to their retirement. They had been at the elite level of the sport for quite a number of years and were feeling the consequences of that: "our bodies had just taken so much pounding, from such a young age, that we used to get up in the morning and your body would ache".

Quality of Adaptation

Emotional

Gail found it difficult to initially get her head around the fact that she was no longer involved in gymnastics and described her emotions.

I remember thinking I can't believe this is it. And it was weird. It didn't sink in for a while. To start with I didn't really miss gym, but then afterwards, I missed having something to do.

Emily added to this, talking about missing having a specific goal within her life to work towards.

I missed the challenge, I think because from the age of 6 we always had a competition to work for, or a new skill to learn, and then suddenly it was like, okay, what am I working for?

Although gymnastics initially left a gap in their lives, they were able to turn their attention to other aspects of their lives and increased the priority of their education and friends.

You go from doing 33 hours a week to nothing, which was a massive shock. It was like, oh my god what am I going to do with myself. But we had A-levels so we had a lot of studying to do. We had things to sort of fill the time. [Gail]

Social

In the first couple of months after their retirement, the twins took the opportunity to enjoy the time and freedom that they now had: "I think because for so long we hadn't really had much of a life, other than gymnastics, it was like right I am going to enjoy this. We went out and stuff" [Emily]. After so many years of a very strict lifestyle and specific focus, they were able to take a normal holiday and enjoy life as what Emily described as a "normal teenager".

We had applied for university as well so we knew that was coming up. So we kind of went on holiday and just enjoyed some time without sport. We went to Alton Towers and all the things like that.

Emily and Gail have maintained contact with their close friends from gymnastics, some of whom are still involved in the sport. They have also developed new social circles from university and their new diving environment.

Occupational

Despite the interruptions to their education, Emily and Gail gained good grades in the subjects that they undertook and managed to gain places at university after retiring from gymnastics. After exploring their options, they were accepted by a university on the basis of the life skills and experiences gained through their gymnastics making up for not having a full complement of qualifications. They are still studying part-time, now working their education around their new sport.

Physical

When they retired their coach gave them the option to attend single sessions, or even a couple of sessions if they wanted to. Initially Emily missed being in the gym and did consider this option. However after this their involvement in diving started and this was no longer a consideration.

Neither of the twins enjoyed the physical changes that occurred when they stopped training. They went from exercising and eating healthily to not exercising and not controlling their diet. Gail described the changes.

I put on weight when I finished gym. Half of that was the fact that I went out and enjoyed myself, I was like I can eat this if I want now. We would go out for a drink a lot more, we would go out for meals, we would eat chocolate and stuff like that.

Post-Career Involvement

After a few months of retirement, the girls realised that they still wanted to be involved in an elite sport environment.

Once you have been an athlete, I think you will always be an athlete. We had 4 months out, and to start with it was great, I could lie in till when I wanted, go out when you wanted, bit of freedom. But then after a bit it was like, this isn't me, I'm bored, we both were. [Gail]

The twin's mother was instrumental in their move into diving. She had suggested the sport to them when they were at the Commonwealth Games, watching a diver who had previously competed against them in gymnastics. She thought that they would make good synchronised divers. Initially, Emily and Gail started to attend an adult diving class. Then through the involvement of Scottish Gymnastics and Scottish Swimming, they were offered a trial to get involved in an elite diving programme. They were subsequently offered funded places within the programme and so started their involvement in their second elite sport. They have hopes that they may be able to add to their previous international competition experiences: "It was like, I'll do the 2010 Commonwealths, then the 2012 Olympics, then the 2014 Commonwealths and finish there" [Gail].

Conclusion

When they retired from gymnastics, they had a couple of months when they were able to enjoy a lifestyle that they hadn't previously been able to. However, they soon decided that this did not suit them.

We didn't like the couple of months that we had off, because we were kind of just like, whatever, and just drifted through it, but now we have structure back in our lives it is like, right happy again now, this is what I want to do. [Emily]

Both Emily and Gail still have high levels of athletic identity, it is simply linked to a different sport now. Their transition into diving helped them to adjust to a life without gymnastics. However, they feel that there are parts of gymnastics that diving may never fully replace.

I do still miss gymnastics though. Although I love diving to bits, it is not gymnastics. There are so many things about gymnastics I miss. There are a lot of things I don't miss, don't get me wrong, but I miss doing certain things. I miss beam, I would love to get up there and do some of it, see how much I could still do ... I miss the whole like prettiness, like the glitter on your hair. [Gail]

CASSIE

Cassie started canoeing at the age of eight. She came from a sporting family and had brothers already involved in the sport. She competed in her first international race at the age of 11, which was the start of a 15 year involvement in elite level canoeing. Her major ambition was to go to the Olympic Games, a dream that was never realised.

Athletic Identity

Cassie described canoeing as the most important thing in her life. Everything that she did was for canoeing. This is supported by her score of 45 on the retrospective version of AIMS, which is indicative of a very high and exclusive athletic identity. Cassie chose her university based around the best location for her canoeing career. The move to Nottingham was a natural progression for many in the sport as it is the British centre for canoe slalom. Once she finished university, Cassie stayed in Nottingham to train full time.

It was just the natural progression. It was like, just what you did when you finished at university, get your qualifications sorted, and then you just naturally just moved to being full time.

Cassie was a full time, fully funded athlete for a period of six years. Because of the nature of her training, the majority of Cassie's friends were involved in her sport. She found it hard to maintain contact with school friends because of her move to Nottingham.

Circumstances of Retirement

Cassie wrestled with the idea of retiring at the end of each season for several years. She had lost the desire to train at a high level and no longer had the same ambitions and goals. Each year she found herself starting winter training and get involved in the planning for the following season and would end up into a new season almost before she knew it. After one particularly tough winter training season Cassie failed to make the

British team in the summer, which left her with more time off than usual. This led her to the decision to finally stop, treating the summer like a period of detraining.

I spent that whole summer just doing what I wanted to do, going paddling if I wanted to go paddling, so I did have that taper period then, without having made the decision, although it was kind of in the back of my mind really that that was what I was going to do.

She realised that even if she was to go on training and find success, those successes no longer meant enough to her to make it worth it.

Realising it probably wouldn't actually make that much difference ... it doesn't change the fact that you still have so many years of life left to live and you have to start doing something. It was time. I was just sort of, I stopped wanting to do everything that I was doing anymore.

Quality of Adaptation

Emotional

Cassie described the decision to retire as being very difficult. It was something that she had not been brave enough to do in the previous couple of years.

The way I saw it, it was like easy for me to keep canoeing, in your nice little safe bubble, it was just natural ... it was a hard thing to stop. You are coming out of your nice safe environment where you know everyone and you know everything, I have been in that sort of bubble for so long and didn't do much with people outside canoeing.

She found one of the harder aspects was telling her brother that she was ending her canoeing career. She worried that her brother might make negative judgements about her decision. However, once she breached the subject with him he was very supportive and this helped her both in having the confidence to break the news to others and to deal with the realities of retiring herself.

Social

Cassie enjoyed the freedom and spare time that she now felt she had and was able to develop friendships outside of her sport. She has also maintained a strong social network within the sport. With both her brother and her boyfriend still involved in the senior team, her links with her friends in the sport are still very strong.

The little things I guess that people just do day to day in terms of like if I go and meet someone from work to go shopping or something, I am really quite pleased about that, that I actually have friends outside of canoeing and can socialise with people that aren't canoers. That kind of stuff are quite nice little things for me, but I guess quite normal to everyone who just goes to work everyday.

Occupational

Before she actually retired, Cassie was already aware that canoeing was going to finish at some point and that she would need something else to move on to. She also knew that she had no interest in going any further in the topic of her degree and therefore had to find a new area of interest. She started to develop some other interests through part time courses. In particular, she focused on sports massage, with the hope that this might open up new avenues for her after she retired. Cassie received three months additional funding at the end of the canoeing season as she was coming off performance funding. This gave her a financial cushion and eliminated some of the difficulties that might otherwise have arisen. Initially Cassie had some difficulty in finding employment and spent a number of months applying for work.

I was like 26 and going for my first job and employers were actually just going, well she's got no experience kind of thing, they don't know what top athletes, what training they have, so I felt that I'd been misled in terms of the idea that you are very employable, because you have shown commitment and all the planning and all this stuff.

Physical

Cassie missed the feeling of being incredibly fit that came along with her canoeing career. She noticed the changes that occurred in her body shape, as she lost muscle mass and tone. This came with the realisation that she would have to work if she wanted to maintain her previous levels of fitness. However she found it hard to motivate herself to train when she knew that she didn't actually have to.

Post-Career Involvement

Cassie is now working with the governing body of canoeing and has maintained strong social links with the sport. She never felt that she made the wrong decision in retiring when she did and never considered coming back into the sport. She has participated in a couple of small domestic races, which she enjoyed although she found that she could not help comparing her performance to her previous standards.

You almost need a clear gap from being like one of the good paddlers to then doing it for fun, because you still sort of have expectations, like when your mind knows what it wants to do but your body just can't quite do it.

Conclusion

Cassie found the whole experience of retiring from her canoeing career quite difficult. She had a very high level of involvement in the lifestyle and at that stage knew very little else, therefore the level of adjustment to move to a new career was quite substantial. Reflecting on her career, Cassie commented that she should have tried to maintain a more balanced lifestyle during her career in sport.

I would definitely try and like realise that actually it is not affecting your canoeing to have like a weekend off to go off on a holiday or something like that ... and realise that actually that will help you in the longer run. And perhaps take time to like have some little jobs, like a little part-time job so you do have some experience and have other things on other than just canoeing.

CATHERINE

Catherine had an involvement in a number of sports from a young age and found that athletics was an activity she was good at and derived a lot of enjoyment and self-esteem from. At the age of 15 she joined her local athletics club, which led to an involvement in the sport which lasted 10 years. In the last five years she was much more intensively involved in the sport and represented Scotland in international competition during this period. She never quite reached what she felt was her full potential as she suffered from a number of injuries throughout her career.

Athletic Identity

Catherine scored 46 on the retrospective version of AIMS, indicating a very high level of identification with the athletic role. Athletics formed a central role in Catherine's life and many of the decisions that she made centred on ensuring that she was able to continue her involvement in her sport. At the end of her degree, Catherine explored the options that she had available to her. She made the decision to study for a PhD as it offered her the opportunity to continue training at an intensive level in a way that a full time occupation would not have.

Catherine was not a funded athlete. She received funding for her PhD and substantial financial support from her partner. Juggling her athletics career with her studies left no time for any form of paid work. However, she was happy to do whatever it took because it meant so much to her.

You will do absolutely anything, you know, whatever it takes you are prepared to do it ... traipsing round trying to find good competitions, and if that meant that I would have to go abroad then I was prepared to pay it, I wouldn't think twice about it, and if that was going on credit cards then so be it.

Injury played a large role in Catherine's career and had a major impact on her self confidence and esteem.

When you place a huge amount of your self worth on being able to do something ... and all of a sudden that's taken away from you through injury, you're in trouble, because there's just a sense of emptiness, and I found it very, very difficult every time.

In the early stages of her athletics career, Catherine described having a broad social network consisting of friends from various different aspects of her life. However as Catherine's level of involvement in athletics grew, her social circle started to reduce as she found it increasingly difficult to maintain contact with people outside of her sport.

Circumstances of Retirement

Catherine was forced to retire when an x-ray on her back identified that she had a bone missing in her back, a genetic disorder. She had already spent a large amount of money on physiotherapy and came to the realisation that her back was never going to allow her to reach her full athletic potential.

There was another factor which was underlying Catherine's decision to retire from athletics. Her PhD research on athletic identity had led her to better understand the consequences of a high level of investment in sport and she started to understand the detrimental effects her athletics career was having on the rest of her life.

I was also becoming more and more aware of how risky it was for me, so in a sense the back injury was actually quite convenient because it gave me an excuse to walk away and I don't think I would have walked away without having that excuse.

Quality of Adaptation

Emotional

Catherine found letting go of her athletic dreams very difficult. She felt that it shattered who she felt that she was, leaving herself feeling empty and unsure what was going to happen next. However, she also had a strong sense of relief, because of the amount of pressure she had placed on herself during her career.

There was a certain degree of relief of oh my god I can be a normal person now, I can actually do things that I never ever allowed myself to do because my life was so, everything was monitored down to a tee, you know, when I went to bed, what I ate, everything that I did revolved around this and it's destructive.

She also felt relief that she could walk away from the sport without feeling like a failure, as she had what she perceived to be a proper excuse in her back injury. Catherine tried very hard to look at the positive aspects of retiring from athletics, the opportunities that she had to do other things and to find new goals and ambitions.

Social

Catherine's husband provided a lot of support during her transition out of elite sport. He was a former athlete himself and had a good understanding of the process that she was going through. Her best friend was also an athlete and helped her to deal with her changing situation.

She was a highly successful athlete who went to the Olympics, and she, it's almost like you don't need to talk about it because you know each other understands, you know, it's that kind of unspoken understanding.

Catherine maintained contact with some of her closer friends from athletics, but also used retirement as an opportunity to expand her social network and rebuild past friendships.

Occupational

Catherine's focus on her athletics led to her neglecting any possibilities of future careers, something which she regretted once she retired.

In complete denial about my future, complete denial, not in the slightest bit even thinking about it, which I'm ashamed about, I should have, because I'm suffering now, still suffering from that I believe, just in terms of being 30 years old and, you know, not having a stable career.

Although she had achieved a lot through her sport and her PhD, she was not happy with her position career-wise in comparison to her peers. Her PhD had taken nearly two years longer than it should have done and she felt it would take her years to reach a position in a career that she was happy with.

Physical

During the latter part of her career, Catherine moved from a sprint discipline into middle distance running. Within middle distance culture there were pressures to become thinner in order to succeed. Catherine recalled one experience she had with her coach.

I moved to a new coach in order to pursue a career as an 800m runner, the first thing he said to me was your nothing but a big fat lassie, and I quote, 'you are nothing but a big fat lassie'.

This led to an obsession with weight and diet which has continued to have an impact post-retirement. Catherine found it difficult to adjust physically to retiring and found that she still felt daily pressure to go out for a run and to maintain that side of her identity.

Post-Career Involvement

Catherine had no interest in staying involved in athletics after she retired. She found it easier to cut herself off from her former sport.

I wasn't interested in that, no way, I didn't want to know what my competitors were doing, didn't want to coach, my coping strategy was, if I'm not doing it anymore, I don't want to be involved.

Catherine now feels a lot of resentment towards a system that she feels does not do enough to look after its athletes. She believes that athletes are pressured to commit exclusively to the athlete role and are not encouraged to maintain a balanced lifestyle.

Conclusion

Catherine experienced some difficulty when she retired from competitive athletics. She had to come to terms with what she described as the detrimental effects of her involvement in sport and ended up feeling quite resentful. She felt that both her social life and her post sport career had been negatively affected, the repercussions of which she was still dealing with. When asked what she would have changed about her career if she had the opportunity to do it over again, this was her response:

In all honesty I probably wouldn't have done it. I'm proud of it, but it is because of the impact that it has had on other areas, all the resentment I've

talked about, it's not worth it. It's positive, I'm proud of it, it looks good on my CV, but in comparison to what I would have got had I not done it, I believe the risks outweigh the benefits to be honest.

JULIA

Julia's involvement in sport started in gymnastics, a sport in which she competed internationally until she was 15 years old. After a career-ending knee injury, the only activity that she was able to take part in was swimming. Starting as a rehabilitation activity, her swimming then developed into serious competitive activity as she realised her talent. The high points of Julia's swimming career were the two Commonwealth Games in which she represented Scotland, whilst her only disappointment was missing out on qualification for the Olympics.

Athletic Identity

Julia's retrospective AIMS score was 43, indicating that she identified strongly with her role as a swimmer. For four years, Julia swam full time and viewed her swimming as her career, therefore it is not surprising that her athletic identity was high. Julia's involvement in swimming did not only have an impact on her life, but also on the life of those people surrounding her, including her partner and her parents.

My boyfriend at the time, now husband, it was quite a lot for him as well to put up with and swimming turned into being a very big part of his life, whereas before he was just like, whatever, so from that side of things there were a lot of people that got dragged along.

Julia's social life, such as it was, centred on swimming, which was fairly inevitable due to the nature of training full time in her sport. It was easier for her to socialise with other swimmers who had an understanding of the lifestyle and its demands. Her involvement in swimming also had an influence on her choice of university degree.

One half of me was, right am I going to go and do medicine, or am I going to go and do swimming and university, and that was quite a difficult choice, because ever since I was quite wee I was like I want to be a doctor ... but I guess ultimately I didn't want to do it enough and I chose the swimming option with a degree attached that I quite liked.

Julia received some funding for her swimming and also undertook some part-time coaching work to help fund herself. She also depended quite heavily upon financial support from her parents. After her second Commonwealth Games, Julia started a new job as a swimming development officer, with an important coaching element. At this stage, although it was a natural end to the competition cycle, she did not stop swimming, as she did not feel she was ready, but she did start to reduce the quantity of training sessions she attended. In that final year of swimming she did not have the same level of focus, but it actually seemed to have a positive impact on her training.

I did less training after that, I only swam once a day and was working and everything as well. I think probably having less of a focus on my swimming was quite good, because I actually swam my fastest ever ... I broke the minute for the fly short course ... and also I swam my fastest ever long course at the World Championship trials.

Circumstances of Retirement

Julia planned to retire at the end of the World Championship trials. Her job had started to demand more time from her and she realised that it was time to make a commitment to it. She was due to get married within a couple of months and therefore her priorities were shifting towards her personal life and her new career. Julia also felt that there was nothing for her to continue swimming for. She had achieved what she felt was the best that she could.

This is a good time to stop, there is nothing else on the horizon, there was no point in keeping going another 4 years to the next Commonwealth Games because realistically I knew that probably, finishing 4th and making the final was probably my ultimate, and actually winning a medal was just a stretch too far, so going for the sake of it wouldn't have been worth it.

Quality of Adaptation

Emotional

Julia found retiring from swimming quite difficult, but reflected that it was not as hard as her end in gymnastics had been and attributed this to the fact that she had been able to choose the circumstances and timing of her retirement from swimming.

At the time when I was told to give up [from gymnastics] I was devastated, it was like the worst thing in the world, it took me a long time to, I think that was almost harder than stopping swimming in that way because swimming was my choice, whereas gymnastics was somebody else's choice and I didn't want to.

Julia found that in the initial stages she was standing on poolside coaching, watching those she swam with still training and believing that she could still have been part of that. Six months after her retirement she decided to return to the pool and start training again. She swam in one final race and by doing that realised that actually retirement was the right thing for her.

By doing that I realised, no I don't want to do this anymore. The rest of my life is now more important and it was like not only did I not have time to do the training, or that, I just, I didn't want to ... I think I did need to do that and to do the race to actually think, what are you playing at, don't be so stupid, just accept it. Got closure.

Social

Julia's life did not change hugely from a social perspective when she initially retired. She maintained her contacts within swimming through working in the sport. Major changes to her social circle occurred once her daughter was born.

I started going like to mother and baby things and all that ... and now I have got a totally different circle of friends that probably I socialise with, and they are all like you know, mums like me.

Occupational

Julia was able to turn her focus towards her new job, which she had not applied her full attention to her first year in the post due to her continuing commitments to her training. The increasing demands of her job diverted her attention away from the spare time she might otherwise have had due to no longer training.

Physical

Prior to her retirement, Julia started to de-train from swimming by slowly reducing her training load. Then for the first six weeks after retirement, on the advice of her coach, Julia did nothing to give her body a complete rest and a chance to recover. She found it difficult to get out of the training habit that she had developed.

That was probably the hardest time, because I felt like I should still be going training, and I was feeling guilty for not going, even though I was really busy with work and doing other things ... I guess it is just a habit that your

body and your mind get into, because it was just like, I had to almost physically stop myself getting in the car and going to the pool.

Post-Career Involvement

Julia fell pregnant with her first child fairly soon after the end of her swimming career. This was something that she and her husband had always planned and gave her a new focus: "I think that was quite good for me too because it took my focus totally away from swimming and sport, and also away from my body being sporty". Julia's career has kept her in contact with her sport and she maintains a heavy commitment to coaching as one aspect of that.

Conclusion

Julia had a transition period in which she was both starting up a new career and continuing an involvement in competitive swimming. She felt that this structure assisted her in dealing with her retirement. Despite this, she initially struggled both emotionally and physically to deal with changes that were taking place. It took her a short-term return to training to realise that retirement was actually the right thing for her. A good career and increasing family responsibilities assisted her in developing other aspects of her identity and ultimately settling into a life without the sport.

IONA

Iona began playing club football at the age of 16, which marked the start of a six and a half year career in international level football. After spending two years playing professionally in Italy her team disbanded and she returned to Scotland. Although she had received an offer from another professional team, her family were not supportive of this option and therefore she chose to remain in Scotland and return to the amateur game. Her career was then cut short by an injury to her knee and she moved into a coaching role.

Athletic Identity

Iona's retrospective AIMS score of 41 is suggestive of a strong and exclusive athletic identity. She described football as the most important thing in her life, prioritised over everything else: "I didn't have responsibilities or a conscience, I just did what it was I wanted to do and my focus was football".

Football had a big impact on Iona's working life. Although she had what she described as a good job in insurance, she gave this up for a second thought when the opportunity came up to play football in Italy. The jobs that she did hold during her football career were flexible, which was essential to her: "I wouldn't have lasted in a job that wasn't, I would just have left if I hadn't been able to play".

Circumstances of Retirement

Iona injured her knee during a skiing holiday; an accident which was to end her football career. Initially she continued to play with her injury, but found herself unable to perform to a level that she was happy with. She felt that she had lost the best parts of her game and was therefore no longer able to properly contribute to the team.

I couldn't even train to the maximum that I could train before, because of the injury. I couldn't kick the ball far and that had been one of my fortes. I wasn't enjoying playing because I didn't have the incentive to go to the level that I did before, so I made the conscious decision just to stop playing.

Quality of Adaptation

Emotional

Iona had difficulty with the transition out of competitive sport. She felt very depressed, and missed being part of the game. She also missed the buzz that she got from putting on the strip and representing her team. She felt that she could still be performing and got frustrated as her body could not do what she wanted it to be able to.

Social

Iona's quick transition into coaching meant that there was not much of a social transition for her. Her social life was very much still wrapped up in football and in her team. She did find some difficulties arose as a result of her change of role: "it's hard because as a player you were their best pal, and then when you start coaching you are suddenly this other person". As time passed, and the players that had been her peers retired, Iona's social group slowly changed as she no longer participated as much in the social side of her team.

Occupational

Iona continued to work in the same job as she had been doing prior to her retirement. Her employers had been reasonably supportive of her playing career, and continued to provide support for her as a coach. Although the time commitments as a coach were far less, she still required some time off for coaching qualifications and competitions over the years.

Physical

Iona continued to do some training, and for many years after her retirement remained signed as a player by her club. Despite ongoing difficulties with her knee, she still continued to play in occasional matches.

I still struggle with my knee, every day. I continued to do some training, but my knee has limited what I can do. I have always tried to keep myself fit though, have always done running, always did a lot of road running. I also still play fives sometimes, so I have always kept a reasonable fitness level, just nothing like where I had been when I had been playing.

Post-Sport Life

Iona moved almost immediately into coaching after deciding to retire. Initially, she found coaching a frustrating experience.

I can remember before watching the game and thinking that I could do better as a player, do better than what was going on in the pitch ... I think it is difficult to stand on the sidelines as a young coach, I think I got really frustrated because I couldn't play, it drove me bonkers. I would be shouting and bawling at the players and I think it was because I knew that if I was fit then I could probably do better. I really missed playing for many, many years.

Iona was one of the first female coaches to get an A licence, which had previously been very much a male-only domain. She has had a very successful career as a coach, achieving success with every team that she has led.

Conclusion

Iona was forced to retire through circumstances outwith her control and found it a difficult time. Her quick transition into the world of coaching helped her to deal somewhat with the impact of retiring, although she feels that she has never quite managed to replace playing football.

I still find it difficult now, when I am standing on the sidelines. You can never compensate, I don't think, for playing, never ... nothing at all has ever come close to what it is like to play, it is never the same.

Iona went through a very difficult time when she decided that she would take some time out from coaching.

I had been coaching for so long and I just thought enough is enough. And I was so lonely, I mean I had work and I have got friends but there was just something missing, and I developed what I called Sunday Syndrome, and it was really strange, I could certainly cope through the week, that wasn't so bad, but I struggled on a Sunday.

This removal from the football world was very difficult to deal with, almost like a second retirement. She explained that although she has since returned to coaching, she will retire at some point in the near future and will have to ensure that she has something else to do to fill the gap.

MEGAN

Megan started gymnastics at the age of four. Her competitive involvement began at age eight and from that age through to her retirement she was involved in Scottish national squads. From the age of 10 she was coached by her father. Her first major achievement was winning the Scottish Championships fairly early in her career. She had several other high points representing Scotland, although she never again reached the number one spot. The major disappointment within Megan's career was missing out on selection for the Commonwealth Games. This had been the major target within her career and her non-selection ultimately led to her retirement.

Athletic Identity

Megan's score on the retrospective version of AIMS was 44. She described gymnastics as totally and utterly overruling the rest of her life and questioned the healthiness of this lifestyle.

Now I've got children I think to myself, would I want that for my children? I don't know if it's a good balance, I don't feel any negative effects of what I've been through at all and I can only see positives at the moment, I might look back in ten years and see differently.

Throughout the majority of her gymnastics career Megan was at school. In the final few years she was at university studying Physical Education. The requirements of gymnastics are quite intensive, and Megan was training six days per week and also attended regular weekend training camps. Megan felt that her involvement in gymnastics had an impact on her education. She recalled a constant feeling of fatigue when she was at school.

I remember the whole of secondary school being absolutely shattered, and not really being able to apply myself. I have this perception of, I wouldn't say I'm not intelligent, I know I'm intelligent enough, but I know that I probably didn't apply myself and learn as much as I could of at the key stages, because I was so exhausted. I'm not sure it is possible to apply yourself fully to two things like that.

Megan's involvement in gymnastics had an impact upon the rest of her family. Her parents supported her financially throughout her career and made sacrifices to ensure that she was able to work towards her dreams. Megan's parents also worked hard to ensure that her brother was able to do everything that he wanted, although the focus of the family was heavily weighted towards gymnastics. Megan's father got drawn in to coaching in the sport due to her involvement. He remains involved to this day, working at an elite level within the sport.

All of the friends that she had were within her sport and she struggled to develop a social circle at school as she was rarely able to attend social events. This caused her a period of anxiety in the middle of her career, when she was questioning whether gymnastics was really what she wanted to do. As her friends developed through adolescence, Megan started to feel left out.

I remember ... it was things like boyfriends and going out, and also my friends getting to that age where they couldn't fully understand and respect what I was doing ... they were starting to think, oh for gods sake she's not coming out again, you know, you could see the rolls of the eyes and then I just stopped getting invited which really hurt.

Circumstances of Retirement

Everything in Megan's gymnastics career had been building towards the Commonwealth Games. This was the highlight in terms of representing Scotland and something which was highly rated by the governing body. In the end, Megan was build up for a huge fall.

I think they put such a huge amount on the Commonwealth Games, that certainly my experience as a senior and of retirement I think is negative because of that, because it is like build, build, build, build, build, build, build, and the minute something happens, if you don't make that, your life suddenly stops, it's what's happening there, because that event was everything.

Megan never managed to recover psychologically from missing out on selection. She knew that the Olympics were not within her reach and another four year competition cycle to the next Commonwealth Games was not a viable option for her. Part of the damage was caused by what she perceived to be a problem with the selection process. One of the gymnasts selected did not end up competing in the event, due to an injury that she had been carrying since before the trials. For Megan to perceive that she had lost her place to someone who was never potentially going to be fit to compete compounded an already difficult situation.

Megan never officially stood up and announced that she retired. She simply drifted away from the sport: "I don't think I ever made a true decision and that's why I was never recognised officially as well because I never stood up and said". For a while she attended some training sessions as a coach, but was struggling to handle being in the gym but no longer classed as a gymnast. After a while, she decided that the time was not right and that she still had more to give. She started training again, working up to the District Championships. In that event she suffered an injury to her ankle, which put a final end to her gymnastics career.

I came back for two pieces and I did a vault and I dislocated my ankle. And that was the last time I ever did gymnastics. And really quite horrible, quite a horrible way to finish, just horrible.

Quality of Adaptation

Emotional

Megan does not remember much about her retirement from gymnastics, as she has blocked most of it out as a method of coping with what happened. She does remember some of the emotions that she was feeling at the time.

I felt totally and utterly lost, that's the one thing I remember, I had no direction, what on earth am I going to do, I've failed, but I am an elite level gymnast, I can't go from one to the other in a week, you know what I mean, I can't be going to the Commonwealth Games and then all of a sudden I'm retiring ... I just couldn't understand how that could happen.

One of the aspects that she had trouble coping with was filling her time with what she described as 'normal' activities and having to let go of her life as someone different, someone involved in something a bit special. It was something that defined her and it took time to be able to find a new definition of who she was.

Social

At the time when she retired, Megan was still attending university. Therefore it was relatively straight forward for her to spend time with other people at university and develop friendships that she had previously not been able to put the time into. Over time, she slowly lost contact with many people from the gymnastics world.

Occupational

Due to her young age, occupational adjustment was not something that caused Megan a lot of concern. She completed her university degree and stepped into her first teaching job shortly after that.

Physical

Physically, the injury to Megan's ankle prevented her from getting involved in a new sport, although it was something that she would have liked to have been able to consider as she was not quite ready to give up on that aspect of her identity.

I thought to myself right what am I going to choose, like I could walk into any sport, it sounds stupid when I say it like that, but in a certain way I did dream about it, I did think, well I'm not finished with elite sport, I want to be part of that, it's what identifies me.

Post-Career Involvement

When she first retired from gymnastics, Megan got involved in coaching at her old club. Although she found her own experiences had a positive impact on the type of coach that she could be, she experienced some difficulties working with the senior coach due to differing points of view.

We were just head to head all the time, because I always saw it from a gymnasts perspective, and I would look at them and think, she's shattered, absolutely exhausted, she's not taking it in, she's not understanding it.

Changing priorities within her own personal life made it fairly easy for Megan to cease her involvement with the sport. However, she hopes that when her family life dictates that it is possible, she will be able to revive her relationship with the sport.

That's something that I still hope I will get into, I still want to judge, because I don't want to turn my back on the sport, but it is just not the right time the now.

Likewise, she also hopes that at some point in the future she may be able to give the time and commitment that would be required to be involved in a coaching capacity. Gymnastics remains an important element of her identity and she feels that there is a lot that she could give the sport. However, at present, her family has to remain her main priority.

Conclusion

Megan first retired as a result of her failure to make the Scottish Commonwealth Games team, something which still haunts her to this day.

It is still the one thing that holds with me as a failure, it is the one memory I've got that to this day, and it sounds stupid, a mother of two, I've got different, but I can still be in tears, I can still speak about it emotionally and say, you know what, I didn't make that, and the whole range that goes with that, and the question why, and bitterness, and anger, the what ifs.

After deciding to make a comeback into competitive gymnastics, Megan suffered a career-ending injury which finally drew a line under her involvement. Although very difficult to deal with, Megan believes that it might have helped her to have the decision taken out of her hands.

I knew that that was it, and in some respects it took that away from me, it's like, the choice was no longer there. I mean I would never have wanted it, and it will haunt me when I am older, but I do maybe think well that was what was supposed to happen, to close the door.

KATH

Kath was brought up in a golfing family, therefore her involvement in the sport started at a young age. She got her first official handicap when she was 13 years old and then progressed through the stages up to Scottish and then British representation. She then played as a professional for five years before deciding to retire. The highlights of Kath's career came from her time as an amateur player. The pinnacle of women's amateur golf is undoubtedly the Curtis Cup and Kath represented Great Britain and Ireland in this event on a number of occasions. In contrast, her final year as a professional player stands out as a low point, as Kath found it increasingly hard work to maintain motivation against all of the pressures of the game.

Athletic Identity

Kath described golf as being “pretty much my whole life”. Although she had other interests, golf was undoubtedly her main priority when she was playing. As golf was her full time job and her means of income this is not particularly surprising and is supported by her retrospective AIMS score of 42. Kath felt comfortable with the sacrifices she made for golf.

You definitely make sacrifices, but then that is up to you to make them and if you do it, you are quite happy in your decision and you just go ahead and do it.

Kath received a lot of support from her family and from her local golf club throughout her playing career. Her golf club provided financial assistance through fundraising events, raising money to send her away to play. Her family provided both financial and emotional support: “when your whole family plays golf and they understand it as well, they know how hard it can be and when you are playing well how good as well”.

Circumstances of Retirement

Kath experienced a lot of financial pressure during her time as a professional golfer. She described the constant worry over whether she had enough money for the next competition, for travel and accommodation, and the pressure to make the cut in tournaments in order to earn enough money.

In the European Tour the money wasn't overly great either at the time and it dropped pretty quickly as well if you were outwith certain places. And you were struggling to make your costs a lot of the time which is not the ideal life you want to be leading.

In her last year as a professional, these financial pressures, along with a series of poor performances, led Kath to lose her passion for the game and start to think about other aspects of her life.

Just thinking do I really want to be doing this now, got no money, you get to a certain age when you start to think, I've got no house, you know, other things, priorities, start coming into your life, that you don't have when you are 20 years old, 25 or whatever.

Despite the fact that she no longer felt that she wanted to play golf anymore, she still found the actual decision to retire very difficult, as she had to let go of unfulfilled dreams. Kath never played as well as she had when she was amateur, something which played on her mind as she thought about what could have been.

I just wish that I had played to my potential. And if I'd played to my potential and still hadn't done well then I would have been happy, whereas I didn't play to my potential so that sometimes grates on me thinking how would it have been if I had played as well as I could have.

Quality of Adaptation

Emotional

The decision to retire was a difficult one for Kath. Initially she went through a period of doubt in terms of whether she had made the right decision and how she would feel once the season re-started and she was no longer part of it. However, alongside this Kath also felt some relief that the financial pressures were lifted and that she would now be receiving regular money at the end of each month.

Social

Kath did not feel that her social life was much changed with her retirement from golf. She maintained contact with her closer friends from the golf circuit. During her golf career she had managed to sustain a fairly large circle of friends outside of the sport and this was only enhanced after her retirement.

Occupational

Once Kath retired, she returned to the part-time job that she used every winter period to gain extra cash and started to apply for jobs. Her occupational transition was remarkably smooth.

I started applying for a few jobs and I got the first one that I applied for, which was a bit of a result. So yeah, that was it, it was really quite an easy transition, I was quite lucky.

While she was an amateur player, Kath had studied sports science at university. At the time, she saw this as instrumental in providing an alternative option to a career in golf. Her degree did eventually have a big part to play in her movement into a new career post-retirement.

I certainly wouldn't have got my job without my degree, and at the time the degree was hard, because you are playing pretty much full time golf with trying to do your studying and whatever as well, but it was definitely worth it, because I wouldn't be in the position I am now without it.

Physical

Kath felt that retiring left a large gap in her life and was initially quite daunted about how this would be filled.

You have a life where golf is pretty much it and you play golf for 7, 8 hours a day and there's a huge, huge gap there thinking what am I going to do. You work whatever hours you do but then you've got this huge amount of time all of a sudden to do other things ... at first you are thinking what am I going to do, I'm going to be bored.

Over time, she picked up other sports and interests and found other things to do with time that had previously been filled up by golf.

I started playing hockey again, I had played a lot of hockey when I was younger, so I went back and played for Haddington there for a little while ... so I am still playing hockey and then I do a lot of stuff at the gym now as well.

Post-Career Involvement

Kath's initial reaction to her retirement was quite strong. She put her clubs away and they did not come back out for over two years: "I had no desire, absolutely no interest whatsoever. They just went away, I was fed up of them". Golf now has a very different role to play in Kath's life and has a very low priority compared to before. She plays in a few tournaments a year, as an amateur, but purely for enjoyment.

Conclusion

The end of Kath's career came earlier than she might have liked it to and left a gap in her life. Golf went from being a central element of her identity to having no role within her life whatsoever, a reaction to the difficulties she experienced in the final year of her professional career. She was assisted by a smooth occupational transition into a new career, which demonstrated the importance to her of getting an education before turning professional. Although she does now play some golf, she does not feel it will ever become a major aspect of her life again in the future.

JENNY

Jenny was brought up in a sporting family and participated in a range of sport when she was young. In her first year of high school she won the individual championships at her school sports and from there was introduced to her local athletics club through her father. Jenny started university, but dropped out during her first year and returned home. At that stage she decided to train full time in athletics, targeting qualification

for the upcoming Commonwealth Games. Jenny's career was shaped by problems with her Achilles tendons which lasted for over 10 years. They greatly inhibited her performance and limited the level of success her experienced in her career. Jenny achieved a fourth place finish in the Commonwealth Games, but had underperformed in the event due to a flare up in her injury.

I always felt that although I threw PB's and I was really happy with the distances, I was always not quite where I wanted to be. You just got used to living with the pain.

Athletic Identity

Jenny's score on the retrospective AIMS was 44, suggestive of a high level of athletic identity. She chose to end her time at university partially due to the realisation that she would not be able to continue properly with her athletics: "it was a case of, well you can always go back and study, but this is your window to do athletics, you can't come back to it later". Her primary focus then became her sport and it was prioritised over other aspects of her life.

For me if you really want to do that then that isn't a sacrifice, that's just part of doing that. And for me that was all I wanted to do at that point, so it wasn't an issue.

In the early stages of her full time athletics career, Jenny relied on the financial support of her parents. She worked a part-time job, but this was more to give her something else to do alongside her athletics.

I didn't necessarily have to work, but for me I think it was a good distraction. I worked two hours a day in a sports centre, for just the fact that for two hours a day you could be a normal person and you had someone to chat to about something other than athletics.

Jenny managed to maintain contact with a very small number of people outside of her sport, however nearly all of Jenny's friends were athletics-related. Her social life was very limited as she only had one day off training per week and lived in a fairly rural area.

Circumstances of Retirement

After ten years of medical and physiotherapy treatment, Jenny finally got a diagnosis for her Achilles problems.

It was so frustrating because when the guy did eventually diagnose it, an Australian chap, it was a lack of strength endurance in my calves and a slightly inflexible big toe. All it took was specific exercises and within two weeks I was pain free.

Jenny was finally able to experience what it was like to be pain free and was looking forward to being able to compete to her full ability in the events in the forthcoming season, which included the Commonwealth Games. However, she was finding training much harder than it should have been and was eventually diagnosed with an under-active thyroid. Her final season was difficult to handle psychologically and caused Jenny a lot of distress.

That season was horrendous in that every competition that I tried to go into I ended up in tears, because I just couldn't do what I wanted to do, and I just kind of remember thinking it's not worth this anymore, it's not worth being in tears every weekend.

Unable to fully train, she could not reach the required standard for the Games. She felt as though the decision had been taken out of her hands. She knew she was not going to be able to get any funding and was unlikely to make it to the Olympics, and therefore was unable to see the point of continuing.

I didn't want to go to the Games if I couldn't throw the standard, because the standard for me should have been easy. And they gave me extra time and stuff but my body just was... and it was hard then as well because my GP didn't explain to me the impact that it has actually on your physique, it just felt like I was running through treacle all the time.

Quality of Adaptation

Emotional

Initially, Jenny felt very low. Everything that she had worked for over a period of four years had gone. At her final event, she failed to make the final and had to sit and watch.

At that point it was just like someone had ripped your heart out. You are sitting watching people that you know you should be competing against if you were fit and healthy, but there was nothing I could do.

She found it difficult to watch the Commonwealth Games that summer, as she was still trying to deal with her non-participation. As the Commonwealths were being held in Britain, there were reminders everywhere.

You would go into Asda and because they were a sponsor there would be banners everywhere, if it had been in another country that wouldn't have been as bad, whereas that was quite in your face. I just remember not really watching any of it.

Social

The majority of Jenny's friends lived in Glasgow and so upon retirement she decided to move and to start a new phase in her life. The majority of her social circle was still athletes, although as she developed her new career she started to make new non-sport friendships. She enjoyed the freedom her new life provided.

You do then become more of a normal person in the fact that it doesn't matter if you want to go out or, the regimented side of things has gone to a certain extent because it is not like you have to be up and training the next morning every weekend, so you could do things that you wouldn't have done before.

Occupational

Jenny did not have a career to fall back on and therefore initially found her transition quite difficult. She spent quite a bit of time exploring potential alternatives, before picking up some work as a strength and conditioning coach. Although not a long term career, it provided a good period of transition for her.

I knew it was never going to be my long term thing, when I look back on it now it was almost like a little transition, allowed me to just kind of be like a normal person, just have fun and not worry. But I almost just kind of fell into it, not part of any master plan, and I mean I do look back now and it was quite an odd time.

Jenny eventually moved into her current role as a sports development officer, maintaining an involvement in sport although not in athletics.

Physical

Jenny found the transition out of an athlete's lifestyle quite difficult from a nutritional perspective.

I can't see how you can go from 15 years of doing that to going to the other extreme and just eating whatever you want. So I am still quite strict on that, not as strict as I used to be. I still feel guilty if I don't train. If I don't get to the gym at least twice a week then I feel terrible, I always need to do something. Couldn't imagine ever not doing exercise of some form.

She stopped javelin training, but has continued to train physically post-retirement. She continues to enjoy weight training and has also got involved in a number of other sporting activities.

I still lift, still enjoy my weight training, probably train if I can 3 times a week, sometimes 4, and then do other stuff as well, but just what I want to do, what I feel like. I can ski now, I can golf, all those things I wasn't allowed to do before, or didn't have the energy or inclination to do then.

Post-Career Involvement

Jenny had no desire to continue any involvement within athletics, because she felt that the sport had many flaws and was marred by internal politics. She did not feel that the athletes were properly prioritised and therefore were not given the best chance to succeed. She felt disappointed that she was never approached to give something back within the field events in Scotland, as she felt the standard was very poor and there was very little expertise to pull upon. She returned to watch the Scottish Championships with her former coach the year after her retirement and was very disappointed in the standard of the competition.

It was the hardest thing in the world to stand and watch someone take my Scottish javelin trophy, which I had won something like 7 times, with a 30 metre throw. Now at that point, even though I had been retired or whatever, I could have got up there and thrown that.

Conclusion

Initially, Jenny struggled slightly after being forced to retire. She had a strong level of identification with the athletic role and had not spent any time developing any alternatives to athletics. Therefore her retirement meant that she needed a complete shift in emphasis, which took her some time. Jenny was very positive about her athletics career, although she accepted that she never quite fulfilled her full potential. There was only one thing that she looked back on with regret: "that's probably the one regret that I have because I would say I never really found out what I could throw pain free".

ANNABEL

Annabel started gymnastics when she was seven years old, influenced by her older sister who was already involved in the sport. She gained a place in the Scottish national squad when she was 10, marking the start of a nine year involvement in elite level gymnastics. Annabel represented Scotland at the Commonwealth Games when she was 15 years old, but suffered a career-ending injury just before what would have been her second Games.

Athletic Identity

Annabel described gymnastics as being everything, her whole life. She was extremely committed from a young age, developing a strong identity in gymnastics at a time when her peers were still going through adolescent identity exploration. This is supported by her score of 42 on the retrospective version of AIMS.

Annabel attended the Glasgow School of Sport, giving her the opportunity to develop her gymnastics alongside her education in a reduced academic timetable. Choosing to move away from her primary school friends to attend a different school for her gymnastics was a big decision. It also meant that her main social groups were all linked to gymnastics, either at school or at her club where she training in the evenings and at

weekends. She found that even her social circle within the sport became reduced, when many of her peers retired at around 14 or 15 and she chose to continue.

Circumstances of Retirement

Annabel's target was to compete in the 2006 Commonwealth Games and finish her career on a high. However, her preparation was marred by a number of injuries. After being injured the year before the event, she worked her way back to full fitness to attend the trials. However, an injury to her foot sustained in the final trial removed her final chance to attend the Games and ultimately ended her career. After having an operation on foot she initially tried to continue on in gymnastics, but over time it was evident that it was not getting any better and she was forced to make the decision to stop.

Quality of Adaptation

Emotional

Annabel found making the decision to retire very difficult and upsetting. Although she was still attending some training sessions, she knew that her heart was no longer in it and that physically she was never going to be able to return to the very top level. Not having to go into the gym any longer left her feeling lost and unsure what she was supposed to do with her time.

I couldn't get to grips with it. I suppose I had done it since I was really young and I was just thinking what do I do, it was really bizarre. It took me a while to find new things to fill my time. But I did eventually, I have accepted it now, but I still miss it.

Social

Annabel's social group is still small, a knock on effect from her training.

I've only got the same wee bunch of friends, because I didn't stay in touch with many people from school and things. I think they get annoyed when you are going to the gym all the time and you are not able to do anything with them. That is the only thing, it is quite hard to stay in touch with a big group of friends.

She has slowly started to develop a new peer group at university, who are far removed from her sport and has begun to enjoy the independence she now has.

I think when I was doing gymnastics everything had to be scheduled, totally like in the time zone all the time, but now you've kind of got free time to plan spontaneously and things like that, which is quite good.

Occupational

Annabel had held off starting university, in order to give her a chance to train for the Commonwealth Games. Once she made the decision to retire, she started her university course. This provided her with an opportunity to develop an alternative identity and assisted with her transition out of competitive gymnastics.

Physical

After spending so much of her time training, Annabel found it very difficult to replace her gymnastics. Although she felt as though she needed to find another activity, nothing could match up to gymnastics for her. Annabel was not able to consider transferring into another competitive sport at that stage, due to ongoing problems with her foot injury.

It was weird when I stopped, it was like I need to do something, find something, I was itching to find something to do, but nothing fills it the same, I was like I don't like that, don't like that, you know.

Post-Career Involvement

Initially Annabel found the easier way to cope with her retirement was to cut herself off from gymnastics.

I felt like I needed to leave it and just not think about it. I felt if I was there then I would just get upset and things. So I did, I just left it a good couple of months just to get away from it. But then you kind of start missing it and think you could go back in.

When she first retired, Annabel was given the option to get involved in coaching, but this is something she has only recently taken up. She helps out a bit in the gym, but still does not feel able to commit to a full involvement in the coaching side.

I can't involve myself fully with it ... I think it would be too difficult for me, there is still a part of me there and when I go out and coach I miss it more. So I just help a little bit, I like to help but not to get too involved, not to get committed to it.

Although she still has a love for the sport, and enjoys going to spectate at international competitions, Annabel has no desire to get involved in some of the other aspects of gymnastics.

It's weird because one of my friends is into judging and others are doing other things but it doesn't interest me. I think the only thing that I liked doing was actually doing it, I don't know if that is bad but I just don't have any interest.

Conclusion

Annabel found her retirement from gymnastics very difficult. She had a high level of commitment from a young age, leading to the development of an exclusive identity. For this reason, gymnastics was the only thing that Annabel knew and when this was taken away from her it left a big gap in her life. She had to undertake a period of identity exploration after her retirement that her peers would have experienced some years earlier. She felt that other people around her did not understand what she was going through and therefore were not able to adequately support her through this transition.

I felt, especially like my dad was just like, oh that's good, she's giving up, she's got a life, but you know that way to me it was more than that, I was like totally gutted, I didn't know what to say to them. I mean they were supportive but they didn't really understand.

ISABEL

Although she grew up with two older brothers who played rugby, Isabel's involvement in the sport did not start until she was at university. At that time it was mainly a social activity, but when she left university and started working Isabel started to take her training more seriously and got selected for the Scotland A squad. After taking a year out to go travelling, Isabel returned and played at international level for a period of seven years.

Athletic Identity

Isabel scored 45 on the retrospective version of AIMS, indicating a high level of identification with the athletic role. Once she returned from travelling, rugby became her focus, prioritised over other aspects of her life. She worked in an unchallenging job which gave her the flexibility she required to participate in her sport. Isabel could be quite single-minded about her sport: "I'm a very, very focused person, sometimes too much so". Rugby therefore had a big impact on what was happening in the rest of her life. If her rugby wasn't going well, then things didn't go well at work either. Due to its all-consuming nature, Isabel felt that her social life was also affected by her participation:

I think I sacrificed some friendships actually, there were some friends that I was in college with, and I won't get time, or I didn't make time to catch up with them, for probably about the 7 years that I was playing rugby seriously, and as a result of that they are acquaintances ... but they are not friends, they are not people that I could call upon, and I think that's a shame.

Circumstances of Retirement

While she was still playing rugby, Isabel changed careers, setting up in business with her brother. As this began to take up more of her time and she started to find it all a bit too much to cope with and decided to finish playing. However, after a number of months out she realised that it was too soon and that she was not ready to give up.

I had just had enough, couldn't take it anymore, so thought I was retiring, but as it happened I just needed a break. By the time it got to the December of that year, from the May, I was actually feeling like I wanted to play again.

Isabel returned to international play, having benefited from a break and feeling refreshed and much more positive than she had before. She decided to work up towards the next World Cup a year later and then retire after that. She described how she felt during the final few games of her international career.

It was like you don't have a choice but to enjoy it because it is going to be your last games, so there is no point moping about the fact that you are on the wing, you have got to enjoy it, you cannot have any regrets.

At the end of the World Cup a number of other players also announced their retirement, a couple of whom were a few years older than Isabel. Recognising this, Isabel started to wonder whether she was once again choosing to retire to early.

I did wonder did that mean I could go to another World Cup ... I thought I will just sit with this for a while, and as the days went by after the World Cup I realised that it was the end, that I was happy with it.

Quality of Adaptation

Emotional

When the final whistle went on her last game, Isabel described feeling quite emotional and a bit upset. However, by the time the team had reached the changing rooms, her feelings were quite different. With plenty to look forward to, Isabel's reaction was quite positive.

I shook hands with some of the girls that I had played with for years and wouldn't play with again. It was a wee bit emotional but I wasn't at all sad, I was quite happy with it.

Social

Isabel used the social support of other players that were retiring, sharing experiences and talking about what they were going to do with their time.

We kind of focused I guess on the things that we wouldn't miss, we spoke about those a lot, like at least we won't have to do x, y and z. We didn't really talk about what we would miss.

She felt that she needed to sustain contact with her social circle in sport, maintaining the group environment that this provided her. This was something unique that she could not get elsewhere. Isabel also got involved in alternative activities and events, in order to develop new social networks, and re-established some old friendships.

Occupational

Before her retirement, Isabel's focus had already moved more towards her new business, which was a new arena in which she could derive a sense of achievement and worth from. Upon retiring, she threw herself more into her work. Despite this, she found that she still struggled slightly with the transition: "it was a bit difficult, a bit flat. I didn't really know what to do with myself, and I actually did very, very little up until about Christmas".

Physical

Isabel found it hard to motivate herself to go to the gym. She missed the camaraderie and banter that went along with training sessions in the gym with her team-mates and felt that she no longer had a goal to work towards that made it worth the effort. A number of months after retirement, she started to feel the effects of her lack of activity.

I was struggling to get into my jeans, and though right, hang on a second, I had lost a bit of muscle bulk but was still the same weight, right that means it is fat, right, not great.

Post-Sport Life

When she initially decided to give up, Isabel thought she would be giving up rugby all together. She enjoyed the free time that she had to do other things at weekends and picked up an activity from her youth.

Getting back into surfing ... and if the surf is up I don't go to the gym to do weights. And if somebody says do you want to go mountain biking, I can do that, I have the time to do things. There were things that were sacrificed for rugby.

However she quickly discovered that she needed to have an involvement in a competitive sport and made the decision to return to her club. She now enjoys playing rugby at this level, mainly for the social side of the sport.

When I play these days I have managed to stop analysing everything I do in games, and if I throw a bad pass it is like, oh well, never mind, I don't need to make it any better, I'm as good as I am and I'm doing it for fun ... these days I'm really happy to help the younger players to, help them to progress, pass on my knowledge.

Conclusion

Although Isabel had a strong level of athletic identity, this started to decrease towards the end of her career as her priorities started to shift towards her new business enterprise. Her transition was therefore not particularly difficult, as she retired at a time of her choosing and was able to turn her attention to her work. She found the spare time that she had difficult and after initially removing herself from the rugby scene decided to return and now has a mainly social involvement. The only negative feelings that she expressed were towards the Governing Body.

I felt that there was no closure. I didn't want a ceremony or award or anything like that, but there was no recognition of thanks for your contribution, we recognise it, we recognise you are leaving. They also didn't engage with us to get us back involved in coaching, you really had to push yourself forward and be saying I want to coach to be able to get involved.

ALICE

Alice did not start curling until she was 17, introduced to the sport by one of her older brothers. Prior to this, she had participated in a number of sports recreationally at school. She was involved in curling at an international level for 21 years, representing both Scotland and Great Britain in major events. Her most significant achievement was winning an Olympic gold medal, which in turn led her receiving an MBE for services to curling.

At that moment when you stand on there and the national anthem plays, that's just, it makes you think oh my god, what have you done, it's all worth it, all the hassle, all the nightmares, you just forget it all and realise that is what you came here to do and that makes it worth while.

Athletic Identity

Initially Alice took up curling as a hobby that she could do at weekends.

You got to travel round Scotland to different ice rinks, you met loads of people, really friendly environment ... and that was why I kept going, it's a good social sport, which is what I was looking for really. I didn't really mean it to take over my whole life.

When curling became an Olympic medal sport the structure became more professional and the ethos of the sport changed as it was brought into the Scottish Institute of Sport. Alice's goals and ambitions changed. She gave up her career in Hotel Management and took up a job in a bank which enabled her to give more time to her curling. Her work became organised around her sporting commitments. Curling became a very big focus in her life and was prioritised over other aspects of her life. This is supported by her score of 41 on the retrospective version of AIMS.

Alice is the single parent of two children and described much of her curling career as being a juggling act as she tried to make sure that her children's lives were not too affected by her prioritisation of curling.

The kids were still young at that stage, and with me curling I didn't want their lives to be affected in that, if they wanted to play hockey or rugby or do the things they do, I didn't want them not to be able to just because I am away curling.

Circumstances of Retirement

Alice's second Olympic Games was a less positive experience than her first. The structure of squad selection had been changed which left players feeling unsettled and unsure about what was going to happen.

I was upset at that one because you put in the 2 years solid hard work before (the Olympics) and it was wasted because of what they did with team dynamics. I think after (the Olympics) I was really quite angry that it had been wasted.

After the Olympics, Alice had to make a decision about what she wanted to do. She had originally thought that she would continue curling until she was no longer enjoying it. However, there were other factors in her life that influenced her decision.

As a single mother I had to get a house and pay bills, so I needed to get a full time job. There was no way I could work full time and give the commitment I needed to curl competitively and look after the kids, that just wasn't an option. So I kind of hummed and hawed and thought what am I going to do.

Alice described her decision to retire as very difficult and not one that she wanted to make. She was frustrated not to be offered an opportunity to become a full time curler, when a pilot scheme was introduced.

It was an experiment, a pilot scheme, open up a couple and see how it goes, so they did a couple of the men, I suppose they showed the potential and I was too old, so that was it. I mean yeah I can see where they're coming from. I think it was hard for me that, for years I wanted to be full time, why didn't they do that years ago.

Quality of Adaptation

Emotional

Alice found her transition out of the role of athlete very difficult. She found it hard to move away from her identity as an athlete, particularly as she did not initially have anything else to put her attention and energy into. Alice found that she struggled to watch the major Scottish competitions, thinking about her involvement in previous years and coming to terms with the fact that she was no longer involved.

Social

Alice's social life had always centred on her children and this did not particularly change when she retired.

It has probably not changed because now I'm away working, and then when I'm not working I want to be at home with them, helping them with homework or whatever, so I don't arrange a lot of social events.

She has maintained contact with her social circle from curling, helped to do so by working within the sport.

Occupational

Once she had decided to retire, Alice started a search for a new job. However, this was a process that took a lot longer than she had realised that it would.

I didn't appreciate how hard it was to actually get a job. I was like I'll do anything, I don't care, but you see my background was hotel catering, but I hadn't worked in it for years, any sports-area wise I had no sports degree, so people weren't interested, they just looked at the application form, saw no sports degree and binned it.

Eventually a coaching post was created for Alice through the Scottish Institute of Sport. This was further developed by her gained a place on the UK Sport elite coach programme.

Physical

Alice described dealing with the physical changes to her body as the hardest aspect of retiring from competitive curling. Once she started her new career, she has found it very difficult to find the time to do any form of physical training. As a result, she has gained over two stone in weight which is something she is not happy about.

All I do is sit in a car and drive about the country. You know, I'm doing 3 thousand miles a month. So a culture shock from being very active, being you know, in that environment, and now sitting in the car all the time, I don't like that side of it, and I know I need to get into a routine of thinking right could I go to the gym.

Post-Career Involvement

Once Alice started her job, she made the decision to stop all of her own participation in curling to assist her to develop a new identity as a coach: "I want to move on from curling, so I think it will be easier for me to get my head round it if I just stop completely, than play bits and bobs". She did find that that she did not miss competition as much once she started working.

Probably it is quite good in the job I am now in that I am so busy, so I am still involved with curling but I am so busy I haven't got time to think about the other side of it.

Conclusion

Retirement represented quite a difficult period of time for Alice. Although it was her choice to end her curling career, she was pressed towards that decision through personal circumstances and a negative Olympic experience. Alice's life changed greatly upon retirement, as she had to deal with ending a long involvement in the sport and finding a new career: "it's a big change, you know it's been over 20 years, competitive curling has been my life, so now it is very, very different".

Appendix J: Interview Guide for PL Advisers (Study 3)

Can you tell me about your position within the Institute?

- PROBE: how long you have been in post, what programmes/assistance you deliver, who you work with, etc...?

What issues do you think an athlete might face when they retire from competitive sport?

- PROBE: what factors might influence whether these are a problem for an athlete?

Who do you think should be responsible for assisting athletes with their transition out of sport?

- PROBE: Should other institutions contribute? Coaches, admin, psych, other?

Can you briefly describe the services that you offer to Institute and Area Institute athletes through the Performance Lifestyle programme?

Are any of these services targeted specifically at, or particularly useful to, transitional athletes?

What has been the response of athletes and coaches towards the provision of transitional services?

- PROBE: how many athletes have made use of these services with you?

What is your opinion of the services offered by the Institute to athletes at the end of their sporting careers?

- PROBE: do you think they are comprehensive enough?

Are there any additional services that could improve the provision offered by the institute?

Are there any future plans for expansion of the services offered to retiring athletes by the Institute system?

Does the Institute system maintain contact (either formally or informally) with retired athletes?

- PROBE: can you describe the form(s) in which the contact takes?

Are similar services provided to athletes who are deselected from the institute system?

- PROBE: do they feel that these athletes require a similar amount of support as retiring athletes?

Should the same services be provided to male and female athletes?

- PROBE: are there issues that female athletes may face that are unique to them?

Is there anything else you want to say about this topic, that I haven't already asked you?

Appendix K: Interview Guide for SIS Athletes

How long were you an Institute athlete?

Did you use any Performance Lifestyle services during your time in the Institute?

- Probe: If not, were you offered these services at any stage?
- Probe: Why they did not use Performance Lifestyle services?

Can you tell me what you thought of the services offered by Performance Lifestyle?

Is there anything else that you would have found useful?

Can you tell me about your exit from the Scottish Institute of Sport?

Did you use any support from Performance Lifestyle when you retired?

- Probe: Were you offered any support at this stage?
- Probe: Why did you not use these services?

How useful was the support you were offered when you retired?

Is there anything else you would have found useful?

Is there anything else you want to tell me?

Appendix L: Interview Guide for Area Managers

Topics covered within interviews:

Some basic details: number of athletes in the Area, number of Performance Lifestyle advisers??

Their opinion of Performance Lifestyle and what it can offer their athletes?

How Performance Lifestyle fits in with the overall philosophy of the Area Institute?

Uptake of the programme by the athletes – and reasons for high/low uptake?

Coaches/other service providers level of support of the Performance Lifestyle programme?

Any issues that they see with the Performance Lifestyle as it is currently operated?

What improvements they would like to see made to the Performance Lifestyle programme (i.e. in an ideal world)?

Starting with de-selections, can you describe the process: who makes decisions, at what point does the Performance Lifestyle programme know that the athlete is potentially up for de-selection, at what point does the athlete know that they are potentially up for deselection?

What processes are followed when an athlete leaves due to choosing to retire or due to injury?

Do all athletes enter the exit pathway when they leave? If not, why not?

Do you feel the Institute system as a whole does enough for the athletes who fit into these categories?

Are there any specific issues you feel that these athletes face that require special treatment or support?

Appendix M: Qualitative Analysis Coding (Study 3)

Performance Lifestyle Advisers	Description of programme	Dominance of education support
		Employment support
		Lifestyle support
		Preparation for life after sport
		Exit process
	Issues identified	High athlete-staff ratio
		Need for increase in staff numbers
		Lack of integration in some sports
		Reactive rather than proactive
		Low buy-in to exit services
	Importance of ongoing relationships	
Athletes	Utilisation of services	Attending workshops
		Use of employment support
		Financial assistance
		Services not useful
	Views of Performance Lifestyle	Services not relevant
		Prominently about careers and education
		Lack of recognition for exiting athletes
	Use of exit services	Use of career support
		Lack of understanding of support available
	Importance of supporting athletes	Positive support for service
		Need for proactive support
		Importance of detaining support
Area Institute Managers	Strengths of the programme	Positive support
		Importance of education support
		Employment support less important
		Dealing with parents
		Preparation for life after sport
	Issues identified	High athlete-staff ratio
		High workload of advisers
		Low uptake of exit services
		Lack of integration in some sports
		Links with governing bodies

Appendix N: Interview Transcripts

KATIE (Hockey)

16th October 2007

OG: Can you start by telling me the story of your hockey career?

K: Well I was a very late developer in that I didn't play any hockey when I was at school, I played a little bit, but I moved school quite a lot when I was young and I played a bit of hockey when I was in England, and then when I came up to Scotland when I was about 15 I went to a school that played lacrosse and didn't play hockey, so I sort of played lacrosse. I was really an athlete, I did athletics when I was at school and so because of that I wasn't involved in any of the sort of Scottish school girls or the junior level of hockey at all, so I didn't come through the usual sort of course. I stopped my athletics and put on a lot of weight when I went to university, because I just was continuing to eat the same as I had when I was training every day for athletics. When I went to university I picked up the hockey again and at that point I got involved in the university team, I started playing Scottish universities stuff, and I suppose then I was kind of noticed for Scotland as well. In fact the SHU changed their nationality requirements so that I could play for Scotland because at that stage I think you had to have lived in Scotland for 10 years or be married to a Scotsman or have Scottish parents, and I didn't qualify with any of those because I had only been up for about 8 years from England. They changed it to 5 years anyway so I was eligible to play. My first cap for Scotland was at age 23 which was really quite old and as I said I had not been involved in any of the junior stuff. So I got onto the Scottish side and just, I've never been a particularly talented hockey player but I am very determined and fairly intelligent, I know where my strengths are and I could work out what I needed to do to get into the team. Once I got onto the Scottish team and I was fairly established there I thought hmm, I would quite like to play for Great Britain, so I worked on specific things that I thought would get me into the team, got into the British team, and basically played every single game for 13 years, I never missed a single game for Scotland and Great Britain. I stopped playing in '92 for Great Britain and I kind of thought at the time I didn't want to just stop completely. I was already the oldest player in the squad in '92 in Barcelona when we won the bronze medal so I knew I wasn't going to be around for another 4 years, it as a struggle to keep going for the four years to get to Barcelona, so I retired at that point from Great Britain, but I knew I was still fit enough and good enough to continue to play for Scotland and I thought it would be quite good to sort of wind down my international career rather than stopping completely. So I continued playing for Scotland until 1995 and I stopped all international hockey in 1995 and then just continued winding down, played club hockey but at sort of first division national league, and the club were Scottish champions for a number of years, so I was continuing to play at quite a high level. And then I'd never been involved in indoor hockey although I played national league stuff, and somebody said to me why did you never go forward for indoor, and I said well nobody ever asked me. So the Scottish coach said would you like to come along to the trial and I said well I might as well go along, I then got selected and, good on him because he selected someone age 42 to the national side, he took a lot of stick for it, but he said I want the best team so if you are one of the best players it doesn't matter to me how old you are. So I played in the indoor side, we did well, got promoted in Europe back up to the A division, I then played the following year and we played well enough to get to the world cup indoor. I didn't know whether I would go forward for the world cup, it was just this year that has past, I said to him I am willing to go forward but if you don't want me to because of my age then I'm happy not to, he said no go forward, I think got quite a bad injury and thought well fitness wise, it has always been my fitness that has got me through things but I was struggling to get back, but anyway I worked hard, got back, and was selected for the squad that went to the world cup indoor and actually was made captain of the side, so I then retired, I knew that that was it, so I stopped after the world cup indoor all international hockey and that has been it. So that was from 1982 to 2007, 25 years in total.

OG: Through the period where you were playing international GB and Scottish, how was the balance of hockey to the rest of your life – what else was going on for you?

K: Things changed dramatically throughout that period. To start off with playing for Scotland in '82, all the time commitment that was involved was you went to maybe 2 training sessions a year. You turned up, trained for a couple of hours, met the people you were playing with that you didn't really know very well, then you went away, you were selected, there wasn't really any squad selection, at that point they selected a starting 11, there was no rolling subs or anything like that. I mean I spent the whole of the first season just sitting on the bench, because they selected the first 11 players and they would be the players that played every game, and it didn't matter how well they were playing or whatever. For an international match there

was no going for the night before or anything, you turned up and you played, you had a big lunch with the other country, a slap up meal beforehand, and then you went out to play, it was absolutely amazing how different it was. So to start off with the time commitment was very little. I tended to train a lot, because I have got an athletics background, and because I was never a particularly skilful player or at least that wasn't really my forte, I kind of knew that I had to keep my fitness up, I was at the time quite fit and quite fast, so I used to actually train quite a bit just individually away from the squad which a lot of other people didn't do, so there was more time involvement for me than maybe some other people, but it was very easy to combine it with working full time. I would say that as time went on between 1982 and 1992 when I was at the Olympics, over that 10 years things were absolutely transformed, so that gradually the time commitment became greater, and you were looking at more volume wise of training sessions for either Scotland or Great Britain, and more structured physical training as well that you had to fit in, and it became more difficult to combine that with working full time. At the time during that period I was also married and I would say that without a shadow of a doubt, I definitely neglected my husband in that period, because there were not enough hours in the day. I would be coming into work, going out to train at lunch time on the inch, have a quick shower and come back again, and then be leaving to go to Glasgow to play in the evening. As well at the kind of time, not so much later on but during the mid-80s, there wasn't any money to fly people anywhere, so to go down to play for Great Britain, we ended up, you would be driving down on a Friday night, going straight from work, driving down, arriving at 12 o'clock at night, getting up first thing in the morning, training the whole weekend, and there were times when I wouldn't get back till sort of 2 or 3 o'clock in the morning and then be in at work again on the Monday. So that was just because there was no money so you just had to drive, there was no lottery funding at all. We ended up spending quite a bit of our time fundraising to actually go to tournaments and things. There was one tournament that we weren't going to go to because Scotland couldn't afford to send us, and we ended up having to do fundraising things, so quite a change over the period. Player funding really only came in after I had finished, I never had any funding, it was later in the '90s.

OG: Did you ever find that your hockey career an effect on your work?

K: I was quite lucky in that I am in a firm that is big enough to cope with somebody not being here, but I definitely could not have played now or even in '96 in the Olympics, I wouldn't have been able to do it and continue work because it was at a point where I had used up all the good will I could possibly have, and you end up, if you have got any conscience at all you end up when you are available working all hours to try and balance it out. Also I was the only female working here and I always want to do something better than anyone else even though I was not here as much, I would want to be working, be getting as much business in as everybody else was, doing as much work as everyone else in a smaller period of time, so it was quite difficult.

OG: How important was hockey to you?

K: I would have to say that it was more important than anything else to me, which is perhaps a sad reflection for the rest of my life. I think it had to have been for me to achieve what I managed to achieve, because it was very difficult for me to achieve that. I think there are a lot of other players who were far more talented who didn't go as far, weren't willing to put it in, but for me to get as far as I did it involved me really just putting everything into it.

OG: You mentioned that you wouldn't have been able to continue through to '96 doing what you were doing work-wise – if going on through to that tournament had been an option for you, can you theorise as to what you might have done?

K: Well you see the thing is I am quite realistic. If I had thought, if other people had put in the effort that I had put in I wouldn't have been selected, whereas now because people are given that opportunity, there is more people have the opportunity to put in the effort because of the funding, I probably wouldn't have been selected anyway. So if it had come to that, and it had become obvious that even if I was putting in as much as I could I still wouldn't have made it, I would then have taken the decision, well there is no point in me doing that, I would be better just working. But I definitely could not have continued working and committed the amount of time that is now necessary, I just wouldn't have had a job because I am effectively self employed so it would have been really difficult.

OG: How supportive were your family, your parents, of your hockey career?

K: Yes, very supportive. My husband was very supportive as well. I've never had any problems with that at all. I mean I don't think my husband would have brought that up as a problem, wouldn't have put that ultimatum to me, might have been worried about the response, perhaps knew what it might have been. My parents when I was younger, my dad used to drive me to athletics and that sort of thing, was always very

supportive, came to watch, so yes supportive. It helped for them to be supportive, but it wouldn't have stopped me had they not been, put it that way. It made things easier and made me feel less guilty, but I think knowing what was at stake, I probably would have just done it anyway.

OG: Were most of your friends involved in sport? Did you have a lot of friends outwith hockey?

K: I would say that all of my friends were involved in sport. Just time-wise, you just really didn't have the time to sort of make friends elsewhere. I mean I've not got, and even now I don't have a lot of friends who aren't involved in sport in some way, apart from those through the office. I just felt at the time that I did not have the time. My husband was involved in sport as well so even our circle of friends were involved with that.

OG: What were the high points for you in your hockey career?

K: Without a shadow of a doubt, the highpoint was winning the medal in Barcelona. I think that made whatever I'd had to put in beforehand worthwhile, I can say that absolutely. There were times where it was really difficult to go out training, I was the only person in Perth so I was always training on my own and it would have been very easy just to say, oh I can't be bothered going out, but I can honestly put my hand on my heart and say I never, ever did that, because if I started doing that it was a slippery slope. So there were times when you would be really busy at work and you would just have to go out and run around the Inch in the middle of winter when it is cold, and snowy and all the rest, and come back and think why on earth am I doing this, and just securing the bronze medal at the end of the day made it all worth while. Another highlight would be just actually going into the Olympic stadium in 1988 in the first Olympics I went to, as part of the Great Britain side, because to go to an Olympics was just like a dream and that as another highlight. The actual result of the Olympics was bad in that we ended up 4th and it was the worst possible place to be, so that was like a high and then to a low point quite shortly after with the result. But those were the two absolute highs. There have been sort of highs for Scotland as well, but in memory they are not the same level.

OG: Do you think being an Olympic medallist has had any kind of effect on your life?

K: I suppose in myself I think it had, because I think that I felt that I had achieved what I wanted to achieve, which wasn't the medal, and I suppose that I can now feel about my hockey career that I did everything that I could possibly have done and that I wanted to do, and if I hadn't got that medal I think there would always be something inside me thinking, oh I got so close, but never actually achieved it. Whereas I think if you do set yourself targets and things and really, really work for them, not just I think I'd like to get that, then you can achieve it. I suppose my me doing that myself then I believe that more and probably in my whole outlook I'm quite a positive person, I'm not somebody who sits there and just sort of thinks well that is going to happen, I would rather sort of go and do something about it, make it happen. I don't like when people are like, oh well we can't do anything about it, I am just like, of course you can, just go and do something about it. I think that probably reflects on my work as well, that I tend to be fairly proactive.

OG: What were the low points of your career?

K: The low point would be the Seoul Olympics, where we were inches away from getting into the final, in that we played the Koreans in the semi final, with all their crowd there, we had a penalty corner, and I remember it was flick from the edge of the circle, and it hit the cross bar and rebounded to one of their players, and if it had been just an inch lower it would have been a goal and we would have been one nil up, it rebounded to one of their players who hit it out of the circle, it found one of their forwards who then scored at the other end, and we got beaten by a single goal. And then having lost the semi-final we then lost the 3rd 4th playoff as well, so to come back with nothing, although you have been to an Olympics and came 4th which was actually higher than we were seeded, it was still disappointing, pretty devastating. I do remember one time, when you played for Scotland there were quite a lot of times when we just underperformed, and we had chances to get to semi-finals of European competitions and we just didn't take it. I remember one in particular when we just needed to draw with Russia to get through to the semis of the Europeans, we were 2 nil up and we managed to lose 3-2, and you just feel really down after that. I also remember really clearly going back to the hotel and being particularly pissed off, and then turning on the television and there were these awful mudslides in India or somewhere, and there were thousands of people killed, and you just think, for goodness sake, it's all relative. But at the time in my little world that was life, it was how has this happened, this was Scotland's chance to get to the top tier. And also I never playing in the Commonwealth Games for Scotland, because hockey wasn't part of the Games, so I just retired before then.

OG: You mentioned the injury you had during your indoor career – did you have many other injuries through your career?

K: I was actually really lucky in that I really suffered from very few injuries considering the amount that I played. As I said at the time there were no rolling subs or anything so you played 70 minutes every time, and I actually started every single game until I think it was the very last season when they had rolling subs and I was on and off at that point. But I played every single game before that. I broke my finger before the Seoul Olympics but it was just my little finger and I had a cast on it and could play okay. I did have a major injury scare before the '92 Olympics, it was a nasty one because it was actually deliberate. I was playing in the European Cup final for my club Glasgow Western, we had reached the final against the Dutch club champions, and they had won for a number of years. I used to run out at corners, and I had run out and blocked the shot a number of times, I kind of read what was going to happen next, knew it was going to be slipped and come in again, and to cut a long story short I went down to block the shot again on my reverse, and the girl who is one of the best players in the world and who hits the ball harder than anyone else managed to miss the ball by about that much (indicated with hands – about a foot) and hit my hand instead. And I knew at the time, said to one of the girls who played with me who was a doctor that my hand was definitely broken, and she said oh it will be fine, there was 10 minutes till the end so I played the rest of the game, and in the end I had broken it, both of the bones were fractured, and we were in the Dutch section in the Olympics and she knew that I played for Great Britain, a player of her quality wasn't going to miss by that much by accident. So it was in plaster, and I just managed to recover in time and was able to play, and we beat the Dutch and they didn't get through. That was the only major injury I have had, the others have only been superficial.

OG: Is there anything you really miss about being a hockey player?

K: I just miss being part of the team, because I think that was the reason that I chose between athletics and hockey, because I think I am just better as a team player. I think probably because I am not a match winner or somebody with great individual skill, but I will always do what is required for the team. As an athlete I was quite good, but I was never going to be Olympic standard, whereas if I'm part of a team you know you've got all the different personalities and I think I just fit into that better.

OG: Is there anything you don't miss?

K: I think if you ask quite a lot of people they will say the training and stuff, but I actually really enjoyed that, maybe because I suppose I knew I was better at it than most people. If you had to go for a run I liked being at the front, and I knew I was better than other people at that. I suppose now that I know I am not as fast as I used to be that I would hate to do that now because I know how hard it would be, but at the time, just after I retired, that wasn't a factor for me. I think now just having more time now to do other things, I am enjoying that.

OG: Can you tell me more now about your retirement from international hockey in 1992. Was that something that was planned?

K: Yes, I did have in the back of my mind that that was going to be it. I think that it wasn't a difficult decision to make in '92, it was probably more difficult in '95, retiring from Scotland. But in '92 the way that hockey works is that it is very much a 4 year cycle and GB only play at the Olympics really, and the Olympic qualifier, so it's not as though there is anything coming up the next year. So it was easy in that I was already 34, so there was no way that I was going to be playing in 4 years time. And because it was hard towards the end to get the, because of the amount of training that was required before the '92 Olympics, it was becoming increasingly difficult to do all that. I managed to do it all but there was no way that I would manage to do it for another 4 years, so I guess I knew before I even went that whatever was going to be the last game in the Olympics was going to be my last GB game. The decision in '95 was harder on the basis that I think I would still have been selected if I had continued to make myself available, so that was a more difficult decision because I was good enough to continue to play. Thinking back now I had kind of taken the decision, I had finished at a European Cup and there was probably not much coming up the next year, and I didn't know that the Commonwealth Games was going to be coming up. So it just seemed like an appropriate point in time to finish and I was 37 at the time so again I was way older than anyone else in the team. It was becoming more difficult for me to be the best at what I did, just because of my age, and because what I was good at was the physical side of things as opposed to the skill, and I had changed positions a bit so I played in midfield in '92 and I had moved back to a central defensive role where there was not as much running to do. I knew myself that it was time to probably stop, although unfortunately at the time the standard of Scottish hockey was such that I could have continued to play. And that does make it more difficult. As it was I then continued to play for the club which still involved playing in Europe, because as Scottish club champions you are still involved in European competitions, so it kind of was a gradual sort of step down. But that decision was probably the more difficult one to take because I didn't have to take it, whereas really with the GB one it was a no-brainer.

I think the decision to finish with Scotland was to do with age, I suppose I am always conscious of my age and I'm more kind of worried, not about the way I feel but more about what other people think about it. I'm more concerned, I was quite concerned because I knew from the press point of view that they always made a big thing about it. For me it is not a big thing, if you are good enough to play then it doesn't matter if you are 16 or 46, you are good enough to play, but the press always made a big thing about it, and I also thought it reflected badly on Scottish hockey, in terms of why do they not have better, younger people, but then I sort of thought well maybe it should just reflect well on me that I am able to play. I never want to put, and I didn't want to put the Scottish indoor coach in a position where he felt that it was going to be embarrassing to select me, so that I suppose does play a bit of a part. And I think also just I suppose the realisation that I have to accept that I am not as fit as I used to be, and that is going to get worse. I would rather stop when it is on my terms than on somebody else's. Going out when I want to.

OG: How did you feel when you played your last game for Scotland in that European tournament in '95?

K: I didn't sort of feel very much really because I was kind of, I still was sort of involved in Scottish hockey in that I was acting manager for a while. I think that kind of made it a wee bit more difficult because you were still there, seeing other people playing and thinking, I could still do that for goodness sake. I enjoyed the extra time that it gave me, but I did certainly miss the camaraderie and being part of the team, being part of the in jokes and knowing what was going on. I still kind of kept in contact with that because my partner was still playing for Scotland, but it was kind of like a vicarious enjoyment of what was going on, feeling slightly out of it. I felt similarly when I then went from the, and I can probably remember it more clearly because it was more recent, going from the club 1st team to playing and sort of coaching and helping the second and thirds, because you are still round about, still seeing them all, and you've been part of that, have gone from being one of the most important players there to not being involved at all, and it's very much that you feel on the outside, and I definitely feel that. I think that I probably did feel that more at the time but I think your feelings have kind of dulled with the time. But from having been so involved with it and it being your whole life to then being on the outside and looking in, it is completely different. I don't think I would have coped very well if I had just cut off and not gradually reduced my involvement, particularly if I had just stopped after the '92 Olympics, I think I would have just found it much more difficult to cope with it. I suppose it was part of my coping strategy, I think I thought I would cope better to just wind down gradually rather than just completely stopping. I really think it probably helped me to do it that way. I also was keen to keep myself fit, I wouldn't just suddenly stop because I am really quite keen on keeping fit, so keeping involved in the hockey was a way of doing that as well.

OG: How did your friends and family react to you deciding to retire?

K: Well from family, well I had been married and I got divorced in '92 after the Barcelona Olympics, realised the error of my ways, and have now been living with the same person for the last 15 years, so it is difficult to say because my husband who had been with me all that time, I wasn't with him when I stopped in '95. And when I did stop then the person that I was living with, am still living with, was still playing hockey, so she was obviously very supportive but we were still playing top quality hockey at the club, so it was just a small transition. It wasn't a big change, all it was really was not going to Scottish training weekends. I was still going out and training physically just the same as I had been before, I just wasn't involved in playing international hockey.

OG: Moving from 1st team to 2nd team club hockey, has that come at about the same time as retiring from international indoor?

K: Yes. The feelings retiring the second time were the same really, very similar. I was speaking to our first team goalkeeper, who has just stopped playing for the first team, someone new has come in. We were both playing for the seconds, and they were playing before the firsts, and so she was watching and walking off the pitch, and I just said to her it gets easier, and she just sort of looked at me and I knew that she was kind of thinking, oh you know that was me just last season. I think it is exactly the same feeling, you still have the thoughts that you would like to be doing it, you know you can't, and you know you've done what you can, but you still miss it. And I think there is no getting round that, if it has been such a large part of your life it is just something that you have to accept. You know, life goes on, but it is a part of you, it has always been an important part, and it is very difficult to let it go.

OG: So when you did stop, did you find your attention started to move towards other aspects of your life?

K: I would say that whatever I do, I like to do it as well as I possibly can, so I suppose if I have got more time for my work then I'll just try and do that a bit better than before, still juggling so many balls, but

just trying to do work better, I've started learning a language, gone to a night class, and when I go to circuit training I'm still trying to do more press ups than anybody else. You are kind of re-directing your competitive tendencies in other directions. I find it difficult just to go and play something, or do something just for the sake of doing it, I will always have the competitive edge.

OG: Did you speak to anyone when you decided to retire, talk it through with anyone?

K: No. Certainly in 1995 there was no support at all, nothing was offered at all, and I think that this time, although it was just last year, because I had just sort of come back and played for a few years, I don't know if there is anything for anybody else but I certainly wasn't given any sort of assistance at all. I didn't speak to my team mates or anyone either, I am not that sort of person really. I don't think it would have helped, I mean maybe I am completely wrong, but I didn't feel it was a major problem. I think it was probably more of a problem for me from the club point of view, because there was a girl who came to the club, a young girl, who played in my position, and what happened was that the coach decided that she was going to play her instead of me. I knew and other people knew that I was much better than her at that point, so I played in the second team, and I didn't want to play in the second team because I wanted to still be playing in the first team. And that was more difficult because there was nothing I could do about it, I wasn't going to make a fuss about it, I mean people were aware that I wasn't happy, and I just thought that was unfair because I knew I was good enough to still be playing, but she wanted this girl to play. And I had said well I think it is better if you played me and played her as well, and then I could help her. But she was kind of put in the position where she wasn't good enough to be playing there and she was exposed, and it wasn't the best thing for the club, it wasn't a good situation. That was just for a season and then after that she improved, and then I was quite happy playing where I was playing, it was just that the decision, probably because it wasn't in my control, that was the only time probably in my hockey retiral plan that things didn't go as I would have wanted them to. So ironically it was at the lowest level, at club level, that caused the most problem. I think it is much easier to accept when it is in your control and when you are the one that has planned it and thought right that it what I am planning to do.

OG: Do you think that retirement support for hockey players is important?

K: I think the whole question of support for athletes has to be looked at really closely, because I think there is just a fine line between spoon feeding people and giving them too much support so that they don't actually make decisions for themselves or them don't think for themselves. I see some of the players now and they complain about the smallest thing, like I had to pay to get sandwiches or whatever, and if it is made too easy, if they are mollycoddled too much, I just think that it doesn't develop the right attitude. It's almost that I had to succeed even though it was so difficult, but now it is trying to get the balance between giving the people the support they need to help them achieve, and giving them too much so that they take it for granted and they don't then work hard, and don't achieve what they could possibly achieve. The problem with hockey as well is that they are treated as individuals, given a lot of individual training, but it is a team game and I think in a way that what we had as a team, because we didn't train so much together, when we did everybody came together as a team and played like a team, whereas now it is almost because there is so much individual training that people are just out for themselves and they don't really mould together as part of a team, they don't play as well as a team as they should with the skills they have got. But certainly from the support point of view, I don't think personally that I would have benefited from it, but maybe some people would have done or at least be given the opportunity. But certainly in '95 there was no funding at all even for playing, so there certainly wasn't any funding for afterwards.

OG: What level of involvement do you have with hockey now?

K: Still playing club level, 2nd team in the reserve league, just in May of this year I was in the club squad that went to the European Cup, so I am still on the fringes of that and involved in the club on the committee, club treasurer, so very much sort of involved in the organisation, making sure all the teams are out, that kind of thing. And then I am involved in the Institute as well, on the board, I have been on that since it started 9 years ago, so at the time it was sort of the athletes perspective, so still keeping an involvement in that as well. Even if I wanted to I wouldn't just stop playing after I stopped playing for the 1sts, because I just think it is not right that the club have supported you and you have taken from the club, but I can tell you there are a lot of people who do that, they will have been involved in the Scottish side, and then they will just stop, or they will not take on any role, any club position or anything like that. I just think if you have got the benefits from it, played Europe, and it's promoted you to Scottish level, that you have some kind of moral obligation to put something back in again.

OG: Do you think this is an aspect where the clubs and Scottish Hockey could become more actively involved, in maintaining the contacts with former players?

K: To be fair to Scottish Hockey, I was asked to go onto some committee thing, and I have been asked to go on quite a lot of things and I only like to go on them if I think I can give them enough time and feel like I can make a difference. At club level I think I am a bit of a control freak, I like to feel like what I am going to do is going to make a difference, I don't like being part of a big talking shop where nothing is going to happen. So I didn't get involved in the Scottish Hockey thing but I am involved at club level. I think there is a lot of good thinking going on, but there is not much action. I was asked by somebody would you be prepared to speak to young athletes who are going to be going into the GB side or whatever, and I said yes of course, but it never actually happened. It is the same with all these kind of organisations, so many people thinking lots of good ideas, but it's trying to get them all co-ordinated and actually for things to be put in place. There is a lot of wasted experience. It is difficult to know, if you kind of said to me oh well what can I say to somebody that would make a difference, I don't really know, but just like talking to them about the things that go on probably would, but certainly I have never actually been contacted about that and I don't think anyone else has been either. There are a few other things, like at the moment I have problems with both of my hips that need surgery, but I don't have private medical care and so I am waiting, but it a huge waiting list. Now if this had been when I was still involved with hockey now, then through the Institute I would get medical support and it would be dealt with immediately. And you sort of think, well I picked this injury up because of playing for so many years, but because I am not playing it is not the sports problem anymore. So that is just sort of an example, you think, if you were involved in a professional sport you would have been paid and you would have got money as well as experiences out of the sport, and you would then feel that you could pick that up or pay for that yourself or whatever, I guess it is just a problem in terms of being involved with amateur sport. And now in a sport like hockey, with the amount of commitment that they are looking at from the players is reaching the point where you can't do that and keep a full time job going, therefore you are going to make some sacrifices. I feel really lucky that I played when I did so that I had the length of career that I did, because nowadays, not only with the volume of matches that are played, but also the intensity of the training and everything, the careers are going to be much, much shorter. You are maybe looking at people putting things off for 5 years, but even then that is quite a lot to ask for some people, coming back in at a level far below where they would have been otherwise and without any financial recompense for what they are doing, and you are ending up worse off financially. You then maybe get people questioning is it worth putting that much in, and then Scotland has got such a limited pool of players anyway, we can't afford it to be even smaller.

OG: Is there anything else you want to tell me about your hockey career or about retirement?

K: I can honestly say that when I played I gave everything I could give, so there's nothing I could have done personally that would have made me a better hockey player, and I think I was lucky to have achieved what I achieved with what I started out with, my natural talent. So I don't think I could have asked for anything more. And that is what I say to, some of the girls are going down to GB sessions last weekend, and I was texting one of the girls saying look, whatever you have to do, don't have any regrets, just go and do it. She has actually gone down to England to stay, to train down there to give her a better chance, and I would definitely do that if I was in her position, because I would hate to look back and think I wonder if I had done that whether it would have made a difference. So I can say that there is never a time that I can say if only I had done this or that I might have got there, there is nothing like that. I think with retirement it's very much what suits you. So I think that would be one of the difficult things if you were trying to set out what people should do, because although sports people have some traits that are the same, I can think of all the individual personalities within the team, and although some of them are the same a lot of them are really quite different people and would deal with things completely differently. Some people find it, because I know with my partner she stopped playing internationally and probably dealt with it much more easily than me because she did not actually enjoy the training, she liked the playing but not the training, so she I think felt much more relief. People are really completely different. I do think that it does get easier as time goes on, and the feeling of you being in the team recedes, and the fact that you are not as fit as you used to be. The more it becomes more apparent that you are no longer able to play at that level, the easier it becomes. I found it certainly easier to kind of wind down rather than leave it completely and a compete vacuum, but I think other people might find it much easier to just get away from it altogether and just go and do something completely different and not to have the continued reminders of it. You need to do what is right for you. And I think you probably know what is right for you before you retire, because I think it depends on the type of person you are. So I suppose what you need to do is think about it before the time comes and decide yourself what is going to be the best for you. And maybe just to speak to somebody about it just to make you aware, just talking through it, can help make it clearer. It is interesting, I think it is a very interesting area to look at, because I think in and out of sport people have so little time, they concentrate on what is right for them at that time, getting the result for the team or whatever, and there is no thought given to what happens when you retire. I think the players themselves are so caught up in the here and now, and there isn't the time to plan for the future. I think it is quite interesting to see how people do cope with it. I could see how some people could

be very badly affected by it. I think it doesn't depend on the sport or necessarily what level they've been at or the length of time, it is the type of personality they are and what kind of tendencies they have, and I am sure there can be serious problems for some people.

END

TESS (Trampolining)

27th October 2007

OG: Can you start me off by telling me the story of your trampolining career?

T: I started by going to, you know in the summer they have activities, like a play scheme, so you go along, they have different games, you've got trampolining, gymnastics, basketball, football, and all that kind of thing, but I'd went to gymnastics from when I was about 3, just basic gymnastics, so I could already do the basics on the trampoline, and then when I went in and Olivia seen me, because I could do that and I was like, teach me something new, teach me something new, by the end of the first week I was already doing somersaults and stuff, and she took me into the club straight away. And then that was me, I was 5, and I was there right through till when I was 17 and a half to 18, which was probably when I eventually decided to stop. I started with the younger group, then I joined the older ones, the ones who had been doing it a while, and then I stayed, competed in under 11s, and from there I just got better and better, I was Scottish champion in my age group all the way right through till when I was 14, and then I was coming in the top three in like the ladies and stuff in Scotland. I was always like in the top 3 in Britain, in the British Championships, and I won 4 World Championship medals for Scotland as well. I competed for Scotland on occasions both for seniors and for juniors.

OG: You said that you were doing gymnastics before you started trampolining. Was that recreational?

T: Yes, that was something that I did recreationally, and then somebody there wanted me to go into sports acro, and I loved it, my coach was fantastic, but they told me I couldn't compete till I was 8, in gymnastics it is very strict like that, and trampolining is kind of coming in line with that now, I mean people can compete in Scottish competitions but even if they qualify they can't go to the finals unless they are age 8 or above, so with our little ones even if they qualify they can't compete. They are looking now at long term player development, so saying you can't start them too early or you will burn them out by a certain age and all that, so that is why they have introduced that. I do agree with it to a certain extent, but you do get some who you maybe think could do. We have got a girl called Pamela, one of the most talented there has ever been in Britain for a long, long time, and she had already been competing a routine that has got 7 or 8 double somersaults in it and she is 12 next week, which is fantastic. So on the one hand they are saying don't want her pushed, but on the other hand when she goes and wins World Championships they'll be delighted. So I kind of went to do sports acro and I loved it, and then I started trampolining and then I started winning and stuff, and I thought I don't want to do the acro anymore. Then they came and asked me when I was 8, they came and said can we have her back, and John was like, it's up to Tess and her mum, and my mum was like, no, and I said no way, I don't want to go back, I was already doing twisting somersaults and winning competitions and stuff. I think that is probably one of the reasons why I was so successful, was because I won so much from a very young age, which kind of spurred me on for the next one, and then next one, and I just kept getting better and better and better.

OG: What else was going on in your life alongside trampolining?

T: I was at school all the way through, so really just school. I had a lot of pressure, a lot of bullying, because I was never at school, I was away so much. It is different now because it is now Scottish Gymnastics, before it was Scottish Trampolining Association, so it was completely different. When they were independent they used to send a team to all the international, Europeans, European youths, World championships, so I was away practically every single month for a long weekend or more. I was never at school, which the school weren't very pleased about, but they couldn't really say anything because I was competing for my country so they couldn't really say anything about it. So that really put quite a lot of pressure on, going back into school on a Monday or a Tuesday or whenever, and they were all talking about what was going on at the weekend and would be like, oh you wouldn't know what we are talking about because you weren't here. Even in primary school I had to choose, because of competitions. Like when the school went to Kaimes, the adventure place, for the weekend and I chose not to go, I had a competition the same weekend and I chose to go to that. So I mean I feel like I totally missed out on a lot of things, but at the

same time I missed out on all the bad stuff as well, I missed out on all the hanging out on the streets and missed out on all the drinking and getting in trouble with the police, so I think I missed out on both sides.

OG: You say the school weren't very pleased with how much time you missed. Did they help you catch up, in terms of work missed and stuff like that?

T: Yes, whenever I was away, especially for World Championships when I was away for 10 days or whatever, they would give me like extra homework and stuff like that, the stuff that I was gonna miss. I wouldn't say they were overly supportive, because I think they were a school, see in my PE class at school it was so competitive because we had people who did athletics for Scotland, who did athletics, who did judo, who did football, who did volleyball, we had a hugely talented group, and it was really, really great, and considering we were all so sporty, we did loads for the sports in the school, I wouldn't say they were massively supportive. Nothing compared to what they are like now. Considering that I was in the paper every single weekend, Tess Milligan pupil of Hunter High School, every single week, you'd have thought that they'd have bought into that a bit but they didn't really bother.

OG: How much training would you say you were doing on a weekly basis, on average?

T: To be honest, we didn't actually train that much and we still don't even now, compared to, clubs down south are training sometimes like 20 or 30 hours per week, and even now our kids only train on a Monday from 5-8 and on a Thursday from 5-8. The only ones now that are training more is Cara because she is on the World Class training programme, so it is part of her conditions of being on the programme that she has to train, I think it is, I'm not sure exactly but I think it is something like 20 hours trampolining and 10 hours in the gym. So she does her Monday, Thursday, and then she has got, she was doing 6 highers at school, but she had to drop to do 3 or 4, 3 I think, and the time that she is meant to be in those other subjects at school she comes away down and trains with Olivia, on her own, just her and Olivia, she gets a Saturday off but that is it. Plus she is at the gym and studying for her highers, and whatever, it is a lot of pressure, she just turned 17 last week. She wants to be a professional trampolinist but she has got so much more options. I always say to her, if I had had half the opportunities and half the support and help that you have got Cara, I would still be trampolining now. I say don't throw it away just for the sake of going to the pub or that with your pals, you will be able to do that in a couple of years, trust me it is not worth it sort of thing. Our ideal thing would be to have our own facility, run it in conjunction with the council, run it as a business. The club could be so huge, and then the elite kids could get in and train whenever they wanted. The elite kids could also get put through their coaching certificates, and then they wouldn't need to work because they could get paid for their coaching, keep them going through until when they stop in the sport anyway, give them something other than just their own bouncing. It is something that is possible, but probably maybe in about five years time, something like that. I think it is actually part of the performance plan for Scottish Gymnastics, they do need a purpose built trampolining centre and if it is going to be getting built then it will get built for us because we are the most successful club in the country. The coaching structure is one of the reasons why I think the club has been so successful, because John Ridge is just, like, amazing, he was my coach, he started the club 38 years ago from nothing, he was the first manager of the John Wright Sports Centre and he has just built the club up from nothing, he is just a fantastic coach. And Olivia, who is now head coach, she was one of the parents of one of the kids that John took, got involved that way, and she is now a British coach and her kids are phenomenal. John and Olivia have been my mentors so I learned, everything I have learned has been through training with John and then with Olivia being my mentor, I've learned everything from them. All of our kids want to do coaching courses so they learn from their coaches, there is like a development structure in place. We always give them that option, even if they decide they want to leave, we say well if you want to come back, or even if you like want to have a rest for a while and then come back, if not come and help with the little ones, or come in and help me, give them the choice that way so they are not hanging out on the streets or going and getting themselves into trouble.

OG: How supportive were your parents of your trampolining career?

T: Extremely. My mum was basically well a single parent because my dad worked away from when I was like 8, so John was like my father figure if you like, even through he and my mum only split up when I was 12, even though he would argue that he did support me but he didn't. I mean considering my mum was a single parent, not working, but she still managed to make sure that I went everywhere and I never missed out on any competition and I never missed out on any trip, even when I went to the World Championships in Australia and she had to pay it, about 4 grand all herself for me and Olivia to go because of course you need a coach, so she paid because they said we're not sending a team but we'd still like you to go if you want to go, but you have to pay for it. So my mum managed to, so she was extremely supportive of my trampolining.

OG: In terms of the financial side, were you pretty much self-funded then?

T: Well in the club at the moment we've got, the kids pay £45 a month, but for that they get their hall hire, their coaching time, their competition entries, their tracksuits, their club leotards, travel to events and competitions, and all they have to pay is their accommodation, which is fantastic. But that is the case now because we've got such a good committee of parents who have all got jobs to do, one does travel, one does competitions, one is secretary, and they all do everything so that all we have to do is coach. So they also fund-raise, they are away today doing bag packing at Somerfield. Before when I was younger we did have, I don't really remember much of it because I wasn't really involved it was my mum, but towards the last probably 4 or 5 years when I was going away all the time, it was mostly my mum that had to pay towards everything because there wasn't any money there because people were like, I was sort of the only older one left, and they were going why are we doing all of this for one person to o away. But then when Cara came and Becky came, their parents started getting more involved, when they were little and I was still at the club, guess they could see the benefits they might get in the future. It is really hard though, getting the parents of the tiny little ones that are 5 to say in a few years they could be at level 1 and doing all that, they can't see the bigger picture. And when they do get to the higher levels and realise it I feel like giving them a shake and saying see we told you this a year or two ago.

OG: So did you get any financial assistance from anywhere else, maybe from the Scottish Trampoline Association?

T: Not that I remember, I don't think I did actually. Probably the most money that we would get, any constant support, is like the South Lanarkshire Sports Council, who usually give the kids like a couple of hundred pounds every year for like British Championships and stuff like that, for all the ones that are going. But I used to get lottery funding as well, I think it was only about £3000 a year though which wasn't a lot. And see the thing was, you had to write down everything, pay the money, put everything down, and then get the money back, and I mean like every single mile of petrol, every single pair of knickers or sports socks or anything that you bought, it all had to be written down. It took days and days and days to sit and go through all these forms, and eventually I think it was more hassle than it was worth, and they were cutting it back and stuff.

OG: What would you say your biggest achievements were?

T: Definitely the four World Championships, definitely, that has obviously been the best thing that I have done, those World Championships. I wouldn't really say anything else apart from that.

OG: When you started trampolining, did you have aspirations for what you wanted to achieve?

T: No I think it just developed really, really quickly. You get a certain type of person, a certain type of kid, and you know they're going to be successful and you know they are going to be great, not just from the way they bounce, from their attitude and they have got that extra something, something you can't teach. But I don't ever remember being like, I want to get up to that level or anything. Well, I think I done my first interview with Scotland Today and I was like 10, because I was the youngest ever member to get into the Scotland squad, you were meant to be 12 and I was 10, so we did an interview with Scotland Today and I remember them saying on that to me, are you going to be World Champion one day, and I was like, yes, I definitely am. At the time it didn't really mean anything to be, I don't remember it doing anyway, but I honestly must have thought in my head then, yeah. But you need that self-belief. We have kind of got it drilled into people in the club from a young age. People laugh about it, they say you pure turn them into something as soon as they start at the club, you drill it into them that they will win or whatever. That is something that Olivia does fantastically. She was the one that took me to World Championships although John was my coach as he was away with work at the Chelsea Flower show, so Olivia was coaching me up till the World Championships. People used to say that I was such a bitch when I was beside a trampoline, and Olivia would be like, but look how good a trampolinist it makes her. One of my friends told me that beside a trampoline a was a horrible person, but I used to win, but then away from the trampoline I could be the pure nicest person. It is just something that Olivia, I don't know how she does it, but she does it with Pamela and Cara and Kirsten, she did it with myself, she makes them believe that they are the best and nobody else is better than them, and that they are going to win, she just makes them believe that, but not is such a way that it is arrogant, it is just something that she does. She just makes you think that you are the best, do you know I mean. I guess it takes an awful lot of experience to know how to do that, but I think it works.

OG: Was there anything that you didn't achieve that you would have liked to, anything you look back and regret not managing to do?

T: I wish that I had won the Worlds, because I was so close so many times. Like in Canada I couldn't have been more prepared. My first Worlds were in Portugal when I was 10, and I came third, but there were no expectations because I'd been, we just went and said we would see how it goes and I ended up third which was great, so I knew what was happening for 2 years later at the next one. I did the same routine, but instead of getting 7s for it I got 9s for it, high 8s and two 9s, and I was first going into the final, and then I lost by point 1 to an English lassie that I had competed against all year, there was three of us that were always competing against each other, and I lost by point 1. So I came third, then I came second, then the third time was in Australia and I came third again, which was good actually because it was a really, really tough competition. And then in South Africa I came third again. So that was one thing, I always wanted to win it. I am left thinking about little stupid things, especially that one where I was so close. And I never ever won the British Championships either and I would have loved to have won those, and I would obviously loved to have won the World Age Groups once after being so close so many times. And I don't actually know anybody that had went to 4 World Championships and came back with an individual medal every single time. And it was over 8 years, so over 8 years I kept up that level, so I don't know anybody who has done that. And the British, I would have loved to have won that. At the World Championships I was so confident, I would walk in and be like nobody is going to beat me, I am so ready for this and I am going to win, but I would go to the British Championships and I would just fall apart. Every single year I would get like lost move syndrome, every single year, like 6 weeks before the British and it would always be something different every year and I would have to start from scratch with that one, and it just totally freaked me out for some reason. I don't know why, just something about that competition. Every year I would know it was coming, do you know what I mean, it was the same every year, I still find it hard now as a coach when I go with my kids to the British Championships every year, I get the same emotions when I feel it getting closer, I feel like the same thing thinking something is going to happen, but it doesn't now you know. I try to have a totally different attitude towards it for my kids, because I wouldn't like anybody to go through what I did every year because I hated it. I think I thought in that back of my mind I am never going to win British Championships because of the judges, and you know if you bounce for certain clubs you have an advantage, so I felt myself that I was never going to win, that there were other barriers, whereas when I went to the Worlds it was a blank canvas, on the world stage, international judges, and it was fair, and that was why it was as close as it was. Maybe it was just me being cynical, or my outlook on the British, but something certainly made me feel that way. It is something I would never tell my kids, they have changed all the judging structure now, and I always tell my kids it is nothing to do with the judges because even if they are crap judges, you are all still in the same group, they are crap to everybody, do you know what I mean. They just have to do your best, and if they think it is a bad bunch then you just have to stand out as being the best in a bad bunch. So I try not to let them, try not to say it is the judges fault of whatever.

OG: How important would you say trampolining was to you?

T: Everything. I mean I never missed training at all, I always wanted to go to training constantly, I loved going away to competitions. It was great, I mean by the time I was 16 I had been away to competitions all over the world. I had friends from everywhere. At the time I used to think my friends gave me such a hard time, but now when I look back I think do you know what, I have got so much. It really was everything to me.

OG: Did trampolining have an effect on other aspects of your life, like social life?

T: Oh definitely, I mean at that age it came hand in hand, because when you were at school that was where your friends were, it is not like now, when you have friends at work and friends outside of work, it's not like that when you're at school, you have got your group of friends so if you are not at school you are not socialising. It kind of goes round and round in a circle. It definitely does affect everything that you do.

OG: And did you tend to find that you had friends in trampolining instead?

T: Yeah. I was quite lucky, quite fortunate in the way that I kind of kept friends from both, so when I did get the odd weekend off or I did want to go down the centre with my friends from school then I could still do that, I didn't kind of isolate myself just to trampolining, because obviously you have to go to school, you have to have other friends. But that kind of gets a bit difficult though, especially if you are younger, you do something for your birthday and you have got your trampolining friends and your other friends, nobody knows each other, I mean it is obviously different as you get older when you go out and you just say, this is such and such from work, but when you are young and you have got these groups of friends, it is hard to be in the middle. I think it kind of depends on what kind of person you are, I mean even from when I was 5 years old and I first went to the club, Olivia will still say, I remember that first day that I met you, and I couldn't get you to shut up, and I have always been like that, just pure talk to anybody, pure outspoken and outgoing, so it was never really a problem. And it has never been a problem for me to tell people what I think

if they are giving me a problem, I was happy to say what is with you giving me a hard time, it is not my fault if I am away all the time because I am competing for my country kind of thing. But it can still be hard.

OG: Is there anything you miss about being a trampolinist?

T: I miss the competing, that was my favourite bit, I hated training, not hated training, I hated having to work. I was fortunate enough that I didn't have to work too hard to be that good, and I kind of think to myself now, oh if I had maybe worked a wee bit harder then I could have been phenomenal, do you know what I mean. I miss the competing though because that was my favourite bit, because I used to win all the time, it used to make me feel great, I miss that. I miss having that closeness as well with John and stuff like that. I mean I am still close to them now but it is different, a different relationship, but I have that now with my kids that I coach, you know what I mean. But obviously John is still a huge part of my life, still has a huge influence, I would go as far as to say, I just got engaged in September and I said when I get married I want to get John to give me away rather than my dad, because he has been the one that has been there for me, we are very, very close. Everyone would say that was because I was his favourite, but it is hard not to have favourites, everybody that knows John would say that though.

OG: Is there anything that you don't miss?

T: Training probably. Yeah I don't miss that. I miss going away for the competitions and making all the friends, you know it is just invaluable experiences that you just can't teach somebody you know. I feel like nowadays the kids are so like pampered, their parents wrap them up in cotton wool, so scared to let them go away and do all this kind of stuff, so that when they get picked to go away for international competitions they want to go with them. Whereas my mum was like, when I went away for my first international she was like, see ya. And I loved it, I was always the little one going out with the team, I was like 11, 12, and they were like 16, 17. I can understand why it hard for them to let them go, especially when it is going away to a different country, but they are going away with people who are trained and stuff, but some of the kids I think are definitely wrapped up in cotton wool. That's why I felt when I was younger that I was street-wise, I could handle myself, do you know what I mean. I don't really miss the training, but that is probably about this. I mean I did love my training when things were going well, but see when I had to work for World Championships or whatever, you know, when you are doing the same routine over and over and over for like 3 months, probably like 3 or 4 months prep coming up to the event it does get quite boring or whatever. I know I moaned about it but I did still get some play sessions as well, and at the end of the day it had to be done.

OG: Can you tell me about your retirement – the period leading up to it, what made you decide to stop?

T: I think I was kind of stupid enough to let, eventually let all the pressure get to me of my friends going out. By this point I was like 17 and it wasn't a case of going and hanging out on the streets, all my friends were going to the pub, going to the dances, getting boyfriends and just having a normal life, and I just really felt like I was missing out on something. And I think slowly but surely, well I started smoking and do you know that way slowly but surely it just started to fall apart bit by bit by bit. And in the end I came in to tell John that I was leaving, I had kind of decided the week before, I was breaking my heart and was speaking to my mum, and she was like, why are you getting yourself so upset about it, this is what you want to do. But I don't think I really did know to be honest that it was what I wanted to do, I just kind of thought, stupid decision at the time, that this was the right thing I was 17 and I was struggling and I was like I don't want to do it anymore, I have had enough. And then when I came in to tell John and I was pure greeting my heart, and he was just like, I have known for a while. So it was obvious, what I was doing, and he knows me so well, he knows me better than anybody, since I was 5 years old. So he was like, I have known for a while sort of thing Tess, but John is not the type of person who if I said I was leaving would come up to the house and say, come on just come back, because he is a really big believer that it is your decision, I'm not going to force you to stay, I am not going to coach someone who doesn't want to be coached, no matter how connected you are to them. I don't really remember that very much about it, but I do remember when I went in to tell him, and I remember being upset about it. And now when I think about it, I obviously wasn't ready to leave, but at the time I was stubborn and wanted my own life and my own independence and to do my own thing, and trampolining I felt just got in the way of that, it had taken over my life for long enough.

OG: So when you went in to tell them you were finishing, did you just stop training after that?

T: I stopped, just stopped. Drew a line under it and I didn't go into the sports centre for over a year. Didn't come into training, didn't come into the sports centre at all, whereas before that I was here practically every day.

OG: And why do you think that was?

T: I think I just kind of, I was trying to keep myself away from it, was doing other things, it just went round in a circle you know. I don't think I intentionally realised what I was doing, but I think subconsciously I was keeping myself away in case I was persuaded to come back, and now I think to myself, I wish I had come in a wee bit earlier and then maybe I would have come back, do you know what I mean, So I stayed away for a year, did my own thing, got a boyfriend, went to the dancing, went to the pub, just normal 17, 18 year old things, what you do. And as well I started working. I got a full time, I actually left school and I got a full time job and I didn't have time to go in. I was working 9-5 in Glasgow, and because I stay in East Kilbride by the time I got home it would be half 6, I'd come home, get my dinner, and the last thing I wanted to do was go to training. And I was like, I'm so glad I don't have to go to training and all that, but I don't think I really was to be honest. So that was just kind of, that was really it then, I started working full time and then it just kind of escalated from there.

OG: And did you miss trampolining?

T: I think I did. I remember at first I did miss it, I think I kind of felt that I had been, I had took that step, I had been and told John that I wasn't coming back and even though I missed it I kind of, it was a really confusing time. It went from being my whole life to nothing. Obviously at the time I was going through puberty and everything and I thought, I had my exams, my highers and whatever, and I think at the time I was just totally confused. So I think yeah I did miss it but at the same time I was kind of glad that I wasn't there, enjoying new freedom that I had.

OG: And then what led to you getting back involved in the sport?

T: I came back in one night, I think it was about October, I think I stopped in the October or November and then when I came back in it was around about the same time of year and I just decided to come in and say hello to everybody. I actually lost an awful lot of weight when I stopped training, my training weight was like 10'4", always 10'4" from when I was like 14 that was my training weight, and I was like a size 10 or whatever, but then when I stopped training, which is really unusual, when I stopped training I went down to like under 8 stone, within probably about 6 months, and I was down to like a size 6. I think even though I wasn't doing any exercise, I wasn't eating rubbish, like I was still eating healthy, but I was on the go constantly because I was working full time and as well because I was out, I was out pure every Thursday, Friday, Saturday, Sunday every week. And then when I came back in, I just came back in to say hello, and then I kind of just stayed. That was like 5 or 6 years ago. I have just been there ever since, I just kind of came back in to say hello and then John had said oh well, why don't you come back in and help. So I came back in and helped John on his trampoline, and at the time it was two other coaches that were in, and I just came in to help every now and again. And then from there they were like, why don't you do your coaching course. And then one of the girls that I used to trampoline with came back in as well and we did our courses all the way through at the same time. Eventually when one of the other coaches left, John had offered me her trampoline and I said no because I said I don't have the time, and it is a huge commitment, and I was like that would be me for the next 40 years or something, so I said I don't have the time, I was still working in Glasgow and not getting to the sports centre till 6, and I said that's not fair on the kids, so I said no and Karen took the trampoline. I just stayed with John and I was quite happy with that arrangement, just helping out and everything, and still learning from him, and then Karen just stopped coming in and so I ended up taking her trampoline with her kids on it which was a nightmare, I had to take them back to the beginning, it was just a disaster. It was a great thing though, there were three kids, I had them for two months and then they had their competition, Karen had had them for a year and they'd been coming 5th or 6th or whatever, and then I took them for 2 months and they all came first. I was like pure in tears and everything that day and that was it, and from then on I was like this is what I want to do. It is so much more rewarding when they win than when it is yourself, so much more rewarding when you put all that time and effort into someone and they win competitions. You see how happy they are and think, I did that, I know what a special feeling that is and I'm so glad I could help them feel that.

OG: Do you think your own background and what you achieved helped you in terms of being a role model for the kids, things like that?

T: Yeah and no, John used to do it all the time, with the kids, used to say, like if they wouldn't do something he would say I wouldn't have ad to ask Tess twice, she would have just done it, things like that, but he did the same with me because obviously there was somebody before me and somebody before her. He can still get o me by talking about Jackie Simpson, who was the one who was great in her time before me, she could walk on water as far as I was concerned, from what John would say. But I can still do everything that I could do, obviously with a bit more difficulty, I can't do routines and stuff but I can do the individual

moves, so I will still play like tag-on with the kids and they think it's great because they will put like double full double full double full double full so that I am pure dizzy kind of thing. I've not played in a while but up till last year I used to play all the time and they were always like determined to beat me. And they ask me, well Pamela, this is her first World Championships and she is like 11, so she was like what age were you when you went to your first Worlds, and I was like 10, and you know she was asking me loads of questions, so it's things like that. They will ask me, see if I am teaching a new move like a double somersault, and I can say look I know it feels like this, and they know that I actually do know what it feels like, it feels horrible when you do it for the first time and all that kind of stuff, so that's kind of good. As well because I'm younger, John is 66 in February and Olivia was just 57 last week, so I can talk to them about other things, and at the same time now they know that I smoke and they know that I go out at the weekends, not so much now, since I met Chris I've settled down a wee bit, I'm not pure out every weekend, but I am strict with them, and I say yeah I know this is what I do but I'm an adult and I have made my own decisions, but if I catch you doing it then I will put my foot up your arse, that kind of thing, like do as I say, not as I do. So I wouldn't say so much a role model, yeah maybe from when I was trampolining, but not so much now. But they know now that I don't want to be followed like a role model, like with the smoking and the drinking, I say that to them all the time, it is a disgusting habit and I don't expect you to do it, which is really, really difficult because obviously they see me as what I was before. I would say that yeah I was kind of a role model to them then but not so much now, I would say now, there is always somebody else, like there is Cara, who for the past few years is the best. The younger ones don't really know about me, weren't around when I was at the top, for the last 3 or 4 years it has been Cara that they have been looking up to.

OG: Was your move to work in Scottish Gymnastics at all linked to the fact that you had got back involved with the sport?

T: Yeah, I mean I have been back now, well I think I came back and started coaching when I was about 18 and a half, 19, I will be 24 in January, so it is about 5 years. My first full time job was in a stock brokers in Glasgow, it just so happened, when I left school I didn't know what I wanted to do, I went to college to do more highers, but I did an HNC in sports development and coaching, and then I thought I don't really want to do this, so I went to the careers advisers and then there was this position which was administration in a stock brokers, and I ended up being there for 5 years, I loved it, I loved my job. But I wasn't like progressing or anything. I was looking for another job anyway and it just so happened that the job that I seen was at Scottish Gymnastics, this was on the Thursday, the closing date was Friday, so I emailed my CV and covering letter in, the job was to do with gymnastics and trampolining, so it merged my own interest there with my office background. So I think it is linked in that way, although it wasn't to do with coming back to coaching. Obviously because I'm involved in trampolining, I probably wouldn't have applied for it if I hadn't been involved, if I'd left and never come back, I probably wouldn't have went to work at Scottish Gymnastics.

OG: Did you ever think at any point about making a comeback?

T: Definitely, of course I did, for a while anyway, and I even came back to train for a while, but it was just not the same. See when you have a couple of months off, or even a couple of weeks off, it makes such a huge difference. But right up till when John retired and I took over his trampoline, he would say that all I would have to do was go to the gym for 6 months or whatever, lose the weight and then come back, because all the moves were still there, the ability is still there you know, and I would say yeah, yeah, but I wasn't really that bothered, and then last year, we had a Scotland versus Northern England match, Cara was away for a competition at the time, there were a couple of people injured, and Olivia was like, Tess can do it, she would probably be better than anyone else we have even without any training sort of thing, and she was joking, and then they were like would you do it and I was like yeah, and it wasn't until after I said it and then I thought, oh my god I shouldn't have done that, and I had only been working in the office for a month at the time. So I did the competition and it was great, I loved it, and you know that way I thought, I really miss this, really miss this competing, but it is like too late now to go back and to do anything about it. I'm fortunate enough now that in my job at Scottish Gymnastics that they are really good, like I leave at 4 on a Monday and Thursday so I am back in time for training for the kids, and they obviously know in advance if I have got a competition coming off and will give me time off or whatever, which is really good because I didn't have that before when I worked in the stock brokers, so for the first year or 18 months that I was coaching the kids after John left I was coming to training at 6pm, so I was missing an hour on Monday and on Thursday, two hours a week, which is a big chunk as they are only in for 3 hours, well not even that by the time they get all the stuff put away, so I was missing almost half their training time. It is really important to me that I am there at training, as much as I can be for them.

OG: You said that when you made the decision to stop you spoke to your mum and to your coach – do you think talking to them helped you in making that decision?

T: Well I think I made the decision and then told them, but that is a reflection of me, I am a very independent person, very decisive, like this is what I want to do and that's it and nothing is going to stop me from doing it. When I was missing it I did speak to Olivia a couple of times, and she was like you know it is not too late to come back, we're all missing you, but I didn't really speak to anyone else.

OG: Do you think in general that support for trampolinists when they come up to retirement is important? Like, do you think it would be good for Cara to have support when she finally stops?

T: I would say that she will get support, she gets a lot of support now from like British Gymnastics and stuff whereas I didn't have any of that at all, but she has got loads and loads of support now which has been fantastic and can only be for the better. She is in the Scottish Institute of Sport so she gets a lot of support from them, so with them they have got not just physical prep and stuff, but they've got mental preparation and all that sort of stuff, I think it will help mentally prepare her for her retirement, I think she would probably get quite a lot of help for them when it comes round to it. Even like Rebecca and Pamela they are in the area institute so they get the same sort of support, not at the same level but they'll get the same sort of things. So I think now there is so much more support than for me, I mean maybe there was stuff there and I just didn't know that it was available for me. Through working at Scottish Gymnastics I have learnt so much in the last year about politics and all that sort of stuff and what goes on, like before that I didn't even know about the institutes and what kind of support they got, anything like that. A lot of other people don't know either, unless I am passing the information on or your kids are in the institute then you wouldn't know.

OG: Is there anything else you want to tell me about your trampolining career, about retiring, anything we haven't covered?

T: Now when I look back, which is quite good because I can pass it on to the kids, when I say to them, look I am being really serious that I gave up too early and it is the biggest mistake I ever made and I would hate to see one of you making that mistake, think very, very carefully, and that's what I was saying to Cara, you've got so much more options and so much more support than what I ever had, don't throw it all away for the sake of a couple of drinks or some stupid boy who's going to let you down in a couple of months time. I didn't have any bad experiences apart from obviously towards the end and that's the biggest mistake I think I've ever, ever made because I could probably have made it an awful lot further. Now I look at Catherine, who competed at the same time as me and it was always like that between us, one would win, then the other would win, and now she is away to the World Championships and qualifying for the Olympics as Claire Wright's synchro partner, so it does make you think, when you look at it, but I just think I'm kind of over it now if you know what I mean. For a long, when I first started coaching for a long time, probably about a year or so, I would still get on the trampoline and play games or whatever with the kids, and then I thought to myself this isn't doing you any favours, it's like torturing myself, leaving you thinking what if, I could still do this. Which is a reason why Karen when she left, I don't think she would have been a good coach because she was trying to re-live her trampolining career through her kids. Its like I've kind of had closure now, having a new experience of the sport. I mean obviously it was really hard to get past that stage, see where you're thinking I want to still do it but I don't know if I can, I'm not going to try to live it through the kids but I'm still learning, you don't really know where you are because you are still learning to coach, but you can still do the moves, and you're not really sure if you are going to compete, and you are kind of in the middle. It is like what it is when you are leaving, you are at this crossroads, but once you work past that, I have had closure, I don't really remember when it was, probably that day when those three kids won the competition and I kind of had closure and said I am not a trampolinist anymore, that is in the past, it was fantastic at the time but it is over, it is done with, I've moved on and I am going to try to be, I am so hard on myself, because I was so hard on myself when I was a competitor, it is just the way I am, so much drive and ambition that it is actually quite frightening. That is why I pure never stop, honestly it is constant, and Chris is like, I never see you. I have actually cut back on my coaching hours and stuff because I was just doing too much and I ended up making myself anaemic, had no energy, ended up pure ill. I apply the same to my coaching as what I did to my trampolining so I am hard on myself and quite hard on my kids, I want to be the best coach I can be, if I am not going to be the best trampolinist then I want to try to be the best coach of the best trampolinist, and that's just the way it is, the way I am. It takes time though, I'm quite an impatient person, I want to have my kids British Champion, World Champion, but it takes years and years and years and years. Even just now I have got one paper to sit for my senior club coach and then I sit my HPC February, but even when you get your qualifications and stuff it doesn't make you a good coach. For me to get to the stage where John and Olivia are at, especially the stage she is at now, it will probably take me about another 15 years or something, 15, 20 years. It might be a wee bit quicker because of my background of training and working with them so closely, I'm hoping it might not take as long. So I am hoping that in about 10 years or whatever if I get to the same stage as them, I always said that if I get to be half the coach that John or Olivia is then I would be delighted, but it is a kind of daunting fact because you know, she is not going to be there forever, at 57 she is not going to be there forever, and so eventually the club is going to

come to me, that is a very, very scary thought. With a club that has been so successful and has got so much history behind it, it is a huge amount of pressure. It is not just the coaching, John was such a father figure to me, I could talk to him about everything, it was like he taught me the rights and wrongs, morals, and so it is all of that as well. It is not just teaching the kids at trampolining, it is about life too, working with the person. It is such a huge responsibility and they do it so well and sometimes I think to myself, I'm just not up to that, I'm just not ready for that. But because I'm so young as well, they are like 30, 40 years older, I have got a lot of time, but it is a huge weight on my shoulders, that one day this is all going to be down to be, it is quite scary.

END

BETH (Swimming - disability)

24th September 2007

OG: Can you start by telling me a little bit about your swimming career?

B: I began swimming at the age of 3, primarily because I had a disability at the age of 3 and my consultant said to my parents swimming is good for rehabilitation. So that is why I started sport. I continued to swim right throughout my junior years and my first international was when I was 15 and then I continued to compete internationally from '85 to '96. In that time I went to International Paralympic Committee – IPC – competitions, at European, World and Paralympic level. So my retirement came in a time before the money from the lottery came in, so I think that my retirement is probably slightly different to people that are retiring now, because the impact of me swimming and you know, was that I had to fund my swimming because the funding wasn't there at that time. So for me I had a full time job and I swam outside my work, before work, after work, 9 times a week. So I still had a career that was continuing, but obviously I had to make sure that my career fitted in with my swimming, whereas now, since the money from the lottery has come in people competing now have a much different scenario because they're competing full time, they are an athlete full time, whereas that wasn't really the process for me at that time.

OG: How important would you say swimming was to you at the time?

B: It was the be all and end all. It was everything. I worked to pay for my swimming and it wasn't the primary goal for me, my work was just to tick over to get me income so that I could swim. If you are swimming and competing at that level swimming has to be the priority, you cannot do it half heartedly because you won't be able to compete at a high level, so for me it was the be all and end all.

OG: Were your family supportive of your swimming career?

B: If I didn't have the support of parents I wouldn't have been an international swimmer. They were very keen for me to progress to the level that I wanted to progress to. I decided at the age of 11 that I wanted to go to the Paralympics and they supported me in every way to make sure that that was an achievable goal. So they transported me to morning training, my morning training was from 5 till 7, 4 days a week before school, and then evening training as well, so they were instrumental in actually making me an athlete. I also got support from my work. My employers used to give me time in lieu, so I would have to make up the hours but they were quite happy for me to come in at 8 o'clock, and then leave at 4 o'clock in order for me to make training at 5. So there was slight flexibility within my working week to enable me to encompass my swimming training, but it was only if it suited them. When I went to big internationals I would get special leave to enable me to, so I didn't have to use up all my holidays, but I have to say that most of my holiday entitlement went on swimming. That's just the way it was.

OG: You have already mentioned that there was no lottery money when you were swimming, but did you receive any financial support from your swimming from any sources?

B: Fife Council used to give me £200 each year, which I used to be able to spend in one British Championships because they used to be about £130, now it is even more but then it was around £130 to £150 that you would have to pay for. And then we would have 9 nine training weekends in Birmingham every year and you would spend a small fortune on those, so most of my funding for my swimming came from my parents when I was younger and then when I became, I went to college and I received a small bursary from my college, but 9 times out of 10 when I was living at home my funding came from my parents. I used to write out to various companies doing a begging letter and occasionally that would give me a few hundred quid. My training would cost me about 5 grand so I had to earn that and my living expenses when I was

training. And I would give up things in order to ensure that I could pay my training. I had to pay training fees, but the club that I swam for in my later years would say you don't have to pay this month you can leave it until 2 months later when I knew something was coming in or I didn't have so many bills going out.

OG: How important was your coach in your swimming career?

AT I originally come from Southampton, I moved up in 1989 when I would be 19 years old. My coach down south was, I came from a bigger club in Southampton and so the priority was given to able bodied swimmers and I was like a second class citizen, for want of a nasty way of putting it, but I didn't get a lot of support from my big club that I trained with in Southampton. When I moved to Scotland and I moved to Glenrothes in Fife, I got a tremendous amount of support from Glenrothes Swimming Club. The way that that was able to take place was because there were other swimmers who were already disability swimmers who were already training with the club and who had already broken down those barriers. And the kudos that the club got was from their disability swimmers who were elite swimmers competing at international level. So one of my main coaches was Eddie Campbell and he could say jump and I would ask how high, he was just fantastic. I also had a coach in Southampton, not part of the swimming club but a guy that my mum knew, and he coached me 3 times a week and he was part of the navy, he was chief petty officer in the navy, and he sort of made up for the weaknesses in Southampton, and he gave me a great deal of technique and worked on specifically what I needed to do to make sure I was swimming at ultimate. So he gave me the skills that I still use now.

OG: Tell me about your biggest achievements in your career.

B: 1990 I was a member of the relay team that got the gold medal and the world record at the World Championships, and that was the first time I ever had a world record and it was just amazing, the atmosphere was just stunning. I think that was probably the first instance where I thought, yeah I want some more of this. And then right at the end of my career I did a 3 second PB in the final at the Paralympics, and it was just an amazing swim, everything leading up to it, there were things that would have thrown me before, but I did a lot of mental preparation and I was able to remain really calm. Athletes talk about being in the zone and at that time I was and I just did an amazing swim, never been near it before or since. It was just a stunning, stunning swim and I think that that, although it wasn't perhaps my best result, it was definitely my best swim in my best event which was 100 back.

OG: Is there anything that you didn't like about being an elite swimmer?

B: I didn't like the morning training, that was the first thing I gave up when I retired, I gave up morning training and I have never been back since. When I was there it was fine, I could swim you know not a problem, it was the getting up and the fact that a lot of the time there were things that you couldn't do because you knew that you had to be up at half past 4. And there were things that you had to, occasionally I would be in my bed at half 9 at night knackered, and all I'd done was swim, school or college or work, swim, food, bed kind of thing, and I had done very little other than that, and those days were tough when you were tired. I think that social wise, a lot of athletes talk about that they lose their social life and I'm sure there were things that I didn't go to because of my swimming, but a lot of my social friends were swimmers as well, so at the time I was swimming they were swimming, so I did have a social life but it was just based around swimming. I wouldn't not be an international swimmer because, not least the memories but the achievements and the benefits far outweigh the plodding up and down, you know.

OG: Can you talk me through your retirement from elite level competition?

B: My last competition was in 1996 in the Paralympics in Atlanta. I knew that I was going to retire after that event, because I was very lucky to make the team for that event. S nmdc nmdc kjkjo from '94 to '96 I thought I would give it one last go and I made the Europeans in '95, but I wasn't an automatic selection for the team for '96 Atlanta, and so really I was very dubious whether I'd actually make team, so I really worked hard and surprised myself by making the team, so I knew that there were other youngsters that were going to be faster than me, if not in Atlanta then certainly after Atlanta. So I almost had a long lead into it, that I wasn't going to continue. So after '96 I gave up morning training and I actually went from training 8 or 9 times a week and I continued to train 5 times a week for the next year just because it was what I did, you know. So I gave up the mornings but still did the evenings, but what I began to do is if somebody said, do you fancy going out tonight, I would say yes, whereas before I would say no. So I had flexibility and that was what I really liked about retiring was that I didn't feel obligated to go to training because I had to go to training in my head, it was like if I didn't want to go, I didn't have to, and I think that that was really the nice part of retiring. In that time leading up from '94 to '96 I managed to get a few coaching qualifications and started coaching in '95, and I still continue to do that now

12 years later. So I've been coaching for 12 years but I moved into that from about, I did the qualifications in '94 and '95, and then put it into practice from '95 onwards.

OG: Did you feel you were still giving everything to swimming in those final 2 years, although you knew you were going to finish?

B: Yes, because I wanted to go to Atlanta. I wanted to go, I knew that it was going to be a stroke of luck if I made it, and I knew that after '96 it was all over, so I only had to do it for 2 years and I sort of gave it everything because there was a possibility that I might make Atlanta. So I thought give everything you have got for 2 years and then you can do what you want. And I have to say that in '97 I did 5 times a week, '98 I did 4 times a week, and from about '99 onwards I've only trained 3 times a week but I still train those 3 times now.

OG: And do you do any competitions now?

B: I did up until last year, I still did Scottish competitions, and I still did the British short course, and I swam for Scotland, predominantly because they needed me for the relay teams and things like that, so I still swam in the relay and selected 1 or 2 individual events that I would swim. But it was about 4 years ago that I started to think, do you know I'm not really, I can't really be bothered, and I'd rather go down as a staff member, because I had been going down as a staff member for other competitions. I thought I'd rather go as a staff member and let somebody else do the work in the pool, and I began to become much less competitive in the recent years, so I sort of let the rest get on with it really.

OG: It sounds as though you had a good gradual ease out of your career – do you think that helped you to deal with moving away from being a competitive swimmer?

B: Yeah, I mean I still have the competitive edge, even in training. If I am determined to beat somebody I will beat them, so I still have a very competitive nature. But I only now compete if I am needed for a Fife team or a Scottish team. And I only ever compete disability events, I will never do able-bodied events now, whereas when I was competing I would do able-bodied events because I might need a time to gauge where I am in my training and things like that. I haven't done an able bodied event for 10 years. So I am much more sort of picky on what I do, but I think that I have, I definitely enjoy competing but I'm really not that bothered whether I do or I don't.

OG: How did you feel when you finished in Atlanta and you knew that you were finishing your elite career?

B: I think I was upset because there is the realisation that this will be the last international that you are at, and I think that it's quite tough to give up and know that the next international you won't be at. And although I had had that preparation time I just felt there was a bit of unease for me, and I was actually lucky enough, after I gave up I went to the European Championships in '97 as a staff member and watching the 100 back, which would be the event that I would swim in, was quite emotional because I was thinking, well if I was in that race I might have got this position and seeing my competitors still swimming and meeting them all. So that sort of twinge of I wish I was there but I knew I had had enough and I knew that to get selected for the team would mean even more than I was doing and I just couldn't give anymore.

OG: Did you think about a comeback at any point?

B: No, oh god no. And to be honest if I had had a comeback it would have been laughable, because in '96 I was number 3 in Britain, but by '97 there were more people kicking at my heels and it would have just been laughable if I had expected to be a part of the team beyond '97.

OG: Do you think it would have been harder to retire when you did if you hadn't made the Atlanta team?

B: I didn't make the World Championships in '94 and that was tough, really tough, because there were swimmers who were at the club were going to the Worlds, and I was one of them that hadn't got selected. I think that it is probably justifiable that I wasn't there because the numbers were reduced so they had to sort of start shaving off people, if I was the selector I wouldn't have picked me. But there was always that element of if I don't go to this one will I make Atlanta, so I already had a sort of moment where I'd had the tears, I'd done all the sort of, what now, and I think that that's why I had 2 years, and I managed to bring in mental preparation into my programme from not getting selected in '94, brought in mental preparation and actual saw results in the water that I had not seen before because I was much more confident. Because I knew that

there was 2 years and the ultimate goal was to get to Atlanta. And the fact that 2 years earlier I didn't make a team was quite a wake up call.

OG: In terms of your career outside of swimming, did you make any plans for when you finished swimming, were you looking to change or develop that aspect?

B: When I was swimming I did admin, nice and simple, you went in, you did your admin, and you walked away, that's it. So for the majority of my swimming career I did something that was easy, didn't challenge me, so my career was on hold really. In '95, a year before I gave up, I started a job where it was much more challenging. I was working with an initiative and a lot of hours were needed to make sure that really began, but I wanted to change career from admin to begin a career of something that I really wanted to do and so a year out from me retiring, I changed job and I began to sort of focus more on my career, but actually still encompassing the needs of my sport. But I knew that I wasn't going to do admin for the rest of my life, but as long as I was competing at an elite level I couldn't do something beyond admin. So for the majority of my swimming time my work time was admin.

OG: And did you find your career was something you could move your focus to once you finished swimming?

B: Yes, and certainly when I retired, probably not in '96 but '97 definitely, I began to take on more responsibility and actually say yes to things rather than sort of doing a cautious maybe, I began to be a bit more open to taking on new tasks. And also within my voluntary work as well I began to take on more responsibility in coaching, and more responsibility of actually being part of Scottish Disability Sport and being involved in the organisation. So my role began to expand. Perhaps if I hadn't been an elite swimmer I probably would have expanded it a whole lot earlier, but I did put it on hold, and made sure it was manageable.

OG: Do people still see you as an athlete now or has that changed?

B: I think people still see me as an athlete. On the Scottish Disability Sport management committee I am the athlete rep, even though I haven't competed internationally I am still considered as the athlete's rep. But I don't mind that, I quite like the idea of being labelled as an athlete because it's probably better broadcasting than retired athlete. But I don't care, to be honest, whether they want to see me as an athlete or not. I'm quite proud of the fact that I was an athlete and the fact that that was many years ago, it doesn't bother me if I am still seen as that or not.

OG: What about the physical side of retiring?

B: The only thing that has really changed that I am sort of like, I find difficult, is that I was burning so much calories when I was training 9 times a week, and I was on a diet that was designed to cope with those 9 times per week training which means that I love carbohydrate food, and I still love carbohydrate food but I am not doing 9 times a week. So my body shape, what it used to be and what it is now, is completely different and that's what annoys me, because I'm not, I don't have, I can't eat anything I want and keep the weight off. I still eat as if I am a competing athlete but I'm not so I put the weight on.

OG: How supportive were your family of your retirement, how much did they help you?

B: My family still live in Southampton, so they don't really have day to day contact with me. So ultimately my family are supportive but they are distant support. I think that I was one of the first swimmers in my group of friends who were elite swimmers to retire, which meant that they were still competing, some of them gave up in '98, and others continued to 2004. But because I still train 3 times a week I still see them, but it meant that if they wanted to do a hard set I could go, yeah I'll do that hard set, or I'll do the set but not as hard as them, and it didn't matter. So for me it was quite enjoyable being out of the pressure. And I think that since '96 the big lottery fund came in, there's a lot more pressure on swimmers than there ever was when I was training. I trained because I love swimming and I wanted to compete for my country. I feel that now, if I had the pressure that swimmers have now, that whenever swimmers stand on the block and they dive in this determining the salary that they are going to get that year, you know are they going to get an A time, a B time or a C time. If they get a B time it could mean 10 grand difference to their income. I never had that, I never had money when I was training. It was always hand to mouth, so I never had the element of if I don't make this time and make the team, and my funding stops, what do I do them. That's not really what I experienced. I found quite a bit of support from fellow swimmers, but also I think I'm quite stable myself. I got quite a bit of support from Disability Sport Fife to point me in other directions as a coach, or as a support member of staff for competitions and things, so I think there has been other things that I have done with the time that

I've had available. Scottish Disability Sport are very proactive in ensuring that their athletes are, if you want to say it crudely, putting something back into sport, that is the crude way of thinking of it. But I think that because you get so much from them in your career you're sort of tempted to put something back in because ultimately throughout your career you do receive support and advice and guidance from those within the voluntary governing body and really it's that support that's helped you in the times that were tough and so, I mean, I was a support member of staff for junior swimming championships from '91, I mean when I was 21, I was still a competing swimmer but I would go down to the junior swimming championships as part of the Scottish team and we would be part of the staff member team that were looking after the kids that were hopefully going to fill our shoes, well trunks and costumes, in the future. So we were role models but also they were learning from the advice that we could give them. So there is a continuing cycle of individuals being asked to put something back in and then it is just a natural process that you just continue to do that once you have finished. Some of the swimmers that I coach I hope will be in London 2012, nobody can guarantee that, but ultimately I'm part of Disability Sport Fife and Scottish Disability Sport people that are trying to encourage them in their time of trying to make it. And then once they reach funding levels then GB can take over and start to develop them. But at this crucial level where there is no funding it is important that Scotland does its bit to make sure that they get there.

OG: Were you given financial assistance to help you with going through the coaching courses?

B: Yes, they paid for me to do it. So they identified what I wanted to do, and identified me as an individual that had the abilities to coach. They then made sure that they paid for me to do the qualifications, and then gave me access to an existing coach so that I could be mentored by that individual. So I was mentored by Judy Black who was the current swimming coach and then she passed on a lot of her skills that I now use. So ultimately there was a transition from Judy Black to myself as the Fife swimming coach. Judy is still involved but in a different sport now.

OG: How supportive was your coach when you retired?

B: Eddie Campbell was just god to me, he got my times to be like fantastic, so Eddie Campbell was god, and I think that he was a really nice guy, he would still put the same amount of pressure on you to perform. We would have like timed sets, and we would have a target time to try and beat, and my target time would still be at a time where I was competing when I was elite, but that would still give me, which was good, I was still really keen and interested in swimming. Unfortunately Eddie retired from coaching and our new coach that came in just didn't cut it. You know when you have had the best then it is difficult to align yourself with another coach, particularly when you are not competing for the be all and end all. So I found it quite difficult to adjust from what I was used to, to enjoying a new coach's programme, and so ultimately, I've had 2 or 3 coaches and I have never put them near Eddie Campbell who gave me the results that I got. I think that Eddie would just sort of laugh sometimes at the times I would do after I retired, but it was like, we had a very good set up and I was still able at that time, training 4 or 5 times a week, I was still able to pull out the good swim when I wanted to, but ultimately my carrot had gone.

OG: Is there anything else that could have been done for you when you retired, either from your governing body or anyone else?

B: I think that probably no. I mean what would have been useful for me would have been to have some financial support, to pay for my training fees, so that I could, you know I used to get £200 from Fife council every year and I used to spend it within a month on training fees and competitions or whatever, and it used to be a real financial struggle. Whereas when I retired I think that that financial pressure was off me quite a bit. But when I retired I don't think there was anything that really the national governing body could have done, because I think they did what was required for me.

OG: Do you think that there are issues that disabled athletes face during their careers and when they retire that are unique to them, as compared to able bodied athletes?

B: Yes. I think that there are things that, some people with disabilities will have a greater need to do physical activity. I have a swimmer for example who has cerebral palsy, and retired a number of years ago, but needs to continue to do sport because his body required that physical activity to remain supple. So he doesn't have the ability to just give up, and I think that sometimes it's difficult for people with disabilities who have to do some form of physical activity, whether it be swimming or whatever. Sometimes they have to do that because of their body requirements, in order to ensure that they have full functional ability. And sometimes that's difficult when they would rather just retire, because if they want to maintain what flexibility they have, unfortunately that requires them to continue with some of the physical activity that they have been

doing. And I think that it is more difficult for an individual with disabilities to retire and not have a greater impact on their health.

OG: Some literature suggests that it might be harder for disability athletes as they go from being an athlete to being a person with a disability. Do you think that could be an issue?

B: I think if you were to ask an individual who had competed at an elite level who has had the stardom, you don't get the stardom with disability sport, but occasionally you get one or two people who have had the pedestal, the receptions at Buckingham Palace and all that, so they have had all the celebrations, and going from that then that becomes a difficult transition I could imagine. I wasn't for me because I never had that. I mean you do get invited to things that you know other people won't get to go to, like Queen's garden party or whatever it is, and you get invited as an athlete who has succeeded in various competitions, but that would be the same for anybody. I can imagine if you ask the same question to Kelly Holmes then you might see that she has seen a drop in her stardom, you know.

OG: Disability sport seems to be growing in terms of its media coverage and people's understanding. Do you think that is going to continue to grow?

B: Yes, I mean if you look at '84 Paralympics, there was an hour documentary 6 months after the event. Go to '88 Seoul, there was 4 half hour programmes two weeks after the event, but it was on grandstand. Barcelona, there were so many half hour programmes on BBC 2 on grandstand. Atlanta, there was half hour programmes on BBC 2 at 6 o'clock showing the Paralympics, the day after. Now they are during the event. So the coverage over the last 20 years has changed dramatically. We are now using commentators that have a disability, that have experience and knowledge about what the athletes feeling, what they're doing, what technical things are needed to ensure they do compete at their ultimate. So there has been a massive transition just from the BBC. Now it's rare that we would get a press coverage in the life area of the newspaper, you would probably see it in the sports section. So when I started, it was Beth makes a splash, or Beth is a victim of polio. There are probably still journalists that write that rubbish, but ultimately it is frowned upon. And I think that we are moving towards that, and as long as we continue to move beyond where we are now we will see more coverage and we will see better coverage. Because ultimately if you look at the '84 coverage it was pat on the head, didn't they do well, and it was very bad, bad, bad. But there have been improvements and I think that as long as they continue to see it as a sport and report it as a sport at an elite level then we should see better coverage.

OG: Is there anything else you want to tell me about your career or your retirement?

B: I think it's important to continue to swim, or do another sport or whatever. I don't think, I think I continued to remain within the sport but just reduce the amount of hours that I do it and that's probably you're not sitting in front of an elephant, and you're just sitting in front of somebody that has just put on weight. I see quite a number of athletes, past swimmers that I knew competed at the time I did who have since retired and said, that's it, I'm never going in another pool ever again, and then they just balloon, and then find it hugely difficult to come back to swimming and be able to join a masters lane or whatever. And I think that they should continue doing some form of exercise that they enjoy, because ultimately it is really difficult not to keep the weight off. I also think that as a sports person you also put your personal life on hold as well. There have been times when I could potentially have had a relationship, but when I was swimming a) I didn't have time and b) it was a distraction, so it would be quite quickly stopped. And I think that that has been put on hold until after you retire, and then you have to consider, are you then, perhaps you've missed the boat or whatever. So I think there is an element of when you are competing in swimming, because it's so intense and because at that time I was working full time as well, the time that you have to devote to boyfriends or whatever is very limited, so I can look back on that and say perhaps there are people that were in my life at that time that didn't get a chance because I was training. And when you retire, you almost have to start as a teenager rather than starting as an adult that is 20 odd years old.

OG: Thank you so much for your time, it has been really interesting.

END

EMILY & GAIL (Gymnastics)

8th October 2007

OG: Can you start by telling me about your gymnastics career.

E: We must have been like 4 or something when our parents took us to like a recreational gym. We used to spend all our time upside down, doing handstands, pushing each other around, so it was like a safety aspect.

G: I think my mum was scared we would push each other down the stairs, doing handstands at the top of the stairs and stuff.

E: It was just like fun to start with, we just used to go once a week.

G: The coach there said that we had got a lot of potential, we could go a long way, if we wanted to. And we loved it didn't we, as kids.

E: Yeah, absolutely loved it.

G: And then it kind of just went from there, we started doing it more and more. And then we started competing, just like in little low level competitions, we were about 6. At the age of 10 I did my first national competition, we both did it, for the north west.

E: We moved clubs at the age of 10, because the coach we were with had said we have got the potential but I can't take you any further, because he was a recreational coach. So we made a transfer to Wigan, and we got our first international there and everything

G: I did like the Manchester Commonwealth Games, Emily was injured. I competed and I was the youngest of the whole Scottish team so I got a lot of press things and stuff so that was good. And then in 2003 we moved gyms again, because we weren't getting on with our coach. We moved to Liverpool gym which is like, it is the best gym in the country, and we were there until we retired.

E: And we did another Commonwealths while we were there, and the youth commonwealths. And I was a reserve for the Olympics too.

G: I think we did gym for 12 years competitively. And then we got to the point when we had just had enough, and we just...

E: Our bodies had just taken so much pounding, from such a young age, that we used to get up in the morning and your body would ache.

G: And we had kind of achieved what we wanted to, and like finishing at a Commonwealth Games. Me and Emily both sat on the plane on the way home, we sat in separate seats, and we sat there and we were like, we wrote each other a letter I think.

E: We didn't know how each other were feeling but I ended up writing to her, because normally after a big competition like that you get such motivation, you want to get back into the gym, there are things you want to learn. But this time it was the first time in my life I didn't feel like that, I didn't know what I was working for next. I knew Beijing Olympics was never really going to happen, with all the youngsters coming up. But there was another 4 years till another Commonwealth Games. So like I didn't have that motivation anymore, and I sat on the plane, and wrote Gail a letter saying I'm not sure I want to do this anymore.

G: And I wrote Emily a letter saying the same thing, and that was it really. But we got back and we had to do, we had a competition planned, the British team championships. We literally got back and we had a week, but we couldn't not do it because of our team. But that was our last competition, and on the Monday of the week after I told my coach. She was like why didn't you tell me, and it was like well we had this competition, we wanted to do it for the team. And that was it, I remember being at the British teams and doing like my last vault and stuff and I remember thinking, I can't believe this is it. And it was weird. It didn't sink in for a while. To start with I didn't really miss gym, but then afterwards, I missed having something to do.

E: I missed the challenge, I think because from the age of 6 we always had a competition to work for, or a new skill to learn, and then suddenly it was like, okay, what am I working for?

G: Once you have been an athlete, I think you will always be an athlete. We had 4 months out, and to start with it was great, I could lie in till when I wanted, go out when you wanted, bit of freedom. But then after a bit it was like, this isn't me, I'm bored, we both were.

E: We argued more because we were just bored. We would stay up late until we got tired and then we would just argue. We didn't have any structure in our lives.

G: Nothing to work for. And it was like, this isn't me at all. And that is when we started diving. But it was my mum who suggested diving to us, when we were at the Commonwealths in Melbourne. There was a diver there than 4 years ago had been a gymnast that I had competed against as a gymnast. My mum recognised her name and said, Gail was that the girl you competed against 4 years ago?

E: She got a gold medal in Manchester as a gymnast, and then 4 years later she got a silver medal as a diver.

G: And mum said to us, you'd make really good synchronised divers. A lot of gymnasts do transfer to diving anyway. And that was it, the thought was in our head, and I was like, you know what, when I quit gym I'm going to try it. When I was at the Games, I was like yeah I'm still going to do gym because I was in like the buzz of the competition, but once that had gone down it was like, no. And then it was after a few months that we tried diving.

E: We were like little kids again, it was exciting and we were learning things all the time. We came to Leeds, basically because it was one of the only places that have like an adult diving class that you can pay on the door and go in, because we wanted to try it and see. So we tried it and we loved it. And then it was Scottish Swimming I think got in contact with us. I think the Scottish gymnastics team manager out in Australia, when we had said we want to try diving once we retire, once she found out we had retired, she said oh are you still interested in doing diving. So I think our details were passed onto Scottish Swimming, and then we got a phone call from them asking if we were interested in doing diving seriously. And we were like, well we do really enjoy it.

G: We had only done a couple of hours, but we were keen to give it a go.

E: And they were like well if that is the case then we could get you put on like a programme and stuff. And then British Diving got involved, because they were like, oh ex-gymnasts, twins. At the Athens Olympics, in the final, 10 out of 12 divers were ex-gymnasts, and the only 2 that weren't were the Chinese. So then they got involved and said, right how serious are you, and we were like, yeah we'd really love to give it a go, and they were right well basically we'll give you a testing day. They took us to Sheffield, because that is where the national coach is and everything, so in about June we went along, for about a couple of hours, and just did like some basic testing stuff in the dryland and in the pool, and after like 3 hours they were like, are you prepared to move away from home, and we were like well yeah, and so they said well come down here and we'll put you on this programme.

G: They gave us a 2 month trial, after that day thing, and during that we lived in the Hotel Bristol, not far from the pool, for those two months. We just trained every day...

E: And they paid all like our expenses and everything for those two months, put us up in this hotel and let us claim for food and whatever.

G: And then from that they said you've passed that, for the next year we'll pay for your coaching fees, give us a full package.

E: Like they helped support our flat because we had to move away from home, so they gave us so much towards rent a month. Arranged it so that we could use the EIS as well, we trained there. They said to us, like we don't know if it is going to work, but it is something we want to plow a bit of money into and see. We were like the guinea pigs, because they are testing more gymnasts now.

G: They said that what we achieved in a year was like unbelievable, that it could take divers like 10 years to learn what we have done in a year. Just because you have got the basic skills from gymnastics. You have also got the discipline of being an athlete, the athlete lifestyle and everything.

E: We found diving much easier on our bodies than gymnastics. We had a 2 week holiday, and I didn't even feel like I had been away when I got back into the pool when we came back.

G: Your body didn't ache, whereas before it would have been like, my ankles, my knees, my back, everything would hurt.

E: We have just started going off 10 metres now and my shoulders will feel that.

G: So that is the story really.

E: Yeah, and then a couple of months ago we decided that the relationship we had with our coach wasn't really working.

G: We had been kind of unhappy for a while. I think it is just the Chinese culture, like he is a really, really good coach, and he is a really nice person and everything, but it I just like, we didn't feel like we could talk to him, because English is quite difficult for him anyway. But we went to China last year and they are really like machines, they are so small, and they are taken away from home, put into schools of sport, and it would just be dive after dive after dive. And there are so many of them, it doesn't matter if they burn a couple of them out, because they have got so many more, and then the one that makes it through is like the Olympic champion, and that is the way it kind of works in China. So I think it is just like a difference of culture. And some people can, there are divers in this country that will work with Chen great, but he just wasn't for us. And we are at that kind of stage where we know what works for us. We had to explain that to our boss, say that it wasn't going to work with Chen, and we explained that we went through several gymnastics coaches to find the right one and we know what works.

E: It is not that we have a great knowledge of diving as a sport, but we know what we needed from a coach.

G: We said that we felt like we had hit a brick wall with Chen and we felt like we weren't getting anywhere. The language was quite a big thing, like he would say the same thing over and over again because he couldn't put it another way.

E: So we made the decision to move to Leeds. We have been at Leeds about 3 or 4 weeks now I think, and loving it again, really happy now.

G: We are so much happier in training now, so although we have to travel to uni we don't mind.

E: And then we are going to Texas for a training camp in 2 weeks, looking forward to that, outdoor pool and everything apparently, it is supposed to be quite nice.

OG: And have you competing yet in diving?

G: No not yet. The Chinese coach was like, well we won't compete you for like a year and a half, and then I'm going to put you straight into Nationals. And we were like, to go straight into Nationals having not done any kind of diving competition, we didn't like it. But now we've moved to Leeds and they are like, I'm not going to throw you in at the deep end, you are going to do lots of little competitions, where there is no-one there, you can wipe out and it won't matter, just to get used to it. So I think we are doing one in a couple of weeks.

E: And then he had put us into one in November and then the Scottish Nationals in December, where we will do a 1m, a 3m and a 5m list.

G: And then depending on how things go, he said that the January nationals are an option, but if we are not ready we won't do them, we will sit them out until the next one.

E: He doesn't want to push us into it and then us not do as well as we should have done, and then knock our confidence. He wants us to go in feeling 100% ready.

G: And there is no rush. The ultimate goal is London 2012 so we've got a good few years.

E: I can't wait to get competing again, I'm really excited.

G: Because as much as we like training, I like to work for the competition and then compete, get the buzz of competition. That is the purpose of your training. So can't wait. Originally we were just going to be like a synchro pair, but they have started to do like individual work and have told us we will compete individually too. To start with we used to like train synchro like all the time.

E: Every session we were always together with everything.

G: And then Emily got injured and I had to train on my own, and it was horrible. I was so used to Emily being there, and then I felt like everyone was watching me. Because when you do synchro, if one of you wipes out then it is kind of like half of the attention is taken off you. I was stuck on the board on my own and I really didn't like it.

E: But since we have come to Leeds they were like, we are going to split you up. We have synchro sessions throughout the week, Wednesday, Friday and Sunday, but the rest of the sessions we do on our own. To start with we were terrible. Like the other day I went up to 10m, and normally Gail would count us in, and I was on 10m on my own and I was like, oh my god I am so lonely up here.

G: But it is so much better for us. Because like the synchro aspect of it, for us, is like dead easy, like we don't really struggle with it, we kind of just do it and it just works. Like we jump pretty much the same height, like we did a jump test and Emily jumped 2cm higher, and the coach was like, right we have to make up that 2cm Gail.

E: It is so funny, because we have got different coaches now, they are like competing within themselves. So we will be doing our entries or something, and we will be doing synchro, and like Gail will like rip, and my coach would be like, oh bother. And then I would do it and he would be like, yes I'm winning, 2 to 1.

G: It is like really friendly rivalry. It is a really friendly environment anyway at Leeds, which is I think one of the things that we missed when we were at Sheffield. Because we were at Liverpool gym club which had a dead good club environment, and the moving to Sheffield, and it was like we were training with the national coach rather than as part of Sheffield Diving Club. Because we were actually registered as part of Edinburgh Diving Club, so that we can compete for Scotland still, so we were kind of registered to Edinburgh but training in Sheffield. We weren't really part of Sheffield Diving Club or anything there. But now we've moved to Leeds and they have really welcomed us, there is a really nice club environment. There is a good link from Leeds to Scotland as well.

OG: If I take you back to gymnastics for a while, how important was gymnastics to you?

G: Very. Everyone would identify us as gymnasts, people would be like, oh yeah you are the gymnasts aren't you. Around school and college, we were known as gymnasts. And we weren't there a lot, so it was like you are the gymnasts that never come to school. I remember, I did the Manchester Commonwealth Games, and of all my routines, I did 10 routines, and made one mistake. And then that one mistake was shown live on BBC and I went back in to school and all my friends were like, I saw you on TV, you landed on your face.

E: It was quite nice to be identified as gymnasts, because you get recognition for what you do, and you are quite proud for what you achieved.

G: The fact that we were twins as well also brought a lot of attention to us. A lot of people say to us like which one is better or which one has achieved more or whatever, but I wouldn't say either of us came out on top. We both made different achievements.

E: We both had injuries at different times which was obviously unfortunate.

G: But I would say that both our careers were as successful as each other, just like in different ways.

OG: Can you tell me about what it felt like to be out injured?

G: Oh horrible.

E: Being injured is like the most frustrating thing ever. I think sometimes it is even more frustrating, like when I was injured in 2002 and Gail had like one of the best years of her life, she did Commonwealths, and all these internationals..

G: Did junior Europeans.

E: And I just sat back injured the whole time. And then Gail was injured in Athens and I went out there.

G: And it is something, like for the Europeans and the Commonwealths, Emily would have gone easy, like especially to the Commonwealths. Even like the Commonwealths, you didn't make it back in time for the last trial, but then the British championships was right before the Commonwealths, and Emily beat some of the girls in the Scottish team.

E: It was so frustrating.

G: It showed she could have gone but her injury was just in the wrong time, so she missed out on it all. And then the same with Athens, I trained all the way up to the Games, and then 2 months before got a bad back and couldn't do it, so then you just go and see other girls go in and take your place. And especially with things like the Commonwealths and Olympics that come every 4 years, and as a gymnast 4 years is a long, long time. So to miss Athens, I've got no chance of going to Beijing, so that is your Olympic hopes come and gone. I think when Emily got injured for Commonwealths you were really young at the time anyway, so you could hold on for another one, but for things like an Olympics you often only have one chance.

E: You have put your whole life into something, and then to get injured. Well injuries always come at the worst time. I think it is because your training increases before a competition.

G: I remember at the Melbourne Games we both went out really, really prepared. I have been like the top all rounder for Scotland, I was planning on doing all 4 pieces, and the first day I got out there, I must have been jet lagged or something, and I landed on straight legs and hurt both my knees. So I couldn't train floor or vault, and even a bit of bars, my dismount, and beam dismount too, so it came to podium training and I hadn't even done anything. So I had to literally say to my coach, look I can't do all four, and obviously I knew this was going to be my last Commonwealths and I was so desperate to do the all-around, but I had to turn around and say that I couldn't because of my knees and stuff. And then in training I then hurt my thumb, and I was like oh my god I am not coming out here and not doing anything, it is my last chance at a Commonwealths, nothing is going to stop me, so I was taking pain killers and everything, and I managed bars and beam, but not to the level that I could have done which was obviously, it is heart breaking because you have trained that hard and know that it is your only shot.

E: You know how prepared you were and how ready you were before it, and then for something like that to happen, it is horrible.

G: It is so out of your control as well, there is nothing you can do about it. It has got to be the worst feeling. And then you broke your foot in diving as well.

E: It was a silly injury, done in dry land training, landed back on the block.

G: I think gymnasts are quite tough really. Emily did it, and she didn't cry, and I was thinking oh she will shake it off in a minute, and she was like ow, that was sore. She wanted to get into the water afterwards.

E: I was like to Tony, can I get in, and he was like, no.

G: When she wasn't shaking it off I was like, something is wrong with that, there is definitely something wrong.

E: It was like if something hurt a bit, but you could carry on, then you would.

G: But then she went and got an x-ray and was like, I've broken my foot. And I was like, I knew you had, I could have told you that, from your reaction when you did it.

E: And that killed me, especially watching Gail, because we had only been diving such a short time we were constantly improving, doing new dives, and I was sitting back thinking oh my god, I couldn't believe it. And obviously Gail was great about it, she tried not to come back and be like I've done this and done that.

G: But it was really hard, you are so excited.

E: But she obviously had to try and control that and not get too overly excited, and obviously see me so disappointed sitting back and watching.

OG: What effects did your gymnastics career have on other aspects of your life?

G: Well didn't go to school much and we didn't have much of a social life.

E: A big effect! Training took over everything. When we did GCSEs, we missed a whole day Tuesday, Wednesday afternoon, and Friday afternoon, and that was every week, just to train.

G: Our school were great, couldn't have been better. We dropped, with GCSEs we did 5 subjects, maths, English, science, PE and childcare and development and that was it, so we dropped our language, we dropped the technology subject that we would have had to do.

E: I mean my timetable came out one year that I would miss 6 out of my 8 maths lessons, so they were like, right we will switch you to the other side of the year.

G: She came to my side of the year so we were in the same classes and could help each other out and stuff. So that was like in a normal week, and then obviously we had training camps, and we went to competitions, we used to go to Lilleshall for training camps and whatever, so we did miss a hell of a lot of school.

E: And we took a year out to focus on the Olympics, Gail moved away from home and I was just training full time. Because we were like just training we decided we needed something else.

G: Because it was just literally training. Monday we would train from 1 till 8, so you would get up in the morning, go to training, and then you would go straight to bed when you would get in. And then Tuesday we would do 9 o'clock in the morning till lunchtime, we would sometimes go back to my coaches and have like lunch there, and then train again at 4 o'clock to save travelling because we lived like an hour from the gym. Wednesday would be 1 till 8, Thursday would be an evening or a morning, or maybe off, Friday 1-8, Saturday half 9 till 4, so the only night that you could socialise was a Saturday night because you were off on a Sunday, but even then we didn't. We were so tired. And then when we were at school fitting in homework, study for exams and everything too. But all our friends appreciated that, so we just saw them during school and that would be it.

E: But after that year out we went back to college and we didn't want the 3 or 4 A Levels that everyone else was doing, so we literally just picked up one, we did one AS to start with, just something to do, and then after we did that we picked up a bit more, so we ended up with one full A Level and one AS. To be honest we did a lot of self-teaching.

G: And because we were doing one A Level and one AS we had a clash with one of our classes, so we just didn't go to the psychology. When we got an A in it our teacher was like, I can't really take credit for that can I. We did a lot of it off our own back.

E: But it was just something to do at the time.

G: But then it was getting into university with them grades. I had to do a lot of ringing around for that.

E: My head of college had said, look you have got so many life experiences, so said ring them up and see if they would consider taking you. So we ended up ringing up Leeds Met, and Sheffield Hallam.

G: We were looking at where the diving places were, fitting it in with that.

E: And they said, yeah look you have got all the life experiences and everything, we will consider you. So we applied, and actually Leeds didn't accept us even though when we had spoken to them they had said that, and then Sheffield Hallam, who hadn't been sure originally weren't that sure, did accept us so that is why we are there. But now we are looking to transfer over to Leeds next year, because it takes us like an hour to get there, and also for uni we are finding that we have to do group work and we are finding that real hard.

G: Our time management skills are pretty good, we have to fit everything together, but other peoples are not so good. We find ourselves trying to organise our group, and then nearly doing all the work for them, carrying our own work and then their work as well. I emailed my tutor, and he said I would like you to try it out with your groups, but if you can't then I will make a group for you and your sister. We tried today and it is really not going to work, so I am going to email him again tomorrow.

OG: And what subject are you studying?

G: Sport and Exercise Science. It was like a different language at first, looking at all this kinesiology stuff, all the different muscles and whatever. But I am finding it really interesting, when we were looking at the joints it was like, well I have injured that one, done this and that, you can relate it to your experiences.

E: I really enjoy the sports psychology aspect. We did A Level PE and there was like all this stuff and it was like, that so happens, and learnt so much.

G: Yeah, I enjoy the sports psychology and the nutrition part too. We have worked with nutritionists and stuff, and I find those two aspects of the course the most interesting. There is actually a course at Leeds Met that we are looking to maybe transfer to, we are going to finish this year at Hallam, and transfer next year. It is like a part-time course and you can pick and choose what modules you do and when you do them, so you can kind of specialise towards your interests, so it is kind of really suited to us. It would mean one more year of travelling but it is not so bad because we are part-time, I mean sometimes we are only in uni twice a week.

OG: How supportive were your parents of your gymnastics careers?

G: They supported us, oh they did everything. We couldn't have done it without them. They still support us now.

E: As gymnasts our mum was our taxi driver, like if one was injured she would stay, wait for them to finish the one session they could do, drive them back and then go back later to pick the other one up. Even though it was like an hour journey to Liverpool and back.

G: And then take us to competitions, they paid all our training fees. Obviously we couldn't get a job, so they paid all our coaching fees, if we needed new hand guards, leotards, tracksuits, competition fees, hotels, they really did pay for everything.

E: They came to support us, I mean they came out to Australia to watch us out there.

G: They went to Manchester obviously, it was only like 20 minutes, they went to the Europeans when I did that, went out to Athens to see Emily. Because Emily was out there for 8 weeks before then, she was over there for her birthday and everything. So we decided for a family holiday we would go to Athens and then see some of the Olympics and stuff so that we could see Emily as well. They like it I think, they went to Australia for a month, toured the whole of Australia. And even now we can't get a job because we are studying and we are training. British Diving help with the flat but they don't pay the whole amount, and then there are bills to pay on top and food and stuff. And then there is competition fees and all our kit. We are on TASS which helps, but that money is kind of allocated towards coaching fees and other specific things. Obviously we need money to live off so our parents give us money each month.

E: And we have to be quite good, we have to live on a budget, and we do try to.

G: So yeah, we couldn't have done it without our parents, really couldn't.

OG: Tell me a bit more about the coaches that you had in gymnastics.

G: I remember our first coach, when we were doing it recreationally, like one hour a week, he was really nice. He didn't want to let us go, like he did because he knew that was what we needed, and he basically said to us if you want to go any further you should move on, if you want to stay where you are and just do it for fun then that's fine, that is all I can kind of do. We really appreciated that because we would never have got to where we did if we had stayed there. I can remember he was really caring, if you got upset he used to have his little hankie, always used to have that.

E: I can remember with the Manchester Games he sent a huge bouquet of flowers to Gail, and then he sent one to me as well.

G: I think at the time when we left him he was upset, and he was like a bit, not off with us but obviously he was a bit disappointed that we had chosen to leave him. He knew it was what we should do but it was hard to accept. But I still speak to him now and stuff, and he sent us flowers, his ones to Emily told her to keep working to 2004 and you'll make it, something like that.

E: He was a great introductory coach, lots of fun, just what you needed. Then when we moved to Salford, we did really, really well there. We did the Nationals and came 5th and 6th, so we made the jump up to where we needed to be. We stayed there for a good few years, 6 years we stayed there.

G: We both got our first international while we were there.

E: You did all like Europeans and stuff there.

G: And Manchester Commonwealth Games while I was there.

E: It was that step from going from recreational to proper club training, and we were part of national squads and stuff.

G: We were happy there for a while, and then I can't remember really.

E: I didn't really get on with the coach that well,

G: Facilities weren't really the best either, like they were good, but there is better about. We had worked with Amanda Kirby, the coach in Liverpool, a bit and really enjoyed it. We just didn't feel like, we didn't really have a beam coach because with it being a guy he obviously doesn't really do beam and choreography and stuff so much, and he had like 2 kids so sometimes he wasn't in. We didn't feel it was really working for us, we got to a point where we weren't really happy there either, but we knew it wasn't the gymnastics. It was one of the hardest things we have ever had to do, to go in and tell him.

E: We told our mum we want to move on, we want to go to Liverpool, and she said right if that is the case then you are going to have to do it, you are going to have to go in and tell him.

G: I texted the coach and said can we have a meeting.

E: And then we went in and Gail was like, can you do the talking, and my voice was all like, aarrg.

G: I think he thought we wanted to talk to him about something like college or school or whatever, and then we were like we want to move, and he was like to where, and like Liverpool was like a really big rival club, and for a while after they didn't really talk to us.

E: It was so hard, but we had to do what was right for us. I think for so long we had stayed there because we felt...

G: Loyalty, we felt we had to stay there, but you get to the point that you have to be selfish and do what is best for you not for other people.

E: And then within a couple of months competed at like the Northern European Champs and I won that, the all around.

G: And just the whole love of the sport came back again.

E: We made another step up in terms of our own performances. We loved it with Amanda. I wouldn't have ever moved from there, she was our kind of coach, on that works for us. She was disappointed when we retired, she was like there is more in you that I can get out. But when your heart is not in it you are never going to achieve it, I don't think. It was really hard to tell Amanda that we wanted to retire.

G: Because Amanda always treated us as individuals as well. She took us in to her office like separately, and Emily came out crying and I was like, oh my god I have got to go in now, and then I came out crying. And then Amanda was like, we got her some flowers and everything just to say thanks, and she was like now go quick before I start crying. And then they did a big presentation for us at the British Championships, a special retirement thing for us, because they said we didn't get to fuss over you when you did retire so they made a big fuss over us afterwards. We are still in touch with everyone at Liverpool.

E: Amanda said to us, look even if you just go to doing single sessions or like a couple of nights a week you can do that. And for a while I was like, I missed it, and I was like you know I could go back and do 4 nights a week or maybe just single sessions, and then we started diving so then that was it really.

G: I do still miss gymnastics though. Although I love diving to bits, it is not gymnastics. There are so many things about gymnastics I miss. There are a lot of things I don't miss, don't get me wrong, but I miss doing certain things. I miss beam, I would love to get up there and do some of it, see how much I could still do.

E: I miss the whole like prettiness, like the glitter on your hair.

G: Diving you get all wet and horrible.

E: You come out and your hair is all knotted. Whereas in gymnastics you always had nice glittery leotards and make up done and hair nice.

G: It is just silly little things like that I think.

E: But I do not miss the sore hands from bars.

G: And the stamina. Now it is like one skill and then rest, whereas there was so much stamina needed for gymnastics.

E: I used to have to sleep with gloves on, all the time, because my hands were so sore. I don't miss that.

G: I don't miss the vault landings, they were always so hard that your feet would kill. You land and it would be so sore.

E: I don't miss the way that I used to lose my fitness so quickly with gymnastics I would take a 2 week holiday and then come back, and oh my god a routine was like a marathon, it used to kill me. Building up the fitness took so long but you would lose it so quickly.

G: Whereas diving is like learning new moves every day. I used to love that part of gym, like after competition you would have new moves to learn, diving is kind of like that.

E: I don't miss getting weighed. Used to get weighed as a gymnast, don't miss that.

G: Gymnastics was a lot tougher, just the training, because we used to have to do like 5 routines, and you used to have to stay there until you had done it, whereas with diving you might do 5-a-piece, and then move on. Though now we are at Leeds they are a lot stricter, I can relate it more to gymnastics training. Whereas in Sheffield it was like you had to do so many and then once you had done them you could move on, you could just do them, whereas in Leeds you have to do so many to the best of your ability. Sometimes they have competitions where you have to rip to move on, or you have to do all your dives and score 8 on all of them, or you have to start again, different things like that.

E: I think as athletes we push ourselves as well. We get to set our own routine on a Wednesday morning and a Friday morning, and we always put stuff on it that we don't like, because we know they need to be done.

G: We always get to it and be like, oh god why do we put this on our work out, but we know that there is no point in running away from it and we know that it is going to make us better divers, so we make ourselves do it. But I think that comes from our gymnastics backgrounds because some of the other divers are like, wouldn't chose to do that.

E: I like the feeling of working hard, like to be aching, and I think that is a gymnastics thing as well.

OG: What were your parents reactions to you deciding to retire from gymnastics?

G: My dad was never really involved with our gymnastics, he obviously supported us and stuff, he would watch us at competitions.

E: But he didn't ever take us to and from because he was always working and stuff. But mum was completely supportive, she was like it is entirely your decision.

G: I think she knew that the time was going to come sooner rather than later.

E: She was just like whatever you want to do, if you want to do it, I'll support you, if you don't want to do it, that's fine. She just wanted us to be happy.

G: She wanted us to do what we wanted and not feel like we were forced into doing anything. I mean she said that from when we were little, because you get some pushy parents. Like kids who would say I don't want to do this, and you would ask well why are you doing it, and it is well my mum won't let me stop. My mum was always like the day you turn round and tell me you want to quit is the day you quit, she was always like that.

E: Our parents couldn't have been any better throughout our whole careers. They always wanted what was best for us and what we want.

OG: Do you think that it helped your decision to retire that you had done what you wanted to do?

E: Yes, definitely. I knew it was the time. I spoke to another ex-gymnast who was in Liverpool, and kind of said like how do I tell Amanda and whatever, and she was like look you know when the time is right, I was the same, you just know yourself.

G: I think with having achieved what we had, we knew that nothing else was realistic.

E: It was like, I am happy and content with that. There were so many young kids coming up, and the way my body was feeling, it was like it is my time, I know it is. Didn't want to hang on and then maybe be forced out by an injury, which would be a bad way to finish. I mean I knew in myself that that was it.

OG: Did you ever have any moments when you considered going back?

E: I had moments, thought I could maybe go back, do a few sessions.

G: A couple of times, yes.

E: I still love to go in a gym and play around now.

G: Yeah, I do. We were at Ponds Forge the other week when we were still at Sheffield, and someone said something about a free cartwheel and how do you do it, and someone else was like, she'll be able to do it, she used to be a gymnast. I was like hmm, maybe, and just tried it and did it, and it was well fun. I loved doing it. I would love to know what I could still do, I would love to go in the gym and just try it. At Leeds Met Uni they have a gym, at Carnegie, a good gym apparently, and I was thinking I could go and see what I could still do.

OG: Did you ever consider going back in to do display gymnastics or anything like that?

G: Not really. I think because diving has taken over, there hasn't been a chance.

E: We did consider maybe doing Cirque du Soleil at some point.

G: We thought about that before we even retired from gym, but you have to move to Canada to do that, and I got homesick living in Sheffield.

E: We are finally settled now, living away from home, we are okay now. But to start with we were terrible.

G: It was like, mum how do we put the washing machine on, how do we turn the oven on, because my mum had done it all for us. When we first started diving it was like, right we have got all this uni work to do, we have got the cooking and cleaning, we have got ironing, and then trying to train as well, and we weren't used to doing all that.

E: But we are getting there now. And not so homesick anymore. But I think that is because we are happy. A lot of it was when we were unhappy, I would miss home.

OG: Do you feel like you are divers now? Or do you still feel like you are gymnasts?

E: I think now I am a diver, but to start with it would be like...

G: I need to go to the gym, no not the gym, the pool I mean, the pool. I have just finished at the gym, no I have just finished at the pool.

E: I would always be saying things like that.

G: But now it is starting to sink in. I am starting to learn where my head is. As a gymnast we didn't spot, and we were taught if it is going wrong, tuck your head under. But as a diver it is totally different. We really struggled doing front one and a half, people would call us, but it was really hard to look for the water, alien feeling.

E: I still find I count, like one, two and then I look. It is like you know where you are. But like when you are taught like back double pike on floor as a gymnast, you are taught to feel it, not to look for the floor.

G: But I think it does help because you can feel it and you can spot. Like a lot of people struggle because they go to a different pool and they can't find something that they can spot. We have not done a great deal of diving outdoors but when we were in America on holiday we did a weeks training afterwards, just some simple line ups first, and the sun was there and you can't see, it is juts so different, the sky is blue and the water is blue. But when you also use feel then it helps, because you can feel where you are too, so do 1, 2 and then look.

OG: How quickly after you finished gymnastics did you start diving?

E: You know it was actually quicker than I thought it was. We finished in like April, after Commonwealths and the British teams, and then by like May or June, I think it was May we did a diving lesson and then June was when we had our testing day. It was a lot quicker than I remember. Like I remember having a crazy couple of months, but it couldn't have been that long. We had our testing day and then because it was competition season all the diving coaches went away, so we didn't start properly till August. So we had another month or so then, we had exams and we went on holiday. August the 2nd was the day we started diving.

G: I can remember sat on the plane home, and we got talking to some of the boxers on the Scottish team, and he was like I hope you are going to be in Beijing, and I was like oh no, but I will be in the next Commonwealths though, but as a diver. And they all just looked at me like yeah, whatever. But then we saw them at the EIS in Sheffield and they were like what are you doing here, and we were like oh we are diving, and they said my you said that on the way back on the plane, and it was like told you.

OG: When you were thinking about finishing gymnastics, what was going through your minds as what you were going to do next, not in terms of sport, but in life in general?

G: Absolutely nothing.

E: Didn't have a clue.

G: We were in the middle of finishing our A levels and stuff, but we didn't even get a job or anything. I just enjoyed the freedom.

E: I think because for so long we hadn't really had much of a life, other than gymnastics, it was like right I am going to enjoy this. We went out and stuff.

G: I don't think I had ever even been drunk before I finished gym.

E: We were quite strict athletes, even on our 18th birthday we didn't even drink. It was like we didn't drink and that was just the way it was. I didn't drink I ate really healthy, I was always in bed at a reasonable time. And then it was like we went a bit crazy really.

G: Not crazy really, just normal teenagers. We went and got our belly buttons pierced, because we had wanted that done for ages but there was no way you could have with gym. So we got that done.

E: And we just enjoyed going out didn't we, we were just like normal teenagers.

G: We didn't settle down or get a job or anything.

E: But we had applied for uni as well so we knew that was coming up. So we kind of went on holiday and just enjoyed some time without sport. We went to Alton Towers and all the things like that. We started diving in August so we just enjoyed the summer.

G: But I think we did that and we decided that it wasn't really us.

E: It was like right I've done that, but it wasn't me.

G: Someone said that to us, they said now we know you have come into diving, you have tried that other lifestyle, said that wasn't you, and put yourself back into this environment because you said you want to. So we know you will be here because you want to.

E: I think it was like, once an athlete, always an athlete.

G: I think it was, I've done 2 Commonwealths, best experiences of my life, and like to have the opportunities to do another one, especially with Emily right next to me, it is just out of this world. There was questions as to whether diving was going to be in Delhi, but it definitely is.

E: Just the thought of maybe being able to compete in the Commonwealths again.

G: I want Glasgow to get 2014 and to do that one too. It was like, I'll do the 2010 Commonwealths, then the 2012 Olympics, then the 2014 Commonwealths and finish there.

OG: You obviously spoke to each other when you were thinking about retiring. Did you speak to anyone else about it?

G: I think we were each others support, I think we always have been. We had both kind of made our mind up anyway.

E: I think we both felt the same anyway. I suppose I had spoken to some of the ones from Athens, like Katie Lennon, and said oh I am thinking about retiring, and she was like well look you will know if the time is right. And I did. And she was like if that is how you feel, then go for it.

G: I think I more told people rather than ask for advice, because I think I knew in myself and I didn't really need someone to tell me. I just spoke to them about it, asking about the best way to go about telling my coach, or how they felt once they retired and stuff. Didn't feel I needed help to make that decision.

OG: Did you feel like it left a big gap initially?

E: Well, yes, because it was our life. But I think we just went to college a lot more, and whereas we would go to college and then go straight to gym after that, we would go to college and then have some free periods with other people and socialise with our friends, and then be able to go out. We both got boyfriends when we finished gym, our life got filled up with other kinds of things.

G: To start with though you go from doing 33 hours a week to nothing, which was a massive shock. It was like, oh my god what am I going to do with myself. But we had A levels so we had a lot of studying to do. We had things to sort of fill the time.

E: We had missed a lot of work from being at the Commonwealths so we had a lot of work to do.

G: But then we did our exams and I think literally two days after we finished our exams we went on holiday, and then we had our college prom. Summer was just sort of filled up with things like that and then before we knew it we started diving.

E: I remember driving to the pool, and a couple of times thinking, my god how much has our lives turned around. A month ago we were living at home, now we are living away, diving, it was such a change.

G: It was quite scary. We wouldn't have been able to do it without each other.

E: We were saying that yesterday to one of my best friends, like if someone said to me, come to Sheffield on a diving trial and I had been on my own, I couldn't have done it.

G: Like at first we were living in a hotel, and to live in a hotel on your own would have been awful. You got like a budget for your dinner so you could go out for something to eat, but you wouldn't go out on your own would you. Obviously we have always had each other.

E: We could go to the cinema together or whatever. Like some of my friends might be I want to go shopping but I have not got anyone to go with, well I have always got someone to go with.

G: It is someone who really understands it all as well. Like I have got best friends at home who are from college, and they try and understand as best they can, but they really don't fully understand. It is not their fault, because they have never been an athlete.

E: We have got some quite close friends within diving now, and some from gymnastics, so we can talk to them.

G: Becky is one of the ones we are friends with now, she is from gymnastics too, and we have got so much in common with her, we just clicked.

E: And even like Beth Tweddle, we were really good friends with Beth and we still keep in contact with her. Because you can relate to each other, you know exactly what each other are going through. The friends who are within the sport, you can just relate to them so easily.

G: Just the whole lifestyle and everything.

E: And so you can help each other so much when things are hard.

OG: Obviously Scottish Gymnastics had some part to play in helping you get started in diving, but did they offer you any other support during your career or when you finished?

G: Well sportscotland used to give us some funding, we used to get like money towards training expenses which obviously helped my parents out a big deal. My parents relied on that because it was a lot of money to have to support two of us, obviously it is not just one person. They used to pay for all our training, camps and things, we used to get kit from them too. We didn't get any support for retirement.

OG: Is that something that could have been useful?

G: Maybe. I think it is hard for me to say because I had Emily there, I had someone to go through it with. I don't know what it would be like going through it on your own, it is hard to say.

OG: What do you think it would have been like if you had retired at different times?

E: Weird.

G: That would have been very weird. Like I couldn't imagine me not doing anything and Emily being like. I'm going to the gym now, or vice versa.

E: I think if one of us if our heart truly was in it and the other one wasn't, I don't think it would influence each other that much. Like we do influence each other, but not to that extent. Because if I had really not wanted to then I wouldn't have done, certainly wouldn't have done it just because Gail was.

G: It is something that we might have to deal with in diving if one of us decides to stop before the other. I think that is why we have started, in training they have started to treat us more as individuals, because if one of us was to get an injury or whatever, then if the only training we had been doing was synchro then that is a problem.

E: It would be so difficult, because of the flat and stuff too. Like if one of us stopped and wanted to move home, then what does the other one do with the flat. But I guess we would just have to face that if it ever happened.

G: Normally we do tend to feel the same way about most things though, which makes things quite easy. We tend to like the same things, the same clothes, the same boys even, everything.

OG: If you were to go back and do your gymnastics careers over again, is there anything you would change, anything you would do differently?

G: Move to Liverpool earlier.

E: Yeah, I would have moved to Liverpool straight away, instead of moving to Salford first.

G: I would have stopped when I got injured the first time, so that it would not have become such a big injury, instead of trying just to keep going with it.

E: You probably wouldn't have moved away from home.

G: Yeah, I wouldn't have gone to Lilleshall, I would have stayed and trained at home. Before the Athens Olympics they tried the whole centralised training thing, they took 8 gymnasts to Lilleshall, kind of the 8 that they planned to take out to Athens, and it was there that my back got bad and all my problems kind of started, and obviously I was really unhappy being separated from Emily, I get homesick anyway when I am away. We lived in a bed and breakfast because we were under 18, and I shared a bed with someone, and someone else had like a little wooden bed on the floor, it wasn't ideal at all. And Emily was at home training with Amanda, really, really happy and doing really, really well.

E: I was learning new things, but I couldn't ring her up and say oh I'm doing this, I've done that, because I knew she wasn't happy.

G: I wasn't happy there, and then my back got bad and I went home anyway. So I kind of put up with unhappiness for so long and then didn't get anything from it in the end anyway. So looking back I wouldn't have moved, I would have said no, I'm going to stay at home and train. But we didn't really have a choice, it was like you are selected to come to Lilleshall.

OG: Was there a physical side to retiring from gymnastics? How did it feel to go from 30 hours a week of training to nothing?

G: Horrible.

E: Hated it.

G: I put on weight when I finished gym. Half of that was the fact that I went out and enjoyed myself, I was like I can eat this if I want now. We would go out for a drink a lot more, we would go out for meals, we would eat chocolate and stuff like that.

E: Because as athletes we were so health conscious and we eat healthily, as soon as we weren't athletes anymore it was like, yes I can let myself go now.

G: We went from eating healthily and exercising to not exercising and eating unhealthily. So it was kind of like, the other extreme.

E: It has changed again now we are diving.

G: Like I quit gym and my weight went up and stuff, and then started diving and eating healthily, and the weight has just dropped off again. Back in the athlete lifestyle again, although I wouldn't say diving is as strict by any means. But also you are older and the coaches appreciate that you are older, and so don't mind if you are having an occasional drink, it is about everything in moderation.

OG: Is there any recommendations you can make to other gymnasts who are coming to the end of their gymnastics careers, things they should be thinking about or doing?

E: I would advise them to plan out what they are going to do when they have retired, because it is just such a big hole in your life, and it takes over your life. We didn't really plan anything did we.

G: We didn't, we kind of just drifted. But I know a couple of other gymnasts, one of them went straight into college, got a job, and I think that is the way to do it. Don't do what we did.

E: Yeah I would say just plan what you are going to do with your life, what you want to do.

G: Give yourself something to work for, because obviously you train so much, it is always in the back of your mind, and then when you stop it is like, oh what now. You need to have other goals and things to work towards, in life in general.

E: When I quit gym I realised that I needed something to work towards, I couldn't just drift.

G: Leon Taylor is a classic example, had everything planned out, knew exactly what he wanted to do and what his plans were. And that is what he is like, but it is the way to do it. I need that, need to know where I am going and how I am going to get there.

E: I think that is why we didn't like the couple of months that we had off, because we were kind of just like, whatever, and just drifted through it, but now we have structure back in our lives it is like, right happy again now, this is what I want to do.

OG Do you have plans now for where you want to go in the future, after you finish your degrees?

E: I want to do sport psychology, Gail likes the nutrition stuff, but we don't really know.

G: We said that we could set up our own practice, Emily can do sport psychology and I can do nutrition.

E: But we don't really know to be honest.

G: At the moment I am really just concentrating on my diving. But I know that I want to do something connected to sport, I am such a sporty person.

E: When I was out in Athens, there was a sport psychologist that worked with us out there. After studying it at A level I really enjoyed it, and I was like I would love to do that because I can relate to it. I would love to work with athletes, know what they are going through, and help them to work through it. So ever since Athens I have thought that I would like to do sport psychology. So I am hopefully going to get my degree and then take it from there. See where my diving takes me.

G: We have always said that education is important, because if they diving doesn't take off then you need to have something else.

E: Like if you get a career-ending injury, if sport was the only thing then you are left with nothing. So even if the education is part-time then you have got something there.

G: And the things we have done education wise we have done well, and I think time management comes into that, and the effort that you put into things.

E: If we are going to do something then we are going to do it properly. Like in our GCSE's we got the same, the same marks in the same subjects. We got like 1 A*, 5 A's and a B, so what we did we did really well. And the same with our A levels, I got 2 A's, and you got an A and a B.

G: I was really disappointed that I got a B as well.

E: It was better than trying to do loads and not doing as well in them. Our parents were really supportive of it which helped, realised where our priorities were but also wanted us to continue with our education as well.

G: We have both always put a lot of effort into whatever we do. I mean we've done our first year at uni and we both got 1sts in all of the subjects we did. I think it is just an athlete thing again, if you are going to do anything then you are going to put everything into it, don't do it by half. We've got all the time management skills to make sure we can do it all. Like we are going away to Texas, but we will make sure that the work is done before we go.

E: Rather than the night before. I mean some of my uni friends sit up till 4 o'clock in the morning the night before, whereas I am like I did that 2 weeks ago. I don't understand. We are busier than them but we can get it done.

G: But my mum always used to say, if you want something done ask a busy person. We are quite organised in all aspects of our lives. I always have a list of everything that needs done, what needs done first, that is the way I work.

OG: Is there anything else you want to tell me, about your careers in sport or about retirement?

E: I think we have covered most things. We never stop talking.

END

PENELOPE (Curling)

25th October 2007

OG: Can you start me off by telling me the story of your curling career?

P: Well I started playing when I was about 13 and quite quickly moved up the ranks and got to the stage where I could qualify to play for Scotland. In 1992 I won the Scottish Championships and went to the Winter Olympics and the World Championships. The Olympics was like a bonus, it was just a laugh, because it was a demonstration sport then. But we got all the kit and we got all the kit, so it gave you something, it gives you the Olympic buzz, and thought yeah, I'd really like to do this again. So that was in 1992, and then in 2002, I played with Rhona in the 2000 World Championships and from there it was a points basis so you could get to the next Olympics, we had got our place a year out so we had a year to train, which was fantastic because we were really well funded so you could pick and choose where you wanted to go. We went to the Olympics in 2002 and got the gold medal, and then it was quite good for a couple of years, and then for the 2006 Olympics they had a squad system. I didn't like the idea of that, there were too much favouritism, because curling's quite secluded, there is a little group and I think people got picked or got different treatment because of favouritism. It kind of put me off the whole thing, I mean I got to go and we didn't do anything because the team had only been put together in the December. The team that was picked went to the European Championship in December and the team that they put on the ice for the first time had never all curled together in the whole squad system. So we went to the Olympics, and we tried hard as a 5 to try and, well we thought we're just going to have to get on with this, they are not going to help us, let's win this and let's do well, but it was just too hard for us all to do together without any help. It was a completely different experience to the one before, the coach was the same in 2002 as in 2006, but it was completely different, he didn't have any, there was one overall coach and he was the one pulling the strings, it just really all put me off. So then after that we had a year and we thought we'll just have a laugh, if we do well then we do well. We got to the European Championships and came 4th and then we lost in the Scottish Final and I thought no that's it, enough's enough, I didn't have a goal anymore because I didn't want to go to the next Olympics because it was a squad system again, so I retired and now I'm coaching, and that's it.

OG: What else were you doing alongside your curling and how much training were you doing?

P: In the run up to the 2002 Olympics I was working 2 days, then training the rest of the week with gym and ice training, and also one-to-one training with the coaches. For 2006 we were funded to go full time just for the last, well for January and February before the Games started, which was great, it was really good.

OG: What were you doing work wise when you were training two days a week?

P: I work at Standard Life, admin for pensions. They were fantastic, right from when I joined in 1987 and I won the Scottish Juniors that year they gave me time off straight away, so even from stepping into the company I got sports leave. So they have been great, really flexible. The year after we won the Olympics I needed a lot of time off to go and do various things that we were getting asked to do, and they also gave me time for that. I have gone back there and I am doing 4 days now. So I started full time, then I cut back to 2 days, then nothing when I was full time training, and now back up to 4 days. Even when I went full time in curling I was still employed, after all it was only for 2 months, so I took some unpaid leave, they gave me some leave, I took some unpaid, and I got funded.

OG: What are some of the differences between training part time and training full time?

P: I think just knowing that you didn't have to cram everything in, you worked Monday and Tuesday, so you were cramming it all in Wednesday, Thursday, and often you were competing Friday, Saturday, Sunday, whereas you could spread it out more, otherwise you were rushing to the gym and then straight up to

the ice rink, you know, and you were constant for about 3 or 4 hours, which is quite tough. So you just had more time, I had more time to organise everything else, aside from sport. I mean my partner was very supportive, he was great, he just let me go off which was quite good. I had my parents as well, and Scott's parents too, they were just great.

OG: How important would you say curling was to you at that time?

P: It was just kind of everything, it was constant. Curling is a seasonable sport, kind of September to March, but when you were in Olympic year it was all during the summer as well, we had squads, we went away to Cyprus for a week to a training camp, which was good, it was during the summer so it was constant and then you got back on the ice and it was as if you had never been away. And we were curling during the summer as well.

OG: What were the high points in your career, the most significant things?

P: Well, obviously the gold medal, and then everything after that. For about 6 months to a year we were at loads of things, we started the Balmoral run, just little things, being involved with people, like Jimmy Saville, meeting him, you know, it was all the people you met in that space of time. It was just fantastic, what we did, the awards we won as a team for what we had done. There was a service in St Pauls Cathedral and all these people saw us and they knew who we were, because so many people had watched it. When we came home we would meet people at various things and everybody wanted to tell you what they were doing that night, they wanted to tell you who they were with, how they'd reacted, it was amazing, I wish I could have taped everybody and got all these stories, it was brilliant. So that was a high point as well, knowing that people had watched it, and the amount of contact, people found out that I worked at Standard Life and the amount of messages. It was good to know that we had highlighted the sport if you like, brought it to the forefront, and then there was a flurry of activity with curling which was good. It also got the sport more funding as well which brings on more kids.

OG: What about the lows?

P: When we came back from the Olympics, it was about a week later and we went to play in the Scottish Championships and we lost in the final, and that was one we really wanted to go to because it is almost a kind of tail off event because the Olympics is the hype, and then the worlds, well it is not more low key because it is still fantastic to travel and win that, but anyway we lost in the Scottish Finals so we didn't go to those worlds, so that was a low point.

OG: And do you think that came as a result of trying to come down off the Olympic hype?

P: Yes, possibly, yes, well we didn't play well enough and the team that beat us won the world championships, so you can't take it away from them either. So that was a low point. So a lot of things that happened that year curling-wise, we didn't win the big events, that was a difficult time, it was tough. And then another low point obviously was the 2006 Olympics, it was just awful. You always look back on something you have been to before, and I just felt that it was so badly managed, corrupt, for want of a better word.

OG: Early in your career, did you have ambitions for what you wanted to achieve in curling?

P: Not really, I won the Scottish when I was 19, so the goal then was always to play for Scotland, the Olympics was never there. And then in 1992 we had just formed a team and started to play quite well, won the Scottish, and all it was we wanted to play for Scotland and all of a sudden it was, here you are going to the Olympics as well, we got the GB thing. And then, once it became a sport, you thought, well I really want to do that. So your goals changed, it was always like, well I want to represent my country, but then it was an addition to then want to represent Great Britain.

OG: Looking back, is there anything you really miss about being a curler?

P: I think in the long run I am going to miss the people, miss seeing the people, you have grown up with these people. So every year you spend a lot of time in these people's company, and although you don't necessarily keep in touch all the time you always catch up in curling season, so I think in the long run I'll miss that. I suppose I'll miss the recognition part of it as well, people knowing who you are, your association with curling, seeing people curling and thinking, I'd still like to be doing that. I don't miss the training and the reporting and everything that the Institute asked you to do, because I think sometimes the things the Institute asked you to do, like seeing the lifestyle person and the nutritionist, it was just ticking boxes for

them, you didn't necessarily get a follow up on it. They throw everything at you, maybe at one training weekend, then you have to follow it up, but at the same time you are doing your training, doing your fitness, you're playing in competitions, you're working, you've got kids, and then at the end of the season they will be like, why didn't you use them, and you are like, you know what I didn't have time. So I won't miss that at all.

OG: Were there any sacrifices you made for curling, in other aspects of your life?

P: I don't think I really put anything on hold. I missed out on a lot of things. I mean, in 2002 they were in primary 1, so I missed a lot during that. I don't feel that they missed out on anything, but then as it goes on and on you think, I can't continue this. I mean, they are going to start high school next year, I just can't keep training loads and not working, and missing out on the important schooling years. But I didn't put anything on hold that I can think about now. It did help that my work were so supportive and flexible, there was no worry financially, or having a career at the end of it, because that was always there.

OG: What about things like family holidays?

P: We still had holidays, because if you are not in the Olympic year there is no training during the summer, well odd weekends but not as constant, so we still did all that, yeah. I was starting to feel a bit selfish as it was always me and my time, like oh well I'm doing this, but then I thought this year it is going to be better, and then I started coaching a junior team and they are like lets do this, and I'm saying, sorry, I've got to coach, so it is just starting all over again although it is not quite as busy.

OG: Talk to me some more now about your retirement – your decision to retire, what led to that, and what happened afterwards.

P: Well last season it was more, we joined up with two girls who we got on well with in the Olympic squad, we joined up with them and thought well we'll go for this season, if we succeed then great, but what we want to do is have a laugh, because it was so intense the season before, with all the squad stuff. So as I said before we got to the European Championships, came 4th, and then got beat in the Scottish finals, so we did have quite a successful season, although not as successful as we wanted because our aim was to win both the European qualifier and the Scottish Championships, maybe out of spite slightly so then when we didn't apply for the Olympic squad they would have to come and ask us why we weren't applying, but we were just being petty because of the whole squad system. So anyway when that happened, well Rhona was trying to find a job at the time and she got the job at the Scottish Institute of Sport, who then said she couldn't do it along with her job because of the coach programme. She was kind of at the stage of thinking that she'd had enough, because she is on her own with the kids and she was just running about all of the time, dropping the kids off with different people, and said I just can't keep doing this. So she had kind of half said that she wasn't going to play and then there was 3 of us left and I thought, I don't really want to do it without Rhona, I've been with her since the year 2000, we've had our Olympics, and I thought I don't want to curl just for the sake of curling, and then have to look for another player. I was getting fed up getting beat in finals and things like that and I thought I don't want to scrape about in curling and just go there for the sake of it. I thought maybe you should just stop when you are on a high, when I can remember myself as a good curler, not as somebody who has just scrapped about. I made the decision, told the Institute, and I never even got a response from the head coach, who was just new but it doesn't matter, he knew who I was. So I didn't get any response, and that kind of made me think, well, they didn't care. So I was fine during the summer and then the draw came out for the European play-off and we would have been in that and it is this weekend, and I was just like, what have I done? But that kind of passed and now I'm alright, although my junior team have booked a practice for Sunday up in Perth where the European competition is being played, and I am going to have to go up there. I think it will be difficult to go back into that environment, I'm kind of hoping the girls will maybe be finished, playing Friday, Saturday, and that it's done by Sunday morning. So I think that before I went to the first coaching weekend, I think I was missing it more, and then when we got into coaching, people are coaching that I curled with years ago, so it is like a little coaching group now rather than a curling group. So I have been on three weekends now and it's all the same people which is nice actually. So you know you are at the ice rink, people are still seeing you, I have not dropped completely away from the sport which I think is quite good, I think that has kind of saved me a bit, I think I would have been feeling a lot worse about it.

OG: How difficult a decision was it then, to decide to stop when you did?

P: At the time it wasn't that big, because I was so hacked off at getting beat, at not getting to the Worlds, and I think the Institute review was coming up, the end of year review, and I thought I just can't be bothered with this anymore, I can't be bothered, I've done it for 7 years, sending in your fitness things every

week and getting no response, I'd just had enough. So it wasn't a huge decision, I mean I made it quickly, because my partner Scott was like, are you sure, and I was like yes I'm not up for it anymore. When I told my mum she was like, thank god, she found watching curling so stressful, so somebody at least was happy.

OG: And what were the reactions of the rest of your family, your partner, kids?

P: They were fine, they don't really know, you know, they've got no understanding of it really, apart from the fact that I am away all the time. But they are not that bothered, they got dragged about everywhere anyway, and still do. Scott was quite pleased, thinking I would be at home more, but that hasn't really been the case.

OG: And did you go straight back into working the 4 days once you made the decision

P: I just changed that after the summer holidays, so I have just done a month, and I'm hating it (laughs). I was working 18 hours and I have upped it to 28 over 4 days now, so being in there for 4 days is a big change, but at least I still get Friday off.

OG: How much do you think your life has changed now that you are no longer a curler?

P: Because the season is just starting, nothing much has changed really so far, but I think after this weekend, then once it has started to get into Championship time, I don't know, I think I'll be a little bit regretful. But I'm not any quieter because I'm coaching so I don't feel any different apart from the fact that I am not training and I'm not competing. I think after this season I'll know better if I have made the right decision.

OG: If you got to the end of the season and decided that it was the wrong decision, would you consider going back in?

P: I think I have drawn a line under it now because the next Olympics would be 2010, so if you went back next year that would be in the Olympic cycle, teams will be chosen by then, I mean the squad and everything.

OG: If things had gone better in 2006, do you think you would have given up when you did?

P: I think I would still have faith in the people that were involved in running the sport, but in 2006 I started to lose it and in 2007 I completely lost faith in it. I don't like a sport where there are favourites all the time, I've never been a favourite, it's just awful. I've been involved in the juniors, one weekend I was away with them, and they were telling me about their squad system, and I thought god it's starting at junior level. I was speaking to somebody who helped out with the wheelchair curling, she was telling me stuff and it's exactly the same, it is right through the whole sport, it's really bad, and I think god I've got them (her daughters) into curling and that is what they are going into. But it is all politics and I don't like politics in sport, but it's always going to happen because there is so much money involved. People moan about politics in sport, because everybody can see who the favourites are, but you are like, well there is money that's allowing that to happen, but the money is also allowing us to improve as curlers. But I enjoyed not being a favourite but still winning, because then you are like well you don't really like me but you are going to take me to that championship, so I quite like that. With 2006 I considered not going just because of things that had happened, but I thought do I throw all that away, throw away my chance, and then have to sit and watch it on TV at home. But I was in two minds, it was the closest I'd been to walking away from it.

OG: Did you speak to anybody when you were making the decision to retire, to other curlers, coach, family?

P: I spoke to my partner a lot about it and I spoke to Janice, she was in our 2002 Olympic team and she had had a baby and come back and then had another baby, so she wasn't curling last season, so I spoke to her about it as well, how she had felt, though it was different for her because she was having a baby, so it was her decision and she was quite happy with that. And Rhona and I spoke a lot about it as well, because she was kind of in two minds about taking the job.

OG: When you were curling were most of your friends involved in the sport? Did you have a lot of friends outside the sport?

P: No, I do have friends outside the sport, they refer to themselves as my summer friends, because I really only ever saw them in the summer. One of my friends sent me a text saying, now you are not curling

lets try and get together, and I'm like, well I'm busy with coaching, still busy. So yes, it is funny because you have kind of got two sets of friends. And I'm still seeing a lot of my curling friends at like junior weekends and things like that. It is funny because I came back after my, it was the third weekend, and it was nice because it is a wee coaching group now instead of like competing against these people.

OG: Do you think if you hadn't maintained an involvement in curling that you would have still staying in contact with those people?

P: No, they are people I would have lost contact with, because they are not people that I would phone or text.

OG: Did you always plan to stay involved in the sport, to get involved in coaching?

P: I had started doing, you have got to do qualifications, levels, in order to coach, so I started doing that last season, got my level A coaching, so I was doing after school stuff and some during the day stuff. And then it was just during the summer this girl phoned, and when she said who she was I thought, well I kind of know roughly who you are but I didn't really know many juniors at all, and she was like, I just wondered if you would like to be our coach, we are in the National Academy, there is support for coaching and training, and I was like yes okay, I never really thought about it, and then as it came nearer I thought, oh what have I done. So it wasn't something I thought, oh I am going to put myself out there to be a coach, the opportunity came and I just thought why not. I wouldn't like to have just walked away completely, I am still doing club curling, so you are still in the ice rink, and I think I had to do that because they (her daughters) are curling, so I think if I had walked away from it then they would eventually have thought, can't be bothered with this. But because I was still there or thereabouts...

OG: In terms of doing your coaching levels, were you given any assistance with those, financially or otherwise?

P: No, it was done off my own back. You pay so much just to get the qualification, it is a written thing, about 2 hours, and then you do 10 hours practical, so you get assistance when you are doing your practical, but no, it's voluntary, it's all voluntary.

OG: Where do the governing body fit in, in terms of running the sport and support for athletes?

P: They don't. It is called the Royal Caledonian Curling Club. Basically the Institute, as far as I know, the Institute run it and the Royal Club just tick boxes and agree, because the Institute basically fund the teams to go to major championships, because the Royal Club don't have money.

OG: What about at the junior levels?

P: Well they have got the Institute of Sport which is kind of the elite, if you like, then they have National Academy is what my junior team is in, so they get funded, and then you have still got Area Institute and you've still got Regional Institute, so it is like a pecking order if you like, and obviously the funding gets less as you go down. But as far as I know the Royal Club don't have anything to do with any of it. And that basically comes from the Royal Club being run by people who have never been at an elite level, so they don't have an understanding, they don't get involved in coaching, they don't understand what the curlers need. It is getting better, as the Institute has gone on and they've seen how much benefit money is to the sport and how much the Institute have done for the sport, they are getting more interested. But I think there was a fight years ago, they were like we are in charge of curling and the Institute were like no, if you don't let us do it you're not going to get any more money, so they have come round to thinking we'll be there, we'll support them, we'll give them all the assistance they want. I think it works for them because they take a back seat but they do show their interest as well.

OG: Did you find that there was a physical adjustment aspect to retiring?

P: A little bit. At first I kept going to the gym and I was thinking what do I do now, because I was used to doing my programme, so I started thinking oh I'm going to go on this, and I would go on all the machines, thinking oh we didn't do machines before, so it was a bit exciting going to the gym. Then my membership ran out, and then it was summer holidays, now I have got my cross trainer in the garage. I'm not as fit as I was. I kind of think, yes I do need to keep fit but I don't need to keep doing all these exercises.

OG: Do you think that is an area in which you could have benefited from being given a bit of guidance with?

P: Possibly, yes possibly. I think because we had been training so hard for the Olympic year and then the next year you were still training hard, it was like a relief, and you know it is like you don't have to go to the gym three times a week. But I think you are right, like a de-training programme.

OG: Do you think that curling is a sport that does enough to make sure that the doors are open for people to come back in and give back to the sport?

P: Well I don't think it is actively there. I mean if I had been out of curling for a year then I wouldn't have been asked to coach the following year. If you don't keep your involvement in the sport then opportunities are not going to be there.

OG: Do you think that is an area that could be improved, in terms of maintaining contact with former athletes?

P: I think that it is something that the sport needs to do, because they really need coaches, and it is a voluntary basis but they need younger people involved in it, the people that are just out of curling. I mean we have got some coaches and they have never been at an elite level, never really played in major championships. I just think that some of the ways that the coaching is done, they are teaching the kids bad habits, and I am not slagging off club curling, but they just don't have that little bit of finesse, what is needed for elite level. I do think that, I mean every curler plays for a club so you are in whatever ice rink is closest to you, and I think that is where the opportunity has to be made available for folk to coach. There are development officers that cover basically all the ice rinks in Scotland, so it is their kind of job I suppose to look out for coaches, and I am sure it is being done but not at a high level, you know it is not like it is advertised, if you want to come and coach then contact...

OG: Is there anything else you want to tell me about your experiences in curling, and your retirement, anything you think we haven't covered?

P: We have talked about most of it, I can't really think of anything else. Speak to me in six months time and see if I am still happy being retired (laughs). I mean at the end of the summer I did go through it, was thinking what have I done. I played in a club game with one of the other girls who coaches, she is not playing this year either, and we both played really well and she was like, shall we just put in a late entry. But as I said to her it's great when you are playing well, and you are thinking why did I stop, and then you have bad shots and bad games and you are like, no that's why I stopped. And that was what I always wanted to do, if I had played another year and had a horrible year, that's all you would remember. I've had a lot out of the sport and now I think it is just time to put it back in. I'm still in two minds, because we didn't win a medal in 2006, I don't know whether I should not have gone and really stuck up for my principles. But we did have good fun as a 5, I just thought I would have been making a mistake if I didn't go. So I probably wouldn't have changed that. But then you are thinking about changing it for the future, you are probably not going to change it for the next one, and then for the next one you are bringing up junior curlers who are already in that system, it is right through the sport so you are not going to change things probably.

OG: I just want to say thank you so much for your time and for sharing your experiences, it has been really interesting.

END

LORNA (Football)

19th November 2007

OG: Can you start by telling me the story of your football career.

L: I started playing football when I was primary 5, that was when I started playing for a club, I always played up until then. I played at club level until 6th year at school in the premier league. When I was 14 I started getting involved with the SFA development squads, from there I progressed into the elite squads and then national trials. When I went to uni I stopped playing at club level, I had a lot of other things to take on board, plus time wise I was working, I still played uni football, but that was when I stopped playing at that higher level. When I finished uni I didn't play at all the two years after I finished. I was missing it but I wasn't sure I wanted to go back to the premier league, I felt that it was too serious, too much time, I just wanted to do something fun by that point. This season I bumped into someone who is playing a couple of

divisions down, and she said come along, and since I have been back I have been loving it again, just playing for enjoyment.

OG: What got you started in football?

L: Me and my brother are quite close in age, he is only like a year younger than me, so when we were kids we were always out in the garden. My mum had played football so she did actively encourage me, both my mum and dad encouraged me to play. Played in the garden every day after school, and then when I was at school I was never that bothered about hanging about with the girls at lunchtime, I got my trainers on and went and played football with the guys. I still kept mates with the girls, but also managed to play football every lunchtime. I can't ever remember not playing football, which is why I guess I say I've always played. Just from being a kid, in the garden and whatever, always kicked the ball about. My family all liked football, my mum played as a kid, she actually had to pretend she was a boy so that she could play on the school team, my dad used to take me and my brother down the park to play, just always played.

OG: How much time was football taking up for you back then?

L: A lot. I think in my 5th year at secondary school was the hardest year. I was training with Kilmarnock on a Monday, games on a Sunday, on a Tuesday I had school training, on a Wednesday development squad, on a Thursday elite squad, and then on a Saturday development squad matches. That was at the same time I was doing higher PE, which I picked football for, so I was doing an hour Monday, Tuesday, Thursday, Friday, 2 hours on a Wednesday all at school. So it was pretty much every day, it was very intense for that year.

OG: How important would you say football was to you?

L: It was very important, it was all I did. When other people at 15, 16 were starting to go out and do other things, I wasn't even bothered, I didn't feel like I missed out, I just wanted to play football. If a game was cancelled on a Sunday then I wouldn't know what to do with myself. It was just what I did, I really enjoyed doing it. If I had a bad day at school I would just be sitting thinking about going training. It was quite difficult because I was doing 5 highers at the time, so that meant studying was hard sometimes. Like on a Monday I would come in from school get ready, go training, then I would come in at 8 and have to sit and do a couple of hours studying and whatever. But actually football forced me to study, because I was always a last minute person when it came to studying, but if I had football I knew I had to get it done, it made me more organised. I don't ever remember thinking I didn't want to do it, or thinking I should step back on the football, it was more like that with the school work, I would be thinking I can't be bothered.

OG: Did you have any ambitions at that point for where you wanted your football to go?

L: I guess everyone always hopes that they will make it in something they want to do, it is just natural I think. At the time I was playing for the elite squads and doing really well, on the fringes of the national team. But I never established myself properly at senior elite level, and I always think it was because of my height, because I was so small. So I guess that had been my ambition. I don't think I ever let myself down, I did everything I could do, I just didn't quite make it over that final hurdle. I did used to get angry, thinking it wasn't fair, I knew I was good enough, I was as good as other players who were there, but I guess that was just my opinion. Long term I always had a dream in the back of my head, that maybe I would go to America to play, but then once I started university it took my mind off that and I started to focus on getting uni out of the way and doing that side of things. It is very easy for your focus to shift, you can't put 100% into both, can't be both a footballer and do the other things.

OG: What were your most significant achievements?

L: When I was younger I was involved in a few tournaments for Scotland, and we won a couple of those tournaments. A lot of the players I was playing with went on to the senior national team and are still playing there now. Further down the line just playing for the elite squads was great, an ex-Rangers player was one of our coaches and he always gave me really positive feedback, it got to the point with the senior team that my dad was on the phone asking what I needed to do, and he said he didn't know, that I would be the first pick on a team of his. It is just little comments that make you happy I guess, rather than big events. I scored goals in big games and all the rest of it, but getting that sort of praise from someone who has played at the highest level was great. That is the kind of thing I remember.

OG: Were there any low points?

L: I guess when I was in the elite squads but not getting through into the senior national team, that was quite a low point. I knew I was playing well and was thinking, if I can't do it now then when will I. And then the national coach at the time, she didn't really suit my style of play, she was all about possession, wanted it done in a particular way. So even when I did do something that I considered good I wasn't necessarily getting positive feedback for it. The place where we went to train with the elite squad was an hour and a half from where I lived, so it was get home from school, go straight out, and then not get home till half ten, eleven o'clock, and I remember being injured, hurt my ankle, phoned and told them and the coach told me I still had to go along to see the physio, which was fair enough. Went along, physio said you can't play for 4 or 5 weeks, just need to rest it, gave me exercises to do, but then the coach made me go along every week just to sit there in the rain for an hour and a half, a three hour round trip to get there and back and this was at the time that I was doing my exams and everything. Things like that really got me down and made me question do I really want to do this?

OG: What were the things that you missed about being involved in football, that pushed you to get back involved recently?

L: I liked the structure of my week, having training then having a game at the end of the week. I liked the feeling at the end of the week, getting my stuff ready. I hate Sundays when I don't have football, I found them boring, the day before you go back to work and having a match just made it more structured and more enjoyable. I miss actually playing, I enjoy going out and being involved, the physical aspect of it and the technical aspect, I just enjoy playing the game. I guess if you are at a good level and can play well then you get enjoyment out of doing things well. I liked the fitness side of it, I liked training, I liked games, all of it. The social aspect of it is another thing, because moving to Aberdeen I didn't know that many people, but just from being involved in the football since the summer I already know 15 or 20 girls I didn't know before, and it is a good bunch of girls, I now play 5's with them on a Monday as well, and at the weekend I had them all over for the Scotland game. So the social side of it is an aspect that you take for granted. I didn't actively think about that when I was younger, it is only when it is not there you think you're missing out on something, the team aspect of the involvement.

OG: Is there anything you don't miss about elite level play?

L: I think sometimes at a higher level there are some people who have a certain arrogance, take that too far. I don't miss sitting before a trial, and sometimes who shouts loudest gets in, who is playing up and getting noticed. I don't miss being involved with that kind of mentality. It isn't true of everyone but there is more of that the higher up you get, because people know they're good so they can be a bit louder and whatever about what they can do. I definitely don't miss being around that kind of person. That is probably the only thing I don't miss.

OG: Were a lot of your friends involved in football?

L: At school there was no girls I knew playing football, through primary school definitely not. And then secondary school, I think by the time I was in 4th year I knew a few girls that played football. So probably by the end of school there were 2 or 3 girls that played on my team that were at my school. That was at the time that women's football was growing so there were more and more girls becoming involved. Through school people knew me as the one who plays football, at that time that was what distinguished me, and it was quite unique.

OG: How supportive were your parents of your involvement in football?

L: They were unbelievably, but when you are a kid you don't realise that, you just expect it. I think my mum and dad took me to just about every single training session, every single game, just encouraged me. Mum and dad didn't have a lot of money when I was growing up so for them it was quite a commitment to drive me to training, buy me football boots, and paying money for training too, but they paid all that without question, and encouraged me to play at school and in all the squads. They always kept things balanced for me and my brother and sister, although I was a bit of a geek when I was at school. I always wanted to do well at school too. They probably if anything told me not to worry so much. I remember I had a test, it was maybe in second or third year, and for a subject that I didn't really want to carry on, but I still wanted to do well and would be sitting worrying about. My mum and dad were the opposite, they would be like well don't worry about it, just do your best, don't spend three hours on it. They had to bring me back in because I got really uptight about doing these things at school. They taught me to relax more, to do as much as I could without making myself stressed out about it. It wasn't like they were saying you are not getting to football if you don't study, it was probably the opposite.

OG: Tell me more about how the move to university brought your football career to a close.

L: I don't think it was a conscious decision to drop off from football, I applied for uni way back the previous year so I wasn't thinking that would be my football finished. When I played my last game for Kilmarnock in the May or something I did think a wee bit, I wonder what I'll do when I am at uni, because every other season I finished on the last day and knew when I would be starting for pre-season and everything, so that was a bit odd more than anything else. I didn't consciously think oh I won't play football again. As soon as I was at uni I went along to the freshers fair and started playing for the uni team. But by the time I'd started uni I was working 20 hours a week in Glasgow so that I could afford to stay at uni, and at the same time having classes, and I guess in first year you kind of do more work that you have to, the balance changes as you go, as you realise how much you have to do to get through your course, but in first year I was thinking, oh I've got to do this, and that, and whatever. And then as you get through uni you realise, well I've actually only got two bits of coursework, go to the classes, but at the end of the day these bits of coursework are what counts. So I don't think I consciously decided but I think I realised as I was going through uni that I wasn't playing club football. I went along a couple of times to Newburgh and Falkirk, but I guess I never really felt motivated to do it anymore. I think because I had so many other things. I liked spending time with my mates at the weekend, whereas going to play football again would have meant I would have had training several evenings and games at weekends, and add that to the uni football and I was thinking when would I go out, when would I actually get to see my mates. I guess at that point that was more important. I don't regret not playing through uni because the friends that I've got, I probably wouldn't be as good friends with them if I was only going out once a month and they were always going out together, I would be on the edge of the group if you like. I think you do drift into other things at uni, so before I used to really look forward to training but then it got to the point where it was a bit more like, oh I've got training tonight but I would rather be doing this or that. But I also never found a club I really liked, because when it comes to the senior level a lot of the girls have been playing at the club for years, they have come up through the ranks and they all know each other, and it can be quite hard to break into it. When I first came up here I started to play with Aberdeen for a couple of months, and at that stage I was trying to come back, there wasn't something else I wanted to be doing and I did want to make an effort to get back and play. I knew I missed it by that point because I didn't have the uni social thing going on, I did want football back. But the girls weren't a bunch of girls that were easy to get on with, they knew each other, they didn't make me feel comfortable, and I just didn't enjoy it. But this year I have been lucky that the group of girls playing at this lower level, there are no egos, there are no weird relationships, everyone is just pretty straight forward and a good bunch of girls, quite a few like me who have played previously at a higher level but now just want to play for fun.

OG: When you were at university, did you ever have thoughts about getting back involved at club level?

L: I would have fleeting moments at university when I played well, and would think maybe I would like to challenge myself again, play at a higher level, but I didn't want it enough at the time to really push for it, to make the sacrifices I would need to have made.

OG: Why did you decide not to play at Scottish Universities level after your first year?

L: It was basically that it clashed with work. I had to work every Saturday, that was the one day I had to do, and the training and matches were always held on a Saturday. I couldn't get the time off for it. Also when I had done it the first year I didn't get a huge amount of time on the pitch, so equally I also thought I didn't enjoy it that much. We went all the way to Exeter and the guy had a clear team in his head that he wanted to play, and it makes you think about whether it is worth doing it again. It was in the Easter holidays, and I came back having missed half of my Easter break, and was thinking it was a good experience to say that you've done, but if you don't get that much time on the pitch it is not that fun and knocks you a little bit as well, because you think he doesn't really think I'm good enough, he's brought me along but not really played. So I guess there was a combination of reasons why I didn't go back.

OG: Has there been any period where you stopped training, or have you always kept that going?

L: When I came up to Aberdeen I probably didn't do as much, because football keeps you naturally fit, it is easy to go out and play, but it is much harder to go out for a run if it is raining, windy. It is easier to stay fitter when you are playing. But I don't think I ever stopped training all together. I always go running. Although I think there was a point last year where I thought, why am I running, when I have nothing to train for, it was just what I had always done. I did kind of think what am I training for now, perhaps something in the back of my head said I was going to get back into football in the future. Tony is quite active as well, he was still training and running and so that kind of kept me doing it as well. So I guess I always kept myself reasonably fit, I never got to the stage where I did nothing, I have always been like that since I was a kid, never sat still at that age either.

OG: How important would you say football was to you during your university years?

L: I think it was important for different reasons. Before football was important because I guess it was something that I really loved doing and thought I could do well at, but at uni it wasn't so much about that, it was more about the social aspect and what being involved in the football team got me socially and as a person at uni, not what it did for my football career. I enjoyed playing the games and I think I was lucky that I came into a team that was good and had a bunch of girls that mentally had the same outlook as me, serious about the football but enjoyed the other side of it. I think that football was important for getting me integrated into uni life comfortably and easily. So from that side of it, it was really important, but it was a different kind of important to what it was going through school.

OG: And what about now? Where would you place football in terms of its importance?

L: It probably is as important as it was at uni I guess, again because it takes up a lot of my time and also has that social aspect. That was the hardest thing about moving away, I didn't know anyone and would finish work on a Friday and be like, what am I going to do over the weekend. Whereas now on a Monday night I have got 5's with the girls I have met through football, Friday I have got football here with the guys, so I have met more and more people through it. The social side has been really important. I always feel good when I play football, I feel fit, and feel good about myself. So there is that side of it too. And I look forward to the game at the end of the week, so I like the structure that that gives your week.

OG: What future involvement do you see yourself having in football?

L: I don't know really. As long as I enjoy it I'll play it, and the minute I start thinking do I really want to do training, not really looking forward to it, then I'll re-assess what I'm doing. The team I am in is affiliated to the Premier League team Aberdeen, and the guy has already asked if I would be interested in going back there, but I am not bothered, I know I wouldn't enjoy it. Football has changed its importance and what it gives me isn't a goal to work towards, it just gives me enjoyment from playing. So I am not looking to do anything further with it. That might yet change if I am playing really well and get ambitious again, I might decide to give it one last shot at the higher level, but I don't think so. I think I will probably always play at some level, even if I stop playing for a club in a year or 2, or 5 years or whatever, I'll probably still play fives or something like that, because if you have done it all your life it is difficult to get into a different mind set.

OG: Have you been involved with any other sports apart from football?

L: Not really. At school I did quite a lot of running and cross country, stuff like that. It was always down the pecking order for me, I wasn't too bothered about it. I do like playing things like tennis, but I don't do it a lot. At school when we did other ball sports, hockey, touch rugby, I would always want to be playing football, I found them quite frustrating in comparison. Football was always the main one I wanted to play. And if I'm not any good at something then I don't want to do it, I wouldn't want to join a team in a sport where I wasn't good at it, wouldn't want to embarrass myself.

OG: Is there anything else you want to tell me about your experiences of football, your experiences of stopping?

L: No I don't think so, I think I've covered everything.

END

CATHERINE (Athletics)

27th September 2007

OG: Can you start by telling me a bit about your athletics career?

C: Well it seems like quite a while ago now to be honest, and I have to confess that I've buried quite a lot of it as a possible coping strategy because ultimately it was quite difficult. So I guess I was involved in athletics for about 10 years, in the last 4 or 5 years it was much, much more intense. At first it was just playing around and then as I started to get a bit of success that brought with it pressures. I represented Scotland a few times, didn't ever reach what I thought my potential was because every single summer I got

injured and ultimately I was forced into retirement because I found out that I have got a bone missing in my back, would you believe, genetic disorder apparently, but I finally got my back x-rayed and that showed up, this problem, and after spending thousands of pounds on treatment just realised that it was never going to be...

OG: What were your early sporting influences?

C: It was always something that I quite liked about myself, because I knew ever since being really young, even at primary school, always winning sports day, and you did win a lot of respect for being good at athletics, and I suppose, well it wasn't until I was about 15 or 16 that I started doing the Duke of Edinburgh award scheme, and then I joined a club and it was really through that, there was no parental influence, really, I think it all really came with me and I am quite an achievement orientated person so with a bit of success and seeing that there could be goals there it became a huge thing.

OG: You say your parents didn't influence your involvement, but were they supportive of it?

C: To an extent, but my mum and dad, well my mum used to do athletics, not to the level that I did, but not especially because, well my dad's a wee bit anti-sport anyway. He would probably deny it but I think that he feels that sport in some ways can develop negative personality traits and I have to say now in hindsight that I agree with him and I do actually recall a conversation with him when I first started athletics, when he actually said, because I used to have an issue with him not supporting, they supported me, took me places and all the rest, but I suppose it was more the social support side of it and I think he didn't really, he felt that it was perhaps developing self-centredness, dependency, things that can be slightly negative.

OG: Were a lot of your friends athletes? Did you have a lot of friends outside of sport?

C: Well when I first started to take it seriously, my social network would have been very, very broad, so it would have been university friends, it would have been friends from home, it would have been friends from all different domains of my life, but as I became more and more involved in athletics, and any athlete will tell you this, it is very, very difficult to maintain the contact and the balance with other people, so ultimately what happens is your social network becomes other athletes, which obviously has other consequences in itself.

OG: Can you tell me a bit about your coach, or coaches?

C: I had about five (laughs). Every coach always had a very, very strong influence because they have the power to mediate what your goals are, if those goals are fundamentally important to you, and are the main thing that you are living your life for, then the coach, by the very nature, is going to be extremely important. Looking back on it, in hindsight, there have been negative influences, just flippant comments that might have been made there that really now make me very, very angry, I think there is a lot wrong with the system, there is too many coaches that are out there for their own success and not actually interested in athletes' personal development as well as their athletic development, and I have a real bee in my bonnet about that, as probably related to what you are doing as well, and in hindsight can become very, very angry thinking about it. But I suppose because I got involved in athletics a bit, you know I was passed the sort of identity development stage, I was to a certain extent protected from that, whereas a lot of younger athletes are much, much more at risk.

OG: What were your biggest achievements in your career?

C: Representing Scotland in international competition, unfortunately I never represented Britain, but it's funny because if I think back, the times it probably made me the happiest was when I ran a PB, which I suppose is reflective of my perfectionistic nature. I just want to beat myself all the time, always have these goals, and when you meet them it is sheer elation. So when I recall, it didn't happen very often because of these constant injury problems but when it did it was the best feeling in the world.

OG: Talk to me a bit about how it made you feel when you were injured?

C: It is absolutely horrific, I mean its, when you place a huge amount of your self worth on being able to do something, and to a certain extent your whole sense of self is dependent on success on that one thing, and all of a sudden that's taken away from you through injury, you're in trouble, because there's just a sense of emptiness, and I found it very, very difficult every time. It was constantly running to the physio, constantly honing in on the injury, becoming ridiculously aware and obsessive about it. The support that I had came from my boyfriend at the time, who was totally, totally supportive. In terms of support from the

organisation, it was always minimum to be honest, but that's because I was probably never at a high enough level to have the free physio, I mean I got free subsistence and stuff but it was never at the level to actually have things for free, so the support wasn't always there.

OG: Do you think your coaches' attitudes changed towards you when you were injured?

C: It is very difficult to say because I have had so many different coaches, so it has all kind of become amalgamated now. I was never really out for a huge long period where I could really answer that question, I tended to be out for 4 or 5 weeks here and there, so it is difficult to say. Some coaches were more supportive than others, I never, ever felt this is... I'm too assertive for that, if I felt that it was ridiculous I would have been on his case.

OG: Obviously now through your own research you probably have a very good understanding of why things were so difficult when you were injured, but do you think you understood it at the time?

C: Well the horribly, horribly ironic thing about this was, I suppose I became better and better at athletics as I was doing my PhD, and what I was looking at in my PHD was what are the consequences of being overly invested in sport, and how do athletes cope with things that will affect their identity, and the horrible irony was while I was studying this I was also experiencing it myself. In a sense that's been a really good thing because that's helped me cope, because along the way I was aware of what was happening to me, very very aware, sometimes overly aware, conceptualising it in my head in terms of all sorts of works or whatever. I suppose it is very hard to differentiate, from doing the PhD, there was probably a year or two before the PhD where I was good but not really that good, but still the injuries then still always had a really big impact, a very negative impact, and I didn't have the theoretical knowledge that I had a couple of years later. But I am a very introspective person with an interest in psychology, so I always kind of knew what was going on to be honest with you.

OG: Can you tell me now about your retirement from sport?

C: Well I think, if people ask a simple question like why did you retire I am likely to say, because I found out about this problematic back issue and ultimately that forced me out of the sport, but I suppose if I am being more honest about it, as I was becoming aware during my PhD of the consequences of being overly invested in sport I was also becoming more and more aware of how risky it was for me, so in a sense the back injury was actually quite convenient because it gave me an excuse to walk away and I don't think I would have walked away without having that excuse.

OG: And can you tell me how you felt about retiring?

JM There was a certain degree of relief to be honest with you because I put excessive, excessive pressure on myself, I really, really did, and there was a certain degree of relief of oh my god I can be a normal person now, I can actually do things that I never ever allowed myself to do because my life was so, everything was monitored down to a tee, you know, when I went to bed, what I ate, everything that I did revolved around this and it's destructive. In a way I was responsible for it, and I knew damn well what I was doing, but it was a vicious circle and I really should have taken control of that but it was very, very difficult, I knew I needed to get more balance in my life but I couldn't be the athlete I wanted to be if I did, or so I thought. I don't think that is necessarily the case but when you get in a habit it is very difficult to come out of it. But I think there was a sense of relief that now I've got a proper excuse to walk away without feeling like a failure. And I think ultimately I burnt out of the sport mentally as well and I think there was excessive perfectionism there, over-identification with it, sorry I can't help talking in the technical terms, just because it's bringing back the PhD. So there was relief, but it was difficult, very very difficult. It was actually at this point that I was actually finishing the PhD and it was so ironic, so horribly ironic, but I think that because I had written so many in-depth case studies and heard so many stories, people telling me, you know I would say to them how did you feel when you got that injury, how did you feel when you didn't make the Commonwealth Games, and I had some people turning round and saying to me, I was suicidal, and you know sometimes I just think it is really worth it, and now I resent it, I really do resent it. And I resent the system as well. So there was relief there, and there was, but it was still crushing, it was still shattering on who I was, of course, and oh my god I'm empty now, what am I going to do, but I am sure it wasn't as bad as it would have been had I not being doing the PhD and being so introspective, being kind of aware and able to anticipate. A lot of my PhD also looked at what is the best way for an athlete to cope who is in this situation, so I kind of had a head start to be honest with you.

OG: Did you do any kind of planning for your finish?

C: You know, I can't remember. It seems like so long ago now and I've just kind of blocked it out. I can't even remember what I was doing work wise at the time. I mean there was a lot of psychological preparation going on, through the PhD, and that can't be undermined in its importance. In terms of sort of practical preparation, I think I did, and I can't, did I keep a diary? I mean there was lots and lots of talking, there was lots of using social support and talking about it, there were tears, inevitably. But trying very hard to look at the positives, you know, like there's an opportunity now to do other things, that sort of thing. I'm trying to think what other things, there must have been other things I did, there must have been, I'm sorry I just can't remember.

OG: In terms of your career outside of athletics, you were obviously doing your PhD, were you working alongside training at any time as well?

C: No, because as far as I saw it my athletics was my career, and juggling that with a PhD, there was no way, there wasn't enough time to do everything as it was, so I was just skint and I didn't care.

OG So did you have any financial support for your athletics?

C: I was funded through my PhD and also I suppose partially funded by my boyfriend who is now my husband. I received local authority support, nothing em, bits and pieces here and there but not lottery, not lottery funding.

OG: So did your athletics career cost you a lot of money then?

C: It must have cost an absolute fortune, yes, but again, when it means so much to you, you will do absolutely anything, you know, whatever it takes you are prepared to do it, and I think, things like summer season, you know, traipsing round trying to find good competitions, and if that meant that I would have to go abroad then I was prepared to pay it, I wouldn't think twice about it, and if that was going on credit cards then so be it. Or even you know going down south and having to stay in quite nice hotels because you don't want to have a crap night's sleep and just wasting money, really. And in complete denial about my future, complete denial, not in the slightest bit even thinking about it, which I'm ashamed about, I should have, because I'm suffering now, still suffering from that I believe, just in terms of being 30 years old and, you know, not having a stable career. I've done well, I've achieved a lot, both academically and in sport, but I don't actually have a, you know, I'm not happy with my position in a career in comparison to what my peers probably are.

OG: You feel like you are playing a bit of catch up then?

C: Absolutely. I mean my PhD took me, probably, a year and a half, two years more than it needed to, because of athletics, I would say definitely.

OG: Were there other parts of your life that were put to the side because of athletics?

C: Yeah, I mean I would say every part of my life, it's inevitable. Actually it's not inevitable, some people get it right, some people get the balance right, some people who are not neurotic about it and who are not perfectionist will get the balance right and ironically they'll do well, but people who have my sort of personality profile, it's a risk, and so other areas of my life probably did suffer. I mean I would miss family events sometimes, because I didn't want to miss training, socially it goes completely out of the window, and we've talked about career wise, so yeah, every domain was suffering I would say.

OG: How long do you think it took you to move away from your strong athletic identity and develop other aspects of your identity?

C: Probably reasonably quickly, given that I was sort of anticipating it. Probably that process started immediately because I knew that that was what I had to do, and probably within, I don't know, 3 or 4 months I was coping, I was probably coping all right with it, and I think that's reasonably, I think that's a success in comparison to a lot of other athletes that maybe just don't understand what is going on in their head. But you know on the other hand I still do a lot of running, maintain a certain element of that identity, probably more in a kind of body image sense. But I obviously, knowing the literature, one of the important things to do is to make sure that the transition is as smooth as possible by engaging in the sport, maybe coaching or some other involvement at some point. I wasn't interested in that, no way, I didn't want to know what my competitors were doing, didn't want to coach, my coping strategy was, if I'm not doing it anymore, I don't want to be involved in the elite side.

OG: Do you think that might change in the future?

C: I feel too resentful of it, to be honest with you, I really do feel resentful of it. I've done some consultancy work and I think what I have done has been reasonably successful because I have been able to understand the accounts that other athletes have given me. But sometimes now having been involved in research, which might have been with homeless people, it might be people who looked after children, it might be people with in a sense what I perceive to be bigger problems than just neurotic, self-obsessed athletes. I kind of take a different perspective on it and I do feel very resentful and just, well to answer your question I don't have any future plans, however it may be that that is what my expertise is in therefore as time goes on I could well find myself in some kind of sporting position. I don't want to play that down, these are strengths at the end of the day, I'm sure they can be put to good use somehow.

OG: You mentioned about body image earlier, and I'm interested in whether you felt there was adjustment required physically when you retired?

C: It was difficult. Had I been a sprinter, and not experienced the whole eating disorder culture that exists in middle distance running then it would have been easy, but as soon as you move up a distance then the pressure to be thinner becomes stronger and stronger. And I did, I moved up from being a sprinter, and you are exposed to a culture which is very, very dangerous, and there was a comment when I moved to a new coach in order to pursue a career as an 800m runner, the first thing he said to me was your nothing but a big fat lassie, and I quote, 'you are nothing but a big fat lassie', and I can assure you I wasn't, and that had huge implications, luckily enough never to develop into any full blown eating disorder, but the fact that you are thinking about it 24 hours a day, well okay a slight exaggeration, but it could have been much worse. And with the other personality traits we have already talked about, there is a pre-disposition. And that is another reason why I am very resentful and feel that the system has to change, because coaches don't understand the implications of comments like that. And I know they're not, it is a gross generalisation and not all coaches are like that, but from my experience a hell of a lot of them are. And if something means so much to you then you will do whatever it takes, and if that means that you have to stop eating then some athletes will do that. I never did because I've got too big an appetite, I like my food too much, but you see it all the time, you know, and it's scary. But adjusting to that side of it was very, very difficult and still is difficult because I'm getting to the stage now that, well I got married in July, probably want to start having children, yet there is constant pressure on an almost daily basis to go out and do a run, because I don't want to completely let go of the identity that came, of that side of the identity, you know the physical side.

OG: And when you run now is the training similar to what you used to do?

C: I can't because of my injury, so it is very much just going out for a run.

OG: Who did you get support from when you retired? Who did you talk to?

C: It would have been mainly my partner, now husband, who was so supportive all along, I mean he was totally into my training, came and watched all sessions and just really, really wanted, he understood how much it meant to me and he wanted to be part of that. So he was totally aware, I mean I talked to him all along, during the PhD, about it, so he knew all the theoretical stuff as well, so it was really just a case of just talking it through with him. And I think that was enough actually, I don't really, I remember speaking to my parents because I remember having tearful conversations with them. I don't really feel that I needed to talk to every Tom, Dick, and Harry about it though because I understood it enough myself and I knew that it was a process that was just going to take time.

OG: In terms of talking to your parents, did you feel that they understood what it was for you to give up athletics?

C: Yeah, I mean ultimately they did because I had explained to them so often and my dad is a psychologist and he had read my PhD so was very, very aware of, but yeah, they were very supportive and understanding.

OG: And was your husband involved in sports himself?

C: Yeah, he is an ex-athlete as well, but completely different personality, very laid back, only really played at it, potential to be way more successful than me, but just complete opposites.

OG: What about the coach that you had at the end of your career – what was their reaction to you retiring?

C: Well I was quite angry about that actually because he was quite selfish about it and saw me as, because I had only been with this particular coach for a year, and we'd worked together very closely. I think he kind of, I was his favoured athlete and I think he had really, really high hopes for me. I think within the last couple of months of starting to indicate, I was maybe starting to say things, starting to reflect what was going on in my head, you know, just I've had enough of this, I'm burning out, I can feel that I'm burning out, but he, there was no real connection with that, for him it was about results. At the end of the day if they are giving up their time and they are not being paid for it then of course it is about results, it's not really for me to criticise, but I do get angry, I mean I was okay, I'm a big girl, but young athletes are vulnerable.

OG: Were there other athletes that you were quite close to, friend who were athletes, who you felt you could talk to?

C: Yeah, uh huh, and it was just, you almost didn't need to say anything. One of my best friends now, I wasn't actually as friendly with her then, I mean she was a highly successful athlete who went to the Olympics, and she, it's almost like you don't need to talk about it because you know each other understands, you know, it's that kind of unspoken understanding.

OG: Was there any formal support offered to you from the governing body or from any other source?

C: I don't think so, no.

OG: Do you think there should be?

C: Yeah, definitely.

OG: What kind of things do you think might be useful for athletes to be offered?

C: Oh wish I had read the final chapter of my PhD, I can't remember (laughs). I'm not sure what I feel about having the classroom situation where you are preparing the athletes, because I'm not sure it really works because they are not in the context of their sport, and I think it needs to be something that is ongoing, not just something that happens at the end of a career. Because by that stage it is too late, there had to be, the coach has to see the athlete as a person as well as an athlete, and has to come up with strategies for ensuring that other parts of their life aren't neglected. I came up with a whole load of ideas for that part, things like having meetings, end of season meetings, start of season meetings, what are your goals for athletics, but also what are your goals for life, making sure everyone is aware what the consequences are, making sure the coaches are fully educated, just making sure that athletes are prepared, you know, because I was lucky, I understood what happening to me. Unless you do what I did!

OG: Do you think psychological or emotional counselling type support is important?

JM Yes, I think it possibly is. It depends on the athlete because different people cope in different ways and it will depend on what the individual needs are. But yes I do, the problem is a lot of that kind of support is stigmatised and a lot of people won't use it even if the service is there, I suppose it is engaging them somehow and how do you do that. The problem is education is not enough. I've seen it myself, I've seen you know, I've worked with some rugby players and identity issues or however you want to conceptualise it have been flagged up and really, really concern me and I've thought, right, this is underlying all this other crap, there is no point in going and getting them to do some psychological skills training because that is not the problem here, the problem is underlying and we need to address the fact that this guy is overly invested in his sport and everything else is suffering, right I am going to really talk to him, I'm going to try really hard to appeal to him, but you're not interested at the time, you don't want to do it.

OG: Do you think there are any positive traits that you have developed through your sport?

C: There must be, there must be yes, I mean I have got some crap on my CV about transferable skills, teamwork and all that, but yeah obviously, you know, the confidence to know that you can have a goal and you can stick by it, and that I know I am the most tenacious person, and I know that whatever it takes I will do it, I know that about myself from having done athletics, and that, it has consequences but I suppose it is quite a positive trait. I suppose it is about goals and about sticking to them.

OG: Is there anything else you want to tell me about your retirement experiences or your sport career that we haven't already covered?

C: Not really, I think that is fairly comprehensive, I think if you had got me a couple of years ago I probably would have talked for Scotland and I'd have been so involved in it, now there's quite a lot of distance, which is probably a good thing. I think it is all about the level of investment. If your self esteem is coming solely from sport, and you can't do sport anymore, then of course you are going to have adjustment difficulties. And in some ways it might be worse for those who are not at the very top level, because they've not got the support processes in place. Those at the top have had it all along so they know who they can go to. Athletes have to anticipate it and they have to realise that if they are overly invested in it then there is going to be a huge gap, and that that is a situation that you do not at all costs want to find yourself in. So get some balance, start investing in some other areas, get your tracksuit off more, even simple things like wearing different clothes, anything that can get your head out of sport for a while, do different things. Get a piece of paper and write down the different things that you want to achieve in your life, and find ways, find strategies to start to put in place some way of achieving them. I think that's the main thing, just trying to get some balance so that when it happens it's not the end of the world.

END

MELANIE (Golf)

22nd October 2007

OG: Can you start by telling me the story of your golf career?

M: I suppose I started as a youngster, just through family and stuff. I lived in Gullen which is very much golfing, not very much else to do there. I think I was probably quite a late developer in terms of now a lot of the girls are really young who are playing senior level, like 15, 16. I played county golf, district stuff, Scottish schools, and then got my first cap quite late age wise, can't think how old I was. I had been away to America, not golfing, had time out, and then came back and kind of got through. And then played for Scotland in two spells actually, '93, '94, '95, and then almost kind of retired, not retired just played more for fun in my mind, and then actually I was quite successful, pressure was obviously off me, so then played again for Scotland in '99. And then after that I had a baby, so that was that.

OG: While you were playing golf, what else was going on in your life?

M: I was never a full time amateur. I was at school and then I was a student, still played quite a lot as a student, not as much as if I was on a bursary I don't think, I didn't do one of the golf scholarships or anything. Then I probably had some time out, I was in the States studying, didn't play at all for probably 3 years. Then came back from that and played but I was working, I worked full time. It was quite hard actually because you basically use every single day of holiday to play your sport, just juggling it all. The nature of golf, it is very much travelling all round Scotland and Britain, so it's weekends, a lot of the big events are at weekends which suits people who work, but it is a lot to juggle. I ended up working here quite soon after I had finished my degree and everything, and so they were very good. I got any representative stuff for Scotland as time off paid, which made a massive difference, was fantastic. Any attendance at the big events, the Scottish, the British, that's during the week and then running into the weekend, I had to use holidays for that sort of stuff.

OG: How important was golf to you?

M: It was probably everything, it was very, very important to me. It becomes a real focus you know. I never had any ambitions to turn professional or anything, but as an amateur it was getting into the Scottish team really and representing Scotland. And then the next step up in amateur golf is to play for Britain, the Curtis Cup stuff, which I, I was probably never going to achieve that, so Scotland was the high for me. A lot of the time I played other sports as well, so in the winter I played a lot of hockey, I just was never as focused as that was going to be my life. I think I probably knew that I didn't have the mental strength. I think I knew I wouldn't be able to hack it. I mean I have a lot of friends who have been very, very successful, Catriona Matthew for example, but it was never something I wanted, I suppose I wanted more of a mix in my life, as much as it was very important.

OG: Can you tell me more about the first time you stopped playing for Scotland, back in '96.

M: I was about 26, 27, I probably just felt that, I wasn't playing very well and I didn't get my cap that year, and I just thought, you know I have kind of had enough with all the traipsing round the country and going to all the events. I probably just took the pressure off myself a wee bit and thought, I'll go to certain

things but just for fun, I stopped going to the British and stuff. I made more of a call that I would do it more on my terms if you like. I wasn't playing well, hadn't got my cap, had kind of been there, done it, and probably enjoyed doing other things. I got married in that space of time, and just had a bit more time. Priorities changed a wee bit, I guess, towards social and personal life. It wasn't towards work, wasn't because of a career or anything. I was still part of the squads, so I was still involved, but mentally I was probably not striving for it as strongly as I had been.

OG: And then what changed going into '99?

M: I really don't know. I won the Scottish Championship, just out of the blue really. I was still going to things because it was social, I enjoyed it, I still wanted to do well but I probably wasn't aspiring to even be in the Scottish team to be honest. And then just had a fantastic week, played really well, got the buzz back a wee bit because I played well. And then I went on to win it which of course throws you back into the whole being selected again, for Europeans which I had never been to before, but it was the European team year so I got into that team. It was great, I really enjoyed it, but I then was pregnant after that so I don't know what would have happened otherwise. I was kind of done in with doing the circuit. My husband played cricket and was really committed to that, so it was fine to a point because he played cricket and I played golf, we kind of just went off and did our things, but I suppose we got to that point, I was 31, 32, thinking about having a family and all that kind of thing. I think you get to the point where you don't really want to do it anymore. And the pressure was a lot to do with it as well, I don't know if it is a thing that comes with age, but the nerves and the pressure change. There is a big psychological thing coming into it I think, and it was do you really want to put yourself in that position all the time, standing there with a card in your hand. I think I got to that point where I thought, do you know this isn't fun anymore. And it is an expectation, thing, golf is a very, very mental game. That Scottish cup where I won and then got into the team and things, I think the reason I did so well was because I was so relaxed. I was on my holidays, I was with my pals, we were going out for our tea, you know it was very much we'll go on our holidays, have fun and play in the event, and because of that I was very relaxed and played fantastically. It tells you something about your golf, about your performance, and I am very aware of that, which is why I would never have made a good pro. You cannot allow any tension to come into it, if you are tense you are absolutely stuff, and that is where someone like Catriona is just phenomenally strong, mentally, cool as a cucumber. I certainly think that is where the good performance came that got me back into it all. But I found the whole thing, although I enjoyed it, being back on that stage, I found it hugely mentally challenging. Had it happened 5 years before when I was originally played for Scotland, then I would have said that that was the stepping stone up to aim to play for Britain, that is the stage where you would then get picked up for GB squads, but because it happened when it did it was a bit like a swansong, it was like I'm back, no I'm away again. I was actually pregnant playing the Europeans and the Scottish internationals, so I knew that it was the end, the last time I would play. Saying that, it golf I could probably start playing now, if I wanted to, yeah a lot of them are younger and stronger, but you don't have to be, it's a very, experience does count for a lot. So I mean I could make a decision now and put my mind to it if I wanted to. But thinking back to the whole kind of nerves thing, no way, no.

OG: How much time were you spending training and playing golf?

M: A lot in the summer. It was not all consuming, I mean I worked full time, when I wasn't away playing golf. But most days I would be playing or practising. It is not like being an athlete or something, in that you don't have to physically train every day, but I practised probably most days. And then during the season, which is very long, you know April right through to September, you were virtually competing most weekends, either one day or the whole weekend just depending on the event. Because when you play at Scottish level, you play a circuit if you like for selection, but you were encouraged at the time to still play your county golf as well, so that was kind of an additional thing, county being one level below international, so you had a lot on. It was good. The winter you didn't play anywhere near as much. We used to have maybe 2 weekends of squad training over the winter and then we started a winter training abroad for a week in March so I did that. And I would practice and play at weekends but not like in the summer season. I also played other sports in that time, all the way through I played hockey in the winter, which for me was healthy, I wasn't one of these people who was single-minded. There were overlaps at the beginning and end of the season and that was always difficult, the golf took priority. But I had various injuries, I probably shouldn't have been playing hockey, hand injuries and the like, but that was my choice. And that is probably the different between the best and the rest, it is about choice.

OG: What were the most significant achievements in your career?

M: Winning the Scottish championship I would say, that was a real high, because it's something everybody strives to do. That was a big thrill, because it kind of came from nowhere, and I just kind of played so well that week, it was great. Another high was probably more when I was playing a lot, the

Scottish qualifying is stroke play and then a knock out match play. My match play was always my thing, again probably the whole mental thing that you can let rip a bit more in match play, but in stroke play it is a bit harder, every stroke counts. But I played in the pro event, the Scottish Open, when it was first kind of over here at the Dalmahoy, and I qualified and did the four rounds, and just played really consistently in the stroke play, for me it was a really big achievement, to play the four rounds in very little over par, that was probably another high at the time. Because that was something that wasn't my strength, and it was a real thrill playing in a pro event as an amateur. And obviously playing for my country. In the home internationals you play foursomes and singles, and I played with a good friend of mine in the foursomes and there were some real highs we had playing foursomes together, the team thing, that was just fantastic. And I think with the whole retirement thing that's what you, that's what I loved, being in the team and the whole camaraderie of the team, doing the whole circuit thing you are not on your own, you travel with friends and things, but it is very much about you performing. Even up until this year I have continued to play, even with having the two kids, with the timing of when they were born I have managed to keep playing my county stuff every year. And that was just very much for the team camaraderie aspect of it.

OG: What were the low points?

M: There were loads. Again probably when I was in the middle of that trying to get into the European team, because the main Scotland team for internationals was 8 but the team for the Europeans was 6 so it was always very competitive, it was the pinnacle, and I remember failing to get in, being first reserve, and losing to a friend, I had missed a put of a couple of feet at the last to lose the match to then not be selected. That was probably the lowest point, because I knew I had thrown it away you know, had I beaten her I would have been in the team. Some people are very good at always thinking it isn't their fault, you know all that internal and external stuff, but I wasn't like that, it was never the wind or this or that, it was I cocked up, it was me. So that was a real low point, which is stupid when you look back, you think well it is only a game, but at the time it was massive. It does make you appreciate what the girls are going through now, because you have been there and you know how important it is to them. I think sometimes some of the people involved don't realise just how important it is, if they have not been there themselves, to the girls, what is going on in their head and just how disappointed they are if it doesn't quite go right. But you have been there and you know. I captained the team this year, the Scottish team, non-playing thankfully, and it was fab because I didn't have that pressure, but I could really relate to what was going on in the girls heads, how they were feeling, it was really good. And when you say to them that you understand, you really do, and hopefully they get that as well.

OG: Obviously your retirement in '99 was a result of being pregnant, so how did it feel to stop?

M: It felt totally right. By the time the internationals came along I was about 6 months pregnant and I probably shouldn't have played. Some people play really well when they are pregnant, I just got very very tired and played really poorly because stupidly I played a lot of county stuff the week before, thinking I was invincible and I was fine, you know. So by the time it had finished I had played really poorly which was horrible to finish on that note. I had played well at the Europeans, that had been in the summer and I was still pregnant but very early on. So by the time the internationals were finished that was it, the golf clubs were put away, not to be seen again for a while. I don't know how I would have felt had I not been pregnant, whether I would have played on, I don't know. I remember finishing the Scottish and thinking, we'd been married a few years, and it was yeah lets go for it family wise. So it wasn't I want to put that on hold to play the golf, that didn't come into it. Doing well in the golf was just a bonus at that time. It wasn't, oh I'll put that on hold because I've played so well, it was oh well that was a bonus. It was dead easy to finish in golf, I never thought for one minute, oh I wish I could play on. I mean had it been earlier, when I didn't get selected and then was trying to ease off a wee bit, that was through choice but then there would have been a wee bit of, oh I wonder if I had done this differently or that differently. But I think because I had slogged it out for so many years it was like, so I have had enough of that now, I want a break. And then as I said '99 kind of came but I was probably at a different place in my life then, golf I don't think was the central aspect anymore, whereas when I had played 5 years before it had been the be all and end all, and there was probably more pressure on me because of that. It was obviously still hugely important the second time but it probably didn't have the same importance I suppose, not that I didn't try just as hard. I mean getting married and all that is a huge thrill in your life and all of that, golfing isn't the be all and end all anymore after that.

OG: What were the reactions of your family and friends when you decided to stop?

M: I think everyone knew what was going on. And I think quite a few of my friends at the time, we all did the circuit together, and we were all quite different ages, the age range was quite a lot, a few of my friends were quit a bit older, some were quite a bit younger, but we had all been doing that circuit for quite a while and I think quite a few of us, we probably all at quite a similar time, within a couple of years, stopped

playing the circuit if you like. So that probably made it easier in a lot of respects as we were all in the same place. I mean some went on to turn pro, but those of us who were your lifelong amateurs were very much, no we'll take a step back from that. We still all played county golf so the ones who I was friendly with within my county, we still all saw each other socially at a lower level. I couldn't defend my title, that was one thing that I was sorry about, but Kate was only 3 months old at the time so it would have been a real logistical nightmare, and that is probably the only thing, I thought shall I do that, just to defend my title, not with a view to achieving anything. But I didn't do that.

OG: What kind of an effect did life finishing have on the rest of your life?

M: It was probably really quite nice, in that I had a lot more time, apart from having a baby, but you know I wasn't traipsing round the country, it was really nice actually. The first event of the year is normally through in Troon at the end of April and the weather is generally tough, and I remember seeing it being on in the paper and just being so relieved that I wasn't there. I felt relieved I wasn't doing all that stuff and I still managed, in about the June would be the county stuff and I played in all of that, so I had to kind of get myself up and try and play. But I did actually enjoy it, it was a wee break, it played almost the opposite role actually, it was time for me from baby. So I really, really enjoyed going back to my golf because I think I had been out of it and had the baby. Although I think I have now progressed to a point where I think I might stop all of that as well, because I have played so badly, even at county level. My retirement is progressing down now. I guess golf is different to some other sports, you can keep playing club golf, I go and play with my mum and we just chat and we play, it is a walk, it is fresh air, it is really enjoyable actually because there is none of the mental stuff going on. Whereas I think my mental issues of playing for Scotland and all the pressure has kind of filtered its way down to my county stuff now because I think through lack of play. I think for so many years, the years and years of practising carry you, and I think they have carried me for 4 years, the first 4 of my retirement, and then you get to that point and it is just mental toughness is going. It is quite strange, this year I just didn't enjoy it. I love the team thing, want to be part of the team, but can't bear to go out there and not contribute. Historically I always was very much one of the mainstays and it's really, really hard to struggle with your game to a point that you are miserable about it, it's horrible. The last 3 years have been like that and this last year I said look if I don't play well this year, that's it. So there is quite a big decision coming up this year.

OG: Do you think that is going to be quite difficult?

M: Yes, it will be. Mind you I might not even get picked, I've played so badly. It is probably a harder decision because I have not missed a year, in all these years since I was 18, 19. It is maybe premature, I don't know, I feel that it maybe is a bit, although it is through choice in a way, but brought on by poor performance. If I were still playing well, if the last 3 years I'd enjoyed and played well, I wouldn't be considering not playing, because age doesn't really come into it in golf. So it is through choice but only because I have been playing so poorly and I just felt I let the team down and that is just a horrible feeling. Whereas if I go and play for myself, like I will probably still play county championship, and if I play well I play well and if I don't I don't, it doesn't matter, it's only me. But when you go and you play and you are part of a team it is rotten. You play foursomes and so you are playing with someone and if you are playing rubbish it is just horrible. I mean you can try and laugh about it, but it's a horrible feeling in your head. I did say it there and then so I guess I have to live with it, I said that is it, and all the girls were like, oh don't be daft, but I would have to play stunning well at the start of the season. So this is a big year for me, in thinking that I am going to say no. Maybe it is just a couple of years out of it I need, but I certainly feel at the moment that that's the route to take, and I'll just play literally just proper hobby, fun golf. You can still compete at a club level in golf, but it is not the same, you are competing to win a voucher or something, it is not important at all, and it is totally enjoyable and there is no pressure, if you have a 10 on the first it doesn't matter, you play for the social, very much for the social. I don't get too competitive, if I am playing in something like a medal I'm quiet relaxed about it, quite whatever, I don't really get disappointed if I play badly, it is not that big a deal. But I would at the next level up, at county level, again representing a team, that really, really gets to me. But at club level when it is just me, or in an open competition, it is just fun. I mean yeah, it is nice to play well, but I am not going to cry over it.

OG: When you made your decision to stop in '96, and again in '99, did you speak to anyone about the decision, about how you were feeling?

M: I probably chatted to friends but not in an advisory way, just in a, oh god I'm getting a bit tired of this type thing, and making that choice to back off a bit I suppose. But it was very much my decision. I think people knew, like my mum and dad and things knew I was getting a bit fed up with it all. There are only so many weekends you can keep traipsing round the country, before you have had enough. I'm sure it comes to everybody after a while. I mean I wasn't particularly demanding on myself, compared to certain sports, like

swimmers for instance, the amount of training they put in, I didn't train like that. I mean I probably needed to work a lot harder, it was probably why I wasn't any better.

OG: Do you think it is important for golfers to be given some form of support when they decide to retire?

M: I think nowadays, because in my job I work with the achieving excellence team, and I have worked with lots of different sports but primarily with golf, and nowadays there are a lot more full time amateurs than there were before. And because of the strength of the pro game there are probably more girls turning pro and playing full time. And I think for those girls, if they finally decide to make that decision, it is probably really important for them to get some advice, particularly when they've turned pro and not been successful, which I think is a really big decision. I don't think it is as important for the career amateurs when they are not full time golfers, because they have got a job or whatever it is they do, some form of work or they're students or whatever. I don't think it is such a big deal for them because they have got something else in their lives. But for the other girls, it must be hard, because then you have got to think, right what am I going to do now. I do think it is very much for those who are full time doing their sport.

OG: What support does the governing body give to golfers at the moment?

M: It is probably quite different between the SGA and the SLGA. The SLGA historically haven't really given any support to the girls that turn pro, they deal with the amateur game very much and then the girls that turn pro are just off. Although that is changing slowly, they're realising that they should maybe try and support them a wee bit. It is more through the Institute as well in that a lot of those girls may be in the Institute, and historically is they turned pro they would have been off, whereas now they are trying to retain them for, we need to write a policy for that, but probably at least 2 to 3 years, just till they get their feet. Retirement is a bit of a different issue. But through that if they then were then still part of the Institute and then retired they would still get that year's support afterwards. But otherwise if you are a career amateur there is isn't really, certainly for the women there isn't any support historically. They've now got Kevin Craggs is now the full time national coach, he's been in post about 8 months, but I don't if now, if it were me for instance, having those debates in my head years ago, the first time around, I probably would have sat down with the coach and had a wee chat, now that he exists. Just to kind of chat it through as to where you are at and your aspirations and things. I don't know if the men are doing that, but I think the coaches are just much more involved in general now with their programming and targeting, goals and aspirations. Whereas when I was involved it was very much the technical coach, and course management and whatever else, he didn't sit down and really even look at your programme, or your goals and aspirations, whether it was Scotland or GB or professional, or being a career amateur and play on till your 50, there wasn't any of that discussion. But I think now any of the girls, having worked with Kevin through the internationals, I think Kevin would probably sit down and talk to them, if they wanted to talk to him. Whereas the rest of the SLGA is very much run by volunteers, I mean they give up a lot of time and commitment but it is very much a volunteer body. The men, they don't really have anybody that could fulfil that role either, apart from the national coach really. I do think the girls who have issues with retiring are going to be the pros, either being not through choice through not being successful, not making their card for the next year, and they probably don't want to retire but they are kind of forced to because financially they can't continue, unless they have got some kind of great sponsor behind you which is highly unlikely, they have to make that call. And the transition into pro is very tough, there are very few who just make it, and some do but most of them it takes a few years to bed in and they need financial support through that. But I think now, I think the plan is if they are good enough, dependent on their standard, they will still be kind of supported through the Scottish Institute, and I would imagine if say Kevin has built up a good relationship with that player and then they turn pro, he would continue to kind of help them if they wanted help. And therefore if you then got to the point where you were trying to decide what to do I'm sure you would probably talk to him. In golf as well a lot of people have personal coaches, it might not be the national coach that would be your personal coach.

OG: What does golf do to encourage former players to come back into the system, to help out with younger players or similar?

M: I think they are getting slightly better at this. I can't really speak for the men's side although I do think they try and have people with the relevant experience as selectors and things like that. I think the women have probably got better at it in recent years, in that historically the volunteers were probably a lot older, you know women that had the time I think basically, were either retired or didn't work or whatever. But I think in recent years, probably in the last 10 years, they have had captains and some selectors who have kind of been there and done it and are a bit younger, which I think they need to keep moving towards that. There will still be an age gap, but not this kind of school teacher age gap. I still think there is a lot of that, an awful lot of older women involved. But I appreciate it is difficult because younger women are either big into their career or they have got a family. I mean if I were asked to be involved again next year I don't know if I

will or I won't because it is just so hard to juggle it all, although I absolutely loved the experience of working with the girls, it was brilliant, and I felt it was great to give something back and to get back in touch, because I think I switched off completely when I retired, couldn't have told you who won what, who was in the team, just switched off. And then you read something in the paper and think, oh that's on at the moment, and I couldn't have told you who was in the team, how well they'd done, all that sort of stuff. I ended up working with golf about 3 years ago through work, so I kind of got a bit more back in touch, but it is not the same as playing. It was really interesting, you would see the names and know that they had done, but you didn't know them. Whereas when you are involved you know everybody's quirks, you know their personalities, you know who is strong in a team and whatever. So this year for me was a steep learning curve, actually getting to know the girls. It is very important to know all of that. But I think the governing body could do a lot more, could get a lot more people involved at a younger age. It always was that when you turned pro you were gone, not involved, and I am sure a lot of them felt very isolated, because the governing body does a lot for you when you are an amateur, you know they organise all the squad training, the coach is there, there is support to go to certain events, it is all there and I don't know if you really appreciate it at the time, until you have not got it. And those girls, they are probably into the big abyss of the pro game. I think an area where both governing bodies could do well, speaking from the women's side, is they should use the girls who have been very successful more. You know the likes of Catriona, Janice Moody, Mhairi McKay, I know they would all happily, if they were back in Scotland, give something back. Kevin had asked me that this year and I think is going to try and use that, if any of them are home try and link them in a wee bit with the squad. Things have changed, and him being in post will make a big difference, because in the past they just had coaches who were recruited for the events themselves.

OG: Is there anything else you want to add about any of the areas we have discussed?

M: Well I think it is a great career if you make it, I mean it can be hugely successful. I suppose one route some girls can take if they retire is to become a teaching pro, which is a really good avenue for them to take. Some of them do their teaching qualifications while they are kind of playing a bit. I don't know if they can get financial help for that, but they can get an assistant pro's job and then they'll put you through your training. I don't know much about that route. But there are some girls who have actually chosen not to play as a professional, but in golf you can't be an amateur golfer and be a teaching professional, because of amateur status. It is a real shame because like I might quite liked to teach golf, but I want to be able to still play and you can't do both. So there have been quite a few girls who have turned pro to become teaching professionals. So they are retiring from the amateur game. I suppose they can play just to play, but they can't compete at all, right down to club events. They could probably play in the pro events, but that is not very likely. So they have decided to become teaching pros and I am sure play recreationally, but can't compete at all which is quite a tough decision. I think there is a big market for that because a lot of women would like a female teacher. So there are quite a few girls that have done that and I suppose the girls that have failed as playing professionals some of them will then become teaching pros rather than re-instating their amateur status. They can do that after a year I think, although I think it depends how long you have been a pro. Lots of girls do come back to the amateur game. Though I think there are pressures attached to that, the idea of being the failed pro back in the amateur game, hard psychologically.

END

VIOLET (Diving)

30th October 2007

OG: Can you start by telling me the story of your diving career?

V: I learnt to swim when I was 14, played around at gymnastics, made friends with another girl at another school and we went and played on poolside. And we were throwing stupid things off the side of the pool, as you do, and an American man comes up to us and says do you belong to the swimming club, she says no, I say yes, and he says you need to join the diving club, I will make you both very good divers. So that was Al Williams, father of Beverley Williams who dived until, I think she packed up after the Munich Olympics but maybe did a Commonwealth after that, not sure. So true to his word he worked us very hard and we both ended up competing internationally under him and he was successful with other divers as well. So that was how I got into diving, and I stayed there until I went off to Australia in 1971, so after the Commonwealth Games, and then came home in '73, '74, had a little poodle off down to the pool again, and stopped.

OG: What else was going on in your life alongside diving in the period up until you went away to Australia?

V: I was working full time. I started working when I was 16, competed in the civil service championships. But work and diving took up everything. Occasionally if I had time off I'd go and ride horses, and on Sunday evenings after we had been to Crystal Palace we would quite often, Sheila and I would go ice skating to queens. But that was it, we were under threat of death, don't break anything. So that was my life. No social life apart from diving social life, parties were all diving parties. Really lost all contact with my school friends, don't have any contact with any of my old school friends at all, which perhaps they weren't friends but just acquaintances.

OG: How important would you say diving was to you?

V: Absolutely important. It was something I could concentrate on, didn't cost that much money at that time, how entering competitions was paid for I don't know, I paid a minimal club fee, my parents didn't come to events, they supported me but they didn't actually come and watch me compete. They watched me compete twice and that was it in the whole of my diving career. Yes it was important, it kept me off the streets and it was something I enjoyed doing and it was a very sociable thing as well. It gave me a big buzz to learn new things.

OG: And how much time do you think roughly you spent a week training?

V: Every weekend we would dive either the whole morning on Saturday and then a couple of hours on the Sunday, except during the winter when there were courses run at Crystal Palace and then we would do a whole afternoon at Crystal Palace. A bit later on we would start going away for the whole day to places like Crystal Palace and Coventry. And then in the week we would also dive every night for an hour and a half or two hours. A big commitment, which is why there was no social life.

OG: Do you think your career outside of diving was affected at all by your diving?

V: Well I do the job that I do because I was lazy at school, didn't do any exams, so I had to make the best of what I could do, and what I could do best was being a PA. It wasn't really impacted by diving.

OG: You say diving wasn't particularly expensive, so was there a financial implication for your parents at all?

V: No, they didn't have to pay for me to go away anywhere, and by the time I started sort of doing the things, going training at Crystal Palace and stuff like that, then I was paying my own way anyway, because I started quite late in life. I had a young brother so their time was taken up with him, he is 13 years younger than I am, so he was just a baby, so that made it difficult. I don't feel I lost out, they thought it was great that I was doing those sort of things, my mum still thinks its great that I'm doing it now, though she does think I'm a bit old for it.

OG: What were your most significant achievements?

V: Walking round the track at Edinburgh, at the Commonwealth Games, it has to be. It was the opening ceremony, and it was just fantastic, so many people, I haven't been to an event where there were so many people. And meeting all these new people, that was a really big thing, because I just didn't think when I got into diving that I would get anywhere like that. It wasn't in my mind at all, it was just a bit of fun. No real ambitions. I never dreamt that I could ever compete internationally, it wasn't in my range of thought at all. Make me a good diver, okay that will get me going in head first and not hurting myself, that was my immediate thought, it certainly wasn't that I would get anywhere internationally at all.

OG: Were there any low points?

V: Yes, when you hurt yourself. Very much when you hurt yourself, when you do something really stupid and you hurt yourself and you think what am I doing this for. And of course when you get beaten, you always aim to win. At that time you needed to win, nowadays we tell children it's not the winning, it is definitely beating your PB. We think it is sound but of course as a child, and someone who is competing at the time it is not the best, the best is getting the big gold at the end of it. When you can't dive too, I've had two sessions where I have not been able to dive at all because of injury, and it wasn't diving injuries either, it was silly injuries like on a trampoline, I did some damage to ligaments, and then the other thing is falling off horses which is pretty silly too. My coach wasn't a happy bunny when that kind of thing happened, didn't

speak for weeks. It wasn't a good feeling when you were injured, because I really missed diving and the social activity, because I didn't go to the pool. If I wasn't diving I didn't go to the pool because I just wanted to get in the water all the time. So I would go back to reading a few books or visiting the horses, stuff like that. But my parents couldn't afford to let me ride every week, too expensive. I mean paying for a public session at the pool to go training, which is how we did our diving apart from a few club sessions was peanuts in comparison to riding horses, so I am sure they were quite glad that I took up diving rather than riding. So I felt quite low, but I guess when I was going to work I had a bit more of a social life, I had more people to sort of call on, are you doing anything tonight, do you want to come out, whereas if I was diving that was all I did. So I guess upsetting it was and I didn't go to the pool as I couldn't dive, I wasn't totally morose. But it is not nice. Even now, if I am not able to dive I hate it, and I get really fixed about not being able to go into the pool. When I am coaching I want to go in, but if I am coaching and I can't dive afterwards then I hate it. You get withdrawal symptoms.

OG: Is there anything you miss about being an elite competitor?

V: I suppose meeting the people from different countries, but actually competing at that level, the one thing that I am glad not to be doing is that it was quite a bitchy sport in those days, so you get people, for example, two divers that I used to dive with, one would be on the end of the board about to do something inward or back and the other actually said things like I hope you don't hit your head on the board, things like that, just before take off. So it is that sort of thing, like oh did you hit your hand, have you broken your fingers, will you be diving, but in a horrible manner. So I am glad I don't have to deal with that anymore. As a youngster you didn't notice the bias quite so much from the judges, and it still happens today, so as an adult you can still see the biases, and as a judge you can definitely see them. Eastern bloc countries were renowned for it then, not so much now, but certainly then, they would always mark up their own. I think judging is organised better now, for example they won't allow 3 judges from any one country now to be on the same panel, so it is better. I guess I miss to a degree the thrill of the new dive, but I don't miss the fear factor. Now I am sort of master of my own things and I know what I can do so I can just say no, I am not going to do that. It is only personal pressure now, whereas it was very much peer pressure before, and coach pressure too. I don't think coaching tactics then would be allowed now, definitely not. Things like, get off the board or get out the pool. It isn't constructive. Nowadays we would say okay leave it, we'll come back to it. Because our coach was an ex-diver I'm surprised he couldn't see what we were going through. Not that I'm saying ex-divers make the best coaches necessarily. What was odd too was he was a springboard diver, and he pushed all of his divers on platform only, really, really weird. And he was successful, but I think it was probably because we were scared of him, like everything else, you do something not necessarily to please but because you might get chucked out the squad if you don't do it. Many times you would go running off to the changing rooms and he would come and hoick you out, you know you would have just hit your hands on the board and it would be come back and do the dive properly, which is the last thing you want. I know it is like getting back on the horse when you have fallen off, but eh no, there's limits.

OG: Tell me more about when you went out to Australia.

V: Well it was all about the ring on my finger, I was going to get married. I got engaged to a guy I met at a friend's wedding, a friend from work, and he went out there at the beginning of 1970, we got engaged while he was out there, and I was going to follow a year later, decided I wanted to go out there. Big silly mistake. However, there was I going out to Australia at the age of 20, 21st birthday just after I arrived there, and on my way I thought this is wrong. Having got there I was sort of obliged to spend two years there. So I had arranged, I had already got in contact with a coach before I went out there, got some information from the Australian divers, and I dived in Western Australia for the two years that I was there. Wasn't happy when I got there, I just wanted to come straight home, absolutely awful. Very different out there, you paid for coaching, very different. You paid to join a club, paid to get in the pool, paid for coaching. But with that payment came more respect, because they respect that you are paying for their time. It is a business to them, so they wished to keep you sweet, and I am sure he actually got better results when I think back to what I did and how I progressed there. I was still training out there as much as I had been here, it was still absolutely a focus. In Australia I dived every night, every weekends, I learnt to judge out there, did some recording. We dived all the way through the winter outdoors in Western Australia. Winter time was spent doing mainly 1m work. I didn't do any platform till the days before the competition, didn't do any platform. That is the way they trained at that time, everything was springboard, and then a couple of weeks before the competition if you needed to learn new dives up there you went up, and if you had the dives already you were expected to do the dives. Quite different. We had different facilities too and that helped a lot. We had a dry board into a pit, and we had two trampolines outside, didn't have those facilities when I dived in the UK. It was a more positive coaching experience out there, maybe because I was older, it was much softer and kinder, but still achieving the same results if you like. So one of the divers I trained with there competed internationally for Australia and now I see her on the judging circuit, so she was obviously encouraged to stay within the sport.

OG: At that stage did you have in your mind an aim for what you wanted to achieve with your diving?

V: I had the Olympic Games in my sights, in '72. In the West Australian championships I qualified for the GB trials, but then I couldn't afford to come home. I think I was in New Zealand by the Olympics in '72 and I remember watching some of the stuff on the television, which was a bit hard. I had the chance to be there, they only sent one platform diver and when I left I would have been in the top 3 ranking for GB. Beverley Williams went to the Olympics, Sheila, I don't know why Sheila didn't go, I think she had given up by then because I know when I came back to the UK she was on her way out. But I think she had had enough of Al, she found him more of a bully than I did. She won't ever come back to diving. And there are others that would say the same thing, people like Dave Wood, Dennis Willison. I came home in '73 ish, I just wanted to come home. I had done some diving in New Zealand, but at that time when I was diving in Auckland there were no platforms so I had to dive springboard, and I am just not a springboard diver. So really by the time I came home, combining the platform that I didn't do when I was in Perth and the springboard only in New Zealand, I came home, had a dabble for about a month or so, back at the club, and it just didn't feel right so I decided that was it, I was going to stop. When I came back I hadn't really been thinking about what I might do, because I had been away so long from British Diving, I just didn't know how I levelled up with the rest of the divers over in the UK, if you don't go to competitions you can't judge what the level is. So I dived with the club for a little while, Sheila was gone, I can't remember if Beverley was there or not, I think Janet was there, but it just didn't feel right. I wouldn't say they weren't welcoming, but I just felt they were looking at me and saying well are you coming back to dive or are you just coming back to see who is around. When I came back I was 23, 24, and that was pretty old for diving standards unless you are American. So I think when I came back it just didn't feel right, and I just went off and went to the other love that had become even more expensive, and funded it myself.

OG: How did it feel to stop diving?

V: I completely cut myself off. No-one asked at that time are you enjoying it, do you want to come back and help us, it was just oh you are leaving, okay bye. Which is really very odd, a really weird feeling. So I just completely cut myself off and indeed didn't dive for about 21 years. I think I was quite glad to stop in a way because big board, big lump of concrete, probably couldn't do the dives, I had hurt myself a few times trying to do the big dives, so I competed 2 and a half in most direction, but forward 3 and a half, the twice I did it I really hurt myself. And if you look today the divers are being pushed to do more and more dives than even aren't on the tariff sheet. And it is all to keep up with the Joneses and the Joneses at the moment are the Chinese.

OG: Tell me about your decision to come back into diving.

V: Oh that was a man. I had broken up with a guy and I was also trying to lose weight, so I had gone down to the pool that was then local to me, decided I would start swimming, and started to do aqua aerobics. That was fun and the pool where I was had a separate diving pool so one day I decided that I would go and have a dabble again. And I really meant just a dabble. So I went and spoke to one of the coaches, who said if you want to come and dive you have to go and speak to that guy over there, who was at that time the chief diving coach for Amersham swimming club and he ran adult lessons. So when the session finished approached him, said I used to dive and I wanted to come and have a play, I understand you do adult lessons. He said yes that's right, you have to go and sign up at the desk, and I did that and arranged to start the next course, which was 8 weeks worth. So I got in the pool and he asked, so what did you say you had done, and I said well a long time ago I used to dive but it has been a while. I think I did a forward tuck dive from 1 metre, got out, and he said, okay, people tell me they have dived before and I just don't believe them, but I can see you really have dived before, we'll go from there. So I did one course, and then I did another course, and I was itching then, I got the bug, I wanted to join the club. I think he was trying to put me off because he kept telling me how expensive it was, but actually it wasn't particularly expensive at all. And from that I went on to coaching as well. I guess what pleased me most from coming back was in about 2 years of coming back I dived in a county 1 metre and I beat all these young little diddies, that were doing big dives but couldn't put them in. And I just used basic simple dives, put them all in for 7 and a half, and I won. That was probably the best of my comebacks apart from winning the European masters in 2001. When I first got back in I had no intention of competing, but then I definitely got the bug and found the outlet in masters. I went to my first masters competition the year after I got back in and I won, and I thought this is great fun. And at that time they were talking about the European masters that were about to take place later on that year in Italy, and I thought that sounds good, I fancy doing this, and I went and I think I got bronzes. And then I really got the bug, and I haven't missed an international masters since.

OG: What was it that encouraged you to get back involved in the coaching side?

V: That was Brian. He said, I think there was one of the learn to dive sessions he couldn't do and he asked me if I would do it, and I said oh okay, not really knowing what I was doing at all apart from the experiences that I had, my own learning experiences. So I did that, and then I think I did some at the club, and the club or the council got wind that I wasn't qualified, and I got pushed into qualifying. It was not do you want to do it, it was you ought to do it. So I did the course, and only needed to do the one because I have got many years of diving and judging and stuff under my belt I got a bye on the equivalent of the level 1 and went straight into level 2. And I have been coaching ever since. I resent it to a degree because our chief coach Brian left the club, and he left me with all of it, so I now have to do more coaching than diving. We have been trying really hard to get a coach but we can't. It as got to be the right person, of the right calibre. I would love to take a back seat now, do my own diving, really would.

OG: If I can take you back to when you finished in '73, did you life change when you stopped?

V: Well I rode a lot, and anything that I did socially was involved around horses. Joined the riding club, very much a snobbier type of sport, a lot of money in it, and I didn't have the money to do lots of competing. I did some, did a couple of one-day events, but I wasn't really interested in real competing. I think competing had finished for me, I didn't want the pressure again.

OG: Did you ever consider making a comeback at any point?

V: No. I can say that quite categorically. I never thought about it. As soon as I walked out the pool and I had stopped that was it, didn't ever think about going back. So it must have been the right decision. I think the timing was also right when I did eventually come back to get involved in the sport, because lifestyle wouldn't have let me do it, the guy I had just broken up with, he didn't like me show jumping and he certainly wouldn't have liked me diving. That would have definitely been off the cards. It was the result of that break up that made me come back into diving.

OG: Did you talk to anybody about your decision to stop, seek any advice or anything?

V: No, I think it was just the attitude that I got from the coach that I just walked. It was really, really odd. There was no discussion, no, do you think you would like to come and help us, do you think you would like to stay in diving, but not dive. No-one gave that a thought. I don't think they did in those days, you either dived or you coached or you left, there was nothing else.

OG: Do you think that is changing now?

V: I think so. When I look at some of the clubs now, I think that they are trying to encourage it. If you look at Southampton, they are definitely trying to encourage their older divers into coaching, the older elite divers, the ones that have come through the programme. You see that most of those now have got at least a level one. They are also trying to get them involved in judging and stuff. It is about giving something back. The sport gave me a lot, but I wasn't offered the opportunity to give something back. I think those opportunities need to be offered. If you look at Karen Smith, she stopped diving, but she did for a while stay in the sport. Monique's coaching, in fact if you look at Southampton all of their older divers are involved. They have a very good model there. I have got a feeling that quite a few of the bigger clubs are doing it, I think they recognise that the older coaches are going to go sometime, and the clubs are going to need someone to run their programmes or help out anyway, and I think it is good to develop the expertise along with the experience. I think it is nice that divers want to, because you can't force them to do it. And it is not just about coaching, you get some people who want to do the recording, you get other people interested in doing travel and team management and stuff, it is about using peoples expertise, learning what they are good at, understanding them and also what they are interested in.

OG: Is there anything else you want to tell me about your diving career or about your retirement?

V: I would definitely do it all over again, without a doubt. I would like to have started earlier. Also I think I would like to be in a club now, rather than in a club like I was then, because it is a totally different concept. I think they have much more fun now than we had before. It's pressurised, there is no doubt about that, but the bigger clubs, the bigger programmes have a lot of fun. They have good clubs and they have good support from the parents. They have got a wealth of people that do things, coach, dive, judge, record, people willing to put time into it. Before you wouldn't think of talking to another coach, you wouldn't hear a judge turn round to a diver and say, that was great I really liked that dive. And now you hear more and more, and they are ex-divers mainly, and I make a point of doing it too. But definitely would have liked to have started

younger, learnt to swim younger, but then circumstances didn't allow it because we lived in London, no pools. So I did ballet instead.

END

NAOMI
(Lacrosse)

22nd October 2007

OG: Can you start by telling me the story of your lacrosse career?

N: Well I first played at school, and probably just took to it, just enjoyed the sport from the minute I started playing. We were lucky to get a chance to do everything, a taster of hockey, netball, tennis, all sorts of things, but I was just better at lacrosse, I think I probably had a crush on the teacher or something, went out every lunchtime and played. Got straight into the first 12 in 4th year, got first selected for Scotland in 4th year for the school girls team. At that point I think realised, oh actually maybe I am okay at this, and I just loved it, just enjoyed it. So played for the first 12, played for the school girls team until I left school. And then took it on from there, staying in Edinburgh to study. Kind of went through the ranks, got selected for under 21s, 4 years in that, and then Scotland B selection. It was many years of slogging away at that, as well as a couple of years away travelling and then living down south and things, before I got my Scotland cap for the first time. So it was years, quite a few years later, so I was just basically hanging in there. And I also did my knee, but I got back after that and it still wasn't until after that that I got selected. And then really the pinnacle was the 2001 world cup and getting selected for that was very, very exciting, very special, I mean it is such a minority sport, I am certainly not the fastest or the fittest but I could play reasonably well and well enough. I always knew I was going to retire after that, basically because of Achilles tendon problems and, the knee was fine but just injuries, I just really wanted my life back, there was a lot of work, train, eat, sleep. Prior to that in 1997 I didn't get picked for the world cup team, but they asked me to go as physio instead, which I did, and it was great, but it was hard too, sort of thinking it could have been me if I had been a bit better. It was as much about perseverance and hanging in there for quite a few years.

OG: Can you tell me how your sport fitted in with your physio career?

N: They pretty much progressed together at the same time. When I was studying I played for a team in Edinburgh, and then went down to Oxford for my first job and made sure I got a team down there. Pretty much my career just plodded along and so did the lacrosse. I suppose my career progressed and my lacrosse was stagnant for quite a few years, and it was really only latterly that the lacrosse kind of took off.

OG: How important was lacrosse to you?

N: Very. I think I was probably one of those good all rounders, not brilliant at anything, but because we got a chance to do lots of things at school I was a good all rounder. I wasn't one of the absolute high fliers, top notch at everything. But this was one thing that I was quite good at so it was very important. The Scottish thing was very important, especially being down south. I think I was lucky enough to be playing a minority sport so I was good enough to get a chance to play representative.

OG: What effect did lacrosse have on other parts of your life?

N: Towards the end of my career when I was really slogging for the world cup, to get selected, I had lots of Achilles problems so there was a lot of rehab and treatment and stuff, and then it was trying to keep fit and you always had matches on Saturdays so therefore your social life was curtailed a bit, for sure. I wouldn't say completely put on hold, but definitely the lacrosse was the priority and you try to fit in other things around and about it, and in the off season and things.

OG: How much training were you doing on an average week?

N: Well laterally it was all quite structured. We probably had 2 or 3 fitness sessions, running, and then your club match, your club training, and then probably a weights session as well, something like that, so quite a lot. On top of that Scotland stuff would be a full weekend every month, on average.

OG: You talk about the world cup being the major high point of your career. Are there other achievements that you look back on as well as this?

N: I suppose my first cap, played a match in Dunfermline, getting selected for that was pretty special. Scoring a goal in the world cup was the absolute pinnacle, because I play defence so it was unusual. We lost the match but for me that was very special. And I guess getting selected as the youngest school girl in the Scotland school girls team way back at the very start was a pinnacle too.

OG: Were there any real low points?

N: Rupturing my ACL playing for under 21s as vice captain, it was the biggest match of my career at that time to date, so that was rubbish, that was really pretty low. Defeats that we should have won, and losing having been really close, but there are no matches that stand out specifically. Losing to countries that you felt you were on a par with, in the home internationals every year it was a close thing with Wales, we were a sort of similar size, and losing to Wales when we shouldn't have done was frustrating.

OG: Tell me more about your knee injury.

N: I was quite young at the time so I never thought that was it, it is coming to an end. I just thought well we'll fix it and get better, perhaps naively, but that worked in my favour. I was out for about 9 months to a year, which actually gave me the chance to do other things. My career was changing, I went down to Oxford for my first job, so lots of other things were happening anyway. So from that point of view it gave me a chance to do other things, get into mountain biking, do some other stuff, it was mostly over the summer I was off anyway which is off-season anyway. It wasn't like I was sitting twiddling my thumbs. I didn't feel like it took my lacrosse career that off track, at the time in the U21s I was thinking wow this is fantastic, and didn't really appreciate that the next step up to B or full Scottish level was significantly more, because at the age group level you can be quite good but then it is not the same at all. I think it was a rude awakening, nothing to do with my knee, that the next step up was much, much bigger and much more competition to get any further.

OG: Is there anything now looking back that you miss about being a lacrosse player?

N: The real competition, being actually on the pitch, the adrenaline flying, just running around and getting absolutely knackered, working as hard as you possibly, possibly could, leaving everything out there. And also the actual skill of the game, throwing and catching the ball. Camaraderie a bit as well, obviously you have had some friends in the team or the squad.

OG: And is there anything you don't miss?

N: Yeah, the training. Yes, the fitness training I don't miss, the disagreements in terms of how the team should be managed, the politics side of things. I don't miss any of that at all, people going we should do it this way, we should do it that way, strong personalities that have their own ideas and pretty strong beliefs and want to do it their way. And you are thinking well no, being part of a team by its definition is that you have to have some compromise and sacrifice to be a team player, you are not an individual really, so all that nonsense I don't miss at all.

OG: Did you need some flexibility in your job to be able to do both it and the lacrosse, or did your sport fit in around your work?

N: Pretty much you could do it outside work. My weekend work commitments meant that sometimes you maybe couldn't play in a club match because I had to work at weekends. I also needed time off for tours which we had a couple of leading up to the world cup, and time off for the world cup as well, I had to use my annual leave for that, just use holidays. But apart from that, I mean I probably didn't do as many courses and I didn't go on and do a masters, which some people were doing in their free time because I was too busy playing lacrosse. Not that I would necessarily have done that but I wasn't able to do other things.

OG: Were most of your friends involved in the sport?

N: Some of each, more outside lacrosse probably than inside it. I did have good friends inside it, just not that many, whereas more of my friends were physio friends, and some old school friends. It was probably a bit difficult at times to find the time to see friends outside the sport, but they were great and supported me through it, understood that I had to go home early or couldn't come out certain nights. A lot of my friends did other sport, they were really good squash players or things like that, so they knew and they understood.

OG: How supportive were your family and your parents of your lacrosse career?

N: Brilliant, 100%, absolutely couldn't fault them. They were so supportive financially, they would come and watch on the coldest wettest days, they were absolutely fantastic. That was so important, more than I think I gave it credit for, more than I realised at the time, it is always nice to have spectators because you don't have anybody watching lacrosse matches, it is such a minority sport, so even to have a handful of people on the side was great and much appreciated.

OG: You talked about knowing you were going to retire after 2001. Can you tell me more about that decision?

N: In the lead up to the event I knew that whether I actually got there or not I was going to give up. Or probably actually sooner, if I hadn't been selected I would have given up as soon as I knew that. To be honest it was mainly dictated by injuries and the Achilles tendon problems, that was a big, big factor. I had surgery on one, got over that, then had problems with the other one, and it was just like I can nurse this through but I needed to stop after that, everything was sort of hurting. When I got selected I was determined to get myself as fit as I reasonably could, but it was clear in my mind that that would be the end. I didn't have a number in my head, it wasn't an age thing, as to when I would stop. It was mainly the physical. And then obviously I was looking forward to getting my life back a bit, have a wee bit more free time to do other things. There comes a time when you want to do all the other things you have thought about doing, go on ski holidays and that sort of stuff. It was a very easy decision, I absolutely knew. Because for me I also knew, I was never the star of the team, it took me a while to even get a place in the team, I wasn't the fittest or the fastest, certainly at that level, so that was as good as I was ever, ever going to achieve. There was no way I could do any better, I mean there isn't a whole lot more than that anyway, but some people had a solid place in the A squad for over 10 years, whereas I just scraped in by my fingernails, so it was my Everest and it was as good as I was ever going to do. And scoring a goal in the world cup was the high point, the icing on the cake.

OG: How did you feel after you had played the last game in the world cup and knew that you were then finished?

N: I suppose a bit of relief, just because I was in pain and knackered. Was I a little bit sad, no I think actually at the time of playing, the minute I came off the pitch it was just relief, that I had got through it in one piece, had a really good experience, although as a team we didn't do very well at the world cup so that was disappointing and I suppose took the edge off it a little bit. Having been there was the biggest thing, I suppose I had regrets that I could have been fitter, could have been faster, but I was so limited by my stupid ankle. So it was relief and also excitement, looking forward to some time off and to be getting other things, social life and stuff, back on track.

OG: And did you have thoughts about things you might do in the time that you had?

N: Yes I had thought about probably playing tennis, it is one of the things that I have started to play now. Other than that not particularly, just to keep myself fit in other ways, but nothing really specific. Just looking forward to a rest and then a change. And then something else, I always knew that I wanted to take up tennis again, I had played at school but haven't played since and always loved watching it, so I thought it was something I could do for the fun of it.

OG: At any point after you finished did you miss it, think you might want to go back?

N: No, it was all pretty much positive emotions. I didn't really have any realistic regrets if you like, any desire to go back, the odd moment of thinking about how I missed the competition actually on the pitch playing, but that is just totally unrealistic so no, not really. There was just no chance.

OG: Did your life change once you finished playing?

N: Not really, certainly not that I can remember specifically. It wasn't like I didn't apply for jobs because I was going to the world cup, that really wasn't an issue. If there was a job coming up I would have gone for it. I suppose the only thing would be perhaps not doing as much study outside of work, things like that, but at the end of the day there is only so much that anyone does of that anyway, just courses that you have to pay for, weekend courses, things like that, that perhaps I didn't do quite as much of.

OG: Did you maintain contact with your lacrosse friends?

N: Some. One of my best friends is a lacrosse player and that was pretty tough, in fact that was a low moment, when I got the phone call that I got selected, we play the same position, and I kind of thought it

might happen but when somebody phoned up at work and we were all getting letters, she obviously got hers and I hadn't been home to get mine, and I knew, and she was like its good for you but was obviously pretty upset too. So yes, kept in touch with her, very much so, and some of the others, but lost touch with most.

OG: Have you maintained any involvement in the sport at all now?

N: No, I pretty much stopped and walked away. I try to go to the internationals and support and I have done the odd thing, you know go to a fundraiser if they are trying to raise money for the next team. Have helped on the table for some of the internationals, doing the subbing and things, as much to help someone else out. While I was playing I did some coaching, I did preliminary umpiring because they were always looking for umpires and things like that, but I was pretty much just a bit sick of it from that side of things, needed time away from it. I shouldn't think I'd ever get involved again, it is like a good chapter closed. Apart from like supporting internationals here, easy support if you like, but happy to do that. But I can't see me getting involved in any other way again.

OG: And were you encouraged to get involved at any stage by Scottish Lacrosse?

N: No, not after I retired. I mean while I was playing it was always, could you help out with this, could you do that, but nothing once I had finished. I think it would be a resource that would be worth trying to tap into, I mean people retire for different reasons obviously, and there may very well be some people who might want to coach and things like that.

OG: Did you talk through your decision to retire with anyone, seek any advice or anything?

N: Well I think I pretty much knew what I wanted to do, I didn't need to ask for advice, do you think I should type thing, I knew, my body was falling apart. I mean I think if I had been totally fit and absolutely symptom free, and had had a really good world cup, then it might have been a different story, because I wasn't sick of the game, the actual playing, it was more just really knackered. I did want my life back, but it would probably have been more difficult to decide what to do if I had been 100% fit. So I didn't really feel the need to speak to anyone, I had said all along that I was just knackered and wanted a rest. I had been through enough with my Achilles surgery and my knee and just wasn't going to achieve anything else. I don't think I even told the coach specifically, I don't think anyone asked, I think the coach was going to give up after the world cup as well so I don't think anybody was looking beyond that. Because it is such a small sport all of the sort of energies were going into trying to scrape the team together and getting it as good as we could to compete. I suppose I just assumed that everybody knew because there were other people in the same boat.

OG: Is there anything you think the governing body or the coach could do to assist players who have decided to end their careers?

N: I suppose what might be helpful, having the knowledge that I have physio wise, would be advice on sort of winding down in your training and your eating habits and all that sort of healthy living advice, especially in amateur sport, because you see it so often with patients, they stop playing, put on weight, and then there is the potential ongoing health problems. So I suppose something like that would be useful. And I guess if people did retire and find that it is a huge void in their life then some advice on how to deal with that I suppose, maybe, like asking to get involved and do something, if they wanted to keep contact, so things like that.

OG: Did you find physically adjusting to stopping training and playing difficult?

N: Initially I stopped all activity, because everything was sore, so I just stopped. I probably didn't do any exercise other than probably go for a swim a couple of times a week, barely that. I walked to work and things like that, but really nothing too strenuous or competitive for quite a while, before deciding that I really wanted to get back into tennis and feeling better enough to do so. But we would do things like going skiing and stuff like that. But for me it was total rest and recovery, lots of recovery, which was what I both needed and wanted, it was perfect, and then it was great because the choices were all open to me, what did I want to do next, and what can I try now.

OG: Did the Achilles problems arise because of the lacrosse?

N: Yeah, pretty much. One of them is fixed and sorted now, the other one has its moments, I would never run a marathon or go jogging for fitness, but I can get away with playing tennis, that's okay. I just know not to push my luck. Certainly I know jogging is not something I would ever do now, because I would

much rather be playing tennis and I keep it strong in the gym. But I know it is degenerate, I have had MRI scans and things, so with a bit of insider knowledge I know how to manage it, which is really helpful. I want to get away with as much as I can without completely jeopardising the rest of my life.

OG: Is there anything else you want to tell me about your lacrosse career or about retiring from lacrosse?

N: Can't really think of anything else. I mean lacrosse has given me so much in my life, and apart from the odd regrets it has essentially been a very positive experience and really happy memories. I think the experience of playing in a team with different groups of individuals has helped at work, in my management role, managing different personalities and recognising the traits that will cause your team of employees problems. And also the knowledge of what a sense of achievement feels like on a bigger scale. But the chapter is pretty much closed and I don't have any regrets about that as such, you know of course you think if only I hadn't ruptured my ACL, but you can't say that, can't change those kind of things. And you think maybe if I had worked a bit harder, been a bit fitter, I would have been selected sooner and things like that. Players are going to need to find something, they maybe have something lined up, but they are going to need to find something to fill the hole, because if they are training that hard it's what am I going to do with all this free time. And if you are motivated enough then that is great, that is fantastic, but if you are not and life is kind of driven by one thing then it could be quite difficult. Then they might want to keep going just to keep that void filled.

END

JULIA (Swimming)

12th November 2007

OG: Can you start me off by telling me the story of your swimming career.

J: Well, I guess I started off as a gymnast, I did that until I was 15, and then I got injured pretty badly so I had to give that up. I competed for Scotland at that, I was kind of training sort of pretty full on in gymnastics from about the age of 10 or 11. And then it was a kind of, oh what will I do, and I think at that point because I was so into, so used to training and that that I couldn't just do nothing and the doctor said well you can go swimming. So I kind of just decided to join the club and it just kind of went from there. Swimming-wise I guess I competed at 2 Commonwealth Games, at '98 and 2002, I was at the World University Games in '99, and the European short course championships for Britain too. I was Scottish record holder, that sort of thing, so fairly high level. I training, how long, from I guess, well at the ages of 15, 16, 17 I was just doing it more for fitness, and then I kind of thought, I'm quite good at this, kept going, enjoyed it, and it just kind of went from there, so it wasn't really until I got to uni that I started training I would say really seriously. And then I finished uni at the same time that I qualified for the '98 Games and after that it was kind of the decision of what will I do, it was like finished uni but because I qualified there and it was kind of a just qualified as opposed to making the team thinking I am going to do something at the Games, being there gave me the thought that I need to go to another one and try and actually do something. So I trained for 4 years, went to Canada and trained out there for kind of 2 half years, so for the short-course winter season I was out in Canada training, just something a bit different rather than staying at home and you know, same old, same old, so that was good. Missed out on the 2000 Olympics which was obviously disappointing but it was always going to be a long shot and at that point thought I am going to be keep going for another 2 years to Manchester, which I did. And Manchester was great, we finished 4th in the relay, I made the final of the 50 fly, it was a really good experience, totally different from Malaysia which was just, wow what is going on, whereas Manchester you sort of knew what to expect and it was a bit more, not serious but you were going there to swim well rather than just to be there. And then after Manchester got a job coaching and swimming development officer so it was like, I didn't stop then though, I didn't want to, so I did less training after that, I only swam once a day and was working and everything as well. I think probably having less of a focus on my swimming was quite good, because I actually swam my fastest ever in sort of I guess my final year, I broke the minute for the fly short course which was the first time anyone had done that in Scotland and also I swam my fastest ever long course at the World Championship trials. I finished second there, if I had had of won who knows what would have happened, I might still be swimming today (laughs), don't think so. That was always going to be my final swim and I kind of had it in my head that I'll swim till there and it was good to finish on a high note. So that was it really.

OG: You talked about how you started swimming as the only thing you were able to do, but can you tell me how important swimming became to you?

J: Well I guess ultimately it was, not the only thing that mattered but it was extremely important, it was my life, and it was everybody else that was involved with me their life as well. But I guess I had that support which was good, so I was able to do spend the four years between '98 and 2002 training, doing a bit of part-time work you know, but I wouldn't have been able to do that without everybody else. But it was, it was a huge big part of my life.

OG: And how does that compare to how gymnastics was to you?

J: I guess it was totally different. When I was doing gymnastics I was like a little girl, I liked that, and at the time I thought it was everything, it's not that you don't need to train as much for gymnastics but you are not there everyday, certainly I wasn't, I trained 4 times a week. But at the time when I was told to give up I was devastated, it was like the worst thing in the world, it took me a long time to, I think that was almost harder than stopping swimming in that way because swimming was my choice, whereas gymnastics was somebody else's choice and I didn't want to. You know I had just won the Scottish Championships, and I had all these things that I was planning on doing and going to, I was going to try and go to the Commonwealth Games for gymnastics, and all of a sudden I was being told I couldn't do it. So they were both like I guess really important, but felt very different. Probably like because of my age and all that as well, that made a big impact on it. I mean I guess for 4 years swimming was my job, you know, to all intents and purposes.

OG: Were you funded when you were training full time?

J: I was funded, but not, my swimming was funded but my life wasn't funded if you know what I mean. So family support and the bit of sort of part time coaching and work that I was doing with Scottish Swimming was where I got money.

OG: So how supportive were your family of your swimming career?

J: It's funny that because, it's not that I have never really thought about it, at the time I was thinking well you know they're sort of sacrificing a lot, but it just seemed as though that was always what was going to happen. There was never any question about it, they never kind of said are you sure or is this what you want to do, it was kind of like, lets just carry on, and I think that's probably partly coming from such a sporty family that it wasn't, it didn't seem to be unusual, in many ways they might have thought it more unusual if I had said right that's it then, you know what I mean. But they were hugely supportive, and I guess my boyfriend at the time, now husband, it was quite a lot for him as well to put up with and swimming turned into being a very big part of his life, whereas before he was just like, whatever, so from that side of things there were a lot of people that got dragged along. But I think reasonably willingly, they enjoyed it, the trips, the watching and all that.

OG: When you came to the end of university, did you have in the back of your mind anything else that you wanted to do, that you would have done if you hadn't been swimming?

J: I think I just knew I was going to swim, because I have been thinking about it over the last little while, once I heard that Glasgow got the Games I was like, I wonder if I could have a comeback (laughs), for about 2 seconds. I think had I not made the Games in '98, I think that would have been it, I think I would have thought right enough's enough, I've had a good go at it but I am obviously not there and lets now carry on with the rest of your life and get a career and stop messing people about type thing. But because that didn't happen it was almost like, well there is still more to come, which there was though, it wasn't as though I was just thinking right I'll just keep doing the same and get quicker. I think subconsciously I knew that I had only be training seriously for you know, about 4 or 5 years, which isn't really that long, so I think I probably felt like a young swimmer, you know even though I didn't start swimming until I was 15, 16, I almost felt like a 15, 16 year old when I went to Malaysia, just because of that lack of swimming experience and everything else, so that probably played a big part as well.

OG: Were a lot of your friends in swimming, did you have a lot of friends outside of swimming? Did swimming affect your social life in that way?

J: What social life! When I was at school, because for the last couple of years at school I was swimming, there were a few people in my year at school who were part of the swimming club so we were kind of pally through that, but most of my friends at school were not involved in swimming or sport. And they were fine with that but I did miss out, but I guess I consciously missed out because I could have made the decision not to go training or not to go to a competition and go out with them or whatever, but made the decision to swim. And that was what I wanted to do, I mean at times you were like, oh, but on the whole it wasn't really any conflict there. By the time I came to university then I was sort of living and training and

going to lectures and that with other swimmers, and probably at uni apart from one or two then the majority of the people I was friendly with and my social group were swimmers, so we were all swimming training together and also socialising together. So you kind of felt you had, not the best of both worlds, but it was kind of easier there because you were in that group setting.

OG: Do you feel that there are things that you missed out on or put on hold for swimming then?

J: There definitely are things, and I don't know if missed out on is, that is sort of negative, but there would have been and there was. When I finished school I was like, well when I was thinking about going to uni, I was thinking what am I going to do. One half of me was, right am I going to go and do medicine, or am I going to go and do swimming and uni, and that was quite a difficult choice, because ever since I was quite wee I was like I want to be a doctor and bla bla bla, but I guess ultimately I didn't want to do it enough, and I chose the swimming option with a degree attached that I quite liked rather than the career option at that time. Had I chosen the other way then I wouldn't have been able to swim, and I knew that so that was the overriding decision. And still now I look back and think, was it right, and it was because, well because it is one of those things that you just know about.

OG: What were your most significant achievements, the things you are most proud of?

J: There is probably two sort of moments that stand out. One is like walking into the opening ceremony in Malaysia, that was just unbelievable, just like totally emotional, you just felt so proud and that was just like, you know really really this is what it is for. By the time Manchester came round we weren't even in Manchester for the opening ceremony, it was like right, been there, done that, get on with the serious business now. And then I guess the other one is going under a minute for the 100 fly, and just looking up and thinking wow, have I actually gone that fast. It was one of those things that was like, I'd love to be able to do that, and then to do it, I had the biggest grin on my face type thing. They are probably two of the sort of things that stand out.

OG: Were there low points?

J: Oh aye, there were tons. Mainly due to my knee injury from gymnastics and that, although swimming doesn't play a huge sort of stress on your knees and that it was, I couldn't swim breaststroke at all, so I had to just do the other three strokes, and luckily I wasn't a breaststroker so that was fine, otherwise swimming would have been a bad choice. But I had a couple of years where my knee was giving me an awful lot of pain and I couldn't really train very well, I was racing, my times were not getting any quicker, and it was very hard to keep going, and I did a couple of times think maybe I should just stop. But then I found a good surgeon who said yes there is something wrong with it after seeing I don't know how many doctors who said you are just imagining it, and he operated, fixed it, and from then on, that was about nine months before Malaysia that that happened so it was like perfect timing and just gave me that extra little, because it was getting too much. I always had in the back of my mind that I didn't ever want to be told again that you have to stop, so I was like no, I want this one to be my decision. I mean obviously there were others, when I didn't make teams, not making the Olympics was disappointing, but it wasn't absolutely gutting because I always knew that it was a long shot. I mean even now I would love to say I swam at the Olympics, but I think I was realistic enough to know at what level I was competing at, and I was never quite good enough to go there, although it was always your ultimate dream, it was still just a wee bit too far.

OG: Is there anything that you miss about being a swimmer?

J: Em, competing, still, I still, I watch it on the TV or I go to galas and I think, I could still do that. Quite sure I couldn't, but I still think it, you know. I miss that. Probably at the moment there's nothing else because I'm just so busy. But I still do miss the competitions and that side of things.

OG: Is there anything you don't miss?

J: Well I would love to say getting up at 6 o'clock in the morning, but now I am up at 5 with these two so (laughs). EM, not really because I enjoyed every bit of it. I enjoyed the training as well as the competitions, no I wouldn't say there was anything. I guess it is quite nice to have other things, to be able to do other things now and not have swimming be the sole focus of everything that I am doing, but other than that I wouldn't say so.

OG: You talked before about knowing that the trials were going to be your last race. Was that something that you have therefore thought out in your head and planned for?

J: Em yes, although when I said I knew it would be my last race it still wasn't my last race. It was my last I guess serious race. There was lots of things that were happening, I was getting married in the September, and I just kind of thought, my job was starting to demand more and more, and rightly so because I had not been pushing it right to the side for that first year, but my swimming was still important to me so I kind of was working round my swimming, where I thought no I need to, not grow up, but think right this is a good time to stop, there is nothing else on the horizon, there was no point in keeping going another 4 years to the next Commonwealth Games because realistically I knew that probably, finishing 4th and making the final was probably my ultimate, and actually winning a medal was just a stretch too far, so going for the sake of it wouldn't have been worth it. I had to start thinking about other people at that point as well. So I made that decision thinking now is a good time to stop, and it was quite good to finish not on a selection meet or anything like that, so I had almost been, not planning it but sort of thinking no right this is going to be it.

OG: What did it feel like when you stopped, and did you stop swimming completely?

J: I'm trying to think, I did initially, I had, and I think, I don't think I did anything for like 6 weeks, and that was partly on the advice of my coach, he said you know you need to give your body a proper rest which it has not had for how ever many years. But that was probably the hardest time, because I felt like I should still be going training, and I was feeling guilty for not going, even though I was really busy with work and doing other things, so instead of going swimming I went running or I went to the gym, because I couldn't not do anything. I had been kind of de-training in that I had been doing less and less, so as opposed to swimming 10 times a week I had gone down to 5 times a week, so it wasn't as though I had gone from full on to nothing, it was a gradual sort of do-less, but it was still, and I guess it is just a habit that your body and your mind get into, because it was just like, I had to almost physically stop myself getting in the car and going to the pool. And I think I did, I was like I'm just going to go for a swim, and it was almost like you are addicted to it I guess, so when I say I was doing nothing I wouldn't, I guess I was still doing some stuff in the gym and having the odd swim to sort of keep that going. And then when I felt recovered, because I felt so tired at that point, you know I think my body, I guess if mentally I knew that that was it, I was done, then it just told everything in my body that yes, you can rest now, you don't need to push yourself and hurt yourself and be training, so there was a lot of sleeping and just generally recovering from that. And then after that it was just like, right what do I do now.

OG: What were the emotions attached to stopped? Did you miss swimming?

J: Hugely. It was probably harder than, I don't know, not harder than the gymnastics side of things because I did miss it, and because I was still involved, my job was in swimming and I was still coaching so I was on poolside, standing there telling other swimmers, little kid swimmers, what to do, but I was still seeing the guys that I trained with still training either before or after, and there was that huge, I still want to do this, and when I went to galas it was like, I can swim that fast. And it was, I went back, it must have been 6 months after I gave up I thought, no I need to train again, and I did, I got back in and I swam, you know I trained 3 or 4 times a week and I did a race and I think I needed to do that, because by doing that I realised, no I don't want to do this anymore. The rest of my life is now more important and it was like not only did I not have time to do the training, or that, I just, I didn't want to. I quite enjoyed it for fun and for keeping fit and stuff, but I was like, no. But I think I did need to do that and to do the race to actually think, what are you playing at, don't be so stupid, just accept it. Got closure.

OG: And after that have you had any other thoughts of a comeback?

J: Just on Friday there (announcement of Glasgow Games)... no, not seriously, no, I just, I guess because a lot of other things happened, Isabel came along, there was all that so, we decided it would be quite nice to have kids, it was always going to be part of our lives. I think that was quite good for me too because it took my focus totally away from swimming and sport, and also away from my body being sporty, and that was really hard as well, to be totally in control of everything, and then all of a sudden you're not, that was very hard. And it was probably quite soon after finishing swimming, so training, that I got pregnant, so it was like woo, what's going on. I didn't like it, I didn't like not being in control of what was happening. Even when I wasn't pregnant you still had that sort of thought in your head, I need to keep fit, I need to keep in shape, because everything up till then has been so much about that, you can't just suddenly switch it off.

OG: How did your life change socially when you finished?

J: I wouldn't say, well I guess initially I had people I was working with, and they were new, but I didn't really see them socially. Probably it didn't change really, until I had Isobel, and then I started going like to mother and baby things and all that, which I was like I'm not going to them, but actually they were really good, and now I have got a totally different circle of friends that probably I socialise with, and they are

all like you know, mums like me and stuff, as opposed to, I have still got my swimming friends who I still see, I have almost got two lives now, which is good because other than that I think I was just a case of swimming and quite a lot of them were still swimming and I was like, what do I do, where do I fit in type thing.

OG: In terms of making the decision to stop swimming, did you speak to anyone about what you were thinking?

J: Well it was pretty much just me, I'm trying to think if I did actually, obviously my coach and he knew that that was what I was thinking, although it was more just an assumption I think on everybody's part that that was what was going to happen. I think probably most people thought that that would be it after Manchester, and it was more of a case of me telling them, actually I'm going to keep going for another, not quite a year but another wee while, and they were like, oh, okay, because I was working and that they just thought it will not last. But still quite happy. So I think everyone was just waiting for me to say that that was really it now, as opposed to I'm just going training, I'm just going to race here.

J: What was your family's reaction and your boyfriend's reaction to you deciding to stop?

OG: Just, I'm not really sure, I think Steven was probably like way hey, I don't need to like keep coming to swimming galas and all that and we can get on with the rest of our lives. I think he was as much a part of the decision as I was, really, and my mum and dad and that, they were probably, you know, are you sure, and just, not happy, but supportive and saying fine, if that's what you want.

OG: Looking back now, do you think the timing was right?

J: Yes, I think so. Without a doubt, I say that with a laugh, because I also think maybe if I had swam another couple of months I would have swam quicker again, but you could always say that. And I think for everything else that was going on in my life it was the right time, and to have kept training would probably have been a bit selfish and it would have only been purely because I thought I like it, I want to, and it would have been more because I have been doing this for so long so I will just keep going, and it was quite, it was having a bit of courage to say, no that is me done. Because I could have kept going, and I was swimming well, so it was a bit of a, just make the decision.

OG: Is there anything else you want to tell me about your swimming career or your retirement?

J: Em, I don't think so, I'm trying to think if there is anything that happened in that, that I thought that wasn't... I think ultimately I would have liked to have started sooner, I still think at the back of my mind that I could have been better, faster, but I almost started to late, which sounds a bit strange but it is one of those things I was still getting quicker when I stopped, it wasn't like I was getting slower, but maybe, maybe not, maybe it was me. So no, I don't think there is anything I would have changed, apart from perhaps being a couple of inches taller, that would have helped a lot. But no, I think everything happened and I was quite happy. If I was to speak to other athletes I would tell them, I think I would say not to finish on a low note, if at all possible. I think, and I guess it depends on what type of person you are, but it was important for me to finish feeling good about my swimming. I know that that is not always possible, but ultimately it is because you can still, if you have a bad meet, you know I had swum really badly in March and I thought well, just keep going till the summer and have a good meet and enjoy it, pressures off. I would say maybe once they decide they are going to stop give it another 6 months, with the pressure off, and you'll probably find you swim quicker then anyway because you are not actually thinking about it. But I would definitely say to have a plan about what they were going to do and have something there for when you finish, don't just stop swimming and then think, right what am I going to do now, and then have to spend however many months or whatever trying to work that out. It is almost like you have got a transition period where you are doing a bit of both, which I think certainly worked for me. And then it is almost a gradual weaning off of all of the swimming training and all that.

END

CASSIE (Canoe Slalom)

2nd November 2007 (phone interview)

OG: Can you start me off by telling me the story of your canoeing career?

C: I started canoeing at like 8 and started competing, I did my first international a week after my 11th birthday. And basically from then on I did it like pretty full on from quite a young age, then got on the junior British team, went from there to the British senior team, and well that's about it really. So from quite young I was doing quite a lot

OG: Were you full time at any stage? What were you doing alongside your canoeing?

C: I moved down to Nottingham, which is the location of the national watersport centre, for university in '97. I was at university until 2000 and then from 2000 till when I retired which was December 2006 I was full time.

OG: And how were you funded?

C: Through World Class Performance. I also had Scottish funding as well, I think I probably went for the record of how many times you can go on and off funding in a career, because I was Scottish I did have a fall back of Scottish funding when I did come off Performance funding, so it was a bit on and off between different sources.

OG: How important would you say canoeing was to you at that time?

C: I guess it was what I did. So everything I did was for canoeing. It was the most important thing in my life at that time.

OG: When you made the decision to go full time, did you have to make a choice between that and other career options when you finished university?

C: Well it wasn't so much a decision, it was just what you did, I didn't sort of sit and think, right what do I want to do, do I want to go full time or do I want to do other stuff, it was just the natural progression. It was like, just what you did when you finished at university, get your qualifications sorted, and then you just naturally just moved to being full time.

OG: When you first went full time what were your ambitions? Did you have in the back of your mind an idea of what you wanted to achieve?

C: The ambition was always to go to the Athens Olympics, and so then with finishing university in 2000 you were within like the 4 year cycle.

OG: And what would you say your most significant achievements were?

C: In terms of results, hmm, you know you have races where you do really well, not necessarily placing but because of other things, maybe coming back from doing absolutely terrible, the turnaround was good but maybe the results didn't actually reflect that, but in terms of results it would have been 6th at the World Championships. Just before I finished in 2006 I didn't make the senior team, but I got a cup place as a reserve, well they were meant to go to the next U23 but there was nobody and then they were meant to go to the next U18 but there was no-one, so then they came back to me, so in that way I managed to get another World Cup. I came 6th at that and that was quite a good one because I sort of really wasn't in the mind set, I was basically thinking of giving up, and I didn't sort of care anymore, and then that was what came out of it, a really good result, because everything wasn't counting on it. In the whole race through to the semi-finals I was actually in the top 4, but in the final I messed up a little bit so I went to 6th, but that still kind of sticks in my mind as a good one, maybe because it was my last one as well.

OG: Do you have experiences that stand out for you as low points?

C: I guess I think I had a lot of politics type problems in my sporting career. I guess you always feel like you are the one that gets it all but I did feel like I specifically had an awful lot of challenges that, well probably because I am not one to just sit there and take it as well, I would try and fight for things, and I felt I had an awful lot of that as well.

OG: Can you give me any examples that can illustrate that?

C: There was lots in the early days of World Class Funding, where I was on Scottish funding, but I was on the senior team so I was travelling, it was kind of assumed, well it was pretty much everyone on the senior team except for me had World Class Funding, and I was on Scottish funding, and there was a real problem

with how, no-one knew how to integrate me into it I guess. With time it has all been resolved, but it was very, very hard at the time because the coaches were like, you had this non-status, which other paddlers would see it as funny to joke about, like oh are you allowed in this mini-bus, have you paid your share of it. So there was a lot like that where I had coaches saying we can't coach you this morning because you're not priority, then going Cassie why aren't you coming to talk to us. So that was like a really, really bad time, I had that and it was always like, why do I want to put up with this, but I mean the good thing is luckily people don't have that situation now. I fought a lot of times for that as well, which also affects your paddling as well because you are sort of like bitter about things. So generally I would say I had a few years of a lot of things like that, but other than that in terms of low times, mm, they are the big ones I think.

OG: Is there anything you look back on and miss about being a paddler?

C: Em, I guess I miss having all the friends that you have, like around the world, like seeing them regularly. I kind of miss the travelling side of it and the racing, because I loved the racing the most really. And I miss the whole healthy, feeling fit kind of thing, the whole physical side of it quite a lot, because it is quite hard to motivate myself to do things when I know I don't really have to.

OG: And is there anything you don't miss?

C: I don't miss the stress, absolutely, like I guess I used to really beat myself up if I had had bad training, bad races, I would really put pressure on myself, and if that is all you do you can't help but make it important, so I absolutely don't miss the stress of it. Life is a lot less stressful now.

OG: From a social perspective, were most of your friends paddlers, were they all involved in the sport, or did you have friends outside the canoeing circle?

C: No, pretty much all my friends were in canoeing. I had one or two still in Scotland from school but it is hard to keep in touch because you are always away and stuff.

OG: Was it quite a big decision for you to move down to Nottingham, to transfer your life in that way?

C: Again that wasn't really a big decision, it was just what you naturally did, it was part of what happened that you moved down to Nottingham to train because that was where you needed to train, where the coaches were, it was kind of what you did.

OG: Can you tell me now about the circumstances that led up to your retirement and what happened when you did decide to stop?

C: I guess, a couple of winters, probably since 2004, I would get to the end of every season and I would kind of be thinking, do I want to keep doing this, the whole sort of thought of winter training again and the whole thing starting over again for another season, it would always get me a bit questioning. But then you would start planning and before you know it you would just sort of roll into it and before you know it you are doing the next season again. And then I guess I really had a tough winter 2005, in terms of really sitting and thinking do I really want to be doing this, is it worth everything I am going through, and so then I didn't make the team in 2006 and then I think all summer, well I basically had loads of time off, did what I wanted to do because I didn't have any big races. Even then it was a really hard decision to actually stop, I think being brave enough to make that decision, because as much as you might think you want to, I wasn't brave enough to do it until that December. The way I saw it, it was like easy for me to keep canoeing, in your nice little safe bubble, it was just natural, for other people it might be hard to see it as an easy thing to keep going but for me it really was, and it was a hard thing to stop. You are coming out of your nice safe environment where you know everyone and you know everything, I have been in that sort of bubble for so long and didn't do much with people outside canoeing and that was the hardest thing to have to overcome I think.

OG: So what was it about 2006 that made you finally make the decision then?

C: I think I just thought what will it mean to me if I keep going? Say I keep going and go to the Olympics 2008 or win the World Championships, what difference is that going to make to what you want to do in the future or just to your life in general, and it really became less significant to me, what the achievement would actually result in, realising it probably wouldn't actually make that much difference, people might be like oh that's brilliant you're World Champion for a couple of months, and then it's all pretty much forgotten, and I thought well it doesn't change the fact that you still have so many years of life left to live and you have to start doing something. It was time. I was just sort of, I stopped wanting to do

everything that I was doing anymore. I started to think I am sure there are other things I will be good at, I don't know what, but I want to be able to figure out, to try other things and see what else I like to do.

OG: Did you make any plans then, before you actually physically stopped?

C: I guess I'd always been quite conscious that canoeing stops at some point and I realised that I am not really going to use my degree, I didn't particularly want to go further in what my degree was. I had done a few little courses, distance learning courses, going for things more like sports massage, and I did a, regardless or not of what happened with canoeing there was this course that I wanted to do for years, but kept putting off as I couldn't fit it in around my training, and then I decided no I am just going to accept that I couldn't go on some trips because I want to do this course, so I booked in on that so I knew that I had that planned for the winter, it was a sports massage course and it was at weekends for six months, so it was a big commitment and financially it was a big commitment. I didn't really know what I wanted to do, I kind of saw a few avenues and options. Basically I started applying for jobs, so that I would have something anyway for when I finished, which I did manage to do but I only started there for 2 days and then I quit – but it did its job of giving me something to do, and to say I was doing, when I retired. So when people asked I could say oh I've got a job in this nursery, but I actually left really quickly, I was just like this is not for me, while I am in the mode of making big decisions.

OG: So then what happened after that then?

C: So I stopped working there and, luckily when I came off World Class Funding I got, well I called it redundancy pay, you get funding for 3 months still, so I knew financially I was okay until like March, which was a big help, definitely a big thing. I would have got that anyway because I was coming off funding because of results anyway, so that was sort of irrelevant to me retiring or not, so there wasn't anything new financially coming in, so it wasn't like oh well if I retire I won't have any money in March, because that was always going to be the case. So there wasn't a new issue for me financially because I was retiring, that was always going to be on the cards. And then I knew I had this course and I guess I planned to go into some massage once I finished my course.

OG: And so is that what you are doing now?

C: No. I actually got a job working for the British Canoe Union, which I saw as an ideal transfer because it is still within an environment I knew in terms of the knowledge base, but it was also into the work environment and into an office, so it was actually perfect. It came about in a bit of a funny way, in that I'd applied for it, didn't get it, and they gave it internally, and I guess I was a bit upset at that in terms of, god you can't even get a job in your own sport, but then the girl that took it ended up getting a different job so it then came free again. Because I know people that work there I heard it came free and I rang them and said look I'm still interested if you still want me and I got it. So I'm doing that and I quite enjoy it. I guess originally I saw that as a stop gap until I finished my massage course, but I enjoy it and there's like, well this letter than I sent off this morning is because I have been offered like a promotion, so I am moving on and like getting opportunities within this environment. And then recently I am also setting up my own business for the sports massage to do alongside that work. So that has been like a year, it is a year on and things are starting to go how I guess in my mind I would like to have seen things go.

OG: Taking you back to when you decided to retire, did you stop training completely and was it immediate?

C: I guess from when I announced that I was retiring, that was it, it was a stop, but I kind of had that tailor off period from selection which would have been like April 2006 right through to when I stopped because I spent that whole summer just doing what I wanted to do, going paddling if I wanted to go paddling, so I did have that taper period then, without having made the decision, although it was kind of in the back of my mind really that that was what I was going to do.

OG: How much do you think your life has changed now, from when you were training?

C: I don't think it has changed hugely. I think I've changed in terms of the way I sort of look at things probably and like I said I think I am a much happier person actually, although I am not advertising it to people who are still competing, oh you will be much happier when you stop, but just because I put so much on it and I had done it for so long and it's nice, like little things I guess that people just do day to day in terms of like if I go and meet someone from work to go shopping or something, I am really quite pleased about that, that I actually have friends outside of canoeing and can socialise with people that aren't canoers you know. That kind of stuff are quite nice little things for me, but I guess quite normal to everyone who just goes

to work everyday. But it hasn't really changed, partly because my boyfriend is still in the senior team, my brother is still in the team, I still live in the area, like other paddlers live on my street and I still see everyone and there is still those links.

OG: At any stage have you regretted the decision to retire, thought about a come back?

C: I've never felt that I made the wrong choice. There have been times when I've thought, like it's coming up to the Olympics next year and I know that there is only one person going for canoe slalom, and I thought well it is either going to be one or other of the two people that I competed against, and that I see myself as being equal to, so one of them is going to be at the Olympics, so you get that little sinking feeling of what, well how realistic could it have been you sort of thing. But then I think but what about all the stresses you would have gone through before that, and think no it's fine. So, in terms of coming back, I have done a couple of domestic races this year and enjoyed just doing that, I think it's hard, you almost need a clear gap from being like one of the good paddlers to then doing it for fun, because you still sort of have expectations, like when your mind knows what it wants to do but your body just can't quite do it. There is also other people, little comments like, one of the races I did, someone came up and said wow you didn't do very well, and I felt like saying well what do you expect, I have been in a boat once in the last month, there are just always going to be people who make comments and it can still get to you, you still care about what other people think. You don't want to be like making excuses but you think, why don't they realise that I have finished kind of thing. But I am getting a bit over that now.

OG: Was there a physical side to adjusting to retirement?

C: I guess there was that thing where I did less over the summer, and then I guess I did have a spell where I didn't like it and it was like you're losing your muscle and you're starting to feel that bit less toned. I guess you always just take for granted that you have been quite fit and toned, and then suddenly you realise that actually if I still want to be like that then I am going to have to work at it. At the start it did get me down, the whole like oh I am going to put the weight on, oh you still need to exercise if you want to eat what you normally eat, but then at the same time not being motivated to exercise, but I think I am getting more used to that now.

OG: Did you speak to anyone about your thoughts of retirement, or when you made your decision to retire?

C: That was one of the hardest bits, because you feel like you can't speak to people about it because then they'll know that you are considering it, word just gets around like that, like instantly. But luckily another girl that I competed with, she retired a few months before me, and quite often over the last year or two we had discussed how we do think there are things beyond canoeing and that we were sort of considering different things, so I did have a friend that I actually talked to quite a lot and we were going through similar things. I think the only difference was that she had medalled at the Olympics, so she had sort of achieved that goal, and I was sort of feeling the same sort of things as her but I hadn't achieved that, so there was that difference, which made it a bit harder. That helped a lot because I had that, if I hadn't of had her to sort of discuss about it with then it is hard because you feel you can't bring it up with people within your sport because then it's like if you did feel like carrying on then you are seeming like not committed because you have been considering not carrying on. That was one of the reasons why I was quite keen to speak to you, to help you with your research and stuff, because I do think that is an area which is quite difficult. It is like what can you do to provide something that is sort of, people feel they can use. Just little things like you just don't know what the process is, who should you tell first, is there a sort of ethical order that you tell people in, and you don't want, it was so hard to make sure I got the right order of people I told, because I didn't want people close to me to find out from other people, and senior people on the programme need to know before others, and stuff. It is kind of a taboo subject until you decide you want to do it. I spoke to my boyfriend about it, because every winter it would be like, okay here we go again, she's talking about stopping again. And I sort of pre-warned my mum, I said look I am considering this so I am going to tell you so that you are not sort of shocked when it comes out of the blue. And she was like, whatever you want, as long as you are happy kind of thing. It was toughest to tell my brother actually, because I think I always feel he's got quite, his opinions and judgements on things, so I sort of broached the subject with him when we were in the gym, and was saying well I'm not sure what I want to do, and he was like really good with it, surprisingly good, and just said oh well if you're not enjoying it then just don't do it, it's fine you know. That really, really helped, and he was the hardest person to tell, so because he was fine about it, it made the rest easier. I mean there might have been other people who were thinking oh you're stupid to waste your talent and stuff but I didn't care if they thought that, that's fine, but I guess I would have cared if my brother had thought that.

OG: How hard was it to tell your coaches that you were finishing?

C: Because I have never had one coach for a very long time, I sort of changed yearly, like the way my funding changed as well, but I had started working with one which, it was going to be going into my second year of working with him, and I had got on really well with him, I did feel again that I had to pre-warn him, because we were in the whole planning the winter stage, I felt I had to be honest and say, look I'm struggling here because I am not sure if I want to be, not sure if I am going to continue. Be he, again he was very good, like he understood everything, he was the first person I told in terms of the whole canoeing scene rather than family, and he was really quite supportive with it, I think he had known me long enough to know that, what I felt about things. My weights coach, we had got quite a close relationship and I did feel I had, because he wasn't paid to coach me and he was doing it just purely out of belief in me at the time, so I felt I needed to tell him, but again we were coming near to the end of working with him as well so, luckily things just happened at just the right sort of timing. So that could be why it was this winter, that winter that I had decided to do it over other ones, because a whole combination of things just sort of arising, coming together.

OG: Were you offered any kind of support from anyone within canoeing?

C: I had spoke to the careers, the Performance Lifestyle, just a little bit, I probably should have done it sooner but I felt like I didn't want to go and say what I was thinking, I wanted to see them once I had made the decision. So because I was just sort of applying for loads of jobs and not getting an interview or not getting anything, I spoke to them, and I think I only saw her for one session, and so I didn't make full use of it. In terms of being offered I wasn't offered anything, I think I knew I could get support from that until, I think it was March again. But I guess I felt like I needed to do it on my own, I was trying to move away from that safe environment where you, where things got done for you and everything and I had to figure out things by myself. I saw that as part of it all. Maybe if someone had come and offered it rather than me having to go and ask for it I may have accepted it, but...

OG: Is there anything in particular you feel that you could have benefited from getting help with?

C: I don't know but I guess I was a little bit at the time annoyed that when you go through your canoeing you are sort of made to feel that the skills and everything that you learned through being an athlete, you know employers will want that from you, and you will have no problem getting a job. You know this is the first ever job I have got, and so I was like 26 and going for my first job and employers were actually just going, well she's got no experience kind of thing, they don't know what top athletes, what training they have, so I felt that I'd been misled in terms of the idea that you are very employable, because you have shown commitment and all the planning and all this stuff, and I didn't think I would be applying for jobs and not getting anything, so I felt like I had been misled.

OG: Is there anything else you want to tell me about your canoeing career or about your retirement, anything you think we haven't covered?

C: I think I would definitely try and have a more balanced life, especially like from younger, like when I was at school and stuff I didn't really socialise with people outside canoeing because every weekend I was away canoeing and I was training in the evenings, so I would definitely try and like realise that actually it is not affecting your canoeing to have like a weekend off to go off on a holiday or something like that, or to have a week to go on what I would call a normal person's holiday, and realise that actually that will help you in the longer run. And perhaps take time to like have some little jobs, like a little part-time job so you do have some experience and have other things on other than just canoeing. I normally paddled better when I had other stuff going on as well. From what I see that goes on in Nottingham, because there is more funding now in sport, and I know it's not every sport, there is a lot more funding for like younger people, you know from a young age you have got a lot more funding and you are almost becoming a full time athlete from quite a young age. I know we've got some 16 year olds that have now moved to Nottingham, been put up in a school that has all been arranged, getting time off for training and stuff, and they are put up in a home stay, and although it is great, it just concerns me that it is too much too young and people still need to, like what I would do if I did it again, get more of that balance and be less canoeing, canoeing, canoeing. My concern is the more funding that is in things the more that is happening, and it is on more of a scale than even I experienced and I just think that people need to be aware of other things if they are doing that, to know that it is okay to do other stuff. But it is hard because these kids, they want to be thinking canoeing, canoeing all the time, because they enjoy it. So that would be a good thing, with the increasing funding, just to like, rather than the coaches really, I was lucky to have a few coaches who were really into the whole balanced lifestyle thing, the coaches need to be saying that it is okay to want to do something else as well, and I think that is important. Also I know it's really hard, but it really is just not really caring what others might think of it, because I guess you think people think less of you because, you see in canoeing you re kind of told, oh count yourself lucky that you have not got a normal job, oh you really would be stupid to want to give up and have,

to go to work. So you feel like you are, like you have sort of got all these opportunities and you are just sort of throwing them all away sort of thing, whereas some people might not have those opportunities. But it is not what others think, so you have got to not worry that other people might be thinking that, because other people might think that, but in the end of the day if you are going to be happier that is what is important. And I think the biggest thing when I was going to speak to someone about it was saying, do you know what, it is not a life long decision. If you make this decision and then in 2 or 3 months think, do you know what, I would rather be paddling again, then you can, and that really helped me when I had that, that it is not an irreversible decision. It feels like it at the time, like you are making this big life changing decision, which you kind of are, but at the same time you can easily have 2 months off, if you are at a high level and you have 2 months off you can easily, you can come back, and I think that made it easier.

OG: Thank you so much for your time Cassie.

END

GILLIAN (Swimming)

5th November 2007

OG: Can you start me off by telling me the story of your swimming career?

G: Well, I suppose I started competitive swimming when I was about, the earlier I remember competing was when I was 12, and then I swam with Hearts Swimming Club, and my first international competition would have been when I was 14. I actually broke my wrist at the competition before I swam, so that wasn't a great first international competition. When I was 15 I was at the GB Youth Olympics and then when I was 16 I swam twice for the junior British team as well, once at a six nations thing and once at European Juniors. And then I moved on to swim with City of Edinburgh, I never actually swam for Britain at a senior level but I swam for Scotland at senior level, and then I finished when I was 20. Just when I was 20, that's when I stopped, which actually looking back I think is quite a young age to stop at.

OG: In terms of getting started in the sport, what were your main influences?

G: I don't particularly ever remember actually thinking I want to be a really top swimmer, you know I think some children do think that but I never remembered thinking that I want to win an Olympic gold medal. I think I just loved swimming when I learnt to swim and from what my parents tell me, you know, I was on at them all the time, I want to join a swimming club, I want to join a swimming club. And then obviously I had a good coach who saw I had some talent and kind of I suppose steered me in that direction. But obviously I loved it, if I hadn't loved it I wouldn't have done it.

OG: As you got further into your competitive career did you start to develop ambitions for where you thought you could go with your swimming?

G: Yeah, I mean I never, I suppose if I am honest I never really wanted to swim for Britain, it was always I wanted to swim for Scotland, I'm a bit of a nationalist. I did obviously develop goals along the way but even when I was a bit older and swimming for City of Edinburgh I never really thought on a four year scale, it was always sort of a yearly goal.

OG: How many hours a week were you swimming and what else was going on in life alongside swimming?

G: Well when I swam at junior level obviously I was still at school and I'd be training probably about 16 hours a week, maybe, in the pool, probably 14 to 16 in the pool and a couple of land training light weights sessions. But then when I left school I took a year out to try, because of the environment I was in and the people that I was swimming with, I mean I was swimming with the likes of Jamie Salter who had already been at an Olympics and was going for the Olympics again, so it was really a big change from when I was at school, you know, it all became really quite serious. This was all when I moved to the City of Edinburgh. It kind of changed the way I thought about it and it did become a bit more serious and I thought I would give it a try and see what it was like full time just swimming, so I didn't do anything else really, I had a bit of a part time job here and there you know. But then I went to university after that. It didn't work for me at all, just swimming, I needed my brain, my brain was just, I needed something else really. When I was sort of 17, 18,

I'd be training 18 to 20 hours per week in the pool, and then I was doing land training sessions and that sort of thing. The most I ever trained would have been about 25 hours per week.

OG: And were you funded when you were full time?

G: Eh no. The programme, the City of Edinburgh programme was funded to a certain extent, like if you didn't get lottery funding you paid slightly less fees, which was good.

OG: So I take it there was quite a lot of parental involvement then?

G: Yes, there was a lot. I mean when I was a junior, when I was you know 15, 16, I did get a bit of funding from the lottery, a bursary you know, but after that I didn't get anything and like it maw my parents that paid everything, and also any money that I earned through my part time job would be used, I'd pay as much as I could, you know. It was expensive. It is one of the things, I look back now and I think, the money that was spent on that you know, oh god.

OG: And so did you find that the balance was better for you when you went to university?

G: Yes, it was much better when I got to university. In fact, I think in my first year of university was my best year of my swimming career and then afterwards it kind of started to go a bit downhill.

OG: And were you supported by the university for your swimming, were you on a bursary?

G: No, no. I didn't swim for the university, it was completely separate. I wasn't really encouraged to swim for the university team by my coach at the time.

OG: What are the things you are most proud of from your swimming career?

G: The things that I look back on are more like my junior achievements, because I think there was more enjoyment in it then. I think once it started to become a bit more serious I stopped enjoying it as much, and that was where, well it became too serious. My personal best was obviously the highlight of my career, when I was at my best, and that was when I was, in fact I had just come back from a trip away with the Scotland team and I had done a PB on the trip and I came back to Sheffield and I did another PB, and you know I knocked off 6 or 7 seconds which was a significant amount because I had kind of levelled out for a while, so that would be obviously one of the highlights. But as I say the things that I look back on with the most sort of enjoyment are my junior achievements. I think just being in a different frame of mind and stuff. I think swimming just got to the stage where I trained, I loved to compete, that was why I did it, I wasn't a, you know, some people would love training, and would train and train and train, but I wasn't like that, I loved to compete and I used to do a lot of my training through competition. But then when I changed coaches and went to City of Edinburgh my coach there didn't really see the benefit of that and so I kind of ended up training and training and training and training and doing the odd competition, and that was probably contributed to me losing some enjoyment as well. Even if it was just, I used to do little competitions, you know, I just used to love it, I would be competing every couple of weeks, but it was more of a sort of training focus when I changed to City of Edinburgh, and you know highlight a few major competitions rather than doing lots of little ones as well as major ones. And you know if you have not competed for a while as well, if you have not competed for two or three months, and then all of a sudden you're going into a big competition, and you're not feeling ready. The thing is I look back now and I think, if I had the sight I have now, you know in hindsight, I was probably with the wrong coach and it has a lot to do with whether you are compatible with your coach. At the time it seemed right, it was one of the best clubs, and it was in Edinburgh, and I was at university in Edinburgh, it meant I could stay at home and it all kind of linked up.

OG: What were the low points, looking back now?

G: Yes, pretty much the whole of the last two years, well the last sort of year and a half, no probably actually the last two years, I don't like to think about because things just went downhill and I was having a lot of issues at the time, you know, with my body and that. I suppose I didn't really feel like I was valued by my coach either, because he never actually tried to, I mean, I actually stopped swimming in a very bad way because my last competition was in June, it was Scottish Nationals, and I did, I swam terribly, but I mean I was just feeling awful, you know, and I swam terribly and he said that basically I was an embarrassment and then that was it, I was in tears, and you know I just cut it off like that which was probably the worst thing that I could have done, but he didn't try and find out why I had swum badly or anything. He had probably had enough of my by that point, because obviously there is a certain element of, you are supposed to be able to go to your coach but he couldn't get anything out of me you know, I should probably have gone to him with

whatever was bothering me. So that would have been the lowest point, and the way it ended because it was a sad way to end what I'd enjoyed so much. So that would be the lowest point I would say. And I mean I did have a lot of injuries as well, it just seemed to be injury after injury, you know, shoulders, back, hip, all sorts, and you know that is quite difficult to get over when your training's broken up, I mean I actually had an injury just came upon me at a competition, it was a World Cup thing in Glasgow, and I was just so set to swim well and it was such a disappointment you know. I think I probably lost a bit of motivation after being injured, which is normal, but I found it difficult to get back up and get back into things, I think I just got disheartened. I actually started to think about what my body would be like when I was 50 as well, you know, if I was putting it under so much strain already.

OG: Is there anything you particularly miss about competitive swimming?

G: I miss the competitiveness, the competitive side. And I miss the buzz you get, the adrenaline rush. When I got swimming, I've started to do a bit of masters swimming now, just for fun, but you know I still get the same kind of buzz when we do silly little relays and stuff and I still, my worry is if I go back to it, because I have thought about competing in masters, how would I deal with not going as fast as I used to go. But at the same time there is a trade off with how much I want to commit and how much I want to train to obviously how fast I would go. But yes, that is the biggest thing. I miss feeling fit as well, I really miss that I have to say. I mean I am never going to be that incredibly fit again because I'm never going to give that much time to sport, you know, because I have more of a life now obviously, but I really miss that. Those would be the two things.

OG: Is there anything you don't miss?

G: I don't miss getting up at half five in the morning, or five o'clock even, in the dark, in the cold, having to scrape the car at 5 o'clock in the morning. I don't miss, well, I don't miss the seriousness of it. Like I get a lot more enjoyment now out of it because there is no pressure, I don't miss the pressure that I felt under. I don't miss the fact that my parents are spending x amount of money on me and maybe not on my sister, you know. I like the feeling of knowing that I am supporting myself, you know, and I don't have to rely on anyone to pay for anything for me, I like being independent and I think that was another consideration that I started to realise, it would be different if I had been getting funding, but you start to think how long can you go on for.

OG: How much do you think being a swimmer affected the rest of your life – social life, family life, and aspects like school?

G: I think, when I was at school I think it helped me, because I had a lot of discipline. I knew that, especially when it came to exam time, I knew that I had to, or homework, if I knew that I was going training and I loved swimming, I knew that my mum and dad wouldn't let me go if I wasn't getting on well at school and I wasn't getting my homework done, and that's obviously how my mum and dad are, because some parents might not be like that but I knew that that was the case. If I didn't get my homework done and I didn't do well then they would have, I wasn't going to be allowed to sacrifice my education. So I was very disciplined in the fact that I got my homework done like as soon as I got it, if I had a free period I would be sitting doing my homework when other people might just be sitting in the common room or whatever. Same with studying, like knowing that I only had an hour every night, I would do it, whereas... I noticed that at university as well, in the first year at university I was very structured and then I gave up, by the time I was in third year of university I had stopped swimming and my grades just plummeted because I was just, oh I've got loads of time to do my work. My swimming was really good for time management and I think that that is something that I have picked up as a sort of life skill, because I swam, or because I was so involved in sport. Socially, I don't think I missed out on anything because I don't think I would particularly wanted to have been drunk when I was 14 or 15 and I don't think it had done me any harm. I still had friends at school, I had friends at swimming, I still did the stuff outside of swimming. It was probably most unbalanced on my year off, in the year when I was just swimming, and I would say that was the least healthy social part that I had because my school friends had gone off to university and it was all swimming, swimming, swimming, so I was socialising with swimming people then as well. But fairly balanced when I went to university, I had, I socialised with people at university.

OG: When you took your year off to go full time, did you have thoughts that if it went really well you might stay full time?

G: No, I always intended to start university because it was something that, as it turned out it suited me much better that way anyway, but I don't know, maybe if things, well being the person I am it wouldn't have

suiting me to do nothing, but if I had had a really successful year I might have got funding and decided to do part-time at university. But I was always going to go to university.

OG: And at that stage, did you have thoughts for what might come after university, did you think for example that you might try going full time again?

G: I think I hadn't really thought further ahead than my degree. I actually left after 3rd year and just got my ordinary degree, obviously at the time I was planning on doing 4 years, honours and everything, so I mean I hadn't really thought further ahead. By this time I'd thought that I want to make Commonwealth Games, I hadn't really thought about Olympics because like I said before, I had more of a Scotland focus.

OG: Can you tell me a bit more about the time leading up to your retirement from swimming.

G: I think it was just a gradual thing that kind of came upon me, there wasn't like one incident that caused me to think, right, you know, it was over you know like I said that two year period. I think it was to do with getting a bit more involved at university, going out a wee bit more, just coming to realising that there is more to life than swimming, and like I said before I did start to get issues about my body, my weight fluctuated quite a lot and I started to... my coach would always comment on it and it ended up that I was completely paranoid about it and had major issues with that and that probably contributed to my decline in performance. I'm not trying to blame anyone but I feel that my coach should have picked up on that and should have, you know, been interested enough to try and work out what was going on and sort that out. This is probably to do with the kind of person I am as well, my personality, but I can remember now, we were talking about low points and I didn't mention this, but one time we were competing in Manchester and I can remember just sitting on poolside and feeling fat, and that was ridiculous because you know, I was fit, but it got to the stage that that was how I felt and that continual feeling of sort of negativity and feeling worse and worse about myself and losing confidence, not just losing confidence but self-esteem you know, and obviously it affected my performance, I wasn't eating right and it's a knock on effect and it just got worse and worse and it got to the stage where it was just crisis point and I couldn't take any more of it and I suppose that comment from my coach, I mean I was in tears and he couldn't be bothered with my tears. But if he had actually known me properly he would have known that there was a reason for it, you know, but that was just the straw that broke the camel's back, I'd had enough, and actually in the year after that I vowed that I would never go near a swimming pool ever again. And it took me probably over a year to go back to a swimming pool, the first swim I had after all of that was probably about 14 months after I stopped.

OG: And so literally after that event you just stopped?

G: Yep, I just stopped. I had no more contact with my coach.

OG: And he didn't try to get in contact with you at any stage? Had you told him at that event that you were going to stop?

G: He just didn't want to talk to me after my event, and then my mum was there, and I was just hysterical, I couldn't take any more of it, and that was it, I just went, I didn't tell anyone I was stopping, I just stopped. To be fair the assistant coach at the time phoned up on the Monday night, that was on the Sunday, and he phoned up on the Monday night and said, is Gillian not coming to training, and my mum and dad said, no she is not coming back, and that was the only contact I had from them, didn't have any contact from the head coach, but the assistant coach did phone and obviously he passed on the message that that was it for me. I still, obviously some of the swimmers that I had swam with were friends, and were asking, what's happened.

OG: And did you maintain contact with them?

G: Not for a while, probably not for that year. I see them a bit more now, but at that time I cut myself off completely and I went a bit off the rails in terms of I went out every night, you know, I just didn't really want to feel anything, just drinking a lot and you know my weight just shot up as is probably normal you know, because you are used to eating such a huge amount and doing all that exercise. I didn't have any support in terms of advising me, I know there is a whole thing that has come in about de-training and probably it is something to do with your diet as well. I probably did the worst thing for my body and just stopping like that, I went from doing 25 hours a week training to doing absolutely nothing, not any running, not any cycling, absolutely nothing. I just stopped completely. And it wasn't until about a year later that I started to think, right, I really want to get back into doing something and I went for a swim. And then I started doing a bit of running and stuff, and went to some classes, so I did get involved in some other stuff,

because you know I was still doing sports science, still involved to a certain extent, friends on the course who were active.

OG: Your decision to finish your degree at 3 years instead of 4 must have come at around the same time as you stopping swimming – were they linked do you think?

G: I think so, I suppose in a sense I stopped seeing the value of sport, because I had had such a bad experience of it, and I just wasn't interested, I mean I barely passed my exams, I got the minimum, I did no work for it, and when I look back I think I could have done so well because, actually you know I was saying in the first year of university I did really well, I was the top student in first year you know, got A's, 80% or over, but that was a lot to do with the discipline you know, I did all the work, I read all the reading, because I knew I had to get it done. But then it is interesting the relationship between my grades and my swimming career, I do think that they reflected one another, and so although I did not want to leave at the end of second year, because I stopped swimming at the end of second year, I wanted to get my basic degree anyway so I, I didn't want to look back and think what a waste of 2 years, so I did the minimum amount and I got my degree, and I was just like, no, I'm leaving, and then I was just working different jobs, cafes, bars, that kind of thing you know. Not involved really in sport at all.

OG: And did you have a sense at that stage for what you maybe wanted to do?

G: I didn't have a clue about what I wanted to do, I was just very kind of up and down. And obviously still even a couple of years after I stopped I was still having issues with my body and eating and stuff.

OG: So now how have you got to working as a swimming teacher from getting back in the pool that first time 14 months after you retired?

G: Again it was a gradual process. I suppose I got over the traumatic experience of how my swimming career ended and I started going swimming a bit, and then I started doing a little bit of teaching with Hearts Swimming Club, got back into it that way. The funny thing is I always vowed to myself, when I was at school and university, never going to be a swimming teacher, so it is ironic now that I am, but I mean I absolutely love it and I suppose I rediscovered my love for the sport. That is the one thing I know now, I may not teach for the rest of my life, but I have to be involved in swimming, I want to work in swimming because I have got such a passion for it. I am so glad I have got the passion back, so glad, because I can go swimming by myself and I can really appreciate it because I love just being in the water and it is just for the love of the sport. I have just done that, it has just happened, like a gradual progression. It is not that somebody has told me I should do such and such to get that back, its just happened. Because obviously that was still there, it was just buried way down deep under all that other stuff.

OG: Have you ever gone back to visit your coach or gone back to the club?

G: No. I've seen him. It is a different coach now at the club anyway, but I had seen my coach a couple of times on a social occasion, he was at a thing that I was at. After that initial year when I didn't really see anyone, I started to make contact with swimming friends and I saw him a couple of times, he just said hi, how are you doing, and I would be like, yeah I'm fine. But we didn't ever talk about why I stopped. He maybe thought that should be the one, that I behaved badly and I should be the one sort of approaching him, but I thought the same, I thought he should be approaching me. I mean I never found him easy to talk to and I don't think he ever really understood me, so I think if you never had that kind of relationship there you are not just going to go up to somebody and say hi, here is what happened. I did think about it, at the time when I was really struggling with what had happened and how I stopped, I thought I might get some closure if I went in and spoke to him, but I never actually had the guts to go and speak to him because it was a really, really hard thing to go back and face him.

OG: In terms of when you first stopped, what were some of the emotions that you went through?

G: I would say I was a complete mess, I mean I was just, I would cry a lot, I just didn't know what I was thinking, I mean I was almost, I don't know what you would say, what the word would be, but I didn't feel balanced mentally, I just felt completely lost, I didn't know what I was doing, didn't know what I wanted to do, didn't know how this had happened, how it had got to this stage, you know. I was like, how did I get here. Because obviously, if there had been one thing that had happened to make me feel like that I would have said, right that's what happened, but it kind of snuck up on me and all of a sudden I was just like, what's happened. I mean I'd lost the biggest thing, I'd been a part of swimming like I say since I was 12, but it was such a big part of my life, and I was just lost I would say. There was anger, I would be angry at my coach. As I said earlier, I don't want to blame anyone, and I don't blame him, it's just the way he is and the

way I am, we just obviously didn't suit personality wise you know, so I don't hold any grudges against him or anything, yet I hated him at the time for it. But I probably did the worst thing possible in stopping, and then I just went straight out drinking all the time, because I had other friends who would be out all the time and it was easy to immerse myself in that.

OG: And how did those feelings then change over time?

G: I think it just sort of got gradually less. It was still there and I would have periods when I would just feel terrible and kind of really down about it all, but it wouldn't be as intense as it was. I suppose the further you get away from the experience the less strong the emotions are. And now I mean I hardly ever think about it. But yes, it just got gradually, gradually better and, sometimes I still, if I watch old videos you know of me swimming, I still get very emotional about it all, because I did love it so much when I swam, up until that point you know. But it is really nice that I have got that back, that I have got some of that back, it will never be the same as it was, but it is the whole kind of nostalgia thing, like you are never going to be a child again, you have to grow up.

OG: Did you ever at any point watch any swimming events that were going on, maybe on the TV, and think, I could have been there or anything like that?

G: Em yeah, because obviously I gave up in Commonwealth Games year, and I should have been, I had the talent and the potential to make the Commonwealth Games team, and that is something I suppose that ran through my mind, but then I started to think, did I actually want it bad enough, and I'm not sure that I did, because, obviously there were all these other issues there as well and I don't know, it might just have been because when I was a child, when I was at school, up until I left school, I loved it, and I don't know, like I say I never really thought I want to be at the Commonwealth Games when I was a child, I'm not saying, I mean I did want it, maybe I just didn't want it bad enough. Because I think I wanted, I found it difficult to be extremely selfish and I think to be a really successful athlete you have to be very selfish, you know, you have got to think just for yourself, and I found that really difficult, I would say I am quite a caring person, I mean I'm into teaching now and I like to help people and stuff, so I find that part difficult and I did begin to think maybe it just wasn't for me, maybe it is the best thing that's happened. But yes, I did look at the Commonwealth Games and think, mmm, well maybe, but I don't regret anything that has happened now, because I like where I am now.

OG: What were your parents reactions to you giving up swimming?

G: I think my mum had known, like, well she had tried to tell me, because obviously your mum knows you really well and she could see that I wasn't happy, and she tried to tell me that and I just kept going, no I'm going to go to the Commonwealth Games, I want to try to make Commonwealth Games, but I think I was in such a state then of just not really having much confidence and it just all went pear-shaped. I was still hanging onto that, trying to make Commonwealth Games, but I think I wasn't really focused enough on it to actually do it. But my mum and dad were furious at my coach, which is understandable I think, they could see how upset I was They were very angry and they would still, I mean my dad in particular would still sort of make negative comments about my coach and how I was treated and I would just go, it's in the past you know, I've come to terms with it and obviously he's not.

OG: And I guess they would have probably liked the idea of you going to Commonwealth Games too, so there was maybe disappointment in there too.

G: Yes, particularly my dad I think.

OG: Through that difficult period you had, that year after you finished, did you speak to anybody about how you were feeling, what you were going through?

G: I would say it was all quite internal, I didn't really speak to anyone about it. I speak more about it now than I did then. I found it hard to speak about it then, easier just to forget about it, block it out. That's I suppose why I didn't want to be anywhere near a swimming pool, why I didn't want to be near anyone I had swam with, nothing like that.

OG: Did your parents ask you anything about how you were feeling?

G: I suppose, I mean, not so much in the year after because I do think I just went completely away from it and I think they just let me do that, they just realised that I probably had to, not even speak the word swimming for a while, but in the time running up to when I stopped they saw all of the emotions that were

coming out, although they didn't realise the issues with my eating, my body issue, they didn't realise that at the time. They didn't push anything, they let me have, they obviously realised that I just needed to be completely away from it.

OG: At any point since you have finished, have you thought about making a comeback?

G: Yes, yes I did, and I think actually I did say if I had had the option of going back to Hearts, or if somebody had maybe suggested that to me at the time, I might have considered it. Even since then I have, I suppose I have kind of half dreamed about it, because in reality I don't want to commit that much to training, you know, I wouldn't want to do, I like the idea of it. Even as recently as 6-12 months ago I was thinking yeah, because I did a bit of coaching, I got into coaching as well, and then I stopped that in the summer, partly because I wanted my evenings and I was working too much really, and I also wanted to do a bit more swimming myself, or a bit more of other sports, and I kind of considered going back to Hearts and joining the top group, but then you have been so far out of it for so long you know, and like I say I don't see myself wanting to get up in the morning at 6am, especially when I am working a full time job you know, so I think it's gone. But I would consider masters, definitely.

OG: Looking back, do you feel that your retirement was at the wrong time?

G: I think, the way things went, that it was probably too late when I gave up, because it shouldn't have reached that crisis point, so I probably should have, obviously if things had been different in the last couple of years then I could have seen myself going on for a little bit longer, but that wasn't the case. I would probably say that I stopped too late and in hindsight probably should have given up the year before. Then it might not have got to the point where I cut myself off from swimming.

OG: Were you offered any form of support?

G: No

OG: Is there anything you think you might have benefited from?

G: I think, I mean I'm not saying I would have accepted it at the time because I probably wouldn't have, by the time I got to that point I was, like I say I cut myself off from it completely. But I probably would have benefited from nutritional and psychological help, advice, you know, advice on how to deal with, obviously it was difficult because I didn't tell anybody that I was having issues with my body. In fact doing this is probably quite helpful for me, because obviously I'm over it now but obviously I have never really brought it out into the open to anyone, particularly no-one from the sporting or swimming worlds. But that would have been a great help. Psychological has got to be the biggest thing, and obviously the physiological effects like getting de-training advice. But like I say I don't think I would have accepted any of that at the time.

OG: And did anyone from your club ever approach you to find out if you were interested in getting back involved with swimming, coaching or anything like that?

G: Well actually when I first stopped the head coach of Hearts swimming club who's a different one to the one who was there when I swam for Hearts and obviously Hearts was my club before I went to City of Edinburgh. He emailed me and said would I be interested in getting involved in coaching and I emailed him back, I actually didn't remember this because I did go back a couple of years later and start coaching with Hearts, and he said do you remember when I emailed you when you first stopped, and I said no, and he said that I had replied and said that I didn't want anything to do with swimming at the time, and I had completely forgotten that he had done that. But yes, he did, he sort of targeted me. It would have been nicer I think if he had asked me if I wanted to go and swim at Hearts, because I probably would have considered that rather than coaching. I don't think I was ready to move into being a coach, but I might have considered going back to swim with Hearts. I mean I might only have swum for another 6 months, but then again I might have found my enjoyment of it again, I might still be swimming now, although I don't think I would have been, but no, I might have been doing a bit more swimming now.

OG: And are there any other areas that you feel that swimmers could do with support, and who do you think it should come from?

G: I think it should come from the coach, or at least the coach should say this is what's available for you and this is what is probably the best thing for you to do, I think because the coach has got to be the person that cares the most about the swimmers and knows them best as well. So it has to come from the

coach, but obviously they are not going to provide all that, apart from the de-training part, but they can point you in the direction, say well we have the psychologist here, nutritionist here, you should go and see them or whatever. I guess the problem comes if you have had a bad experience with the coach, and it is difficult that because it must be very difficult to keep track of every sports person that stops, so how then do you get round it if the coach doesn't do that or the athlete doesn't want to take advice from the coach, you would have to think of somebody externally, so I suppose a second thing, a fall back option. But it is also keeping people involved. It took me a while to come back in, but I did finally decide that swimming is my passion and I want to work in it, at the moment I am teaching, I don't want to coach, because I don't think I want to be at that high level again, and probably because it might just take me back to when I swam, because even when I was coaching with Hearts, I was coaching kids, but I still did get that kind of, oh I wish this was me again feeling. And also it is a lot of responsibility to take for somebody's life and well, and sort of helping them to take decisions, steering them in a certain direction, and I see that from maybe if I had had a different coach when I was younger, maybe I would have made different decisions, it is very difficult to think, that coach obviously persuaded me in some way you know, steered me in a certain direction, and I wouldn't want that responsibility. So I know I don't want to coach but I'll definitely be involved in swimming. I love swimming and I have done a sport related degree and I know a lot about swimming, I suppose what I love so much about teaching is that I sometimes just love seeing kids enjoying it in the water. I can't help myself, I do get excited about swimming, I can't help it because that is where my passion is, but kids pick up on that you know. It is nice to see, especially when you get the little ones, coming out of armbands for the first time, it's great.

OG: Finally, is there anything else you want to tell me about your swimming career and your experiences, anything you think we haven't covered?

G: I would say be honest with yourself, I don't think I was for the last, I mean I think I knew that I didn't want to do it anymore but I forced myself to keep doing it because I felt that it was expected of, or because I felt there was some kind of pressure, also maybe because I was scared of admitting that I didn't, of stopping because it was such a big part of my life. If I had actually been honest with myself it probably wouldn't have reached that crisis point so, yes, be honest, and if you don't want to do it, don't do it. And obviously do all the things, like don't just stop, like do the opposite that I did. Get as much advice as you can, get as much support as you can, and take the support that is available..

OG: Well it has been really interesting hearing your experiences, thank you so much for your time.

END

MEGAN (Gymnastics)

19th November 2007

OG: Can you start by telling me the story of your gymnastics career?

M: Okay, I started gymnastics at the age of 4 which was really young, you couldn't actually get into gymnastics until you were 5 but I was put into a sort of different area to train. In Aberdeen, I've always been based in Aberdeen. And then just trained away, obviously I had talent from quite early on and was sort of club champion and north district champion quite early on, from under 8's sort of idea. My dad then got involved because he was a parent who would be constantly putting away mats and kit and all the rest of it, picking people up, dropping us off. So he was my main coach I think when I was under 10, and that was a sort of highlight probably of my career in terms of winning the Scottish Championships, it was based at home so it was a big event for me, big crowds, and it was always much harder for me to perform and do well because I came from Aberdeen, I wasn't from the central belt, and that was drummed into me, I was aware of that from a very early age in the sport. So I always had to be better than the best to get a good score, kind of thing. So a big, big thing for me that I managed to get that and do well. But from then on, I think I was probably 9, 10, I was in the Scottish squad and just remained, I was continually north district champion and remained in the Scottish squad right through to the end. I think in some respects it's weird because I, even my dates get a little bit fuzzy, it was a real, it was a bit traumatic actually, my journey as well towards the end, and I don't know if I just sort of shut that sort of idea off, but I can't even pin point dates now. But yeah junior and senior, probably top 3 Scots for most of my time, and won specific medals at Scottish level but I never won major championships again. Always probably looked at myself as being captained quite a lot, I was quite a strong competitor, they would maybe put me up last, would see how the team went and then I would get chatted to, right you must go out and perform this way, we're going to take certain skills out, you need to get strong 8s or strong 9s or whatever, so very tactical based you know. I remember that from being

told, being taken aside by the national coach and things. And also just knowing that I was always going to count on every piece, I was a key member of the team type thing. But my dad coached me for the whole of my career, he was my main coach alongside Sandy Richardson who was the Scottish coach, he took care of me while I was in university, I was in university in Edinburgh, so that was quite a difficult period because I had to actually change clubs, I did become a member of Meadowbank gymnastics club but never ever felt at home, my heart was always Bonnacord, I would find it difficult to go into championships and see my dad coaching other people, really it would have been easier to be seconded out or train with them and then compete for my own club, but it didn't work, I couldn't understand why that was difficult, but if I was going to train alongside them then, but I got a lot of training done, I was at PE college so there was kit there and there was space, so Sandy would come and do sessions with me as well. So really just, looking back it was a big commitment, trained a lot at Inverclyde, it was my second home, once a month I was always down there, if not twice a month. I was at the British one as well, which was based in South Shields near Newcastle, so it was crazy, lots of travelling, lots of commitment, I think normal hours were Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday, Friday, Saturday, and Sunday, Monday off, so it was my life, was for a long, long time.

OG: What was it that got you started in the sport at the beginning?

M: I don't know, I asked my mum and dad that, because to be so young, I don't have a memory, so I was asking did you take me there or, and I think, my mum and dad knew nothing of gymnastics, it wasn't like it was a sport they were involved in and would quite like me to enter. I think I probably saw it on TV and I liked to jump about, was maybe quite a confident, bit of a risk taker, if you looked at pictures of me as a youngster you would see me climbing on my pram frame, whereas my brother wasn't so much like that, and maybe they saw that in me and thought well we'll try you, and I really quit liked it. There was a lot of tears as well, I mean I went to dancing, did ballet, and things like that, so I did a few things, and I think they just saw that I liked it, I must have asked to keep going, you know, as a youngster. But there wasn't like a flier that came through or a big event in gymnastics in the city that I thought I would like to go to, and certainly my mum and dad didn't have a background in it, so I think it is something that I must just have seen, then must have enjoyed and then kept going with it.

OG: It is quite interesting that your dad got so involved in the sport. How supportive were your parents through your gymnastics career?

M: Hugely, yeah, but it was very difficult as well. With two children, my brother was elder, he was 3 years older than me, and you can imagine the level of commitment that I had to have in that sport, and then one of the parents decided that that was going to be their, my dad was national coach, he was team manager for Kuala Lumpur, and he was a high performance coach, it was his life as well, he decided that this sport is just fantastic and he loved it. He is still involved now. He coached after I retired, and then he just retired about two years ago, but he coaches the university team so he has still got that bug, he can't see people stuck, if people want him to run a coaching course or as a tutor as well, things like that, he has kept on, but I think it's quite nice, he's got grandchildren through me now and I think there is just a change there as well. I think in a weird way which might come out later, we both actually spoke, I think we both almost mentored each other through a real, because I stepped away from the sport almost completely as well at the moment, I've got a bit of turmoil in, I think we actually talked each other through, we didn't want to think negatively of the sport, that was definitely a decision we came to about a year ago, we were both having a similar sort of problem with it and we both decided, look, I don't want to hate this sport anymore, maybe we need to move away. So yeah in terms of the commitment my mum was very supportive but I think had an awful lot to cope with, having to, I think there was a lot of guilt there as well, had to fill the gap for my brother, because we were away all the time and, money was tight as well at times, but I'm still going to be getting kit bought for me because I had to have a Scottish tracksuit and a new leotard on, flights, sometimes the association couldn't afford flights, I remember getting sponsored by my mum's work to fly me to a competition so I could go, so stuff like that I look back, and my brother and I actually still joke about it, he'll sort of go, oh but we've got the 'gymnast' in the family and then he'll take the mickey and, but there is a truth in that somewhere, I think it was very difficult. And I think the one thing I really respect my parents for is that they never really let me feel that when I was in my sport, ever, I was really unaware of that, I really was totally absorbed by my sport, loved it, would have done anything for it, it was my life, didn't care about anything, not in a selfish way in that I did care about my family, but also they would never had made me feel that that was an issue, which is good. Only now do they tell me things as an adult that make me think, yeah I suppose, I never saw it as that, I can look back and think, oh gosh was that the scenario, and I did this, oh my, but at the time you don't think like that.

OG: How did gymnastics fit in with the rest of your life?

M: I think it totally and utterly overruled it, and I still haven't answered that question in my head of whether or not, now I've got children I think to myself, would I want that for my children? I don't know if it's a good balance, I don't feel any negative effects of what I've been through at all and I can only see positives at the moment, I might look back in ten years and see differently. But it overruled my life completely, and I think the only thing I remember socially being, I did really struggle in that I didn't really have friends, the only friends I had were in my sport and that was okay, because I saw them quite a lot and we had a really good rapport within the club, and I think my dad, the gymnastics I had, even at the Scottish level, we worked hard but we played hard, it wasn't this strict regime of, and I know in a lot of English clubs and in other countries, it can be a really elite level in that there's no laugh and there's no nothing, you get the job done, but I think that would have wiped out Scottish gymnastics to be honest, at that level I remember we had such a good team going on, and they did work hard because they were rewarded by having fun, having a social interaction with each other and good relationships. And I think I prefer the way I did it, and maybe that means you are not hitting so many league tables and medals and not winning the Olympics and whatever, but if you are hungry enough there are always avenues for that, and that is I suppose why people move away, down south or abroad, because they decide they are not going to get what they feel they need in this country or whatever. But yeah, I struggled at school, primary school not so much, but secondary when it became all about social and parties and going, I didn't ever really go out, I mean I couldn't, I was training most evenings and then any nights out I did get, my mum still tells me now that I would be shattered as well, you know she said she would speak to me and say do you want to go to the gym and I would be like, oh I really don't want to go, and she laughs about it now, because she would say to my dad, look Megan really doesn't want to go to the gym tonight, she's really tired, and he would say to me, mum is saying you don't want to go to the gym, and I would be like, no, no, I'm fine, and she said, you would be upstairs in a second putting your leotard on and you would go in the car, and I would be left thinking, thanks very much type thing, and she said you did it over and over, and she said it was like you came to me for your cry for help, but you couldn't help yourself, you wouldn't want to miss out and my dad would turn round and give me eye contact as a coach rather than as my dad. So that's weird that I just, I think in terms of that it was ongoing all the time, I mean there was brownies, I was dying to go to brownies because everyone did it, but I couldn't because it was a Wednesday night and that was one of the main training nights and I just thought, I can't go. So that was really difficult and I think school-wise, I was shattered all the time, that's a memory I have, I mean I trained at the Beacon and I would come home, quite often didn't get my tea before I went because my mum maybe wasn't home in time to cook, so I would come home 9, maybe half 9, because my dad was the main coach so he would be speaking to parents and all the rest of it, me jiggling about in the car park waiting to get back, half nine I would be having my tea, then looking at doing some sort of homework, absolutely shattered, you know, needing to have a bath or whatever, getting to my bed it would be after ten, up for school and, I would remember the whole of secondary school being absolutely shattered, and not really being able to apply myself. I have this perception of, I wouldn't say I'm not intelligent, I know I'm intelligent enough, but I know that I probably didn't apply myself and learn as much as I could of at the key stages, because I was so exhausted. I'm not sure it is possible to apply yourself fully to two things like that, you know, I look back, and I think for an all round, well adjusted, mentally, socially, you know the whole lot, I just don't think you can squeeze it all in, because it is just too much. You think that little tots can cope with it but inside I think they are just getting worn down, because even when I coached, I ended up coaching sort of elite level, and I could see it, and I think that's partly why I left the sport in some respects, I don't know if I am going off on a tangent here, but I coached senior girls working with a senior coach who was not a gymnast but his daughter was a gymnast, and we were just head to head all the time, because I always saw it from a gymnasts perspective, and I would look at them and think, she's shattered, absolutely exhausted, she's not taking it in, she's not understanding it. And I think I was always very aware of the negative things that I could pass on, I'm quite a reflective person, I'm quite open to say, right stop and you know really analyse what I'm doing personally, and I think there are dangers there as well that I was always very aware that any negative experiences I had or even shortfalls that I had in my career myself, I wasn't going to project them onto another gymnast, it was very easy for me to stand back and see them as individuals, and work out what they want for themselves rather than what I want for them, because it doesn't work like that, it doesn't matter how much I want it for them and for myself as a coach, they have to want it or there is not a hope in hell that they are going to make it, it has got to be from them, and I think that is a huge advantage going into coaching. I think it really is an advantage, and although the guy I worked with was a very good coach and I had a lot of time for him, I don't think those sort of things were ever given the credit that they needed to be given, and I battled a lot with that when I was in the club environment and eventually said I can't, I felt like I was, I was going to hate the sport and I wasn't going to be able to flourish as a coach myself, it was always this shouldn't be this difficult, I shouldn't feel that I am battling, we should want the same things for the club, but I just wasn't understood, I was in an environment where my dad was the only one that could understand me, and I think because he, he is unique and I know he's my dad, but I would put my hand up and say he is unique in terms of being able to understand that it's not about him, and it's not about the club, it's about the gymnast and about developing key skills individually and being able to get them. And I don't know why my dad's different, I don't know if it was because I was his daughter. I mean I was able to stand up to him and

have these blow out arguments whereas a lot of gymnasts and coach relationships are very much, the respect is there and it is like, okay whatever you think and whatever you tell me, it is absolute trust, but I had such a different level of trust and understanding that it was a lot easier for me to really, I suppose just have a good relationship and understand it, and for my dad probably to learn as well from me. I think it is definitely about what you are like as people as well, and I am like my dad, I have got similar traits, so maybe we have an underlying understanding. But I think this kind of relationship with parent being coach could make or break you, I'm not suggesting that this kind of set up could work all the time, I think it could be a nightmare for some. I'm not saying it is the key because it helps you to understand, I do think it has to do with who you are.

OG: What were your ambitions in terms of your gymnastics?

M: Yeah, I think I remember being in really young squads and I went to Edinburgh, now gymnastics was a trial sport, and it was actually been held in Falkirk, and I had my Scotland tracksuit on and I knew quite a few of the athletes who were up there competing for Scotland, they loved it when guys like us were there, it was like wee Megan the mascot, and I was just in awe. I remember sitting through the whole thing, being part of it because I had the tracksuit on so people knew that I was with them, but they were like my absolute idols, and just sort of thinking wow, that is just fantastic. And I think I always wanted to compete for my country, I feel really strongly about that, but the Commonwealth Games was the be all and end all. And in some respects I saw, I mean I watched that one, wasn't going to go to Auckland because there was a strong senior team there, they were really good, they weren't going to take a full team anyway, so Canada was the one that I was on for and various things I think blew my chances in that respect, but that was definitely my aim, and looking back I wonder if that's, I don't know, angry is too big a word, but I wonder if that's a failing of Scotland and the gymnastics association, that I think they put such a huge amount on the Commonwealth Games, that certainly my experience as a senior and of retirement I think is negative because of that, because it is like build, build, build, build, build, build, build, and the minute something happens, if you don't make that, your life suddenly stops, it's what what's happening there, because that event was everything. And I'm not sure if I had, if you'd asked me when I was 12 what do you want to be, I maybe would have said, I want to win the Olympics, but I don't know, I watched these Romanian gymnasts and thought they were beautiful and I thought, god I want to be able to do that skill, I would sit and play with my routines and that's what I wanted to do, I was always a technician, I always wanted to, you know I was never the most confident of gymnasts, there were gymnasts who had the guts and I really admired them because I knew that I was a bit of a feartie, but technically that's where my strength lay, I think that's obviously where my strengths lay in Scottish gymnastics because they knew that I would do it over and over and over and over until I perfected it and until I was able to know that's a safe routine. I was a safe routine and I'm not ashamed to say that, I still did big skills, I think that's it, I can look back and I know that I had a range of good skills but I had weaknesses that I probably didn't address, but indirectly the coaches allowed me not to address them because they maybe then said, well that's just Megan, that's how she is going to be, but she's useful and she can perform at an elite level. I think I played on consistency, I played on the fact that, from an early age as well I realised that when we went across the border I was the top Scot, when we came back across the border a week later I wasn't never the top Scot. Now year after year and month after month that happened to me and I learned that I was always going to be penalised in my own country because I had no judges from the North, judges just didn't come past Edinburgh, Glasgow, so every panel that I showed up in front of, every time I stood up in front of a panel of judges, I would be standing in a panel of gymnasts and I would have Cumbernauld to the left and Falkirk and Edinburgh, and I would see Cumbernauld, Cumbernauld, Edinburgh, Glasgow, Falkirk, it was a hiding to nothing, judges are impartial, but they also have a job to do, so yes they judge what they see but I'm also a qualified judge and I know that there are areas there that you can claw back scores if you really wanted to. I am so strongly against it, that there's times I think I've been guilty of probably penalising my own club when I've then judged because I'm almost trying to do what, and that is the only thing that I probably carried from my own experience into that now that I have to be careful, I am quite a strict judge, that I expect to see it and if I know a gymnast can do it, that is the only problem with looking at my own gymnasts, if I know they can do that better when I see it I am like, for god sake, like I have seen that pop up to 12 o'clock, why is it not like that now, but the other judges might be going, that is really nice and tight, I'm quite liking that, so they are giving it. I always had this attitude when I was competing, be better than the best, my dad and I would say it to each other. I used a lot of psychological skills when I was competing because we were always up against it and I would think, well they'll decide what I get anyway, but it about me, it is closed skills, it is about what I am performing, and I think it gave me a calm approach of I've got a job to do and I have to do it, they can't take that away from me, they can decide what they're going to give me for it, but a lot of the other gymnasts were, they've got that on board, they can't get anything else from this, they can only do the best they possibly can, there was a lot of pressure on them to be performing and doing well because the judges can't really pull it out of the bag if they have done really bad, and I think there is an awful lot of stress for other gymnasts, and I think that is why I did pop up a lot in competitions and I did quite well. I know at Scottish level as well, that's what would make you laugh, because then I am obviously part of the Scottish team as well, and all these central

belt judges were Scottish judges and they were now routing for me and I think at times it was quite funny, I just used to think, oh yeah, you know, my straddle full turn was perfect today was it, but it was the same as last week, I know it was the same, but last week you didn't give it to me, but you eventually just have to put it to bed, you've just got to get a job done. It is difficult motivationally though when you are not getting the good feedback, when it felt good but you're not getting the marks, and so that is why I think I just ended up turning to my dad and asking him like, how was it, and I think, I remember Sandy as well, the best piece of information or coaching he ever gave me was, well he was always asking me, so what are your aims today, and so many gymnasts would say I want to get an 8, and coaches would be saying, right we've got to get a 32 today, and even the Commonwealth qualifiers it is got to get over 36 in 3 out of 4 competitions and all the rest of it, but it should be what do you want out of it, because that is out of your control, and you've got to be in control of what your aims are. It should all come down to skills, and I put that onto my gymnasts. One of the problems is the parents, they are looking at the scores, they have got their score sheets out and they are looking and they are adding up before we get to the end and these kids are watching their parents. It is one of the reasons that I was at loggerheads with other coaches when I was coaching, because for them it was all about that, must get this score and I would be like, no what have you been working on for the last 12 weeks, a flip layout on beam, so that is our goal, you need to be sticking that in a competition and if you don't stick it you need to be making sure you lift it high, you get both feet on, if you fall off, fine that is the first time you have competed it, lets get the nerves away, that is the goal of the competition, and I think the gymnasts responded to that because they understood what I understood about emotion and it was putting them in control of their competition. It was teaching them as well that you have to look at failure, it is not a dirty word, did you do your job – no you didn't, because it had to be about doing the job and not doing it, because what are you training and giving your life up for if you are not going to analyse that performance. And to me I think that is a real key to coaching, it's not about score and all that, it literally comes down to being about a personal thing again and what you are looking at. But I do look back at that and wonder if that was, you do wonder if each individual, maybe for instance Commonwealth Games should never have been an option for me, if it wasn't this pinnacle thing, and all the money and publicity and everything that is getting driven through Scottish Gymnastics, and you know you go to Inverclyde and it is all about this, that and the other, yeah it is great to be involved in and it is a lovely accolade, and to even be part of the squad, but my god, it is still the one thing that holds with me as a failure, it is the one memory I've got that to this day, and it sounds stupid, a mother of two, I've got different, but I can still be in tears, I can still speak about it emotionally and say, you know what, I didn't make that, and the whole range that goes with that, and the question why, and bitterness, and anger, the what ifs.

OG: What would you say your most significant achievements were in your gymnastics career?

M: I couldn't pinpoint them exactly, various, I always felt proud standing up for my national anthem, that was always important to me, I always took it serious you know, and I think putting the leotard on and knowing that we had a job to do and being really focused. I think the World School Games, we went out and it was a really close knit team, and I remember Sandy Richardson it was his first posting up to Scottish Gymnastics and he was still a really good friend of mine, and we had a lot of people who flew out to Bruges, I remember we all started crying the night we got there and I think Sandy thought, oh my god what on earth is happening, and we all just bonded that night and the next day we were competing and it was just like we had one of the best competitions we had ever had, obviously it was just this huge event for us. And I remember, I always needed support for my vault, because I never could get it, I never trained it in training because I was petrified of it, couldn't do it, and I was just like I'll leave it to the comp, and you were just like what on earth is that all about, but I just couldn't, was just petrified, and then I would maybe turn it once before the competition, coach would say you can't just throw this, you've got to turn one in warm up with support, and I can remember getting to the top of this run up, and I turned this Sukahara and it was the most amazing Sukahara of my life, and Sandy just took one look at me and went, oh my god, and I think he was in a bit of a panic, thinking we just need to tone it down a bit because you are just going mental, but I still remember that feeling today, just doing it and thinking, I also was on form, I was aware, totally confident, and that was a great Championship, a real honour. Other things I suppose are just, don't know actually, probably a lot of just insignificant things, to me they're not. I think certainly I had a routine to Vivaldi and a lot of people would come and say to me that the hairs on the back of their neck stood up at the end, and my dad used to say it to me and that meant the world to me, and I knew that I could perform it, it became so engrained in me that, I'd had it for quite a few years, and then I had changed emotionally, I was an adult then, I was a senior, so it was not just about being a junior and picking skills up, I was actually able to put full emotion in and feel it fully for myself and I remember just loving performing it, and especially at things like Kelvin Hall, and yeah, just loved it. And I remember when I was pulled in as well at the last minute, I think it was to do the Centenary Cup, I was down to spectate, someone wasn't able to compete, and they just came up to me and went could you manage to compete, and again I was so proud, proud to be asked, proud that I felt that I could do that at the drop of a hat, I was trained enough, I was fit enough, that I put the leotard on, I went up and competed, and I remember that my picture was in the Gymnast magazine which was a great

thing as well because everyone read it and I remember at the club them going, that's Megan upside down doing it, and I remember things oh yeah, that's great, so that was nice. But yeah lots of just insignificant experiences and things, meeting a family in Iceland, because we went to an Iceland international, one of the loveliest families I think I've ever met, and just feeling so welcome, being part of their culture, and I still speak about the food, I wish I could remember what they gave me because it was the yummiest thing ever, it was just great, and going to see the geysers, them taking us round the city in Reykjavik. In Turkey as well, I remember being on the floor, warming up our tumblers, and this other gymnast was saying you can go first, and it was Lilia Podkopyayeva, who was like the Olympics champion at time, and I was like, no it's alright you can go first, I'll just do some split leaps over here type thing (laughs). But just the honour of being involved in a competition like that, you know. It sounds stupid, because I don't want to make it about that, but always being really proud as well standing in airports, we were all dressed in our kit, we had full uniform wherever we went, and I just thought, I think it is about being part of something, and people looking saying what are you, oh right you're gymnasts, oh good luck and all that, and thinking, not thinking you are something, but indirectly you are, well I'm doing something I'm proud of, and it is sport, and everyone has got a relationship to sport in some way, and they come up and say my daughter does gymnastics or whatever, just little things like that, knowing we looked good, we looked like a professional team, and they did invest, we always looked the part, and I think it was really nice that we felt like that, that we felt important.

OG: We've talked about the high points, what about the low points, the difficult times?

M: When I think I was about 13 or 14 and I really wondered if I wanted to be in the sport, and I found that I was then caught in a really difficult spot because my dad was my coach, and I was an elite gymnast, and it was like if I walk away from this, what is going to happen to my life, what's my relationship with my dad going to be like, and I don't know if that kept me in because I didn't want to take that gamble, I really don't know. I'm glad I did, because I wasn't finished, you know what I mean, I was probably, well not just beginning but I had a lot to give. I remember it was just, it was things like boyfriends and going out, and also my friends getting to that age where they couldn't fully understand and respect what I was doing, they did respect it up to that point, but they were starting to think, oh for gods sake she's not coming out again, you know, you could see the rolls of the eyes and then I just stopped getting invited which really hurt, it was like please invite me and then I can say no, but they were like well you are going to say no anyway so what is the point, and I really struggled, I felt really alone, and I think because I was, because my closest friends were other gymnasts who were in the central belt, who I kept in touch with the most and wrote to, because there was an age gap at that point in my club, and I did get on with everyone but I just felt a bit alienated. And I was probably the only big elite as well, there was a couple of girls who were good but again they were too young, and I just felt quite alone and just really struggled with it. School was getting tougher and my mum was probably getting tougher on me, and yeah, it was a really low point, and I was just thinking I don't know what to do, but I stuck it out. Other low points, well luckily enough didn't get injured, until after I retired, I went back in, and then dislocated my ankle which has destroyed me to this day, which is like great. I mean I had niggles and things, like back injuries and stuff. My biggest one, which I'm probably holding off, is the Canada Commonwealth Games, which was an absolute disaster, absolute disaster for me. Was sure that I could make it, and I remember my dad was on the committee and he went to the committee when they made the final selection, and he phoned me, I was in my flat in Edinburgh, and it just broke my heart, I just couldn't, it was that loss feeling, and I was angry as well, I think there was other things that go with it, I knew that, I knew that they weren't going to put a full team, there was always this thing of how are we going to split the team, and then men had done better at previous one I think so they were going to get another place, but there was rhythmic and they decided they would send a young rhythmic girl for experience, which is fine you know if that's what they want to do, I think my feeling was I wasn't going to go another 4 years, I wasn't going to make the next one, this was my chance, and I knew that she wasn't at the level that I was at competitively, no way, not justifying taking a place, and I think in the end, she had an absolute nightmare and I think she got drunk, it was ridiculous, some of the parties, it was just like ridiculous that it happened, she didn't perform that well, and I think one of the main things for me is the two artistic girls that went were both from the same club, Cumbernauld, and don't get me wrong, this lassie that went was probably number 2 in Scotland and I probably hit number 3, but I knew she was injured, I knew she carried an injury, and when she went out she never ever competed, she went out for the experience, so she did the warm up sessions but never ever stood up and competed in the Commonwealth Games, and I knew it, I just knew it. And I think that's what hurt me is the girl who was our key player and she was for years, an absolutely wonderful gymnast who I had a lot of respect for, she was with the same club, and I remember the look she gave me when she knew I wasn't going, and I knew that Sinead knew that something's wrong here, something's not right, and it has never left me the look she had as well. I think it has just never left me. I don't mind if they had gone out and they did their job, it always came down to a job for me, nothing else, it's about get out there and do what you are trained to do and what you know you can do. Yeah, the Commonwealth Games is a wonderful experience, it's got a big ceremony and it's this and it's that, but at the end of the day strip all that away, you don't go for any of the ceremonies and the peripheral stuff, you are standing up there, with four bits of kit to

get on, you've got a job to do, it's your sport and that's why you're there. And I might be wrong, maybe she felt that she would be able to carry the injury and go, but we knew it beforehand and she didn't when she got there, it just tore me to pieces, I just, it was just not right.

OG: And did you watch it? Was it televised and did you watch?

M: Yeah I watched Sinead, I did actually, I watched it all, I found it really difficult to stomach it. And I think I did, I think it was like looking at a horror movie but not looking at it, that sort of idea. I remember seeing Sinead on TV and being really proud of her, thinking go on girl, knowing her routines inside out, going come on, do it, do it, willing her through it, but then never seeing Yvonne and wondering why, and not ever knowing because nothing ever got fed back, and then finding out that she had a knee injury, and I mean rumours go round too, how do I know how injured she was, because there were definite camps of, 'that's ridiculous' and the rumour was she was carrying it, I knew she was carrying the injury, but we all do from time to time, and it is up to her if she pulls her way through it, gets up and does the job, but she didn't. And I think that's what is stuck in my throat. But I am also fully aware, there was another girl Mandy who was English and they came into the Scottish scene probably a good 3 years before knowing there was a better chance in Scotland than there was in England, but good friends and really loved their coach, they put everything, and they were Scottish gymnasts as far as I was concerned, I had no issue with them, and I think we were probably head to head, then I wonder if I am clouded in my judgement because the scores weren't fully, even then they never fully explained where the scores came from and how they selected, I really don't know for sure. And I mean Mandy was injured as well, it was all coming to that, we were all struggling, you know what I mean, which is another thing that I think is poor, I think you push your athletes so much that there is a real danger of burning them out before they even get there. I would love to know the stats on that, on how many elite athletes just don't make it in the end, and it's not their own fault, it is the way they are being driven and that it's managed. And I remember the Commonwealth Games trials is the one that we all had to attend, it was in Inverness, and I did, I blew it that day, didn't dismount off bars, because I went too fast, couldn't control it, and I just did this shoot off. The judges were looking at me and willing me to get back up and dismount, because I was unaware that in not doing the dismount I lost a whole mark or something, and I was unaware of that, and I just couldn't think, I was blown away, I was almost in shock just standing there going, woo what happened there, and I didn't, I just saluted and walked away. And one of the judges came over and said even if you had just got up and done a back away, you would have got marked down but you wouldn't have lost the whole mark. I think I still did alright in that competition, I can't remember it being it over, but I remember I thought well that's it, you blew it, and you have got to take responsibility for that as well, and I'm fully aware that I didn't make it through my own merits as well, if I had been like Sinead for instance I would have made it, I would have made that spot mine, but I think what annoys me is I would have been able to cope with that better, I could have just looked at that in black and white and said, right I didn't make it, but instead I have this horrible issue of why was rhythmic given a trial, let's give her experience, when I think she retired after it as well, and I think that's what blew me away, I just felt that it was unfair, you put all this, it has been your whole life for so long, and it is a huge sacrifice, it just gets messy. I think if it is clear in my head I can handle that, because I think athletes are very particular like that, they need to know, especially if you come from sports where it is about exact, it is about scoring, it's about being perfect, it's about extension, it's about doing the turn, whatever, you're in control, you know what the rules are, you just get on with it. And I think when it then gets messy, I just think it is so hard, I can't deal with it.

OG: So after 1994, obviously you didn't get to the Games, what happened after that?

M: Right, I was given the sorry you didn't make it card to go out to Istanbul to represent the country, which was lovely, that was when I was on the floor with Lilia Podkopyeva and I was captain of the team, so there was about 3 of us I think, so that was like your token, we still love you and you are still an elite gymnast. So I remember doing that, and then, well, '94, I finished uni in '96, got my job here, I reckon I retired, and this, it is amazing really because this is when it gets really fuzzy for me and it does make me wonder if I just shut it off, because I can't, all I can remember is I dabbled in and out, I was still in squads, because that is the other thing that I have got a big issue with as well, because I didn't officially retire. Most gymnasts that retire did it at Scottish Championships, stood up, it was a big thing, they got flowers, and they were given some sort of thing like a shield or a whatever and it was thanks for all your, and I never did that because I never knew what I wanted to do. I felt totally and utterly lost, that's the one thing I remember, I had no direction, what on earth am I going to do, I've failed, but I am an elite level gymnast, I can't go from one to the other in a week, you know what I mean, I can't be going to the Commonwealth Games and then all of a sudden I'm retiring, that to me is just unacceptable, how on earth can that be, yeah maybe that is what it is like, but it is so wasteful, I just couldn't understand how that could happen. But at the same time I think the country and the association just were like, party's over, back to square one, you start working through. I can't even remember if I did a Scottish Champs after it, I would need to ask. It was like, what do you do, you know

another 4 years isn't realistic but you feel you're not finished. I do remember Sandy being aware of that, being aware that we need to have something that we work towards, and I think we did have, yeah, we did a, I tell you what he organised, we went down to Rochdale, which is where he came from, and he called it Scottish select, and he took us as a Scottish select team, and we competed against the main counties down there, and a real pride thing I remember for him because it was where he was from and he was really well known, and we won the whole competition, we blew them away, we blew him away, I don't think he thought we would win it. It was just a really nice competition to get involved with and really enjoy yourself socially afterwards as well. And that was really nice, I remember we had that. And then I think, I know I got my job here in August and was I still training, no I think for that year I did, I retired just as I graduated and I came here, so it would have been about '95 coming into '96, and I then came out of retirement. Because what I did was I dabbled, I first went into coaching and then I came out of coaching, what I did was I would tell my dad yeah I'm coaching tonight and then I wouldn't turn up and be like, I can't make it, and he eventually, quite rightly, turned round and said, you can't do that, you are either coming or you're not. But I was obviously still torn as to whether I wanted to train or not, I probably couldn't handle being in the gym. So then I came out of retirement and I decided stuff it, I'm doing the district champs, I'm going to try it again, I feel fit enough, and I came back for two pieces and I did a vault and I dislocated my ankle. And that was the last time I ever did gymnastics. And really quite horrible, quite a horrible way to finish, just horrible. It makes you wonder, I was pretty much injury free all my life, training seriously through from the age of 8, the only decision that's going to make it final for me is that, it was then easy as well, there was no way I was coming back from that, really, I maybe could have physically with good rehab, but there was no way I was going to do that, I knew that, I knew that that was it, and in some respects it took that away from me, it's like, the choice was no longer there. I mean I would never have wanted it, and it will haunt me when I am older, but I do maybe think well that was what was supposed to happen, to close the door. And I see a lot of gymnasts like that, I see a lot of gymnasts you know younger than me but are dipping in and out and are now at uni and stuff, they are trying again, but they know it's not the same. It's like a bug, they love the sport, the sport is beautiful, they can't get the feeling of it anywhere else, the like the challenge of it, but at the same time they have got to just let go, they can't physically, there comes a point where physically it is just not what you remember it to be and I don't want that to change either. I don't know what it like for other sports, I wonder for other sports if it is different, you are at elite level, and then you can drop to national level, then to regional, you can work club, you can still get that sensation, but I don't know if you can do it with certain sports. Because most of the fitness in gymnastics comes from the high level training you do, the conditioning, the repetitions, the build ups, you don't do much outside the gym, and the minute you drop to recreational level, you drop the number of days or whatever, your condition starts to go and then you are at a true risk of really hurting yourself, of pulls and of major injuries, it's just, your coordination and things go. I mean there is a pocket of people who do recreational and adult gymnastics, but if you have never had that elitism and you don't know what it is like to be thinking at those levels or performing, then they can do it. It is just too frustrating for anyone who has been at the top to do that and to drop levels, and I think that is when you can really resent the sport, you can get frustrated, and you don't want to have that memory.

OG: Did you think of taking up any other sports, when you finishing gymnastics?

M: Yeah, I remember, I must have been going out with my husband at that point, because I remember saying to him stuff I, I'm going to go to the Commonwealth Games, I can do this, I'm an elite level athlete, I have these skills and I think a lot of it is how you drive yourself and stuff, and I thought to myself right what am I going to choose, like I could walk into any sport, it sounds stupid when I say it like that, but in a certain way I did dream about it, I did think, well I'm not finished with elite sport, I want to be part of that, it's what identifies me. I think that's one of the big things I struggled with was, when you do things like that, when you are extraordinary, you don't fill your days or your weekends with the normal things that everyone else does, your whole thought process, the whole, everything you eat, has got a reason, everything you do has got a reason. I would sit in my lectures, and instead of listening to what they are telling me I would be writing out all the symbols for my routines and thinking right, I can play with that, the judges said that that didn't quite work, you know, your whole thought, everything, your whole day is sport and elite level and I think I didn't want, I wanted to still be part of that, I wanted to be going to cheese and wines with sportscotland and spending time with these people who had the same understanding as me. It's having a goal, and having this common vision for Scotland as well, as much as, I know some people don't buy into that but I was very nationalistic and I did think yes, I want the best for Scotland and I want us all to be standing up there and going yeah, come on, and I think when you've got that, that's what I miss, that's when I thought there must be another way, and I think I thought about it through judging and coaching, and then I realised that coaching, I was a good coach and I didn't want to waste what I had, that was a huge thing as well, I thought somebody can benefit from this, I don't want to waste it. But I struggled with it, you know, I just struggled slightly to, it was more working with other coaches, not all of them, but certain ones, I just thought oh no, I can't do this. And judging it just unfortunately never came up north and I always struggled to make courses,

that's something that I still hope I will get into, I still want to judge, because I don't want to turn my back on the sport, but it is just not the right time the now.

OG: And do you see yourself still involved in coaching at any point?

M: I don't know, I think, the commitment is huge as well, I have come to a point where I have committed all my life, with coaching I find myself committing to the gymnasts, going home, because I was doing club judging too I still knew what the kids needed, so I had this package that I pretty much thought I had it all to help them, but I am also because of my job a strength and conditioning coach, I understand conditioning fully, a lot of these other people don't, they are office workers and I would just be overloading with it, I would be taking everything home and be like right I really need to get Rachel's shoulder girdle muscles stronger, I need to be doing this, I need to be doing that, and I just saw my dad metamorphosing through me, like I have got two wee boys, I am young in my marriage, I don't want what my mum and dad now speak about, I'm not willing to make that sacrifice again, it's not mine to make right now, I owe it to my family I think not to do that. I might come when I am 40, 50, and might get more involved, but not right now. I think that is why coaching-wise I am probably wiser to take a step back, even though I do think that it is a bit of a waste, and I think, I'm trying to get involved in the uni club but again just work commitments just stop me this term. And it sounds stupid but I do believe that gymnastics is the gateway to all sports in general, and I am so passionate about that, about it's part on the PE curriculum, I've got that avidly through my work and I think if I can use my gymnastics in that way, and just encourage these primary school teachers to be a bit more confident, say talk about shapes, talk about body tension, talk about body awareness, talk about flexibility. And I think that is more of my passion now, but still feeling that I have got, you know because I do talk about who I am and I find that, I am still struggling with that a little bit. If I just stripped gymnastics away, well I haven't walked away from it really, if you were to ask me outright I would say no. If someone asked me, and it was to do with the Grampian Institute and all the rest of it, then I would say my sport is gymnastics. Now I am not technically active at the moment at all, but it is still my sport, and I think I still need, I probably need maybe to reinvest something, to help me to cope with that, to make me feel that I am not wasting it, but I don't know, working through schools, or doing pre-school kids stuff. And eventually, I would like to judge eventually, to be a freelance judge, not be attached to a club, which is a huge commitment as well, but be a judge, so maybe I would tutor judges so that we have got more judges, there is definitely an avenue there that I would like to explore. Trying to make people more aware of it, but not to the elite level, I mean I would love to just work with wee tooties now, just what is it about and getting them aware of body tension and everything.

OG: When you finished, did you talk to anyone about the decision, about how you were feeling?

M: It's weird, because again it is so fuzzy. I know I must have spoke to my dad, I remember that, and that is definitely where my mum came right in the back door, I think I sat with my mum and I just talked it all through. I don't think I spoke to many other gymnasts about it, I think we'd sort of, some had left, and I think, it wasn't a taboo thing but because I wasn't sure of it in my own head it was like if you said the words out loud, you sort of had to deal with it. I think that's what I remember, being in Scottish squads, still travelling down to Inverclyde as well, thinking, having this feeling that I was a hang-er on-er, do you know what I mean, knowing that I wasn't quite as fit because I knew that my fitness had gone down but I was still in the elite Scottish set-up, and that was almost an embarrassment, because it because they had no gymnasts coming through, no senior team. So it was like I know that I am nowhere near where I was, but I can still be in any of the senior competitions now, I can be winning everything, and I think it was just a horrible period of just feeling, this is crap, what is this about, this isn't what I signed up for and this isn't what I want to feel. There was nothing to push you and motivate you, and I think you knew the juniors were coming up and pushing you, but there was no real need for being there and training hard. But you also knew that if you went to competitions outside of Scotland it would be embarrassing, and the stress of that was just horrific, almost dreading it. I mean it's weird, I still have re-occurring dreams that I'm not sure if they were real, but it is like I have turned up to competitions and I've felt sick and I've not been able to get through the routines, and I've wondered whether, did I do that, or, it is a weird feeling, I can't remember if it was real, but it was the sensation of thinking, why did I turn up to do that, I shouldn't have done that, it is so bizarre because I still have re-occurring dreams about that, and I can't think where they came from, but it is like that, knowing that I shouldn't be here, this is ridiculous, this isn't it. So yeah, speaking to Sandy I think he was quite a key player in terms of, he did a couple of courses, took me on with him to do club tutoring and things, and I think it was just a feeler to see if I liked it, I had also done my PE teaching, and I also helped out and judged at local club comps and things like that. I spoke to people in terms of I am not going to compete anymore. But it didn't last very long, I was like 21, 1995 I think it must have been, and then I was here that year, so I had like a year of floating about and then I decided I was going to compete again, so it was like, yeah really fuzzy. I don't think I ever made a true decision and that's why I was never recognised officially as well because I never stood up and said. I did a couple of comps that were like, I knew that I only needed to do a couple of

pieces, I did a couple of team events with Bonnacord where I was a really strong senior and I knew that there was no way they were going to be able to get a better score than me, so I just did bars, or I did whatever, so I was still tagging along there. So it was probably more of an unspoken end, and I never had that final closure, and I think that is why I can't remember it, it is so fuzzy, it's weird, and I think later on, it was over a year later, but I was given the master gymnast award by Scottish Gymnastics, and that was huge. Part of me always felt like it was a bit of an after thought, like where did that come from. But it was really nice and that was a definite closure, you were given the award and you sat and got your photo taken and what have you, and I remember that, I remember thinking, right, you know I am not going back there again. But yeah, just a weird period, it's just bizarre, it's fuzzy.

OG: And did Scottish Gymnastics ever contact you to offer support or offer you opportunities to get involved in coaching?

M: No. I think, not to my knowledge, and don't get me wrong, we could have had a chat. I think they did a post-commonwealth chat, I'm sure they did something along the lines of, you've not made it type thing and how to psychologically, because they were quite upon that. But in terms of retirement no, and I think it was maybe my fault as well, because did they know I was retiring, did I just drop out, I don't even know how I got out of the squads, did I just not go? God, it's amazing, because I really don't know. But no, they didn't say, oh look you guys, you could be doing this or, definitely not coaching, judging maybe a bit more because we all, quite a few of us ended up being club judges and I know that the two girls that went to the Commonwealth Games, they're now regional and national judges. But I think it came more from the club, the club was very like that, very supportive and everything. I don't think it was the governing body at all, which I think is poor, I think to have a resource of people like that that are going out of the door, I know they've got, I think it is a fine line because you have got to let them fly, you don't want to pressurise them and you don't want to say, look we need you. But I think what people might think of me is that I am waiting to be asked, and who the hell are you to wait to be asked, you know what I mean. I think that sometimes it is like, right you are done, you've been in the sport and you've done your thing but it is over for you now so get on with it. And often I think, should I go and ask, but I find that really difficult, it's an area that, and maybe I'm not ready yet either, but I think even when I am ready I'll find it so scary. I'm walking back into an arena that I knew like the back of my hand, and I knew everyone that was there, and I still know people that I'll see at competitions, but it's really scary to have been out of that and then come back in. I always had a friendly response when I was coaching and I took my girls onto the arena and I saw the coaches that coached the girls that I competed alongside, and I had a great time with them, I am a jokester and they love my sense of humour, I knew that and I missed it, it was like oh I've not seen you in ages bla, bla, but I think now when you take the gap away... I think sometimes you just need to be told that it would be quite nice for you, and also to be told of what use could you be, because you sometimes start doubting well what, there must be people that do things that they would maybe want me to do. I think there is a misconception or a misunderstanding, definitely the communication is not right, but I sometimes think people, if I'm not sure about making that step, and they were to hear me say well I don't know, I don't know what there is, I think some people would think, well ask if you want to, and I think that is the difficult bit. There is definitely so much more than just competing, just being an official, just being a coach, especially from an elite level, and even more so people who were at GB level, they must have so much knowledge and experience to pass on in a mentoring way to others. And there is nothing wrong with them asking, because I am given the option, and I can always say no, but at least the door is open, the question has been asked, and it might be that that particular time in their life they maybe think, actually I could afford that and actually that is something that I am quite interested in, but if the communication is not there, then it is not going to happen.

OG: Is there anything else you want to tell me about your career or your retirement?

M: I think it comes down to personality for me. I think it can be very, I think you have to assess what sport means to you and what boxes it ticks. And I would almost write that down, I would almost look at a plan of, right what ambitions does it fulfil, how much time does it take up, is it a filler in terms of your ambitions, in general a diary of what it is, and then you need something to replace that. Not all at once, it's not going to happen, but then the key things that you then need to value, what are the key things that are important to you there, and you need to then, 1) speak to someone, 2) ask for help with it. Don't be scared to say, look I'm really scared of having nothing and losing my identity and not knowing how to self manage. Your life's managed by your sport, the minute you wake up, what you eat, how you dress, your whole life from minute to minute, and I think, I definitely found that, on a small note I still suffer with, I never like to be in the house on my own, now that seems really weird, but I don't know what to do with myself, really, and it sounds stupid, but I don't know how to structure. I was always told, in an hour your doing bars, moving round, you've got 15 minutes, always told we're doing flexibility, we're doing this, we're doing that, we're doing this because of this, you know, the day of that week reflects to this training, reflects to that week, reflects to this part, you've got a secondary competition there, a primary competition there, you know

everything. And do you have a plan, do you have one of these flow charts for your life from day to day, I'm getting up, going to the dentist, no you don't. And that would to me be the biggest piece of advice, that you're suddenly a little bit lost or a big bit lost, depending on your character, and I think if you are lucky to find something else to fill the gap then great, be wary you don't put all your eggs in one basket, go down the same line that you commit everything and then you're unsure of whether it was the right decision or not. But just to have someone to guide you and to have a structure I think is huge, because I think it dictates your life and all of a sudden it's gone and you're like, who am I and what do I do.

END

KATH (Golf)

13th November 2007

OG: Can you start by telling me the story of your golf career?

K: Okay, well basically my whole family played so I was just sort of dragged up to play golf. I got my first handicap at 13, then pretty much just went through the pretty general stages that you do, East Lothian and then through to County stuff, then East of Scotland, East District stuff, and then through to Scottish junior level, and then obviously County senior level, stuff like that. Went on then to play Scottish senior level and then GB&I stuff, played for GB&I, and then basically after that I turned pro and was pro for 5 years. Played kind of futures tour in America and stuff and then European Tour as well. So that's pretty much it, and then gave up (laughs).

OG: How important would you say golf was to you during the time you were playing?

K: Pretty much my whole life, pretty much did everything through my golf. Although I did have other interests that was my main priority through the time that I was doing it.

OG: Did you always have plans to go pro – was that something you had been aiming for?

K: I don't think when I first started playing that I was thinking that, because you just kind of go with it you know, you are into different sports and you just kind of do what you do. But then as you kind of get further up the ladder and you start playing representative stuff then you think oh maybe, I'm quite good at this, would be quite a good life. So yeah, probably about then you know. You then start to focus on that is what you want to do.

OG: When you were playing amateur representative level, were you working at the same time, studying at the same time?

K: I was studying at Moray House, doing sports science during pretty much to the end of my amateur stuff. And then while I was pro I kind of worked a lot of the time during the winter, in the off season. When I was amateur I was pretty much studying. The work I was doing when I was pro was just for money, just small stuff, golf was always the main thing, the priority.

OG: Did you have any thoughts when you finished university about what you might like to do career wise?

K: I had some ideas because you have got to have them as well, you know, just in case things don't go to plan, you have to have a contingency. So I had thought about what I might want to do with my degree and stuff, but never really thought that much on it at the time because I was playing golf.

OG: Can you tell me more about what it was like to be a professional golfer?

K: It was good. I mean I think a lot of the time you don't realise how hard it is going to be you know, sponsorship wise and stuff, you don't get the backing that you get when you are an amateur. I mean when you are a top amateur you get pretty much taken everywhere, everything is paid for, expenses, the whole lot, and you get bursaries and whatever, sportscotland, talented athlete programme, you know you get a lot of money to kind of do what you want to do. Whereas you turn pro and you know you get your funding for the first year, which is great don't get me wrong, it is a major boost to anything you want to do, but then after that it is all of a sudden cut and then it is a bit of a shock to the system, you know, when suddenly you think

oh my god I have got to get all this money to go and play and stuff, and if you don't have sponsors and whatever it's tough.

OG: And is there more pressure on your golf because you know you have to play to a certain level to make money?

K: I think subconsciously there is, yeah definitely, I mean certainly nearer the end of my career that definitely was an issue, you know, worrying about how much money you would have for the next week or so, worrying about accommodation and where you were going to have to stay, kind of prices and whatever, definitely was an issue, without a doubt. It was pretty tough at times.

OG: How supportive were your family of your golf career?

K: My family were 100% behind me, everything I did, as was my club, they were great, used to do fundraising events or whatever to get me basically enough money to get away and play. I have always had loads and loads of support on that front without a doubt. When your whole family plays golf and they understand it as well, they know how hard it can be and when you are playing well how good as well. My older brother plays to quite a high standard as well, plays for Lothian and stuff but not really any further than that because he didn't want to.

OG: What were your family's thoughts when you decided to turn pro?

K: I think they thought that that was going to be the natural progression anyway, that was what I was going to do, so they were just 100% behind me and you know, just off you go.

OG: Can you tell me a bit about the coaches you have had through your career?

K: I had, from the start I was quite a natural player anyway, I didn't tend to get that much coaching, I just kind of went up and hit it and got on with it. A guy from Durham called Jimmy Hulme, he did a lot with my coaching kind of earlier on, you know if I was struggling I would just go to him for half an hour, an hour or so and that would be it, it would be fixed and off I went again. But I just tended to get on with things mainly, often if you were playing badly you just played through it. And then obviously we had our Scottish coaches who had an input, and the GB&I coaches. At times, for me being a natural player, not really knowing a great deal about the swing, I sometimes found it too many people telling you, you should be doing this, you should be doing that. At times now even when I think back, when I was playing really well at amateur level, yeah I got a bit of coaching here and there, but I was basically just out playing. And then you know you turn pro and it's, there's this kind of pressure on you to you know practice loads and stuff like that, and I never practised all that much when I was an amateur, you know I played a lot, played with my brother and with loads of the guys at the golf club a lot, but I wasn't a great practicer. I mean don't get me wrong, I did do my practice, it wasn't like I didn't practice at all, but I certainly wasn't a, I was more of a go out and play boys for money, and make some money in the process (laughs). And then you turn pro and suddenly you feel like you are pressurised into being on the range x amount of hours every day and you know having a coach there that's going to work with you. And sometimes I regret that I maybe moved away from my natural swing, because you look back and think, well I didn't have that many huge faults anyway, you know, but you just, you are always trying to make it better, and at times I don't know whether that was maybe a bad thing.

OG: When you were in season, how much of the time were you away travelling for events?

K: It depended. At the start I was away, I mean you are pretty much away most of the summer, but in saying that you're not, on the European Tour there wasn't that many tournaments when I played, there was only I think 10 or 12 tournaments a year which in the grander scale of things isn't actually that much. When you go from amateur when you virtually play every weekend without fail, and then you suddenly go from that to having 2 or 3 weeks when you won't play at all, then it is a bit of a shock to the system, you've got a card in your hand again, and you are thinking oh god I've not played for 3 weeks, when as an amateur you are just so used to playing all the time. And of course once you're pro you can't play in any of the other events, and so I found that all quite difficult, from playing all the time to suddenly having like 3 weeks off where you are just kind of practising, and I get bored practising, so that was tough.

OG: And was it quite difficult to have only golf going on in your life?

K: Yeah, I mean I think I was pretty much used to that anyway. I played lots of other sports as well, and I still did a lot of stuff when I was at home, still went round to see my friends and stuff, it wasn't like I was hidden away in a room. You definitely make sacrifices, but then that is up to you to make them and if

you do it, you are quite happy in your decision and you just go ahead and do it. I can remember one of my friends coming past one night, I think it was like a Friday or Saturday night, and she'd been out and I was on the practice area and it was pouring with rain, it was like 8 or 9 o'clock at night and she was like, what are you doing? But you know it was just normal to me to be there just practising, but others are thinking what are you doing, you're off your head. But you make the decision and you go with it.

OG: Were a lot of your friends involved in golf? Did you have a lot of friends outside the sport?

K: Well obviously I grew up being at the golf club a lot so my brother played, so I played with a lot of the guys there, and also we had, at the time, quite a strong girls section in East Lothian county so you know there was kind of 5 or 6 of us that all kind of travelled to play in girls opens and girls tournaments and stuff, so there was a crowd of us that kind of hung out when we did that as well. And the East Lothian team at the time as well was pretty strong. So we were lucky in that respect, there are some girls now that are coming up and they are the only girl in their club and they are the only girl in their county. A lot of girls just get to a certain age and they just give up, purely because of that. I was in a lucky position because there were quite a few of us the same age that got on well, so that kind of helped.

OG: What are your most significant achievements in your golf career?

K: Obviously playing for Great Britain and Ireland, played in the Curtis Cup so that's kind of the pinnacle of amateur golf really, women's amateur golf. And then I won the Scottish strokeplay, the Helmholme, which is an open tournament as well so there's people from all other nationalities playing as well. And then obviously playing for my country as well, playing for Scotland was always a massive thing for me as well.

OG: Were there low points that stand out for you?

K: Amateur I pretty much think I sailed through it. One year I didn't get picked for the Curtis Cup, I don't know what year that must have been, I had a really bad season and I was obviously pitched to be getting in the team and I didn't get in, and that was a bit of a blow, but then you bounce back and you get on with it. Professional the last year was just hard, hard work pretty much all year, just not really enjoying what I was doing any more, and just kind of going through the motions. No passion there, just thinking do I really want to be doing this now, got no money, you get to a certain age when you start to think, I've got no house, you know, other things, priorities, start coming into your life, that you don't have when you are 20 years old, 25 or whatever.

OG: Tell me more about your retirement from golf, the period leading up to it, the decision to stop, and what happened after that?

K: Well, I hadn't really played that well pretty much since I started, I turned pro and I injured my wrist straight away, so I had to pull out of a few tournaments, which wasn't the best way to start your professional career, I'd never been injured in my life before. And then I just, I never played to my potential, I don't think, as a professional. I certainly didn't play as well as I did when I was an amateur. And then kind of the last year was just, a lot of doubts about whether I wanted to be doing it. Being away from home has never ever bothered me so that wasn't even an issue, I just got to the point of thinking, oh god I've got to go away again and what if I miss another cut and it was just basically loads and loads of negative feelings going on, and you just get to the point where you are thinking, I just don't want to do this anymore. I think probably the few months or so before I decided enough was enough, I had kind of made up my mind, but it is still the hardest decision I have ever made in my life, without a doubt, to say right actually I'm not going to do this anymore.

OG: And so did that then happen at the end of a season?

K: Yeah. I mean obviously at the end of the season you have to make the decision as to whether to go to qualifying school or not, I mean I hadn't had a great year so I would have had to go back, and I just think the decision had been made long before that, had lost the drive. At that point I pretty much just went back to the job that I would normally do over the winter period when I was playing professionally, because they always just knew that I would come back each year, it would be like they would know that it was September, October time, because there's Kath back. And then I started applying for a few jobs and I got the first one that I applied for, which was a bit of a result. So yeah, that was it, it was really quite an easy transition, I was quite lucky.

OG: What did it feel like when you finally decided you were going to finish?

K: Just a lot of things going on in your head, you know, you think did I make the right decision or not, how am I going to feel next year, when they are all away playing and I am just here doing something completely different. But then quite exciting as well to be kind of out of it and the knowing that I was going to get money at the end of every month as well, I'm going to be able to buy a flat and I'm going to kind of fend for myself. You just get tired of having no money and tired of the slog of where's the next tournament, how much is it going to be for a flight, you know, so all that pressure is kind of taken off you as well, and you kind of get a life back.

OG: Did it change what golf was to you at all?

K: Yeah, well, I didn't play at all once I decided. My clubs went away for probably pretty much 2 years, I didn't pick up a golf club. I think the decision had definitely been made (laughs).

OG: What did it feel like when the season started again?

K: Yeah, that was a bit kind of, you know, quite a lot of looking on the internet and thinking how other people are doing, and oh I would have been in South Africa now, I would have been here, I would have been there. You definitely have a lot of thoughts thinking yeah, that would have been nice, but in the grand scale of things I think I knew I had made the right decision.

OG: Did you have any thoughts of a comeback at any point?

K: No, no. I think I put myself through, I put myself under too much pressure in the last year or so that the thought of actually going back and doing that again and living that life, particularly if you are not going to play well, I just, I'd had my fill you could safely say.

OG: So then what was life like for you when you stopped and got this other job?

K: Life was very different. Obviously you have a life where golf is pretty much it and you play golf for 7, 8 hours a day and there's a huge, huge gap there thinking what am I going to do. You work whatever hours you do but then you've got this huge amount of time all of a sudden to do other things, which is quite daunting, at first you are thinking what am I going to do, I'm going to be bored. But then I just sort of started up my other sports and stuff and other interests and whatever as well, you just find other things to do.

OG: Tell me about why you didn't even play after you retired?

K: I had no desire, absolutely no interest whatsoever. They just went away, I was fed up of them.

OG: Were you being asked to play by people, did you have the opportunities?

K: There was, I mean I might go up to the golf club with my brother, just for a bit of a chat and stuff, and they would be like where's your clubs? And then you'd go don't have them, they'd be like why not, and I would be saying I don't know where they are, they are in the loft somewhere. People would say why are you not playing, it is a waste of talent, I would get a lot of that, but that's people's opinions. I definitely didn't have any desire, needed a break.

OG: Did your life change socially when you retired?

K: Well I still see a lot of my golfing friends that I was on tour with, and even amateur golf, I have always kept in touch with anyway so that wasn't an issue. And then just obviously I have got some new mates through work and stuff now, but it has not overly changed, all my friends are just pretty much still there that were there before.

OG: What other sports did you pick up?

K: I started playing hockey again, I had played a lot of hockey when I was younger, so I went back and played for Haddington there for a little while. And then I actually stopped doing it again because I, it was quite competitive as well and I kind of decided I didn't want that. And then I am back playing again at the moment, so I obviously can't stay away for that long. So I am still playing hockey and then I do a lot of stuff at the gym now as well.

OG: Did you do a lot of gym training and fitness training when you were golfing?

K: Did some, yeah I definitely did some. Probably not as much as I should have done, but then as I've said golf does take over a lot, and I've always quite a sporty person and that so I was kind of running about anyway. I definitely do a lot more now than when I was practising, but then that is just kind of time management more than anything else, you have got to just fit it in when you can. So yeah, I have always really done quite a lot of fitness.

OG: What did it feel like when you eventually did pick your clubs up again?

K: The first time I played again I actually played great, which was a bit of a worry, I went round the course in about 3 or 4 under par, and of course thought why did I give up. But then knowing all the emotions that come along with that, and you know how easy it is when you have not got a card in your hand, it is very different. So yeah, I enjoyed it the first time I went out but I still, even now if I go out I still struggle with the whole if I am playing rubbish, you know, I don't want to be there and I don't want to play, but deep down you know, it is kind of getting over that mindset that you are not going to play like you used to, and that is something I still struggle with a bit, find it hard to just play for fun. But even now I really don't play that much. I came back and played for the county. I pretty much applied for amateur status I think the year after, I knew it would take a year to get amateur status back, so I just did it then and got it back. Because I couldn't do anything at that point in time when I stopped playing, because I couldn't play in amateur golf or professional. At the time it made no difference to me but then further down the line, I thought I am not going to go back and play pro so I might as well get my amateur status back, because then if I want to go and play then I can. So I did that, and I played county matches this year which was very bizarre I have to say, going back, like all the old faces and them thinking, oh Kath's back, and even felt quite a bit of pressure when I went back. When you know you have not even practising and not even played for I think at least a few months, you are thinking oh dear, I hope I can at least do something decent here. I mean it was good, but apart from that I think I literally play, I think maybe 3 or 4 medals a year, the handicaps, a few mixed opens, just for a bit of a laugh.

OG: What would you say golf meant to you now?

K: It's not overly important now, I have to say, in my life. That might change in the next few years, you know never say never, but no, it is not one of my priorities in my life now. I mean now if I play mixed opens or whatever then I can enjoy it, just play, whereas before I couldn't at all. I can now just have a laugh with it, but you still, anything I do I am still very, very competitive, and you are never ever going to lose that. So although it is not taken quite as seriously you are still raging if you don't win. But, yeah, you know, it has totally changed. But the competitive side is still there in anything I do.

OG: Is there anything you particularly miss about being a professional golfer?

K: It was great at the time, a lot of travelling and stuff. I enjoyed going to other places and made a lot of really, really good friends out of it as well. Some of them going through the same thing as me, maybe struggling a bit a well, and I think we all got each other through a lot of tough times as well. There are others who were doing really well, who are still doing well, so that is great as well. I look back, and have some mixed ideas on it. I had some great times, and other times it was absolutely hell on earth.

OG: Is there anything you particularly don't miss?

K: Just the pressure of the money, to be honest with you. Just worrying about loads of different things that I don't need to worry about now on the financial side. At the time that is always on your mind. Near the end there was always so much pressure because there were so little tournaments that when you did play you knew you had to win money. And in the European Tour the money wasn't overly great either at the time and it dropped pretty quickly as well if you were outwith certain places. And you were struggling to make your costs a lot of the time which is not the ideal life you want to be leading. Money definitely helps. I had a lot of help from my club, people were really great with their golf days and stuff like that, and I had a management company that helped me out a bit, but that was it, there was nothing else.

OG: Were you given any other forms of support, like advice on being a pro or on how to deal with finances, things like that?

K: I think you get the chat when you are a top amateur, that this is going to be hard and all that. I think at the time it is a one off chat and you think oh yeah, but I was always the type of person that, you took it on board, but you are never going to know until you try. So although they say it is really hard and all that I think a lot of the time you have to have that experience to know. Whereas now, the only thing I look back at now is that I just wish that I had played to my potential. And if I'd played to my potential and still hadn't done well

then I would have been very happy, whereas I didn't play to my potential so that sometimes grates on me thinking how would it have been if I had played as well as I could have. I think that was possibly because of the pressures, but I don't think I'll ever really know. Sometimes I think did I practice too much, did I not stay with my natural swing. Should I have just not listened to people and just run with what I did, because that was what I did when I played well as an amateur, was it other circumstances, I don't think I am going to ever know, I can't pinpoint it. There was a lot of factors.

OG: Do you think it would be useful for golfers to have some form of support in these areas?

K: Yeah, I mean I think it helps, but I think as well when you are that type of person and you are very competitive, I think you are going to do what you are going to do anyway. I think your decision will always be made before anyone comes in and says anything, obviously professional sports people are very single minded and they know exactly what they want and know what they want to know. But even advice through the first few years when you are a pro, rather than oh you need to be careful, are you going to turn pro or not. I think in general you need more support in the first couple of years as a pro, after you make the decision. Not only financial support which is obviously a huge thing but everything else that goes along with it.

OG: Were you given any advice or help or guidance when you retired?

K: No, not that I can remember.

OG: And do you think there is anything that you could have been offered that would have been useful?

K: I think it depends. I very much kind of knew that I went and did my degree just in case it didn't, so I always had ideas of what I was going to do if it all went pear shaped, whereas other athletes maybe don't have that. I was very lucky that I came back and I knew roughly what kind of area I wanted to work in, whereas a lot of other athletes wouldn't be able to do that, so a bit of career guidance and support for some may be good. But I was very much, I knew I wanted to go into a sport related position.

OG: And if they were to provide that in golf, who do you think should be providing it?

K: I think it's very difficult, with the governing bodies and stuff. Although they are moving forward and stuff I still think they are very out of touch with modern day life at times. And even now I don't think a lot of professional sports people when they came back would necessarily take advice from the likes of their governing bodies, certainly within golf, because it can be seen as a bit backward at times and a bit set in its ways and things like that, whereas other sports have moved on so quickly. And yes it's got its traditions, but I wouldn't necessarily say that they would be the right people to be giving the guidance. It might be from the likes of professional athletes who have been there and done it, that might be the best option, to get it from people who have been there and know what they are going through, rather than people from a governing body who have never really done anything and sit on committees and whatever, but they have never played county, never played representative, they certainly haven't been pro. The player has to be able to look up to the person who is giving them advice, it is very difficult to take advice from people who haven't done.

OG: Do you think one of the reasons they are perhaps stuck in their traditions and not moving forwards is that they do not encourage enough of the younger players who have been there and done it to get involved?

K: Certainly any time when I was a pro or when I've not been playing I've never ever been remotely contacted or anything like that, about anything. And I'm sure that a lot of people how have been involved in the sport would put back in because you are very passionate about your sport, even though at the time when you are playing it might be tough or whatever, you are still always going to have that passion there that you want people to do well, and you want your country to do well at the sport. And I definitely think it would be beneficial. But the thing is people are busy, everyone's busy now. I am very much until people grab a hold of me and say Kath would you do this, I'm not going to go looking for it because I am far too busy, I've got loads of other things going on. But if the opportunity is there and they are saying it would really benefit bla bla and would you come and do this then you certainly would think seriously about it because you are passionate about playing for your country and helping out the youngsters that hopefully, you know you have possibly not made it but there is quite a lot of talent out there that can do, and making it a lot easier for them. It seems ludicrous that you have all that there and you are not making use of it, to make athletes benefit from what they could give them.

OG: Is there anything else you want to tell me about your experiences?

K: I think it is a very individual thing. People react in different ways. I mean I obviously put the clubs away for 2 years whereas there might be some people that really still want to play. I think it is a very individual thing and I think I was very lucky that I got into a job quickly and whatever. But certainly just take advice from everybody that you can possibly speak to about it, and try and make it as easy as you can for yourself. And find other thing to do, because there is a lot of time, you are used to playing your sport and there is a lot of time in the day where you can do other things. It is finding other things so you are not sitting thinking, I think with me it was certainly about finding things to keep me busy to start with, because there was a huge gap there. And then you find other things that you enjoy as well, which is great. I think I have been very lucky, you know I pretty much as I said walked into a job, and I had things that had been put in place beforehand like doing my degree. I certainly wouldn't have got my job without my degree, and at the time the degree was hard, because you are playing pretty much full time golf with trying to do your studying and whatever as well, but it was definitely worth it, because I wouldn't be in the position I am now without it, I would probably be working in Dorothy Perkins or Next or something, sitting bored out of my head.

END

JENNY (Athletics)

15th October 2007

OG: Can you start by telling me the story of your athletics career?

J: My career was quite difficult because I had quite a lot of, well I had one injury that lasted 10 years that nobody could ever really get to the bottom of. It was my Achilles, I had really bad Achilles that no-one ever truly diagnosed until literally the year before I retired, the November, and I retired at the end of the next summer season, so it was in 2001. I had a fantastic career, don't get me wrong, I didn't make Olympic level, but if somebody had told me when I started out that you'll do this, and you'll go here, and you'll meet these people then I would have been quite happy with it. Obviously when you're in it you get a bit more... but that was the one wee frustration for me was over 10 years, the money and everything spent on physio, and no-one could diagnose it until an Australian chap came over, and it was the simplest thing in the world. So a lot of frustration because it inhibited my performance to a massive extent, because I couldn't really walk most mornings. At one point, a couple of years before I retired, I was told by key individuals within the Institute that maybe I would just have to put up with the pain, which really wasn't the advice that I was looking for. I mean I finished 4th in the Commonwealths in '98 but basically I had been kind of Britain's number 1 that full season and about two weeks before I went out to KL my Achilles flared up to the point that I couldn't walk in the morning basically, you know, you couldn't run across a road without being in agony, I would have described it as like an Alsatian hanging of the back of my Achilles. So that's probably the one regret that I have because I would say I never really found out what I could throw pain free, because I eventually got my Achilles fixed, not that there was anything actually wrong with them, it was all to do with my big toe which is quite interesting, got them fixed in the October of 2001, pain free for the first time in 10 years, training really hard but a lot more tired than I should have been, and eventually went to the doctors in the January and got diagnosed with an under-active thyroid. Got the diagnosis towards the end of January, and really I had only stuck around to get to the next Commonwealths to get the medal that I should have got, or I thought I should have got. So got diagnosed about the beginning of February, and the way it works with the medication is that you get given a little bit for a month, then you get a blood test to see and they gradually kind of build up. And that basically ended my career because of the timescale, by June my medication still wasn't levelled out, and I was quite upfront with Scottish Athletics and the Commonwealth squad, saying listen I don't want to go to the Games if I can't throw the standard, because the standard for me should have been easy. And they gave me extra time and stuff but my body just was... and it was hard then as well because my GP didn't explain to me the impact that it has actually on your physique, whereas for me it just felt like I was running through treacle all the time. So it was a really fantastic career, I loved what I did, but a lot of kind of injury problems in there.

OG: Can you tell me about how you got started in athletics?

J: I was always quite sporty as a kid, came from quite a sporty family. Went into secondary school, did school sports the first year and kind of won the individual championship thing. My dad was a teacher at the school and knew one of the chaps at the school went to an athletics club in Dundee, and I went along with him. Went to my first competition really as a shot putter and a high jumper, which is a really odd combination. At the first competition they said need someone to do the javelin and I kind of went och I'll do that, and I won it. And then basically that was me, I was the club's javelin thrower, you just get sucked in.

OG: Were you training full time at any stage in your career?

J: Basically I left school at 6th year, I was quite young, only just 17, and went to Edinburgh uni to do law and business. It was the wrong thing wrong time, too young, not happy, dropped out in the first year and went back home. Basically I knew that by being there I couldn't do my athletics as well. So I didn't enjoy where I was, didn't enjoy the course, couldn't see my coach because I'm from Kirriemuir originally, and my coach lived in Arbroath so I was in Edinburgh, he was in Arbroath. So made the decision then to kind of go for the, gosh it must have been like the '94 Commonwealths, and basically just went back home and kind of got myself back together, because it was a bit kind of a stressful time. And then just over the period of time just kind of decided to take some time, parents were really supportive, stayed at home, got a part-time job, and just trained my ass off. Missed out on the Commonwealths in '94 but started to get some better results. When I say I worked, basically my mum and dad were totally supportive that I didn't necessarily have to work, but for me I think it was a good distraction. I worked two hours a day in a sports centre, for just the fact that for two hours a day you could be a normal person and you had someone to chat to about something other than athletics. If I hadn't had the support of my parents then there is no way I could have done it, no way. I can't remember exactly when the lottery kicked in and stuff but at that point when I first started there was no kind of funding that way. I was quite fortunate in that I had the support of some local business people and things, basically just to pay your petrol because the mileage I used to do was quite crazy. But if my parents hadn't been into it then there was no way.

OG: Did you have one coach all the way through your career?

J: No, initially when I was say 13 or 14 when I joined my first club, Tayside it was, there was kind of a guy there who didn't really know much about javelin throwing but just got me to a point. And then I was really fortunate in that I worked for about 10 years maybe with a chap called Clark Hayward who was the Scottish national javelin coach, and lived in Arbroath which was 25 minutes away, so was absolutely fantastic. Myself and Clark worked together for the majority of my career, it was only towards the end. It was hard because myself and Clark would then go down to British squad things and we worked with John Trower and Calvin Morris and we used to take a lot of advice from them. After 10 years it kind of got to the point where Clark was almost like a second father to me, more like an uncle, but there were frustrations creeping in and things he wasn't seeing. The last maybe 2 or 3 years I worked with John Trower, and for about 6 months I worked with Meg Stone, but for technical input in Scotland there is only Clark who I would trust, who has the knowledge. I think the changes happened because his knowledge had gone to a certain point. The reason I used to get frustrated with him was you were in the middle of a technical session and he would harp back to what you used to do, and what you used to do wrong, and all you would hear then obviously were the negative parts, so it was like well I know I used to do that, but what I want to do is this. But it got to the point where the frustration was creeping in too much and it was getting really quite detrimental to the session. It was really tricky because I loved him to bits, like you know an uncle or whatever. I remember having a conversation with John and he was saying it was funny, male athletes would leave a coach in a second, whereas females are always like this because they are like, I don't want to hurt them, have that attachment. And I mean I still stay in touch with him now, he is someone I'll always stay in touch with. It was difficult to change it all because basically for most of my training I did it on my own, because I was pretty much full time, and where I stayed there wasn't really a squad of people to work with. There was a couple of guys that I would maybe do a gym session with here or there, or join some club athletes who were part of Arbroath to do some running sessions, but there was not an actual group so I was 99% on my own. So when it came to changing coaches, basically I then had to commute down to Stoke every two weeks to see John. And this was what was quite hard, you'd go down and you'd work on a technical aspect, and then it was go away and work on that for 2 weeks, video it, analyse it, and come back. And then what I felt happened was we broke down the projectile into tiny little pieces, so you kind of worked on something for 2 weeks, and then it was okay, work on this part for 3 weeks, but it was never put back together, so it was all quite fragmented. Javelin is a bit like golf, it is really technical but if you think too much about it you were screwed, basically. So that was really quite hard because you were training on your own all the time, you were videoing your own sessions and analysing it, you almost became too critical, because you watched hours and hours and hours of throwing, comparing yourself to the ideal model. So even if there was a throw that might be quite good, all you saw were the negative points. So eventually I just stopped filming it and went on kind of how it felt. But yeah it was really hard, I used to do about 30,000 miles a year, up and down to Stoke. It was also hard because you would go down there and there would be other throwers there, people like Mick Hill and Tessa who were all training together, and they would be complaining because they had a half hour or hour journey to get there, and I would be like I have got a 15 hour round trip. And sometimes you didn't get as much out of those sessions as you wanted to, so it was quite frustrating.

OG: Were a lot of your friends athletes at that time?

J: I had maybe 2 or 3 friends outwith the sport, that I had gone to school with from home. They were really pretty understanding and quite happy that on the rare occasion I did go out with them, no pressure to drink, party and stuff. But pretty much everybody was sport related, athletics related. I think that was linked to the fact that I really had no social life because my day off that I had I kind of worked half the day, and then the rest of the time I was just tired. And also because I lived in quite a rural area, if you did want to come down and socialise with people it was down in Glasgow, and that was difficult because you were always training the next day or whatever.

OG: You talked about making sacrifices, it sounds as though you did put quite a few things almost on hold for your athletics.

J: Yeah, but it didn't feel like that at the time. It's funny because I do some work with one of the women's football teams and I look at their lifestyles and it just baffles me, they talk about having aspirations to do things but they will in no way compromise their lifestyles to achieve that. For me if you really want to do that then that isn't a sacrifice, that's just part of doing that. And for me that was all I wanted to do at that point, so it wasn't an issue. I had more fun and experiences that I would never had had if I hadn't done athletics. And when I dropped out of uni I spoke to my parents and it was a case of, well you can always go back and study, but this is your window to do athletics, you can't come back to it later. So I didn't see it as a huge sacrifice. I think some of it is an individual sport thing, because the case is if you don't train then it is you who is going to look silly, and the fact that you wear lycra is also quite important, there is no hiding place. I think in athletics, in every event, you have to do so much training to do that. Like for me it wasn't just running up and throwing a stick, you had to do the gym sessions and the track sessions, your technical sessions, your injury prevention stuff, all the different sessions. Whereas say football, they do some fitness work and they play football, you won't really find a lot of them in the gym or doing injury prevention stuff or other aspects. I don't know whether it is a different culture, whether it comes from the coaches within it. Perhaps it is personality, I always said you have to be crazy to do athletics, I think it is a defective gene, that's what we all used to say, that you have got to be slightly mad, otherwise why would you run up and throw a big stick at the end of the day. I think as well, as I say, 9 out of 10 training sessions I did by myself, so I only had myself to push me or whatever, there wasn't anybody else.

OG: Did how things were going in athletics affect the other aspects of your life?

J: Yes, absolutely. If you did well you felt fantastic, if you did badly you were in a foul mood through the next week. You wouldn't be a very fun person to be around if you didn't do well on the Sunday or whatever when you were competing. Totally linked. But I mean there was no feeling like it when you did well or threw a PB or had a great result, then you were way up high. But equivalently I can remember a competition where I tore my elbow and couldn't throw for 6 weeks and I missed out on Olympic qualifier by 20cm and then you are way down, I'm not fun to be around.

OG: You have talked about how injuries shaped your career in many ways. Can you tell me about the emotions that you felt when you were injured?

J: It's quite hard with the Achilles situation because over such a long period it was reoccurring and nobody could tell me, so many allegedly experts gave me the wrong advice, you know, I saw one guy who prescribed me to wear orthotics, which I did for 6 weeks and then found out they were going to give me stress fractures because they were entirely the wrong shape. Probably for me the massive thing was just frustration, because you couldn't train, and because of that you couldn't compete the way you wanted to, but then alongside that nobody could tell me what was wrong, for years. I mean they wanted to scrape my Achilles and I was like, well why are you scraping it, you are not scraping it if you can't explain why you are doing it, then it was like we'll try cortisone, well why if you don't know if it will help, and they were like, okay good point. So it was really frustrating because a lot of it, well I knew people who had had Achilles problems in the past and had them scraped and it was just horrific, people who had had injections and things for no real reason, it was like well lets just try it, it might work. So again I was probably, not stubborn, but I was like I am more than happy to get it done but can you tell me why we are doing it. I had lots of scans, lots of MRI scans, no there is no thickening, no scarring, but we'll scrape it anyway. And it was so frustrating because when the guy did eventually diagnose it, an Australian chap, it was a lack of strength endurance in my calves and a slightly inflexible big toe. All it took was specific exercises and within two weeks I was pain free.

OG: How did you feel then?

J: Well I was ecstatic because it was October November time in 2001, and I thought fantastic, for the first time ever I am going to be pain free for the Commonwealths, wow I'll actually know how it feels. I

always felt that although I threw PB's and I was really happy with the distances, I was always not quite where I wanted to be. You just got used to living with the pain. One of my last PB's that I threw when I was down in Peterborough, I was in a lot of pain, a real lot of pain, but you just kind of put up with it, I mean myself and ibuprofen were very good friends for most of the seasons. I remember afterwards that I could not walk. We drove back up from Peterborough and I just couldn't walk anytime we got off the bus. I went for a scan the next day and they found I had a 7cm tear in my gastrocnemius, and the doctor basically said how did you manage to throw a PB yesterday, and I'm like you just learn to live with the pain. Because if I didn't do that they I wouldn't have been able to compete. I used to get up in the morning and I couldn't flex my foot, it was one hand on the wall and one on the banister trying to come down the stairs because they wouldn't flex. And that was one of the problems, it took me so long to warm up and as soon as you went onto the ball of the foot it was just like broken glass through your Achilles every time you put your foot down. Often trained and competed against medical advice. It was like don't compete, why not, because they'll hurt, well they hurt now, well they'll hurt more, so I was like is my Achilles going to snap, and it was well I don't think so if they were going to snap they would have done so before now, so okay then I'll compete. When they did fix it, it was like wow, won't it be amazing to see what it is like to be able to throw pain free, so when you are coming down the run up you can't feel that, and although you get used to it and are blocking it out, I still always thought there would be a huge difference if that wasn't there at all. Training would be effected too. I had to stop sprinting in winter training sessions and do rollerblading sessions instead, which were equivalently hard, but basically we had to adapt the training because the Achilles would so often just not let me do it.

OG: What are the most significant achievements from your athletics career?

J: Probably winning the British Champs for the first time, because nobody expected me to do it, probably least of all me, but that was a good day. The Commonwealths, even just being selected for the Commonwealths, finished 4th which was devastating, and the 2 English girls beat me who hadn't beat me all year which was even worse. That was an experience that I will never forget. And then I won the British a couple of times after that and they were also good days. I remember one competition specifically, and it wasn't even a big competition, it was one of those typical Scottish May days when the wind was about hurricane level towards your face which was really hard. I don't remember many throws from my career, you might remember 6 or 7, but I remember that competition. There was only about 4 of us in it and I let go of this one throw and as soon as I let go of it I knew that it was a fantastic throw. It was one of the best of my career, not necessarily distance wise, because of the wind, but I thought on a nice calm day that was a 60m throw, but in that wind in Scotland it was like 55 and a half. But that was another one, just that feeling of it working, it clicked. That doesn't really happen very often, even if you talk to the likes of Steve Backley and stuff, I was lucky to train with them, and they said there was only a few times when it is the easiest thing in the world and it all just clicks. It didn't happen very often.

OG: What were the low points, aside from obviously the injuries which was have already talked about?

J: I think sometimes the politics of sport. The difference between the kind of Scottish and British systems, that is quite frustrating. If it is close between you and an English person the British team would select the English person because it is cheaper for them to be on the team than to fly you down.

OG: Is there anything you look back on and miss about being an athlete?

J: Training, getting to train so much, being outside so much. The situations that you get put into and the bonds that you create with certain people. There are a few people that I will know for the rest of my life that I have only known through athletics, and whether I don't see them every year or every 5 years the relationship will still be exactly the same. Probably, when you are away on a trip, the kind of closeness and the banter, the mischief and the silly side of it. I don't really drink even now, and people are like how can you not drink, and it is like I wouldn't drink for a year, but then when you did go out in your two weeks off you went out in style, and I think that kind of situation when it was just silliness, you know just fun, even if life I have a great time but I don't think it is quite at that level, because it was almost like letting off steam.

OG: Is there anything you don't miss?

J: Getting up at half 6 to go for a run. The feeling when it doesn't go well and I suppose now that your life is so different, now that you realise what you were missing out on, if would have been good if you could have had both, but I don't think you can.

OG: Tell me more now about your retirement.

J: Well I always thought I would struggle with it, but it was the easiest thing in the world because my thyroid had been diagnosed the decision was almost taken out of my hands to a certain extent because by the time they got my medication sorted out it was that kind of, well I believe in fate, that things happen for a reason, because I got diagnosed with that and then I got signed off sick from that job in the sports centre and I hated it at that point anyway because it was the most mundane thing in the world, so it was almost like do you know what, I am not coming back, see you later. Then I just kind of thought well why would I continue, I'm not going to get funding, I was 27, 28, still living at home, it's not worth it all anymore. Because at that point I was really low because everything that I had worked for between 1998 and 2002 I knew had gone. And I knew I was never going to be an Olympic champion and I knew at that point it was unlikely I would make it to the Olympics and I just thought, no, I'm done now, I've done it. So I quit my job, didn't know what I was going to do. They took me to the English trials down at the Manchester stadium to try and give me a last chance and I remember on that day I threw abysmally, I was embarrassed to be out in the stadium competing because basically it was just right, lets try and just get some kind of distance and I threw, I think I threw 40 metres which was horrendous. And I remember being out there and I didn't even make the cut to go through to the last 8. I remember they didn't let me go back into the stadium so I had to sit and watch the top 8 take their last 3 throws, and I remember sitting there thinking, I mean at that point it was just like someone had ripped your heart out. You are sitting watching people that you know you should be competing against if you were fit and healthy, but there was nothing I could do. I described it at that point, generally when you are coming down the run up you can feel everything, but at that point I could feel my head and then I had nothing, no connection to my body whatsoever. It was only afterwards looking back and realising that your thyroid affects your metabolic rate, affects your muscles explosiveness, affects basically everything, but nobody had told me that, so it made it even worse in the sense of not understanding. I just remember that day thinking no, not again. Because that was probably the worst ever. You were just sitting out there, I was embarrassed by my performance, I knew I wasn't going to the Commonwealths which was fine, so I made the decision, spoke to my club and they asked me to do one more competition. So I did one last league match for them to give them some points and then that was me done. I always thought how will I retire, because how do you walk away, but it was almost like no, that's me, I'm fine, I know I've done everything that I could have done.

OG: So when you stopped did you stop training, and was that pretty much immediately?

J: I've never stopped training actually. I've not touched a javelin for, gosh it will be 5 years now, although I work in, I'm a sports development officer so they keep getting me to throw these foam javelins. But after that last competition I did for my club down in London I've not actually properly thrown a javelin since then, so since August 2002. But I've never really stopped training. I kind of, I detrained for a little bit, just did what I wanted to do for fun, and then I actually really badly damaged my knee doing something very silly, took a step backwards, didn't realise there was a step there, and tore my cartilage. I retired in the August and that was like the October/November. I got surgery on it then and I have basically been training ever since, doing whatever I want to do, just for fun. So I still lift, still enjoy my weight training, probably train if I can 3 times a week, sometimes 4, and then do other stuff as well, but just what I want to do, what I feel like. I can ski now, I can golf, all those things I wasn't allowed to do before, or didn't have the energy or inclination to do then. And to be fair by the end of the summer my shoulder was normally quite trashed, so even holding a hairdryer was tough, so you kind of just needed a bit of time to chill.

OG: How did you feel once you had done the final competition and knew that you were finished?

J: Do you know I don't remember much about that whole competition. I don't remember the throw, I know I didn't throw well, but for me it wasn't about me that day, I was very loyal to the club and would have done anything for the club, that kind of thing, so for me it was a pay back for them. I mean I could quite happily have never thrown again, but I kind of said you need the points so I will come down, I am quite happy, I think it was either about relegation or promotion. So I don't actually remember anything about it, I can't even picture the stadium, I know it was down south somewhere. I don't remember anything about my event, I remember being on the relays and things like that. The hardest thing was the Commonwealths were in Manchester, so it was great because everywhere you went, whether you were in Asdas or whether you were in town, everything was the Commonwealths. So that was really hard because I'd worked for that for 3 or 4 years and then although I knew I wasn't going to make it, you couldn't escape from it. Especially because it would be on the TV, so people would be like, are you watching the Commonwealths, and it was like no. Or you would go into asda and because they were a sponsor there would be banners everywhere, if it had been in another country that wouldn't have been as bad, whereas that was quite in your face. I just remember not really watching any of it. I don't think I was really that reflective at that point, I was probably more thinking, okay what do I do now.

OG: So how did you get from there to where you are now?

J: I don't really know. All my friends were in Glasgow so I kind of decided that I was going to move to Glasgow. I ended up, I didn't know what I wanted to do, but I ended up getting into the strength and conditioning side of things. So I moved down to Glasgow to share a flat with friends. And then, I think it was because I was in the Institute one day in Stirling, and I think it was through speaking to Susie Elms and seeing what they were looking for in a coach, so I kind of got into the strength and conditioning. I knew I wanted to work in sport, I couldn't go and work in an office, had to do something with sport. So I just kind of did that voluntarily for a few weeks, and then I ended up doing that for about 2 years, which was quite frustrating as well because I was quite frustrated with it when I was an athlete and then you saw it from the other side as a part-time employee and was even more frustrated by it. I knew it was never going to be my long term thing, when I look back on it now it was almost like a little transition, allowed me to just kind of be like a normal person, just have fun and not worry. But I almost just kind of fell into it, not part of any master plan, and I mean I do look back now and it was quite an odd time. That's sort of why I believe things happen for a reason, I mean if I look back now I would never have thought that the things that happened would have, not that way.

OG: If you hadn't had your thyroid problem, where do you think your athletics career might have gone?

J: I mean I really don't know because if everything had been fantastic, I had gone to the Commonwealths and done well, who knows I might still have called it quits because depending on how I was throwing or what I achieved then I might have thought, do you know what, this is all I can do. The year before I think I had kind of said the aim at that point was the Commonwealths in 2002 and I think the aim was after that it was I'll see, if I am happy to walk away and I've done everything I can do then fine, because as I say I knew I was never going to be an Olympic champion at that point, I mean you just know. And some people say well that is wrong, you are never going to be that if you tell yourself that, but seriously you need a little bit of realism. Especially in athletics and in a field event, there are other factors that come into it as well. Those distances were not achievable for me. So yeah, I might have absolutely called it quits after that.

OG: Did your life change from a social perspective once you finished?

J: Well you do then become more of a normal person in the fact that it doesn't matter if you want to go out or, the regimented side of things has gone to a certain extent because it is not like you have to be up and training the next morning every weekend, so you could do things that you wouldn't have done before. It is almost just like you could kind of chill out. But not like a big weight or anything off my shoulders because I didn't dislike training, just that kind of regimented I had to be at home or I had to be doing this or that, I could do whatever I wanted.

OG: You spoke about the fact that most of your friends were involved in athletics. Did that start to change once you retired?

J: I suppose so, but the opportunity to expand that had always been there, you had just chosen not to. Because other people would be like do you want to come and do this, or that, and you would be like, that would be nice but actually I have got to train, whereas now you can go, oh yes that would be good, lets do that. So you were just probably more, not receptive but it meant that you could do different things.

OG: Was there a aspect of physical adjustment to your retirement?

J: I think that is the part that is still with me because, like your diet thing, even though I am still really quite strict with it because I can't see how you can go from 15 years of doing that to going to the other extreme and just eating whatever you want. So I am still quite strict on that, not as strict as I used to be. I still feel guilty if I don't train. If I don't get to the gym at least twice a week then I feel terrible, I always need to do something. Couldn't imagine ever not doing exercise of some form. That has been right from when I was a child, when I was little I did every sport under the sun, mum and dad encouraged us to try everything. But I suppose at that point my body was just tired, kind of broken to a certain extent, between the thyroid problem and then all the injuries and all that, so it was just a period to just let everything settle down.

OG: Did you talk to anybody about how you were feeling about retirement, or about your decision to retire?

J: Not really no. Like my parents obviously. Not really. I'm quite a private person so people always tell me things and I always listen and give advice, and I'm happy to do that, but I tend to keep things in my head. My parents though because they knew how down I was about it and stuff.

OG: What was your parents reaction?

J: My mum and dad are fantastic and their theory is whatever makes you happy we'll back you. But they knew what I had been through and how hard it had become. They probably knew that I felt that I had had enough and that it just wasn't worth it anymore. I mean that season was horrendous in that every competition that I tried to go into I ended up in tears, because I just couldn't do what I wanted to do, and I just kind of remember thinking it's not worth this anymore, it's not worth being in tears every weekend. And I'm really quite close to my mum and dad as well so they knew how hard it was and how much I was struggling. So if I had said I wanted to continue then they would have supported me, but they probably knew as well as I did that it was time to call it quits.

OG: So you didn't speak to any other athletes, any of your friends within the sport about it?

J: Well it was quite hard because probably the two people I was closest to had retired the year before, a couple of years before actually. So we'd all come through that kind of 10 year period all together, so it was almost just kind of like, if they had still been involved maybe it would have been harder because of the lure of coming to train with them, the banter and stuff, but it had almost just like run its natural course of this is the right time to call it quits. But I didn't talk to them about it, not that I can remember. They knew as well that, I mean I was quite open that I was struggling with this thing, not with everyone but with my friends, and they knew how hard it was as well, they obviously knew the distances I was throwing were so bad that they knew I wouldn't be happy with it, so they probably would have realised that it was finishing as well.

OG: What was the reaction of your coach?

J: Well at that point that was quite hard as well because I wasn't really working with Clark, I just saw him on occasion, John Trower down south had a big squad of people so I wasn't his, he was working with Backley and Tessa and people, so I was just a person who was in the squad. It was Meg that was trying to do my conditioning programme and again I don't think, not that I wasn't valued as much as I could be, but it was like did they really care. It was difficult because working with a coach who had 4 Olympic medallists in their squad, and here's me just coming down from Scotland every so often, you're not necessarily, it's not that you're not an equal member of that squad, but in the big scale of things you're not really that important. And with Meg and the Institute, that was all quite a tricky time as well, nothing to do with me, just politics and dynamics and all that kind of crap that was going on on her side. So again you know, although she was doing the conditioning things and I would see her a bit, it wasn't like it was a really strong coach-athlete relationship. She offered to do my programmes and stuff and I was kind of in that position where I can't keep going down to England all the time, Clark is not taking me, who else is there. And in Scotland, at that level, and especially in field events, it was really very limited, really limited in terms of who's got the knowledge and who's got the expertise.

OG: Have you thought at any stage of going back, getting involved in athletics?

J: Do you know it is interesting, that is the one thing probably when I got your questionnaire, I think Scottish athletics missed out on an opportunity to retain a vast amount of experience and knowledge, because, and I don't just mean myself, probably maybe 5 or 6 of us all retired, and probably 3 or 4 of us in field events alone who had been British Internationalist, been to the Commonwealth Games, who had retired and no contact was ever made by Scottish Athletics. And I'm not, I have no desire to work in athletics because for me the sport is flawed, there's too many muppets in it, too many politics in it, I am cynical, I did say. But there was no contact made, and again I'm not just speaking on my own behalf, I know that Stef was the same, shot putter for 10 years, internationalist, left the sport, no approach was made to get in contact, but there was no attempt with him and others to try and, even if they contact you and you say, no I don't want to coach right now, but okay and maybe later. All we all said at the governing body is so flawed, whoever is in charge should really have looked at that. And as I say I'm not in any way egotistical, I'll always underplay everything that I do, but why would you not in field events alone because in Scotland field events, I'll be honest, in Scotland the standard of the field events is crap, hammer is okay, but across the others it is appalling. I went along the year after I retired to the Scottish champs, just to see Clark, and it was the hardest thing in the world to stand and watch someone take my Scottish javelin trophy, which I had won something like 7 times, with a 30 metre throw. Now at that point, even though I had been retired or whatever, I could have got up there and thrown that. And do you know that way I just kind of thought, I suppose that is that kind of competitive thing, you go that's my trophy, and you don't deserve that with your 30 metre throw. I was throwing 30 metres when I was 16, or 14 or whatever it was. That made the fact I won it 7 times less somehow, I quite often didn't enter the Scottish champs because it clashed with something else or whatever, but I can remember thinking I'm going to win this 7 times because no-one else has done that. So the next year to see someone take it away with 30 metres was a bit galling I think, a polite way of putting it. But even

the standard today, the standard of field events in Scotland, is appalling. I think it would be quite interested to read your PhD when it's finished because I would be intrigued to see if any of the governing bodies actually supports any athlete that retires of any level.

OG: Is there anything else you want to tell me about your career or your retirement?

J: People have to be sure they have made the right decision, they have to know in their heart that the time has come to walk away, because if they don't then it will be hard. What comes after that, I think that almost just happens, whether it is fate or whatever, but if you don't know in your heart that it is done then it would be really hard. If you know the time is right to retire and you have done everything you could to achieve those goals, whether you have achieved them or not if you know you have done that then everything else will be fine. Because you won't be able to think what if or anything like that. I had a great time in athletics and I have had a great time since I retired. I'm not the type of person really who regrets things. I don't think you can regret, there is no point. I mean I do know a couple of friends who retired and struggled, on drunken nights out sobbing, and you kind of think, you didn't want to retire. Whereas as I say if you can put your hand on your heart and say I have done everything I could have done to make it, and I mean I would say I didn't make it, I had a great time and a lot of fun, but I didn't make it to the point that I was at the Olympics. That is probably the one thing that makes me think. But it obviously wasn't meant to be. Maybe somebody else could look at my career and say, well you should have done that, but at the time the decisions I made were what I thought was right for me at the time, both as an athlete and as a person. An outsider might say well you should have done this or should have done that, but for me as a person it might not have been the right thing.

END

ANNABEL (Gymnastics)

20th September 2007

OG: Can you maybe start by telling me about your gymnastics career?

A: Well I started doing gymnastics when I was 7, and then when I was 10 I got into the Scottish Squad, and then from there just developed into elite gymnastics really, squads and competitions and training increased as I got older. I went to the Glasgow School of Sport as well, I started in first year and went to the School of Sport for 5 years.

OG: What would you say your biggest influence was in terms of getting started in gymnastics?

A: Well my big sister did it when I was young and I wanted to join in, but then she gave up and I stuck at it, I enjoyed it.

OG: How did the decision come about to go to the Glasgow School of Sport?

A: It was just starting up when I was going into first year so my coach had kind of encouraged us to go to it to see what it would be like, so I agreed to go.

OG: Tell me a bit about what it was like.

A: Well it is a main stream school so they had just kind of incorporated 5 sports into it, we were a bit like the guinea pigs going into it, it was supposed to be like we would miss PE and art in first year and go off to our gymnastics instead. It was good, you did get to train more, but when we first started it wasn't quite planned out greatly for us. I think it was maybe better for other sports where they could go in, have a quick swim and come back out, whereas we were just getting warmed up and getting ready and then had to go back into class. But I think they have developed it as they have gone through the years, given them more time.

OG: So when you were at the peak of your gymnastics career, what did your weekly training look like?

A: Probably we would do about 2 hours in the morning, miss certain subjects or whatever, then go to school, and then after it we would do like 4 hours at night. We would do that through the week and then we would have Saturday off and train about 4 hours on a Sunday.

OG: And did you enjoy it?

A: Yeah, I loved it.

OG: What would you say the most enjoyable parts about being a competitive gymnast were?

A: I kind of loved all the adrenaline of competing, I liked going away places, I don't know, I just like gymnastics in itself, it is one of the sports that I just have a passion for.

OG: And was there anything you didn't like about doing gymnastics?

A: I got a lot of injuries and I found that pretty hard, you were kind of left to the side a lot when you got injured. A lot of people don't have the patience, they kind of give up on you, so that's quite hard. And then you have to rely on your parents to take you places, to hospitals and whatever else.

OG: And did you get much support in terms of going to physios and stuff like that?

A: No, not really, there was nobody set there for you, you had to find your own. Maybe sometimes the coach would recommend people but there wasn't anything else.

OG: And in terms of financially I presume that you, well ultimately your parents I suppose, would pick up the tab for that?

A: Yes. At the end I did get some funding from the Scottish Commonwealth Games fund, like they did help out a bit and things, but at the beginning it was all my parents really.

OG: Were your parents very supportive of your gymnastics career?

A: Yeah they were. I would say my mum more than my dad. My dad was but he was kind of, when I got injured and things he didn't like it, he was quite protective of me.

OG: And how important do you think their support was?

A: Very important. When I was training I saw a lot of children who were there just because their parents wanted them to be there, I could see that as a kid, it is just so bad.

OG: Did you try other sports before you did gymnastics?

A: Not really, I did a wee bit of swimming when I was younger. Gymnastics just kind of takes over, you do find out that you have to choose very quickly.

OG: Tell me about your biggest achievements in your gymnastics career.

A: Well the best one was going to the Commonwealth Games, that was like the best thing. And also like being Scottish Champion from under 10 right the way up, retaining my title every year, that was quite big. I went to Norway and did an international and won quite a few pieces and things, that was quite good as well.

OG: Tell me a bit more about your experiences at the Commonwealth Games.

A: I was quite young, I was only 15, I was one of the youngest chosen to go, but it was like amazing. I just can't describe how you feel when you go there, it is just like oh my god, just awesome.

OG: And do you think it made a difference being at the kind of 'home' Commonwealth Games, in Manchester?

A: I don't know, I kind of wanted to go away somewhere better to be honest, but I suppose it was nice that you had like your family there, people coming down to see you.

OG: Did you find you got quite a lot of support generally from the crowd, because it was in Manchester?

A: Yeah, we got quite a lot. It was a good atmosphere.

OG: Were you tempted at any stage to stay on to try to get to 2006?

A: That was actually my aim, to begin with, to get chosen for 2002 was kind of a bonus. I was injured for a year before it but I came back and did the trials, and I was on the list, but then in the last trial I got injured and then that was it, my chance was gone. I was a bit gutted about that. My personal coach, he had been selected to go with the team, and he really wanted me to go as well.

OG: Tell me a bit more about your coaches. Have you had the same coach all the way through your career?

A: I have had a few different coaches. At the beginning when I was about 9 I had a Russian coach that came, this was kind of where I started off from, but he was only there about a year and then unfortunately he died, so that was quite a traumatic thing. So then my main coach came along, he coached me for a good 7 years or so, then he moved away so I got another personal coach who worked with me in the lead up to the 2006 Commonwealth Games.

OG: How supportive were your coaches?

A: Some of them were better than others to be honest, you get a mixture, I mean some of them were really good, my last coach that I had was excellent, over the last couple of years, because I was older as well, he was really supportive.

OG: Generally coming up through school, did you find there were things that you had to miss out on because of gymnastics?

A: Yes, there was a lot. Because when I went from primary none of my friends were going to the same school as me so it was quite a big decision, it was just me and one other girl starting, so it was quite hard. I found it hard as a gymnast in the school of sport because we were at the side of the school so it was quite difficult. And a lot of gymnasts gave up, so then you only had a few friends.

OG: And were there things outside of school you were missing out on, things your friends were doing that you weren't able to do?

A: Yeah, but you kind of have to choose that. I realise that but I don't regret it or anything. It is hard, especially when you get to 14 or 15, a lot of people just give up. I was left myself at one point, no team-mates left, and I was thinking what's happened to my club, that was quite hard.

OG: Can you tell me now about your retirement from gymnastics?

A: Well it wasn't really planned to be honest. I wanted to finish on a high but then, I held on, I had an operation on my foot and I held on to see if it would be better but I held on for a year and it still wasn't any better. So I was having second thoughts, I was starting uni and it was getting tough and I just thought I don't know if it is worth it anymore, I felt I had to choose.

OG: Tell me about the decision when you finally decided to stop, how was that for you?

A: It was horrible. I was on it and off it for weeks just thinking about it, I was still coming in but I was like, because I was thinking about it I felt that my heart really wasn't in it when I was training. It was a horrible feeling. I kind of discussed it with my coach and he agreed that it was up to me. I don't know, it wasn't very nice, you just felt so down for ages.

OG: Can you describe those feelings at all?

A: Well I was upset at first, and then I was kind of like at a loss, because I didn't know what to do with myself when I gave up, you just naturally went into the gym, so it was like what do I do now. It was so strange as well, it was weird.

OG: And how long do you think it took you to move away from those feelings?

A: Quite a while actually, I couldn't get to grips with it. I suppose I had done it since I was really young and I was just thinking what do I do, it was really bizarre. It took me a while to find new things to fill my time. But I did eventually, I have accepted it now, but I still miss it.

OG: In terms of your life socially, were a lot of your friends in gymnastics?

A: Yes. I feel like, well my sister has a big group of friends but I don't, I've only got a few certain friends, and I find that difficult now, I've only got the same wee bunch of friends, because I didn't stay in touch with many people from school and things. I think they get annoyed when you are going to the gym all the time and you are not able to do anything with them. That is the only thing, it is quite hard to stay in touch with a big group of friends, it is quite hard.

OG: And have you kept in touch with your gymnastics friends?

A: A few of them, but quite a lot of them gave up when they were like 14 and then they just wanted to do other things and because I was in training they didn't like it. I kind of lost them as well, you know. I kept in touch with a few but some of them I have lost as well because I was still training when they gave up, they didn't like it.

OG: Was there a physical side to adjusting to retiring to gymnastics, going from doing all of those hours training to stopping?

A: It was weird when I stopped, it was like I need to do something, find something, I was itching to find something to do, but nothing fills it the same, I was like I don't like that, don't like that, you know.

OG: Did you ever consider trying to transfer into a different sport, trying to pick up something else?

A: I did think about it but I have still got a problem with my foot, so it is not really worth it the now. I don't know, I did think it would be good to get into something else, but I have not found whatever it is yet.

OG: Did you shut off gymnastics completely when you finished, how did you cope with the emotions that went along with finishing?

A: I did actually shut it out a bit because I was told you could come in and coach, and I do that now, but at the start I couldn't. I felt like I needed to leave it and just not think about it. I felt if I was there then I would just get upset and things. So I did, I just left it a good couple of months just to get away from it. But then you kind of start missing it and think you could go back in.

OG: What about how other people viewed you? Did they see you as a gymnast? And how did you deal with that when you then stopped?

A: Well it was quite hard actually. It was more so my family because I had just started at uni and so people I knew there didn't really know, I would say I don't do that anymore but they didn't really go into it because they didn't really realise the level I was at and stuff. It was when you see old friends and then you are like, no I don't do it anymore, it is quite hard.

OG: Were there any positives to retiring?

A: You get more of a life, more of a social life now, it is better for going out with your friends and things I guess. It is not as stressful either, I think when I was doing gymnastics everything had to be scheduled, totally like in the time zone all the time, but now you've kind of got free time to plan spontaneously and things like that, which is quite good.

OG: Is there anything you miss in particular about being involved in gymnastics?

A: Yeah, a lot of it. I miss all the training and I miss the competing, the whole excitement of getting ready to compete, I miss that. I also miss going away, I was used to going away a lot, you know like every month, even if it was just down an hour away, but now I don't travel anywhere, you know, which is weird.

OG: How involved have you become in the coaching side of the sport now?

A: Well, I can't involve myself fully with it, people have been like you should just go into coaching full time but I don't want that. I think it would be too difficult for me, there is still a part of me there and when I go out and coach I miss it more. SO I just help a little bit, I like to help but not to get too involved, not to get committed to it.

OG: And I guess to be a coach in gymnastics you have to be very committed to it, as committed as the gymnasts are really?

A: Yeah, you do.

OG: And have you been through coaching qualifications?

A: Yeah, I did a couple.

OG: Do you think that there is a chance that you might get more involved in coaching later on?

A: I don't think so. I'd like to keep it just to fall back on just in case I decide, but I think that I'll just do it now and again, part time kind of thing, I don't think I'll get totally committed to it ever.

OG: Would you like to get involved in any other aspects of gymnastics?

A: No. It's weird because one of my friends is into judging and others are doing other things but it doesn't interest me. I think the only thing that I liked doing was actually doing it, I don't know if that is bad but I just don't have any interest.

OG: If you go back into the gym and you are coaching young gymnasts, do they know who you are in terms of your own gymnastics?

A: Some of them do, I am in my old club so some of them do, some of them don't really know, the really young ones. The ones who, do, who remember when I was in, are sometimes like can you do this, can you do that, so they do remember.

OG: And do you feel that you could be an inspiration to them, in terms of someone who they might wish to be like?

A: I think so. I think because in my club there was a big gap, there was me and then there was like a ten year old so there was a big gap and they did look up to me, so I think that is something.

OG: How supportive were your family and friends when you retired from gymnastics?

A: I don't know, it was quite difficult, you know that way I don't think many of them knew how to support.

OG: Do you think that they understood what you were going through?

A: Not really I don't think, I think it is kind of quite a personal thing. I felt, especially like my dad was just like, oh that's good, she's giving up, she's got a life, but you know that way to me it was more than that, I was like totally gutted, I didn't know what to say to them. I mean they were supportive but just not to the extent, they didn't really understand, they are not sport people themselves.

OG: Your sister had obviously been involved in gymnastics, did she understand a bit more?

A: I think she did understand how important it was to me, so I think she did understand a wee bit more.

OG: So when you retired was there anyone you could speak to about it, about how you were feeling and what you were going through?

A: It was quite hard to find someone to speak to I think. My personal coach was really good, because some people are scared to tell their coach when they are stopping but he was excellent and we did speak and he gave me options and everything, but other than that it was quite hard to find people to speak to.

OG: Did you ever speak to any other gymnasts who had retired, anyone else who had been through that same process?

A: Not really, like the only people I knew retired younger and they wanted to, like that was it, they didn't want to do it anymore, and they were happy.

OG: Do you feel that this is something that would have been useful for you, if there had been someone there, for example through the governing body, that they could help put you in touch with?

A: Yes, it might have been. I think it would depend if they had known someone, the way it was at my club there wasn't really anybody else. If there had been other people there then I think it would have been different.

OG: What about other girls who were in the Scotland squad at the same time? Were you close enough at the time to talk to them?

A: No, you see that was the problem as well with Scotland, I was quite close to them, I enjoyed going away to meet with others, I had quite a few close friends, but most of them gave up as well, they were all younger again. There was a few older ones but they came from down South, so I wasn't close to them. They just came up for 2006 and then they gave up, but I wasn't really that close to them so I didn't really know, and then the rest of the Scottish were a bit younger than me, so it was a wee bit different.

OG: As you have said you started university about the same time as you gave up gymnastics. Did that help you or did it add an extra element of trying to adjust to a new lifestyle going to university as well?

A: I think I made the right decision there, you know because of my injury. It would have been difficult if I had been training full time to go to uni, especially with the course that I am doing. And I had held it off, I was like, I wanted to give myself the option to train for the Games. I think it was a good thing because it kept me busy, with giving up gymnastics it was something else going on.

OG: Did anyone talk to you about flexible university study, when you were first thinking about going to university, were you given any help with searching for universities that might have allowed you to combine it with gymnastics?

A: No, not really. Because of the course I wanted to do, it was always going to be intense, so I held it off at first, but it would have been difficult to do if I had wanted to train full time.

OG: Did Scottish Gymnastics give you any support at any stage, when you retired?

A: No, it was more or less you are finished with the squad and that's it. I sent them a nice letter and everything to thank them, but got nothing back really.

OG: When you were in the Scottish National Squad, was there a national coach, or was it still your own personal coach that looked after you?

A: There was a national coach, they changed every few years or whatever, but there was a national coach.

OG: And did they help you at all or talk to you at all when you made the decision to retire?

A: No, it was kind of like you are finished and we are not interested. Well that is what I felt personally. I mean, some of them did care and stuff, but that was the impression that I got.

OG: Is there any areas in which you feel that you could have been supported, anything you can think it would have been really good to have had this or that?

A: I think that Scottish Gymnastics could have done more, don't know, I just felt that they just kind of left you and that was that really, they weren't really bothered. And they don't have that many gymnasts so I think there must be a reason for it. And in Scotland the drop out does seem to be a lot worse than in a lot of other countries, certainly down south anyway.

OG: Did you ever look at the option of moving down south to further your gymnastics career?

A: I couple of my coaches had mentioned it before because I was like the leading Scottish gymnast and they were like you could do something, but I wasn't interested. I wanted to do it for Scotland and I wanted to stay in Scotland, you know it was my home, I didn't want to move. I didn't see the reason, like why I couldn't make it in Scotland.

OG: If you had to do it all over again, is there anything that you would do differently, anything you would change?

A: Yes, well I don't know, I think I would be more sorted with my injuries and things and realise it. Because when I was doing gymnastics, gymnastics was everything, you know that way it was my life, but now I realise that it wasn't everything, but you think that at the time. I think I would have looked more to realise that, but I would have still done it, you know I loved it, so would have still done it.

OG: Do you think that is an area in which gymnasts could be given help, because as a young gymnast you are not necessarily going to have the emotional awareness to realise that you have to think about other things?

A: Yes, I think so. And also like competitions, I mean it is quite different for different people but for me it was like everything, I mean I know it wasn't everything but it means so much to you, you know, it is like your life at the time. And you realise now that if you had a bad competition then you just have to get on with the next one.

OG: And do you think that your coaches encouraged that kind of gymnastics is everything approach to it?

A: I think one of the coaches I did have, she was kind of like it is everything, focus on this, this competition means the whole world, all the pressure is on you, that's how you felt sometimes. I think some of the coaches did put quite a lot of pressure on you, were quite demanding.

OG: So if you were the only older gymnast at your club, did that mean that you were doing a lot of training on your own?

A: Near the end, yes, the last couple of years I was pretty much on my own, just me and my coach a lot of the time.

OG: Do you think that made things tough?

A: Yes, I think so. You don't have anyone to, I don't know, discuss your training with, or talk to about your training, it is just like focus and get on with it.

OG: Was there any stage after you had retired when you considered going back in, in which you thought you might have made the wrong decision?

A: I was thinking that all the time, I was thinking about whether I had made the right decision or not, it took me a while to think yeah, I have made the right decision, you know sometimes I would think oh, maybe I should go back, and then I would think no, don't be silly.

OG: And do you think you have now managed to replace gymnastics with other things?

A: Yes, I feel as if I am starting to get a normal life now, but it does take a while.

OG: Is there anything else you want to tell me about your gymnastics career or about retirement, anything you think we haven't already covered?

A: I think if you know you want to retire then you should just do it. I don't think there is any point keeping on going if you don't want to do it. Gymnastics is one of these sports in which if you know you want to stop then you won't regret it, but I think you have to make sure that you really want to do it, don't just give up lightly. Because otherwise you have to keep going I think. A lot of people if they give up when they are like 13 or 14 they regret it later on, they all say I wish I had kept going. And there is always time after it to do whatever, to go out and things. I would just say that it is, I found it pretty difficult, there was nobody really there to talk to about it which was quite hard.

OG: Is that also quite hard because it is not seen as a career, not like someone who is in their sport full time such as a professional?

A: People maybe don't understand how big it is for you, particularly as you are young as well. But I have done it since I was like, well all my life really, so it is like a major thing for me, it was my whole childhood.

END

IONA (Football)

7th November 2007

OG: Can you start by telling me the story of your football career?

I: Well, I started playing club football at the age of 16, and then I played there and at international level for 6 and a half years. Then I got the opportunity to play professionally in Bari, in Italy, so I left sunny Dalkeith and played there for 2 years, then my team disbanded and I came home. I started playing with a new team back here. And then I got injured, nothing to do with football, got injured in a skiing accident, so my football career was really cut short. I did try and come back, but I never ever got back to the level I had been at before. I was a midfield player, but couldn't get back to that level of fitness because of the injury I had. When I came back from my skiing trip I went to the doctors and he told me it would be fine, but it wasn't, it was half bent all the time, couldn't straighten it or bend it further, and so it was just a nightmare, and I was trying to still play on it, hobbling along, living on painkillers. When I did go back to the doctor he then decided that yes, there definitely was something wrong after all, and finally I got sent to the hospital. I saw physio, and it did get better, but I never got back to that level I was at and I lost the incentive after that. I did play on and off after that, but never back to where I was at.

OG: What was it that influenced you to start playing football in the first place?

I: I come from a poor background, and from a small village, and the only thing you could play was football. If you didn't play football you didn't play anything. So I just started playing very young. Every street had a team, and you played games against all the different streets. I played at school too, played for my school team.

OG: Can you tell me more about your experiences in Italy?

I: We used to train twice a week, matches on a Sunday, and we got paid for it. I was semi-pro, we had to say we were semi-pro, but I didn't do anything else, I just played football. When I left here I worked in insurance, but the wage that I got for playing football in Italy was more than I was earning here. It was strange adapting to that environment, the warm climate, sand, sea, different culture, different food, food you have never seen before. In fact for the first few months we lived off fish fingers, because that was all we could recognise in the shop, we didn't know how to cook pasta. It was the captain of the team, she could speak a bit of English, and she showed us what to do with the pasta, how to cook it. But it was a great experience, fantastic. We only trained twice a week, so the rest of the time it was sunbathing, we used to go and lie on the beach. It was a learning curve, because initially you spent all your money really quickly, but you didn't have your parents to bail you out, so you had to learn to plan your money. You grew up very quickly, because you had to, you had to fend for yourself.

OG: How important was football to you?

I: It was massive, it always has been, the most important thing in my life, and it is still now a part of my life. It has an impact on everything, because football was the priority, social life was affected, work often suffered. I didn't have responsibilities or a conscience, I just did what it was I wanted to do and my focus was football. I mean I had what was really quite a good job in insurance, maybe didn't think it was then, but realise that now looking back, but I gave that up just like that to play football. I've been quite fortunate in that the jobs that I have had in my career have been quite flexible, but I wouldn't have lasted in a job that wasn't, I would just have left if I hadn't been able to play.

OG: What are your most significant achievements?

I: Obviously playing for my country was important to me, playing in the San Siro stadium in Milan, that was a massive thing for me, and then away from the playing side being one of the best coaches in the country, I was one of the first female coaches to get the A licence which really was a male only domain before that. I have had a lot of honours as a player and a lot of honours as a coach as well.

OG: What were the low points?

I: Apart from the injury I haven't had a lot of low points. I guess one was when I came back from Italy, I had to re-apply for amateur status, and I was told by the association that I could never play for the international side again. I mean with my injury I was never going to play at that level again anyway, but that ban was never lifted. So even without the injury I would never have played for my country again.

OG: How supportive were your parents and family of your football career?

I: Not really. I don't know if secretly they were really proud of me, but when I went to Italy it was a nightmare. They didn't think I should go, so they weren't speaking to me. It was hard because I had made my decision, I was going to go against all my family and my friends as well. People were like, why are you wanting to go so far away, give up a good job, you've got an international career here, you play for a really good club, so they weren't supportive of that move. But I guess from their point of view they didn't know where I was going and they were just worried about me. When I was younger they hadn't been keen on me playing football, had tried to stop me, but I was a wee rebel, I was quite stubborn. So I do think they were quite proud of me but they were the kind of people who would never say these kinds of things. When my team folded in Italy I did get an offer from another team but I never went back, and my mum and dad didn't want me to go back. In hindsight if I had gone back I would never have had my skiing accident, but then again I wouldn't have done all the things that I have done since as well.

OG: Tell me more about your decision to finally stop playing.

I: Well when I was training I couldn't even train to the maximum that I could train before, because of the injury. I couldn't kick the ball far and that had been one of my fortes. I wasn't enjoying playing because I didn't have the incentive to go to the level that I did before, so I made the conscious decision just to stop playing, and to go into coaching. The team that I played for needed a coach and I thought well I'll try that. And so I started coaching when I was 23. I still find it difficult now, when I am standing on the sidelines. You can never compensate, I don't think, for playing, never. After every game I am shattered, even though I am not playing. I must tense my muscles, because my legs are always killing me. But nothing at all has ever come close to what it is like to play, it is never the same. I don't do it so much now, but I can remember before watching the game and thinking that I could do better as a player, do better than what was going on in the pitch. I say to the players these days, never give up until you have to give up, because you will never replace it. I think it is difficult to stand on the sidelines as a young coach, I think I got really frustrated because I couldn't play, it drove me bonkers. I would be shouting and bawling at the players and I think it was because I knew that if I was fit then I could probably do better. I really missed playing for many, many years.

OG: What are the things you particularly miss?

I: Just participating, being part of the game. The buzz that you get from putting a strip on and going out on the park. And when you scored a goal, I scored quite a bit and I was a midfield player. The camaraderie within the squad as well, it is different when you are the coach or the manager. You are always between a rock and a hard place when you are the coach or the manager. You have to keep your distance a wee bit, because you need to be able to instil the discipline, you can't be their best pal, you know. It's hard because as a player you were their best pal, and then when you start coaching you are suddenly this other

person. It took me a long time to develop as a coach because initially I just had to learn from my own mistakes, the coach I had had in Italy was fantastic so I used a lot of his things, here the training was just lots of times round the park, bust your lungs, game at the end and that was your training session. They were further ahead in Italy, used endurance work, speed work, strength work, skill stuff, so I used a lot of that, and it was different, so my team got better and my players got better.

OG: When you finished playing, what was going on for you work-wise?

I: I started working in the place that I am still at now. You didn't need the same amount of time off as a coach as you do when you are a player who had international stuff and all the rest. But they have been good, and I have been able to get time off if I need it for coaching things. There are too many employers who are just not willing to help people out, who frown upon it rather than encourage it. Even one of the girls in my team, she works in marketing, and she had had to give up her job for international play, because they wouldn't give her any time off, apparently the other staff were complaining that she was getting time off, even though she was taking it as unpaid leave. Some of it is just an attitude towards women's sport, and towards women playing football particularly. With women's football things have really improved playing-wise, but not in terms of attitude. The men's teams in this country pay them lip service, and I don't think that is going to change for a long, long time.

OG: How much did your life change socially once you retired?

I: It didn't really, because I was still involved as a coach. The team that I then coached, I lot of my friends that I played with were still in it. It has changed drastically now, because obviously all my friends have retired and moved away from the sport. Back then I would socialise with the girls in the team, now I am just coach and I don't socialise with them at all, apart from things that might go on after a match at the weekend. As I grew older my friends stopped playing, new players came in, and so it just wasn't the same anymore.

OG: When you were making the decision to stop, did you speak to anybody about it?

I: No, I didn't, I just made it myself. I can remember making the decision. I can remember sitting thinking, I'm not enjoying this, and I wasn't contributing enough to the team as well, so therefore I was as good as a man short in my opinion, so I just made that decision just to leave it and didn't speak to anyone. Just told the club that was me finished, started coaching and that was it. Started coaching practically the same week. I did play occasionally after that, I was always signed, right up until I was 47, I played my last game when I was 47, just about killed myself but I did play. I can remember playing 90 minutes in one game in Elgin, and it took me nearly 3 weeks to recover, I couldn't even go and take training. And I still struggle with my knee, every day. I continued to do some training, but my knee has limited what I can do. I have always tried to keep myself fit though, have always done running, always did a lot of road running. I also still play 5s sometimes, so I have always kept a reasonable fitness level, just nothing like where I had been when I had been playing. I have never skied again, don't do many other activities, but never skied since I had my accident. Sometimes I want to but I am just too scared of hurting myself again.

OG: Were you offered any kind of support when you retired?

I: No. I think the association should help people, help them to continue in the sport. Into administration jobs, into coaching jobs, development jobs, all these kind of things, diverse options. It is about getting them to put something back into the sport. That was one of the reasons that I made the decision to coach, because the sport was good to me in the short career that I had. There are a lot of people who just walk away, especially from women's sport. I mean the women's game is sadly lacking female coaches, but there are not enough of them encouraged to stay. The association needs to help them with the coaching courses, because they are expensive and they are time consuming as well. But I definitely think women's sport should have a lot more women's coaches, I think they would understand the differences better, the particular things about females in sport. But I don't think they are given the opportunities. And I think the SFA make it too difficult. Like I asked them why they didn't run coaching courses for women only, like the same course, because sometimes they are intimidated, it is all professional football players that are on the higher level courses. It is so hard, and I don't think I would put myself through that again. You are standing up there in front of all these professional footballers who think you are an idiot anyway and it puts you under a lot more pressure, you work really hard to get everything absolutely spot on and right so that you don't make a fool of yourself. But it was a learning experience.

OG: Is there anything else you want to tell me about your football career or about your retirement?

I: I shouldn't have come from Italy, that is my biggest regret, I should have stayed there. As I said I did get offers. Even when I was with my team I got offers to move teams, but the friend I had gone out there with, they didn't want her, so I didn't go. But I probably should have went because they had a fantastic team. Maybe I shouldn't have listened to my mum and dad when I came home, I should have signed with the other team. But I don't have a lot of regrets about football, I enjoyed it. But that was one, should I have maybe dug my heels in and said, no I'm going. There was one time when I did take a year out from coaching, about 4 years ago because I had been coaching for so long and I just thought enough is enough. And I was so lonely, I mean I had work and I have got friends but there was just something missing, and I developed what I called Sunday Syndrome, and it was really strange, I could certainly cope through the week, that wasn't so bad, but I struggled on a Sunday. I would usually have a routine on a Sunday morning, both as a player and as a coach. I would get up and have a scrambled egg roll, walk the dogs and then go to the football. So I would still do the first parts, but then I had nothing. And by quarter to one I would be feeling really agitated, knowing that I would usually be in the changing room, I would feel really, really nervous, but I was sitting at home. By quarter to 4 I felt alright because the game was over. I just couldn't get my body out of the habit that it had been in for so many years, it would know it was Sunday and that it was football day, it was crazy. The only thing I could call it was Sunday Syndrome. It was just such a big part of me, and I just felt so lonely without it. I don't think I as much missed the football as missed the banter and the laughs which you would have at training. I think if someone has been in the sport as long as I have then they have to find something else to do with their time, to fill the gaps, because if you don't fill the gaps then it is lonely. I found that I had all this time on my hands that I never had before, I would go to the shops to fill my time and spend money on a Sunday, just to fill the time in. You really have to fill that gap, because it is massive, and you don't realise what it is like until you actually retire, and all of a sudden everything is so different. I can say that I was really, really depressed and I couldn't get out of that depression, it was particularly bad in the winter, through the season. I wouldn't see anyone all week, because I didn't have the football in the evening. I think people leaving a sport after a long term commitment should try to get back into it in some capacity, or find something new that is just as fulfilling, that they enjoy. I will probably finish as a coach soon, it is just not the same for me anymore, but I will find something else to do after the experience of the last time, definitely, I don't know what.

END

SUZANNE (Athletics)

26th October 2007

OG: Can you start by telling me the story of your athletics career.

S: I started running at primary school, so I was 9 at the time, and I was introduced to it by a teacher. Local athletics was starting up and, I can't actually remember making the decision that, oh I fancy doing that, I don't know whether we were all thrown into it and then I just enjoyed it, but it became a kind of, they were setting it up in school and I did it, and then I think there was a couple of local school races. This same teacher then told me about the local running club and it wasn't until I was about 11 until I actually went to the running club, so it was a couple of years at school doing a bit of training and then at the running club. It started off as Tuesday and Thursday and the good thing at that point was there were a lot of girls my age at the club. I was lucky enough to have a really good coach, who made it fun, and I think that the real motivation was that it was fun and there was a real group of us battling against each other. I think I went from being the best cross country runner at primary school to going to the club where there were other people who were just as good, if not better. I suppose at the time you don't realise it but that was probably my competitive side coming in. I don't ever remember thinking, I'm not the best anymore, I don't want to do this, I think the fact that it was fun we just got on with it. I stayed with the club, and with my coach until I was 16, and then he died, and then my dad took over coaching, and that was probably quite a, it was a difficult age as well, and I remember I was kind of getting to the stage where I was asking, do I want to do this. I never had any pressure on me from my parents, but that only probably lasted about a year, and then when I started at uni I didn't have so much of a focus on it. I was always brought up to get your education, focus on your studies. So probably from about age 12 to 18 I was running a lot within the school competitions and the club competitions, and then from about 18 to about 20, I was still doing a lot but I think the focus was different and because my dad was coaching me, and we were very close but it is a difficult relationship, I used to question everything we did so I think there was a wee bit of a struggle there, although he probably really primed me if you know what I mean, because he kind of toughened me up, strengthened me up, and really when I got to 21 had just finished my studies, and I really went right into the running at that stage. It was a couple of years later that I changed coaches. My sister had started at Strathclyde Uni and I started working with her coach there too. But I would say the biggest influence from a coaching point of view

was probably my dad, and I think by the time I changed coach it was more guidance rather than coaching. I think that was probably me then from about 22 onwards, I was really peaking, and it was 6 days a week, twice a week. I always had my rest day, very very rarely did I train 7 days a week. But I was very prone to injury. I feel looking back, that although I had some really good blocks of time it would always be interspersed with injuries and niggles, hips and knees were the worst, and I think that was what really finished me off in the end to be honest. You would be out for a few weeks with the injury, and then you would come back raring to go, and it really just got to the stage where I could see it was a cycle, injury, recover, train, injury again, and I think mentally it just eventually takes its toll on you. I always enjoyed racing, but looking back this is where I find it hard, because I think if I was to do a race tomorrow it would take up my whole weekend, it is like tonight I need to do this and that, and everything. So I did enjoy the races although I did get very nervous. I raced relatively well, I had a few real crackers where I just totally mentally was ill-prepared and you could kick yourself at the end of it, but that is all part of the process of maturing, that is what it is all about. I think when I got to early 30s, I had got married at 29, and I felt like my career had ran its course, so to speak. I felt that I was going into a new part of my life. And it wasn't that, Dougie is always very supportive, I met him when I was at the peak of the career, and he knew that he wouldn't really see me during the week, because I was out training and then away to bed early. So he was very supportive, but I just felt it was a new phase in my life, things were changing, and you are starting to think of other things, like you have got a house to run as well, bills to pay, my priorities changed and I just stopped running. At first I didn't miss it at all, but then I did put on a bit of weight, only something that I would notice myself really, it is only one size but to you it feels horrible, you don't feel right, and that was when I started to think that I would get back out and do a wee bit of jogging. I still didn't miss the races at all. I mean I am 35 just now and that was probably when I was about 30, 31. I also had another injury and I just felt I can't get back this time, I don't want to. There was definitely a couple of years after I stopped where I was thinking, I'm not running anymore, but the past couple of years I've started to feel that I could maybe edge back in. So I will do the women's 10K this year, but it is like my aim has changed, I'm doing it just to do it now. I tend to, if I'm going to do a race now, I'll enter quite a big race, because then I know that I can kind of be lost in the crowd. I know if it was a small race I would feel more exposed and I would be worrying about what other people were thinking of me. One of the first things that I had to try to get over was what the club was thinking about me, about my running. So initially I ran just on my own, so that nobody knew, so they couldn't see how poor I have got. I know that there are reasons, that I am not training anymore, but I can't help but worry about what others are thinking, and feel I have to try to justify where I am at. It took me a while to go back up to the club, because they have seen me as someone who ran for Scotland, and now I was going to be back at their level, without sounding harsh. It was kind of mixed emotions, strange because I probably didn't expect to feel that. But I have got back to the club now, running on a Tuesday night, not with the fast pack but I don't have the drive or the motivation to run at that level now, it is definitely more of a social thing. And it does still give you that feel good factor, I will come home from the club on a Tuesday night and although I am running quite a bit slower than I was ten years ago I still get the adrenaline buzz. I wouldn't actually rule myself out of the competitive stuff forever, because I am now a vet, which provides the opportunity for a new challenge, As yet I haven't taken it up, but it is a possibility. What else can I tell you? Well in terms of support, I got most of it from my family. I got very little from Scottish Athletics even when I was at the peak of my career and competing for Scotland. I would say that it was my family and friends that would give me the support and encouragement. I wouldn't be surprised if that might have been a different scenario if I had been based at a different club. For example there was one occasion where I did the cross country selection race and even before the race there were some girls that got their selection race, before we had even raced. It really upset me because there were some girls that had got their selection already that I had beaten. You get this feeling that you have constantly got to prove yourself, and I think that eventually wears you down, you think I can't do this anymore.

OG: Were you working alongside your training, after you finished university?

S: Yes, when I qualified at 21, I was lucky enough to get a job straight away. When I started full time work I really threw myself into the running as well. Although I had been doing it while I was at uni, and I had a few good results, it was always a case of maybe, being too busy at certain times of the year, so training would take a back seat. I did cross my mind when I was about 22, 23, I did think about going part time, but I think it was just a kind of thought and it never came to anything. Before you know it another year has gone by, and then you say well we will look and see how this year goes. Financially you are thinking, oh, and at the end of the day it was really going to be a case of me going part time and hoping that my parents will help fund me. I didn't expect to get funding from anywhere else. So I suppose at the end of the day it came down to finances.

OG: How much did athletics affect the rest of your life?

S: Well socially I just didn't go out, sort of Monday to Friday. And then when I met Douglas I would see him, like we say Friday night, but then if I had a race then that wouldn't happen, or it would only be for a short time. But really, Monday to Thursday anyway, they were training nights. And then a Saturday night I would go out with friends, but again it would depend on the running and on the race schedule. You know, if I had a race that weekend then I wouldn't go out at all. Socially, I suppose I was lucky in that both of my good friends from university both went abroad to work, so I did have some friends from school but it was quite easy for me to opt out of the social scene, because I didn't feel anybody was totally relying on me. Looking back I don't feel that I missed out, because I would go clubbing with girls from school on the Saturday night depending on the race schedule. I never drank, so I would always take the car if we went out at the weekend. I did feel I had a good social life, I could get out if I wanted out. Once Douglas came onto the scene we did slowly start to see each other during the week, started to become more of a part of what I did.

OG: What were your most significant achievements in your athletics career?

S: Well firstly, when I was younger, winning the Scottish schools, that was when I was in 1st year at school, that was a real highlight. And then moving onto the club scene I got a bronze medal in the cross country championships for Scotland. That was a very competitive era for me, there were several other girls who were running at a high level. I would look back and say that was a really special time, because the competition was high, we were pulling each other along. And then after that, when I was working full time, when I was about 22, I couldn't put my finger on a specific race but I can remember feeling very good and running really well, and when I look back that was me running at my peak. I remember feeling that year that everything was going so well, and I was probably still on a high from finishing uni, I had had a whole year of good training under me. I went on after that to still have many good races up till about the age of 30, but I would say that my highlights where I was really feeling good and I felt like I was really flying in training were at that stage around age 22. I had very good support from the club, I didn't always go up to the club but the guys up at the club were very good at meeting me during the week and giving me hard runs, which you can't really do on your own, it is 5 miles of hard running, you can go out and do mile reps but I needed it constant and someone to press me to do that. In my early career I was mainly doing 10K and cross country, but in my later twenties I decided to do the half marathon, and I remember my first race, I ran 1 hour 20 which was my target and I made it, and I remember feeling very good about myself.

OG: What were the low points?

S: I think the worst point, and I think this is why 22 sticks in my head, I was running so well when I was 22, and just before I turned 23, in the June, I had entered the UK trials for the 10,000m, and I had never done that distance on the track but the year had gone so well, and all of the road and cross country races had been going well. We had kind of targeted this at the start of the year, and then I got to June, the month of my birthday, and I started to feel a bit of a niggle in my hip, but I thought oh it will be okay, you know, because other than that things are going so well, but it just wouldn't go away and that was the first time I had the hip injury. I went to see a physio, a private physio, a guy who has since moved on to work with the Scottish rugby team, and I went out to see him at his house and he was doing all the manipulations and everything. But at the time I was still so blasé, treating it like a little irritation that was going to go away, thought that everything would be fine. I remember him saying, right what are you aiming for, and I said I have got the 10,000 track race in a couple of weeks, and he just looked at me and said, no you'll not be doing that. I just started crying, it was so unexpected and I was just devastated. It sounds as though he said it really cruelly but I don't think even he realised, I mean I don't even think I realised how focused I was on this race. I had just been assuming that nothing would stand in the way, that it would be fine. He just said sorry, this is not going to just go away, it was a bursitis, you are going to need an injection and stuff. He said at the end of the day it is up to you, of course you could run, but my advice is not to. That was, mentally, the start of problems. There was all that training, all that hard work, and you feel so ready for it, and then out of the blue it is snatched away. I think that was maybe the start of me holding back a wee bit, after that event it was like, well I hope to do that race and I hope to do this race, but realised it was not definite. I don't think I was running as freely as before either after the end. I did have other good races, and I did keep going, but I think that was the first chink and the first time I realised that you don't always bounce back from everything. And I was always injury prone after that. I know it wasn't overtraining, because although I went out training 6 days a week, we didn't double train every day and it was not really high mileage. I was never a high mileage person. I think it was to do with my make-up, I mean I was under 7 stone when I was racing, I know that I was eating well and training, but it was maybe just to do with my frame, and my body was prone to breaking down. So that was definitely the lowest point. But I did bounce back, and I did have another 8 years of hard training after that, but I definitely do feel that something changed with that injury, it wasn't quite the same again after that.

OG: Can you tell me a bit more about your retirement?

S: I didn't wake up one morning and say that's it, I'm not going out for a run, I can't be bothered. It was really another injury, another niggle, and by this time my coach was great with me, we would see each other twice a week, sometimes 3 times, but the rest of the time she trusted me to get my stuff down, and at the end of the day if I didn't follow the training plan then it was me who was missing out. But whereas in the past if it was a work night out on the Thursday night I would go training first and then I would go out, I would start telling my coach that I couldn't make training because I was going out. Then it would be getting in on the Monday night and be like, oh it is a bit cold, I can't be bothered to go out tonight, I'll just wait and go to the club tomorrow night. I wouldn't say there was one thing that happened, I can't say when it started, looking back I can just say a few things started to build up, priorities changed, I lost a bit of the drive. I was lucky in that there was never any friction with my coach, she would have been within her rights to turn round and ask me what on earth was happening, but she didn't. I think it just took its natural course in that when I did see her I would be saying to her, look I didn't do this session and that session, and she would say fine and maybe adapt the programme. So it just went on a kind of natural progression. And then after I got married, I got married in the July and then I kept training, I did a road race in the November, and had a good run, it was a ten-miler, so I was still in full training after we got married, but it was probably after Christmas that I got a wee niggle. And normally with something like that you would take a few days off and then get back into it, but the few days off led to another few days. I think it was really just wee niggles that made me take more time off. I was honest with my coach and it eventually came that I told her that I didn't want to race anymore. First of all I lost the motivation to train, and then as a result became fearful to race because you know that you are not going to be able to perform well. I would say it probably came over a 5 month period and by then my coach knew, she was like, well I don't need to give you another schedule do I. I do still keep in touch with her, now I sometimes try to get into the university on a Thursday to do a run with her group, but you know it is a different outlook now. So I couldn't say that there was one thing that made me say that was it, it just petered away. I think at first that I did feel guilty, because I knew that once the niggle was away that I had no excuse. I think I then started making arrangements, like I need to get this schoolwork done, and I would make sure I was doing something rather than just sort of sitting about, so that I didn't have to think about it. I don't really know how long that went on. My family were always very supportive, it was like, okay that's fine, you just do what is right. But like I say priorities had changed in our lives, we had started thinking about other things, and I just felt that it would probably be good for me to spend a bit more time with Douglas, chill out a wee bit. And then I suppose what happened was that I started putting on a wee bit of weight which I had never experienced before, I had always been able to eat what I liked. That only happened a few months down the line, I started to have to pay a bit of attention to something that I never did before. At first I was okay about it, because people would actually make comments like, oh you are looking so much healthier, so that made you feel good, but then there is the balance between that and feeling bad about weight gain. Also my whole routine had changed, I wasn't training, I was also having my dinner later because Douglas wouldn't finish working till after 6 o'clock. Before that I would either have trained and deserved the big dinner, or I would have already eaten and be heading out training. But now what was happening, I wasn't training, I was eating later, and I was probably eating more than what I normally would. So I think it was a whole snowball of life changes and everything making me feeling, feeling bad, putting on weight, and didn't know what to do about it. That was probably the hardest time because I felt too fat to go back up to the club, it wasn't the Suzanne they knew. It was ridiculous because I wasn't fat, but to me I had put on over a stone, I was over 8 stone, which I don't actually think was healthy for me. But to most people looking at me I was fine, but to me I then didn't feel good. I suppose it went on over a period of a few years, but it just kind of sneaked onto me, you know before you know it you are looking in the mirror and it is like, aarg. So I couldn't tell you what it was, whether it was seeing a photograph or what, but I just thought you know something needs to change, I need to do something. I just started getting back out on my own, a wee bit of running, and I would go out with my sister. I wouldn't say that the weight dropped off, you know I thought I would get back out and that would be it, but it has allowed me to lose some weight which has made me feel better about myself, and as a result I feel I can actually still have my cakes and my coffees and not feel guilty. I always now manage to get out on a Tuesday with the club. Thursday it just depends, and then again at the weekend. But I try and get out 3 or 4 times a week and I know that just keep me ticking over. It is something that is just enjoyable and it is not eating into my social life or my time with Dougie or anybody else, but it is also making me feel good about myself again.

OG: Looking back, is there anything you miss about being an elite level athlete?

S: No, not really actually. I mean I suppose from a vanity point of view I probably miss being a bit skinnier, although like I say I still feel as though I want to lose a bit of weight, there is a wee bit still to go. But I wouldn't want to go back to that level of training in order to get that body back. It is just about feeling good about yourself. But I definitely don't miss the racing, the competitive side, at all. I still go to the races and watch them, and I don't ever feel as though I want to be doing them. I don't ever feel that urge to get back in there. Socially I still feel that I am in touch with a lot of the girls that I ran with.

OG: Do you think that support for athletes who are retiring would be useful?

S: I think that it would be useful. I mean I think it would especially be useful to get former athletes involved. You know I feel that I have been involved in athletics for a long time but I have never been asked to help, I don't feel they are utilising the people that they could be. It is this feeling that you have been part of this big organisation and you've kind of been a means to an end for them, it is like oh right she can fit into this team, and then when I am no longer there it is like I no longer need you anymore. It is not like I personally would want to be highly involved in Scottish Athletics, but I think if maybe I was approached then I would be more interested and then get motivated to get back involved. I actually did my level one coaching course back in October, it wasn't an area that I had been thinking of getting into at all, but it was actually through the club. They said they want a whole body of people to be kind of more involved. I feel they have looked at me and said you have got all this experience, we are not wanting you to run the club but you do have something to give. I think it would be an idea to have, I don't know if they do actually exist or not, but some sort of conference thing once or twice a year, inviting young athletes, different age groups along, and I think it would be a great motivation thing to have former athletes there. I remember going to, as a young athlete they had speakers coming up on like training weekends, and you would go away thinking this was great. And I am not saying for us to do the talking, but I do think it would be quite valuable to have these kind of training weekends or even just a training day and involve people who have been involved in athletics. I mean in some ways I don't feel as if I have retired, I feel as though I have just gone down a different path in the sport. But when I did stop I just kind of dwindled away, just drifted off, there was never any formal acknowledgement of the fact that I had finished, no recognition of that. And again psychologically that doesn't make you feel very good about yourself when they have simply moved their attention to the next lot coming through. Any support I have had or push to be involved has come from club level, not higher up. I just feel that there was no reason for them to lose total contact with me, I mean I know it is difficult to please everyone and some people will fall out of the loop, but I was always like I say still going to the races to watch. And the people who are running things are getting older and older, and eventually they are going to have to get young blood in, and it is maybe a drip drip effect and there are one or two coming in. But I mean I was at a race the other week and the timekeepers are still people who were timekeeping when I was 15, 16, and I'm thinking this can't go on for ever, they are still the ones who are doing the volunteering. Perhaps the problem is that nobody wants to put anybody else's noses out of joint, but I guess in any of these sessions it is perhaps difficult to bring in new blood.

OG: Is there anything else you want to tell me, about your athletics career or about retirement?

S: In some ways I feel that I am still trying to come to terms with it. I would say actually that it is a piece of advice that somebody gave me a couple of years ago when I felt I needed to get back into it a bit. I entered the women's 10K, and I decided that I needed to get a lighter pair of trainers, that it would make me feel better, so I was on the phone to Run and Become, and in chatting to the guy he was saying that he would recommend a certain pair, which was great, and then I gave him my name, and when I said it her was like, is that Suzanne Gemmill? And I was like, yes it is, and he was like oh you won't remember me, but it was a guy who used to organise races out in Edinburgh. So it made me feel good first of all that he remembered my name, but then he was asking how are you doing, and I was saying not that great, I am doing the women's 10K because I need to do something, I've not been training, and I don't know what I'm going to manage in the race, I'll be horrified if it is over 50 minutes because that would be a disaster. And he turned round to me and said well do you know, you have to say to yourself, what is your PB, and I was like 35 minutes, and he said right firstly you have to realise how long has it been since you set that, and it was 10 years ago, so he was like well you have to set new goals, you need to stop saying to yourself I am never going to run 35 minutes again. You need to say right this years goal is such and such, etc. And I was thinking, well how simple is that advice, because I was just always thinking well I am never going to get 35 minutes. I would say that was probably the best piece of advice I got. I think I knew that was what I needed but just somebody telling you, you need to set new goals, it was obvious but it was so right. So when I was running the race I was like, right you are never going to get close to 35 minutes but that doesn't matter because it was like 10 years ago. I do feel that I now go into any race I do and think, right what is my goal for this race. It is not, what did I do last time, it is what am I trying to do now, and also based on what training I have been managing to do as well. So the advice I would give to people is to try and set new goals. You forget that even if you were training 6 days a week you probably still couldn't reach near those old times because you are 10 years older. I would say it has probably been the biggest influence in making me the person that I am, and it has given me a real strength to cope with whatever life kind of throws at you. We have had a hard year, my sister died earlier in the year, and I think I got back into running for that reason too. Running because I still can, and she can't. It has been a real coping mechanism for me. The other week there I had a lousy day at work and then I got up the next day and I just felt like going for a run. So I went a run and I came back and I felt great. It has been probably the thing that had shaped me. I do think running has made me a tougher person.

END

LINDA (Netball)

18th October 2007

OG: Could you start by telling me the story of your netball career?

L: Right well, netball was primarily a female sport so at priLinda school it was very much that was the girls sport and the boys played football, so really started from there, with I suppose some of the priLinda school teachers who had an interest, didn't really maybe understand fully the rules but they gave up their time. So it sort of led from there and actually when I went to secondary school basically it was one of my P.E. teachers again who was a member of a club that played in the Glasgow league who really encouraged me to go forward probably from the age of sort of 13 and actually I joined her club and she used to take me along, pick me up and take me there every week and from that went for trials for Glasgow District and then internationally. And really I played netball at an international level from the age of 17, so that kind of developed. I left Bishopbriggs club in my mid-twenties and joined Bellahouston netball club, just because there was different coaches there and probably more of a challenge. From that point again just competing, I did trials for what was the open adult squad at that time for Scotland, so just competing for my own position. But at that point as well as the years went on I was then appointed as captain for the squad which was for the last world championships that I attended. So I represented Scotland and captained the squad there, so that's really how I got to where I am now. And obviously now I have gone on to coach. I still play a bit for my own club, Bellahouston, but primarily coaching there in a club which is set up with three adult squads with a team within each of the divisions of the Glasgow league, the 1st, 2nd and 3rd divisions, and so we are talking about 35 females attending on a Monday night, ranging from 15 year olds up to the oldest I think is 43. So that is kind of where I am now.

OG: And when you were playing netball, what else was going on in your life alongside that?

L: Well obviously alongside that I went to college, so from the age that I was playing international you had to also be studying at the same time, and then I went into full time employment from the age of 21, so again just really having to work with the demands of having a full time job and also playing.

OG: And did you find that you needed a lot of flexibility in your job? Were there big time commitments you had to make to netball?

L: Yes, there were commitments, but most of it was in your own time, because all of the training had to happen after hours. SO basically we met 3 or 4 times a week, for example at the Kelvin Hall, and we did get support from the council where we actually got talented sports cards, which meant that we got to use the facilities for free because you were playing international netball. So there wasn't really a financial impact on the day to day training, there was more that flexibility was required from companies around maybe tournaments and things like that, either Europeans or if you went to the World Championships.

OG: Through the period that you were playing internationally, how important was netball to you?

L: Extremely important I would say, to the extent where most of my friends, the long-term friends, are actually netball players because you spent so much time doing it, your whole social life was based around it. To say social life, I actually gave up quite a lot, the friends that you had been at school with, and college, who were doing the usual going out on Friday nights and stuff like that and for us there were times where you just couldn't do that. I mean there were times in the off season, it wasn't that we didn't have a social life, but when there was competition or training weekends, you just had to put that first.

OG: What would you say were the high points of your career?

L: Definitely for me the pinnacle was captaining the team at the World Championships, because it is something, I mean you can play your game and it is an additional responsibility, which I think people underestimate at times because it looks fine and it looks as if it is an easy job but for me I kind of knew what was involved in it, I had seen other captains, some I respected, some that hadn't been so successful, some that were very successful, and I think I had taken a bit of each of their personalities but still trying to be myself at

the same time. Also trying to focus on your own performance, because I think at times it can distract you if you allow it, you become more responsible for other people, so it is getting that balance. So the World Championships in New Zealand was certainly the pinnacle.

OG: Is there anything else that stands out, anything else that you look back on with pride?

L: I suppose just the different events that you get to attend. For example as captain you would get to go along to for example schools and present with other sort of famous athletes, I remember once turning up with some of the guys from the Scottish rugby team when I went to a school in Edinburgh and they were also presenting at the school. I suppose it was more all around exposure that you got, you know meeting the Lord Provost and various other people, like Commonwealth Games qualifiers and things. The main playing pinnacle was the World Championship and being captain but I think getting to meet other people, getting to go to different countries, each of those in themselves was an achievement I suppose.

OG: Were there any low points that you can recall as you look back?

L: Yes, well there were obviously the times, the disappointments when you are working hard and you are not selected. I was quite fortunate in that the first World Championship I went for I wasn't selected but at that time I was actually working away as part of my college course so it probably didn't impact me as much. So the other World Championships that I did put myself forward for I was selected. The biggest disappointment for me, or low point, was that I ruptured my cruciate ligament in my knee, between my second and third World Championships, and I think the low point there was that you had been at the top of your physical fitness and then you had this big challenge to get back to a decent level of fitness after the operation, and then could you ever achieve what you had done before? To be honest I think I did, but I think that was the turning point as well, the effort of having to get yourself back up to that sort of fitness. I mean I did get to the World Championships after having ruptured my cruciate but after that Championship that was when I decided I would give up, because I just felt that the amount of effort that it took to get there, physically in my body, and still now you have aches and pains from your surgeries.

OG: In terms of your knee operation, did you get any medical or financial support, due to the fact that you were a national netball player?

L: I would say I got help indirectly. I was in the NHS, but the physio that was volunteering to help the squad at the time actually worked at the Southern General Hospital so she spoke to one of the consultants who knew I played for Scotland. Although I still had to wait I think it was 8 months before I actually got the operation, but I think from that respect I have spoken to people who I was in rehab with who had just not been given the operation at all because they weren't at international level. SO having initially thought I was doing the same and waiting in the same queue as everyone else, but then speaking to someone else and realising that they had been refused the operation because it didn't affect them enough. So in that respect you obviously did feel that you had gone some sort of prioritisation when it actually came to getting the operation. But in terms of funding and stuff there was no funding for that and I wasn't insured, I didn't have health insurance, so basically I was waiting for the NHS, but I probably did get a slightly small benefit from being a netballer.

OG: Is there anything you look back on and miss about playing international netball?

L: Probably the excitement and the competition. Just now the squad are preparing to go to New Zealand it is again actually for the World Championships and quite often they will ask ex-players back to play against them and you know that you can still see the game and read the game, but it actually having that physical fitness and being at the top of your sport. Whereas these girls are at the top of their game. So it is that kind of thing, physically feeling that you were still able to be at that level, but also the competition, I think being part of something where you have to work as a team but you are also actually competing against each other, it is quite different from an individual sport where you are only competing against yourself and whoever you are playing next. We are actually trying to bond as a team but compete at the same time, so I sort of miss that, trying to build that team spirit but at the same time trying to fight for your own position. And again that is about camaraderie, the friends that you have had over the last 10 or 15 years with other players, so it is sort of meeting new people and developing new friendships as well.

OG: And is there anything you don't miss, anything you look back and think I am glad I don't have to do that anymore?

L: I would say the commitment, you know, I think now that you have moved on in life you do other things and you have got other interests, so the thought of going maybe 4 days a week to train plus you have got your training night plus weekend sessions with the national squad, and it does impact your life, to the extent now that you know I have put myself forward to coach the adult development squad and I had to consider whether I wanted to give up my weekends in order to do that. So you have gone from almost giving up your whole life to thinking now do I want to give up the odd weekend.

OG: How supportive were your parents and your family of your netball career?

L: Extremely, extremely supportive. I mean because obviously as a sport that is not got a great amount of funding it was always based around fundraising, getting your own money, contributions from family, especially at a younger age when most of my friends were out getting jobs and things so they could fund the activities they were doing or whatever it was, my family were quite happy that I didn't because I was using that time to play netball. It was always that if that was what I was wanting to do then they were willing to support me financially. It is a lot of money and sometimes it is a lot of pressure because you need to have the right uniform, and need to be able to pay for it, you needed to show you could pay before you were even considered at times, and at times that could be hard.

OG: Can you talk me through your retirement – the period leading up to the decision to finish, and then what happened when you retired.

L: Well obviously the injury played a big factor, in terms of the effort I had to put in to get back to the fitness, and even although I did feel that I got back to that sort of level, every now and again I would have to go to the physio because I was getting some sort of pain in my knee and stuff. Just even basic things like kneeling down became difficult and is still difficult you know, and you start to think what sort of pressure you are putting on the rest of your body, you know you can see the signs on one knee but what is happening with the rest. I suppose to a certain extent it was around the physical aspects of continuing to play at that level, but also realising that you do have relationships, you do want to spend time with family and friends and things like that as well, so that was the main factors, the physical aspect of having to train and what it was doing to my body and also the feelings of now I want to have a bit of a life where I can try other things and do different things, so that was really the decision I took before we went to New Zealand for the World Championships. I had definitely decided beforehand. And then after that, it actually wasn't a good time, it was probably one of the worst times when you went back again for the start of the new season, when people were going up for trials and things, you weren't going up and you were starting to think, have I gone too early, and it was actually quite a difficult time. Even to the extent that you don't feel part of things anymore, there is a wee bit of that, you know, that you were part of that group and now things are going on and you maybe see that group there and you feel like you are an outsider, you know. It is a kind of loss, it is like there is a gap that needs to be filled, so that was for the first 6 months to a year, and I suppose it really took until after I had seen one or two of the internationals after I had left to kind of get used to the feelings of well I am not part of that anymore, lets just focus on what they're doing and you know encourage them, and do what you can, obviously we try and support the current squad in whatever way we can, whether that be fundraising or playing against them or whatever to get some competition. So I had definitely made my mind up but there was a difficult period after that.

OG: Was there any point at which you thought about making a comeback, of changing your decision?

L: I think probably in my head I did but I didn't ever speak to anyone else about that. I think because there were quite a few of us that said that is it, our last World Championships, and they were younger than I was so I was thinking why am I considering going back, but I didn't actually have that conversation with them so maybe they were also thinking the same thing. But it certainly wasn't something that I voiced, it was something that I thought about a couple of times. I think one of the things was because the World Championships are a four year cycle so that is a long period of time, a bit like the Olympics and stuff.

OG: When you first stopped, did you stop playing completely? I know you say that you now play for your club, so did that just continue on?

L: That club play continued on, and to be honest at the time I thought it was probably the wrong time – we lost our coach, she decided to leave our club, so I was kind of thrown in to the coaching side. I had always said, once I stopped playing, that I would start coaching. But it almost came too soon, and I was a wee bit

resentful I suppose, because I think halfway through that season I thought I've gone from being an international player and now I'm a coach, I didn't have a lot of time to transition, so there was a bit of resentment there I think. But in the end it was something that I wanted to do and looking back I had to start somewhere so I suppose starting with your own club is as good as anywhere. But I felt that it was forced on me a wee bit. But I think in a way that helped because it sort of filled maybe the void that was there, so instead of going along thinking that I am preparing for my next practice, I was thinking I am preparing for this coaching session.

OG: Was there any kind of physical adjustment for you, going from training into retirement?

L: It was difficult because I think in the group of friends that I had that were part of the squad, I was probably the least enthusiastic when it came to sorting training sessions, they basically would arrange it and I would go along. So when everybody went off and did their own thing it was up to me then to try and sort out my training which was a real struggle I have to say. And I think that became a problem as well because initially it was okay, you could maybe get away with it for 6 months without feeling the impact of not doing that amount of training, but then after that you did and the frustration then was in your performance, you know, not getting to the ball first, not jumping higher than the player beside you. So I found that quite difficult, the whole physical side of things was probably the biggest shock for me, because before you could eat healthily and you could eat lots as long as you were training, and then suddenly that training stops and your body changes, quite quickly actually. So that was quite hard to deal with as well.

OG: Did your life change much when you stopped netball?

L: It was definitely different, because you had time available, and I think to a certain extent people had stopped asking me along to things because they knew that you would say no so you would be saying to people don't ask me on a Monday, Wednesday, Thursday, Tuesday, because I am training. So you then went through a sort of period of having all this time on your hands until people realised that, oh right Linda can come to this, we can arrange this on a Tuesday, so there was a bit of that as well. There was a lot of time on your hands and you were thinking what am I going to do with all this time, and then maybe feeling guilty that you weren't doing your training and you should be to keep yourself physically fit. So I think initially that was quite hard, but you soon fill that time.

OG: Did you find you picked up any other activities, or other interests?

L: I would say probably work, because before that I always made sure, because I was meeting other people, that I left at a certain time to get there, and over the years I have progressed to the sort of management position, so whether I could have done that I am not sure because there is an expectation obviously that you stay on if there is a problem, whereas before you had made that commitment and you were at the Kelvin Hall for half past 5 no matter what because you just left, you downed tools and you left. So I think work probably came in and it has sort of taken over some of those hours after work certainly. Also the coaching thing has, and over the last few years I have been coaching my own club and also I have coached at under 17 Scotland level, which again is a bit more commitment, and I coach at Glasgow district as well, so I have sort of grown that side of things as well.

OG: And in terms of socially, did you find you picked up more friendships with people outside of netball, maybe ones which had dropped off previously, or were you still mainly seeing netball people?

L: No, I was still seeing netball people but I think again things that previously you wouldn't have gone to you went then because you didn't have a session the next day or whatever, so probably people at work you became a lot more sociable with, because they kind of saw you as someone who played netball and didn't go to social things. But I would say that my netball friends are still my closest friends, this year was my 40th birthday and we went to Barcelona, and I would say 6 of the girls there were my netball friends, so that has still continued, you know we have a good social life and we meet up regularly.

OG: When you were making the decision to retire, did you speak to anybody about your decision, what you were thinking?

L: No-one really within netball I would say. I did speak to my partner at the time, because obviously he was very supportive of the whole New Zealand thing, it was quite a new relationship and I think he was quite relieved when he heard, he was saying make sure it is the right thing but obviously the fact that you are out 5

nights a week and can't go drinking every time someone asks you, I think that was there, so he was supportive of it, as long as it was the right decision for me. But I didn't speak to any other players. The players that played before me, they played till, well some of them were in their early 40s, late 30s, and I was 32 when I decided to retire, so I kind of thought I was young, but the players that were retiring with me were even younger, so I suppose there was this kind of thing going on as well, but I think the physical side of things... no I didn't actually speak to anyone, I think I told them, but I didn't actually speak to them.

OG: Did Netball Scotland give you any support in any way? Did they contact you when you made your decision to retire?

L: No, for them it was more about who is in the next squad really, lets prepare for next year. And to a certain extent you can see that for an organisation of their size that they struggle at times to support the team that are there, with regards to funding and you know, facilities and getting the right people on board, sport scientists, physios, that type of thing. But it was very much like that is you finished, you know, who is next in line. I don't actually think, well maybe in passing one of the older coaches has maybe said, you've retired, how do you feel about that, but there was nothing formal at all.

OG: I know you have continued in a coaching role and that was through your club, but do Netball Scotland make a habit of encouraging people to come back into the sport?

L: Yes, I mean they do do that and to be honest they are very encouraging to the point that you feel that you really should be doing something. Again they do rely on the people who are experienced to sort of give something back to the sport. I think it is difficult for the whole of Netball Scotland because of the financial aspects because they do encourage coaching but they is no real structure at the moment to developing coaches. We had some opportunities to meet Lynne Gunnison who was one of the top coaches who is being paid by England, because they've got lots more funding, she works at the Bath Institute.

END

REBECCA (Hockey)

23rd November 2007

OG: Can you start us off by telling me the story of your hockey career?

R: Well, I started at school when I was 12 years old, I'll skip a big chunk, to then I played for under 16 Scottish, under 18 Scotland, under 21 Scotland, and then got my first cap in 1988 when I was 18. Rattling on through, I played for Scotland 123 times I think it was, got my first British cap in 1991, missed out on the Barcelona Olympics, unfortunately I was the reserve for Barcelona Olympics. I was selected for the Atlanta Olympics as vice-captain, continued on, had a baby, had Katie, and then decided to go back to the Olympic set-up for Sydney and played in the Sydney Olympics and I was lucky enough to be captain. I retired after that completely from international, both British and Scottish, so in the year 2000. Didn't play too much hockey after that for a while, but I've played some club stuff, more this season than ever really, and so I really only play in the odd game now.

OG: Taking you back firstly to those early stages, what were the main influences that got you into hockey?

R: I pretty much had a choice between athletics, swimming and hockey at school, and I felt that the other two were, obviously, individual sports and I wasn't very keen on that, I liked the team element. So my athletic ability allowed me to play in the teams, and then I started to get international trips and it just went on from there. I had a really good international trip the first trip I was ever on, I loved it, got on really well, really enjoyed the whole set up of the team sport. So that was what got me started. Big influences were a male PE teacher, family, mum and dad were very supportive, and really just taking it from there, Before I knew it I was in a Great Britain shirt and I was lucky to stay injury free and I was really enjoying it, I had support from family as I said earlier. I think the Seoul Olympics was probably the first visual, when the British men won the gold medal and we had a party on their behalf when I was really quite young and I thought I want to do that, I really would like to do that. So that was probably the first visual thing, and then I had a lot of people that I aspired to in Edinburgh, so I moved from, I didn't actually move house but I played instead of for Dundee I played at a National League team in Edinburgh, travelling down there 3 times a week.

OG: That seemed to be quite common in hockey, people migrating towards the big teams in Edinburgh and Glasgow.

R: Yeah, certainly at that time, there are better teams further north now, Dundee is currently the top team in Scotland now, so things have changed now. We are still up against Glasgow but Edinburgh are now not as strong. But at the time it was pretty much put to you that you had to play for a top team to be seen and to be selected. But I also trained with men in Dundee, so I had a home here in Dundee, so I training with the men physically and with a ball, and then I trained with the ladies, and then I started to train before I trained in order to be tired before I trained, so it was just really doing that extra bit, training with the men probably was a big help.

OG: What else was going on in your life alongside hockey through your career?

R: Working full time. I used to work for Swinton Insurance, so I worked full time. So I would get up in the morning, my daily routine Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday; Friday was off so I lived for my Friday. I would be up at the back of 5, do a training session, a stick and ball session at lunchtime, and then a session at night through in Edinburgh, so it was 3 times a day, big commitment.

OG: And were you ever full time at any point? Did you go full time in the lead up to the Olympics?

R: Yes, to both Olympics. The first time I got, well both times I actually got 6 months off. The first time I got paid, the second time I didn't get paid, so that made a huge difference, paid or unpaid, but that is a different line probably. So yes, 6 months full time and that was tremendous. A lot of the time with both trips, we were working Monday to Friday down south with the whole British squad and then you come up for the weekend, or you were abroad with training camps, two or three weeks at a time. There was a month before each Olympics that we were in camp before the Olympics started.

OG: And were you working for the same employer with the 6 months paid and then 6 months unpaid off?

R: Yes.

OG: And what was their reason for not paying you the second time around?

R: The second time round was a strange one, personnel was slightly different, my boss was slightly different and he didn't push for me to get paid particularly, but they felt that they had already done that, although they did allow somebody to go and watch the Olympics with leave paid which I thought was a bit ironic. I didn't push it, I was just pleased that I had got the time off, and career security in terms of something to come back to. But also I had used all of my holidays up, because I had had maternity leave, and I think that had probably had a bearing on it as well because I was just back from baby and then I was asking for more time off, so that was possibly an influence as well. At the time I had support and the lottery funding had started at that point so they were able to pay my bills. I didn't have anything spare but it was a choice thing, you give that up.

OG: So how important would you say that hockey was to you through the period when you were playing internationally?

R: Hugely important. It was my whole life, basically, it was just a lifestyle. I mean obviously you have got partners and things to think about, you know Davy was around and things, but he was very supportive. It was basically that you got up in the morning and thought what am I going to train for, in order to play better at the weekend or to get selected. Running up the hill I was very much thinking who am I going to get into the team as opposed to, so there was a name that I wanted to aim for a position, so you train harder to try and get that position, or to maintain that position, as opposed to just scraping into the team, so there was always motivation.

OG: What effects, if any, did having that hockey career have on things like your social life, personal life, family life?

R: Em, I'm divorced, and I think that was a big, big part. I wasn't around at all and my husband decided that he was going to do other things and that was fine and we just drifted apart, I just wasn't there. Social wise, I tended to be a social animal before I turned 18 and then after that I thought I am going to be serious about my hockey so I was teetotal, I didn't drink, I was very strict with myself, I was probably quite boring when you actually think about it, focused, but boring to some. So yes, it had a big impact. I think

special friends stay with you, but I wasn't one to go and have teas and coffees and drinks every Saturday night, it just didn't happen, so it had a huge impact, yeah.

OG: Did you have a big social network within hockey?

R: Huge, and still do, I've got loads of friends that I maybe don't speak to for months at a time but I know they're there. When I see them it's great. Not so much abroad, a lot of people have kept up with foreign players, but I wasn't big on that, but certainly within Scotland very much so, a lot of good friends.

OG: What were your most significant achievements in your career? What were the things you are most proud of?

R: I think from a Scottish perspective, captaining them was just amazing, that was 7 years I was captain for Scotland and I loved it, I absolutely loved it. I loved the idea of just leading the girls, that was just great. Qualifying for the World Cup for Scotland was actually a key one because it doesn't happen very often as you know, so that was a biggie, that was in Zimbabwe and that was very emotional. I suppose the key things are not always very nice, losing the bronze medal in Atlanta was not a nice experience, but you have to be big and strong and get out there. Missing out on Barcelona selection was a key turning point in my life, because it made me much stronger and work harder. But certainly leading out the British team the first game of the Sydney Olympics against the host nation Australia was definitely, but actually it is a bit of a blur, it was like did that just happen, was that me. That was one of the best bits.

OG: What about on the flip side of the coin – the down bits, the lowest points for you?

R: I certainly think non-selection for Barcelona. We actually went to Barcelona, as a holiday with my family, and watched the games. We had a part holiday, we went further north of Barcelona so we actually had a holiday but we were coming in to see the hockey and the athletics. That was some great things, that was when Linford Christie won the gold and Sally Gunnell won gold.

OG: Was it quite hard to watch the hockey, knowing that you had had a chance to be there?

R: It was a bit surreal, because I was almost looking in like I hadn't been part of it and we were actually at the airport when they won the bronze medal and I was so happy for them, but I was so disappointed that I wasn't part of it. So that was a real inspiration though to pick myself up, to make sure I would be there next time, so that was a very hard bit. We weren't successful in Sydney, but I wouldn't say, I would say that was a difficult part of time, but I wasn't particularly down at that particular time. Other than that I have been lucky with selection, I have been part of virtually every tournament selected for, I have enjoyed it and been very lucky.

OG: Talk to me a bit about training full-time for those periods leading up to the Olympics and what they were like compared to training alongside working full time?

R: Not having to get up quite so early, I was still doing my early stint but not quite so early. The fact that you can actually have a rest in the afternoon, I used to go back to bed in the afternoon, just for two hours, just relaxation, but usually slept, and then got up and would think that it was morning again, here I go again. Just having the recovery time was key, I didn't do anymore socialising, just purely to recover, and then you were able to talk to nutritionists and psychologists. All the extra time you could take and then off load some of the concerns. That was an excellent time, loved it, really, really loved it.

OG: Is that something that you would have liked if it had been a possibility, to be a full time hockey player?

R: Yes, depending on financial restrictions obviously, but yes, very much so. I think as a nation we would be, people have different opinions, but I felt that we were much, much stronger and fitter and faster and better as a result of having that time. So I think it would have made a huge difference. And you also get time to get to know individuals, you are not just jumping on a plane to go back up the road again, that made a big difference, just having the quality time.

OG: Did spending time down south training in that time have an impact on family life?

R: It was quite hard, I very much when I was down there thought I can't miss people, I just have to forget, not forget about them because you wouldn't do that, but I never got upset about leaving. The time that I did get upset was when I thought I wasn't going to go for the Sydney Olympics, I actually said to the coach

I'm not doing it. I didn't get selected for the Olympic qualifier because Katie was only 4 months at that time and I was just back, and he said you are not selected for the qualifiers, so I thought well if I am not good enough for the qualifier then I will not be good enough for the Olympics so that's my thing over, and I was quite upset about that situation because I thought that is not me deciding that my time is up. And then they came back and said no, we want you to be part of it, but now is too soon to come back into it. So yes, it was quite difficult to train down south but Davy was here, my mum and dad were here and they were very supportive, they said the fact that I was upset meant it was obviously the wrong decision so go for it, and if you are not selected then so be it, at least you know you have tried your best. So yes, it did have a big impact on it, but the communication is fine now, you can email, you can phone, you know you are not completely isolated. It is probably harder for people here, because I was so busy and there is never a dull moment, whereas if you are here I find on the flip side now Davy is away a lot with international coaching and I'm here, and I'm absolutely fine because I've got the children to keep me busy, but if I was on my own I would be thinking corr, what an existence I have, would be getting that left behind feeling. I would probably go on a lot more of his trips with him. I think it has to come from the support, I mean if you don't have that I think it would be very, very difficult. They are the unsung heroes aren't they, you get the recognition and the credit if you like, but I am never shy of saying to these people that they were my influence.

OG: When you fell pregnant with Katie, did you know you were going to continue with hockey afterwards?

R: Not to the level, but definitely getting myself fit again, yes. I had spoken to one of the other girls who had a kid before me and she had been told, although she didn't follow it through, that the first 12 weeks after the baby was born, if you are not at a fitness level at that point then you will take a long, long time to get back. So whenever I got the tick 6 weeks after baby I was on the treadmill and Katie was at the side on her rocker, sound asleep. I started off very light, I could barely walk properly never mind jog, and then it just got better, and then my turnaround was massively quick. I was swimming right up to the last week basically before I had her, so I was doing a lot in pregnancy terms compared to most others, but I think most ladies who are athletic, Liz McColgan was exactly the same, running right up to the end, you see it a lot. And because of that you are still very strong, maybe even stronger because you are working harder because you have got baby. So the initial bit was quite painful but after a couple of weeks I was back on track and the wee one was quite happy, she was sitting there quite content, so I just kept on going, you just work round her. I did give up some things, wasn't getting up very early in the morning and things. I never really set out to go to the Olympics again and I really didn't have a thought, I had done it, I was not really that concerned about it. But I tell you a funny story – I was sitting at home and the postie came and there was an envelope with nothing else on it other than a sheet of names, typed, no letter head or nothing, just a sheet of names and it had on the top Sydney Olympic pool. I have no idea to this day who sent me it, but when I looked at it I thought, I can get in that team, and that was a turning point. I don't know who it was that sent me it, I have no idea, which is very strange. It kind of gives me goose bumps to think that at that point somebody obviously knew that I was thinking about not going for it, so somebody reasonably close to me, and gave me the trigger to think, I can do this, and that was it, I started training really hard realising I had a chance of going to this tournament.

OG: Looking back, is there anything you miss about being an international hockey player?

R: Definitely the banter, because we got on, I mean there was people that you would not want to be best friends with, I mean I got on with everybody but... probably meeting all the people I did; I really enjoyed going away and seeing other cultures, for all that you did see of it, but it was just being part of that. Being fit as a flea, I quite liked that side of it. I liked the fact that you could eat as much as you liked basically, because you were training so hard. But the people bit is probably, when I go back and see them I think, oh I really miss it, and then I come back and family life takes over again, back into the swing of it again. So I would say the people, but also the travelling, I loved the travelling, I loved the whole aspect of it, and also the buzz that you get from a competition.

OG: And is there anything that you don't miss?

R: Fitness testing is a definite, because I knew that I was reasonably fit but I just hated the thought that I might not show that I was as fit as I was. That's really silly, but certainly that pain. Probably airport delays and things, they used to really annoy me, you can't go anywhere without that extra hour, it didn't really bother me but looking back, you know, I don't miss the actual travelling, the getting from a to b, I don't miss the travelling through to Edinburgh for 2 hours in the car. It was a big commitment but you did it because you just had to do it, that was part of what you did. Some personalities, I wouldn't have any problem with never seeing them ever again, not players I hasten to add, but some of the coaching staff and support people.

But I suppose on the whole it was not really the hockey side of it, it was more the getting from a to b and then the fitness testing.

OG: Moving on then to talk about your retirement. You told me that you retired after the Sydney Games. Did you know before those Games that you were going to finish after that?

R: Not really, no. No I didn't look at it that way. I thought maybe that people would start to say, look you are getting on a bit, you know, I was 31 at that time, 32 coming up, so, well I didn't really think about it, I didn't go to Sydney thinking that I am going to retire after this. Although when I was there, because I didn't really enjoy the hockey experience, I knew my last game was going to be my last game and I actually said that to the girls at the time.

OG: So the decision was almost made during the event?

R: Yes, during the actual event, very much so. If the experience had been better, both on and off the pitch, from a hockey perspective I hasten to add, the actual Sydney set-up and the place and after we finished the tournament that was all wonderful. It was to do with quality of play, and the coaching – the head coach was not a pleasant person at all so that kind of spoilt it big time. And I think the whole pressure of the situation was not coped well with, with the management again, and some more than others but one in particular gave us a lot of problems. And I think with that it was, I'm not putting up with this, I am not doing this anymore, I'm too long in the tooth for nonsense like that now. We have never had a set up like it before in Scottish, we were all very together on things, athletes would decide together but we would all make sure that we were doing what we needed to do, whereas things were creeping in where people were not going to rest and relax when they should have done, they were going down to the bar, or to have a coffee, or to meet up with their mates, and I think indiscipline is creeping in and I can't handle that, we have to do everything we can, and everyone needs to do that. That began to creep in, within Scottish a bit more than, British was certainly very, very focused but the odd one or two were coming in, so as I said it was very much during the tournament that I started to think. And then the last game, I remember actually saying out loud, at half time – we were one-nil down – this is my last 35 minutes of international hockey girls, as it is for some others, let's get it right. So at that point I definitely knew.

OG: What were the emotions then when you knew that this was going to be it for you?

R: When the whistle went, initially it was disappointment because of the play, but the next wave was very much relief, thank goodness, thank goodness. But I don't know if that was because, it wasn't so much to do with the hockey it was probably because of the situation again. And then when I came back it was very much thank goodness, I'm happy, I've done what I set out to do, I'm content, and that was it.

OG: It was interesting that you stopped Scottish play at that time as well?

R: I think because I was out of the Scottish, a new captain had come in, I'd been off having baby and captain had come in, and I felt, it is not something I really thought about, I just knew that it was the end for both. I didn't actually physically wave a flag to Scottish and say that was me, I just said I was retiring from international hockey. I just felt if I go back to it, it's very unsettling for the person that's now got their own way, she was very close to me as well and I thought, it's not right for me to do that. And it could have been very detrimental ultimately, and I had had my fair turn, so I thought that it was important that someone else gets an opportunity, and I still feel very strongly about that.

OG: And then you say you were not really involved in hockey for a while, so you stopped club play at that time as well?

R: Yeah, I had a wee break. I was pretty much stunned by the whole thing to be honest with you, I just thought this person is going out to destroy people's attitudes and basically people's concepts, so I had a little bit of a break, I still kept up doing little bits and bobs, I put a lot of time into my junior development stuff, but probably about 4 months later I thought maybe I could pick up a stick. At the time I thought I don't think I'll bother anymore, and then I picked up the stick mucking around one day and thought, you know, I quite like this, and I was still, you know you think I can't do this anymore, but actually you can, and you think there are people that are now so much better than you when in actual fact they are still not, you have still got that really grounded basis drilled into you if you like. So I think it was a bit of that and then I thought, I'll play a little bit of club stuff, just keep ticking along really. And David again is quite like, he had to stop because he was injured, and he was like you're not injured, so play as long as you can, you are a long time injured, you are a long time old.

OG: Did hockey take on a different meaning for you then?

R: Yes, and it was very much on my terms as well. I wouldn't say I was particularly selfish but at that particular time I started to think, well I'm not travelling around to play games, and then I moved my job not long after I came back, I went to work in the PE department in the local school, so all of a sudden I thought I'm driving around on a Saturday morning with school hockey games, so to go away in the morning, come back, and then go away again in the afternoon just wasn't an option. So hockey in my life is very much, when David's here, when the children are with me I don't want them to be hockey orphans at the side, so if David's home, we're at home, and I'm available, if those things tie in then I'll play, and I don't care who I play for. At the time I kind of thought I will still play for the first team, but now as I have got older I will play for anybody who wants me to play for them. So for enjoyment, and also trying to feed back a bit more, keeps me fit too, it is a tick in the box for a session for the week, and hopefully teach others some concepts both on and off the pitch.

OG: And do people still look at you are say, oh that's Rebecca, she captained GB?

R: Yes, and it is really quite spooky, because you kind of go, what, me? You can never see yourself like that, like they do, it's kind of weird. And I keep saying that I was just lucky, you know, I could have injured my knee and never ever done any of this. It is a big responsibility sometimes as well, I feel sometimes you know when you are playing I am very conscious not to chat back to the umpires, trying to be very positive and stuff, being a role model to younger players. I'm not used, for want of a better word, I am not asked to do an awful lot, if there is an opening of a pitch or something like that then people will still call me. There will come a stage when I will be old news, and people will say, who? And that's fine, it's not far away probably.

OG: Did you ever think that you had made the wrong decision in retiring?

R: No, no definitely not. Although I was kidding on the national coach the other day because I was playing for the first team, and it was a top of the league clash and we beat the other team, and people kept coming up at the end and saying, oh you played so well, and talking about a Scotland call up. But you know I thought you know what, no danger, and I actually laughed about it because I thought it was ridiculous, I'm 38 years old and if I am being able to get an international call up then what does that say about what is happening. But no, no regrets whatsoever.

OG: It sounds like your retirement was a good time for you, in terms of coming at the right time in your life.

R: And baby 2 came along 2 years after that so I have got two girls now and a great family life.

OG: In terms of adjusting to retirement, how did your life change socially, and in terms of your family life?

R: In a way disappointingly not that much, because all of a sudden baby took over, children took over. I saw a little bit more of family, I was able to do a couple of weekends away with family that we wouldn't normally have, so that definitely impacted, but the actual getting together with loads of friends and social, it improved slightly but not vastly, I didn't go off the wagon or anything. I think I had done that before, I did that before I was 18, I was very much a party girl at 16, 17, 18, because of the crowd I was in, so I haven't missed that, I don't feel I've missed anything at all, and then I have had David there and I really just wanted to be around the family. Even now we are so busy, even with retirement, we are a hockey house, you know, and just constantly on the go.

OG: Do you ever look back and think, how did I do it, how did I fit it all in?

R: Yes, sometimes when I actually say what I did in a week I go, oh god, considering that I worked in quite a high job as well, I had quite a lot of commitment there as well. I think other people probably say that more to me than I actually think myself. I did it because it was just what I did. I sometimes think where did I get the energy from, because now I still run in the mornings, not every morning, some mornings I think, I just can't get up, but I never ever had that thought in my mind when I was that age.

OG: Do you think that is also a reflection of the fact that you don't have to do it now?

R: That is the hardest bit for me now, definitely, I don't have any objectives, I don't have any goals. I was always a goal setter, we didn't really talk about goal setting back when I first started but I definitely had

very clear, goals: play for Scotland, captain Scotland, play for Britain, Olympics, I always had that in my mind, captain in the Olympics was just ridiculous, far beyond my expectations. I don't know who ever told me to do that, I just kind of did it. So now I think, where did I get the energy from, but at the time I didn't have to think twice, I just thought about that next tournament, or selection, or someone new was coming into the squad so I have to be better than them, have to keep ahead. So now I think about really silly things like getting into my jeans, and maintaining my size, they have become my objectives. I also think pitching up o do a hockey session, if I was 16 stone then it wouldn't be a particularly good advert.

OG: When you go out and play club hockey now, do you still feel as though you have to be able to keep up a certain level?

R: Yes, absolutely, and I think the dread is when you overhear somebody – I have actually had dreams about this, you are on the pitch and you hear somebody saying, she used to be really good too. So I think that is very much out there, definitely, no question about that. On Saturday one of the teachers asked me to speak to one of the girls, she was quite chatty, gobby for want of a better word, to me as an umpire, and the teacher said, she doesn't actually know who you are. And I said well she shouldn't need to know who I am, she shouldn't be gobby to the umpire, and she asked if I would go and speak to her. And the teacher said the kid just about died when she knew who I was and I did go and speak to her and I said, you know you are a terrific player, however I'm an umpire who's been a player and I know your frustrations, however you are not going to get on if you continue in this way. In that situation I thought there is 2 minutes of my time, and you can either accept it or not. I mean, maybe that's above my station slightly, and I thought well I want to say it because she could actually be a terrific player but she will annoy people if she is going to be like that. So you can use it to your advantage as well sometimes.

OG: Was there a physical adjustment side to retiring?

R: The whole body shape changed, I used to be muckle, I used to be really strong, it actually kind of changed between Atlanta and Sydney, I remember our Atlanta coach was very big on weights, it was about being strong, but then the detriment of that was that your speed dipped slightly, whereas the next time around for Sydney it was very much speed driven, not so many weights, I actually stopped the weights because I thought I was strong enough so that was fine. So body shape was key, that was a big shock, because I didn't think that body shape would change quite so much. And then all of a sudden you are having to think twice about having that extra biscuit or, I wasn't that big on biscuits, but you know having that extra portion, because the portions you had when you were training were massive. So yes, it is in the mind, but not taking over or anything, I was never in danger of going to the opposite extreme or either extreme really, I wasn't ever going to be really fat or skinny, I wasn't going to cut everything out, I couldn't do that to myself.

OG: When you made the decision to retire during the tournament, did you speak to anyone about what you were thinking?

R: No, it was all very internal. I maybe said to my room mate, Rhona, because I was very close to her. She was a real kind of support, because I was captain I was getting a lot of flak on behalf of the team, I think I probably mentioned it to her, but other than that only the generalised discussion that we had at half time that I remember very clearly. I certainly didn't say anything to family or anything, nobody came out with me that particular time, but when I came back I said at that point that that was the end of it. I think it had probably been reported by that time anyway. But that was the time that I kind of said it to everyone else.

OG: I know you said you changed career not long after coming back – was that something you were thinking about doing anyway?

R: No it was something that came later. I was still enjoying my work, but it was two year, it was when Ellie came along and my work was so massive, there was a lot of travelling and I just couldn't cope with it. They wouldn't accept that I wanted to step down and they didn't help me step down a couple of pegs, so I had to leave basically because I couldn't cope, and I was quite stressed at that time, I lost a lot of weight and I just had to move. But I left with no job and then I thought, oh my goodness, and then a job came up, and because of the background, because I am not a PE teacher, I'm a games coach, I could go into the private sector, so that job was put in the paper and I then applied for it and it has gone from there, this is 5 years down the line.

OG: In terms of maintaining involvement in hockey, you have obviously maintained some through your job and through your club. Have you ever been invited to be involved at national level, or giving back to the sport, talking to the players, anything like that?

R: Yes, well I was on the board of directors for 4 years, the idea behind that was that I would be the players representative, so players would come to me if they had any issues or concerns, if there were any player issues from Scottish Hockey I would go and speak to the players and then feedback. Personally, without going into too much detail, I didn't feel that I was utilised to that degree, there was very little talk of athletes when we got to meetings and because the people that were there were very business people and I was female I felt very much the wee lassie that was sitting in the corner that just happened to be there and I didn't enjoy that experience at all. Even now I have been asked to help with the u18s, not to actually run a session because I can't do that at the moment, I haven't got time, but to pop in and out of sessions, and to feedback, and to give motivational talks and things. I still do club juniors, so I run the juniors club, I'm obviously influencing the hockey there, and I go along to tournaments, I have never actually been asked to give any talks to national teams in tournaments, which is slightly disappointing because I think they could use that a lot more, not just me but other people of that set up, some people you would want to do that, some people maybe don't have the persona to do that, but the European Championships for u18s were in Edinburgh, I thought that was an opportunity, I am not going to force myself on somebody, but I was disappointed that I was there and nobody thought that might be a help. It was the first tournament for some of these girls, and I remember my first tournament and how I felt and so it could have helped, but then I am not going to force myself on them.

OG: I guess there are a few areas like that in which governing bodies can utilise former competitors?

R: Very much so. I also feel that a lot of coaches have never been at big tournaments, really although they think they know what it is like at a big tournament, they don't, it is not something to be taken lightly and it is not something that you can learn necessarily overnight, you have got to have a lot of discussion, there is a lot of psychology involved in it and the pressure pot and things, we need to use that a lot, lot more from former players. But the players have got to be wanting to do it, there is only, most of the people to be fair that are Olympians of the Scottish women, there are not many of us, but most of them, I would say half and half, are actually currently still putting back in. The people that frustrate me are the ones that have taken, taken, taken, stop, and never give back, and there are quite a number of them at Scottish level, club level and British level. I think it is all fine and well, you are on the golf course now, but what about the youngsters, you needed somebody to help you at that time, you could do so much more now.

OG: And do you think that the governing body could do more to try and get those people to come back in and give back?

R: I think they could ask, because they can only say no at the end of the day. If you don't ask you don't get and I think, you know, people's data is there, it is just a case of contacting them and just having a face-to-face, or looking at what they could do, even if it is just one every year, just come along and say something. The couple of people that I aspire to don't do anything with hockey now and I just think what a shame, because you really inspired me so why would you not inspire somebody now. But I think people have got to take time, and that is hard because people are so busy. What I tend to do is I tend to go and be a selector, I don't run the whole programme because obviously with David being away a lot, I've got the kids to consider and I'm full time virtually and David and I are got our own company as well doing hockey coaching outwith all that, although he doesn't do an awful lot with it, I do a lot more of it, so between all of that to then take on a further commitment, I can't do it, but I will do it as and when the kids come up, they are only 8 and 5, I am very determined that they are going to have a regular parent there, David is away a lot and he dots in and out, when I go away for a day I get severe headache, you know, where have you been and all that, from them, whereas he can go away for 3 weeks and it's not really a big fuss because they have got a constant there and that is really important.

OG: And do you think your girls will play hockey?

R: Katie likes it, the older one, Ellie does not like it whatsoever, if you ask her do you like hockey, it's nope, not at all. I think she links it to cold, to being outside in the cold, I don't think she particularly likes taking instructions, I don't think she is big on instructions particularly. She does like gymnastics, although they are even stricter with her. She is much more airy fairy, whereas Katie is very strong, built very much like me, and loves scoring goals, loves it, so it is like the play was terrible but I scored 2 goals mum. I am not really bothered, although I think it is a big of a shame because there will potentially be a lot of pressure on her to be good, which I don't really want. She kind of knows things now, it is quite funny, because I heard her saying not that long ago that she had told somebody in the school that I had gone to the Olympics, and I thought I have never heard you saying that before, so as she is getting older it is starting to register what that actually is, but I am still mum at the end of the day, that will never change, but she is enjoying her hockey. Ellie definitely not.

OG: And is it a lifestyle that you would encourage them into, if they showed interest?

R: Yes, very much so. I would love to have a situation where we play in the same team and I could maybe be the manager of a squad if she is in the Scotland team, I'd love that, I really would, that would be great, because we are quite close and I just think I could help her a lot. I don't know how easy it would be for her, maybe she wouldn't want me to do it, but I do look forward to the day when I can be in the same team as her, and I think that will be great.

OG: Did you talk to anyone about your decision to retire?

R: I got psychology support quite late in my career, so that was probably quite a big part we have probably not touched on so much, I got a lot of psychology help when I finished, because the chap was such a horrible person to me personally, I struggled with understanding why, and I suppose that's why, I suppose people want to know why did that happen to me, why did they take my freedom away or whatever, and that was what I struggled with when I came back, why was the guy like that with me, why did he seem to think it was my fault, kind of idea. I suppose that is what there is a severe lacking in for retirement is the psychology, and the preparation for coming back.

OG: And did you seek that help yourself or what that offered to you?

R: No, it wasn't offered at all, nothing was offered to us at all. You were completely, home and then boom, back to normal life, horrendous, and that was actually part of quite a lengthy document that I sent to British Hockey. We had a de-brief, which wasn't a pleasant experience, everyone round the table, chatting it through, lots of investigations about why we didn't do this, why we didn't do that, the head coach resigned, before he was pushed who knows, and at that point I said that it is terrible that you just expect people to go back from this experience, or any experience of international, and just go back to life as if nothing is different. And it was quite, I remember driving home from the Sydney Olympics, and I was driving from Edinburgh airport home, thinking, I am so different, and the trees are the same, and Stirling is the same, and the car is the same, and I am so different. And I just thought, my life will never be the same again because of the experience, not necessarily there, but just India was a big influence, cultural things were a big influence. You know, I will never say I'm poor again, I'll never say I'm hungry again, I never say I'm starving anymore, you know, and that is 18 years down the line, I still don't say I'm starving and I still don't say I'm skint, because I think, you don't know what poor is until you have seen. And I want to take my kids back to that in order to let them see, not now, but when they are older. But I would, if anything comes from this chat, I would really encourage the girls, tell them they have to put something in place, and that's happening right now, there is a couple of girls that have retired recently from Scottish, and there is not even so much as a phone call from the governing body, how are you, why have you done that, why have you retired, you are at the peak of your career so what is making you retire, why are you doing that, and they would get some pretty uncomfortable answers sometimes, but I think that is needed. And I think it is important for the athlete to know they are being listened to, we went through all that process for it to be filed in a cabinet, for the same mistakes to be made the next time, you know, you think well why did I go through all that, it is just insulting, so that would be key. The psychologist guy that I spoke to, I got David to give me his number and I phoned and he came for a couple of sessions, and I went through every emotion from crying to laughing to you know anger and everything, and it was a really positive healing process. And I think that if I hadn't done that then I would still be very, very angry and have all these emotions. I wrote a lot down, I dumped my brain a lot on paper, and I encourage people to do that now, I have spoken to quite a few athletes and if things are bothering them, then write it down, if nothing else for future reference, you can refer back to it, you can look at it and understand what happened. But that is me saying that, I shouldn't be saying that, they should have that in place. When you are an athlete you get your psychologist and your nutritionist and that all came in and there were all these people, life planners as well, I didn't really take them up that much, I took up the nutritionist and psychologist very much so when I was away, but when you come back you go from having all these people around you to having nothing. I think the psychologists have got to appreciate how people will feel when they come back, the down they experience, what I felt when I was driving home, they have got to appreciate what you are going through. But then can they, if they have never been there, I think it is quite a difficult one. I think people's attitudes about psychology is a very old fashioned, lie on the black couch and almost hypnotising you, whereas we were sitting just like this and just chatting. Some people didn't buy into it at all, I did, the guy that was there, the first time with Scottish, you either loved him or didn't, and I got it, it made a lot of sense to me, and he was one of the people that listened to what I was trying to say to him and tried to help and he really did help, and I think that gave me great encouragement to go to the next one and he was a lovely guy, very, I felt very confident that what I said to him was confidential which was important, and I was very appreciative of what he did. He did it off his own back, we didn't have to pay for it or anything, he just wanted to help. A lot of it is about confidence in a person, you have got to have that for it to work. But I would, there are lots of things, British never did anything either, the only thing they did was sent

through an Olympian magazine every 6 months or so, and I thought well, that's lovely, congratulations you are in the Olympian club, but there is more. When you are continuing on it didn't bother me so much, but when I was finished I really... and even now, one of the girls who is finishing, retired a couple of weeks ago, and you know all of a sudden there is nothing, nobody's bothered, there has not even been an announcement in the paper or a fuss made the fact that she has got 100 caps, it's ridiculous. How ridiculous is it that they can't put pen to paper and it only takes two minutes, I just find it appalling, when you think how many hours you put into the sport, we do and have had letters through from our governing body though, you know, congratulations on this, well done getting to this, well done on your efforts, so the current chairperson has probably got more of a personality like that, but the next person might not find that important. But I think even the phone call to say why are you retiring, for me that might have been a very lengthy phone call, but it would make me think that they actually care therefore I might put it back in, not now necessarily but in a couple of years time. And also making sure that the decision is right for them. The girl that has recently retired, I have actually spoken to her for about an hour about her retirement, I took her out to lunch and we actually had a chat, I didn't do it deliberately, she is a very close friend and plays in the same team, but just to let her know that I have been there and, you know, not to be afraid of it. I just feel that is it a bit like it was my responsibility to open up during that de-brief, that there is no danger that, well there is a couple of young girls who are going for the Beijing Olympics and you think well do I want them to be treated the way I was treated and the answer is absolutely no, so I cannot sit still and be quiet, and I can't say it during competition, I had a serious issue, it was like I could be taken to court here if people don't start backing me up on what was being said, but I think that was certainly on the forefront of my mind. If I thought that some of my players, some of the people round about me, or one of my daughters, was being treated like this I would never forgive myself, and that was really a key bit you know. Maybe I sound as though I am like shoulders about 50 foot wide but it is part and parcel I think of what we should be encouraging people to do and if more people did it... It is about how the next generation are treated, I mean I was like, you can't touch me now, what are you going to do – drop me? Well I was already retired so that wasn't a threat. Players need to talk, talk to somebody, seek somebody out and talk things through, what it might be like not having that to do, setting new goals, new objectives, even the most simple ones, set something because the void is hard to cope with.

OG: Is there anything else you want to tell me, about your experiences of hockey, of retiring, anything you think we haven't spoken about?

R: I think you probably need to take a bit of time to re-invent yourself with your family and your friends, and go out there and enjoy yourself definitely, make up for some lost time and just tell people that you care for them really, because you don't do that very often when you are competing, you can, but you don't tend to do it very often, and if you can afford it then buy them something nice. And then, just if you can really, in time, in your own time, give back to the sport, because I think if we all did that it would be so much better for all, you know, don't just walk away from it would be my big please, please, please kind of idea. Because I think it is important, there is a lot of girls and boys that are playing hockey at a very good standard now and they need role models, and if role models hide then who do they look up to, there is no-one to look at, so maybe take a bit of time out but then try and put it back in to the youth or you know, your club or wherever. Whatever suits you, if it is the wee totty five year olds then fine, if it is the more elite ones, management, whatever aspect you want. As I say just don't disappear, because that's a shame, people have put a lot of finance into you and you know if you can put it back then that would be the big one for me I think. I think that would be about it really, I think if everyone did that then it would make things a lot easier for some others. I'm sure I'll think of other things once you leave, but I can't think of anything else. Well, I think it is enjoying your time when you retire, and making the most of it really, enjoying what you do, whatever it is.

OG: And have you got involved in any other sports since you finished hockey?

R: I have actually, quite recently, I've been running. Which is very interesting because I have been doing a running club and it's great because nobody knows who I am, nobody expects me to be really good, I just go out and it is a very social kind of a run, and I am really, really enjoying it because I don't have the pressure of people looking at you like you should be something different. I suppose I still have my inner competitor which wants to go from the bottom group to the top group, so I have a little bit of that. And I suppose from our point of view I do hope to do some qualifications at college, I want to do some more, I did my advanced secretarial typing and things so I would like to get something written down that I am actually going to do that at some point. I think tie will probably take me by though, and I probably won't end up doing that. My objectives, I'd like to be able to ride a motorbike, which is something I'd like to do which is completely off the wagon, and there are just bits and bobs that I have kind of got on my mind that I'd like to do in life basically. But no other sport really, I don't fancy taking up golf, a lot of people turn to golf but I am not interested in that, I just think I could do more important things with my time than 4 hours on a golf

course. The most important thing for me is that I can put time into the family, you know, I don't have to worry about that. If I do a run, I do it before they get up in the morning. But I have no regrets whatsoever, I would recommend it to anyone. You know, you have good times, you have bad times, but on the whole it is certainly worth it. It is quite strange because at school I was probably never the star, there was a group of us and I guess it is about the path that you take, it is about psychology again. I tell the story at dinners a lot, there was a group of us and would I go to the shops and buy the cigarettes and drink and go round with the boys in their cars, or would I go running with my dad? I remember this, as a key moment, very clearly, and dad said do you want to come with me and I thought what do I do – do you know that advert on the telly about drugs or football, that was me, absolutely, and I choose to go running with my dad and that was where my path then led me. The girls that were better at hockey in school haven't done anything, but my path took me my way. I think because you set your pathways early, even now for youngsters I have got my first and second years telling me what they want to do within their hockey, asking them where do you want to go? From the 16 to 18s point of view, there is no reason why their coaches can't be asking them to do that privately, talking it through with them, but again it is time, you don't have time because you want to spend it on the pitch, but it could make a big difference ultimately. It could be about educating the coaches, I have just been through my level two coaching course and there was no mention of psychology, other than statistics, and I mentioned it while I was there, said you can talk all you like but the score was 3-1 against you, and the FIH and the EHF the governing bodies, they don't think, yes but you had 25 circle penetrations, well you know what, maybe you did but you still lost. So don't go too deep with that stuff or what you end up doing is suppressing the flair.

END

ALICE (Curling)

1st November 2007

OG: Can you start me off by telling me the story of your curling career?

A: Basically I have curled internationally for 21 years, started at World Juniors, went to World Juniors which is under 21s. I didn't start curling until I was 17 so I was quite late in starting. So then I went to World Juniors and then you just move on and go, you know Europeans, Ladies, and then when it became an Olympic medal sport you stay in. The attitude to curling changes when it becomes an Olympic medal sport. Years ago when I started I took it up as a hobby, something to do at weekends and that was it, so I have been in the sport and seen it progress quite rapidly into a different sport with a professional attitude. So yeah, that has been my curling career, a lot of years of playing for Scotland and Great Britain and yeah, I have seen it change quite a lot.

OG: What made you start curling in the first place?

A: Well I was doing other sports at school but then I was obviously going to be leaving school the next year and wanted to try just something different. I have got 4 older brothers and they all golfed, one of them curled, and he went to the World Junior Championships in Canada and I went to watch and I thought, oh this looks quite good fun, so I thought I'd give it a go, but I hated it, I was cold, I couldn't balance on this one leg, thinking what is this all about, I kept falling over, hated it. Thankfully he persuaded me to go back, and I went back, and you know very quickly you got to travel round Scotland to different ice rinks, you met loads of people, really friendly environment, and then once you start to go abroad and realise, hey we are competing with these foreigners, and it just all kicks off, it was fun, and that was why I kept going, it's a good social sport, which is what I was looking for really. I didn't really mean it to take over my whole life (laughs). I think that's what, because I did hotel management at college, and then I was working in hotels, but because I was in curling that was always weekends, that didn't tie in with hotel work, so I stopped working in hotels and just went to work in a bank from Monday to Friday so I could curl.

OG: You were part-time I think for most of your career, but did you go full time at any point?

A: No, you were always just training, well the only time was before Salt Lake we got 3 months full time training basically before the Olympics. But that was it, the rest you just fitted in around the kids and jobs and everything else.

OG: When you went full time for those months did you take a career break?

A: Yeah, we all, because everybody in the team were doing different things, I had two kids, one was at school, the second was just going kind of that year, so I was intending to go back to work when he started school, so at that point I was still kind of just doing part time coaching, so I just delayed going back. The other girls had to take a couple of months from their careers whereas my circumstances kind of fitted round it.

OG: How much time did curling take up?

A: Obviously we have only got ice for 6 months of the year or 7 months of the year, so at that point you were on the ice every day, and then you were following really rigorous gym programmes as well, so you know every day you were doing it, but it was kind of like a juggling act as to what you could do. We wanted to be abroad in a lot of competitions, that takes up masses of time, like flying to Canada, losing entire training days travelling, so when you were at home the training was quite intense, on the ice and in the gym. But it was good, I always thought it would be great to be a full time curler and just do that as a job every day, whereas when you either have to go and do a job to earn some money, or pick up kids, you know that's all kind of like, it would be great for it to be your life, just to be able to curl everyday. But anyway, it was fine, we managed to fit it in.

OG: Were your work fairly flexible, could you get time off when you needed to?

A: At the time I think I worked my work around curling, because you had the season time when it was really busy and then you had the other times when it wasn't and you could do a lot more, so during season time you just had to basically juggle it, and do what you could, but you know the training, you had to make sure you did that. But the build up to the Olympics, because we knew, it would have been 10 months before the Olympics, we actually sat down and worked out an exact programme of what we would do in that 10 months so nothing was a surprise, everybody was organised and knew exactly where we were to be and when.

OG: How important would you say curling was to you?

A: Well as I say it just started as a hobby and it was fun and I did it but then I think once you get the taste of that international scene, you know even then you were still just going to Worlds or Europeans every year. But then when it became an Olympic medal sport your goal and your dream changed completely. In '98, that was the first year it was an Olympic sport, we lost the final on the last stone to go to the Olympics, because they just played a weekend competition with the top four teams, we lost the final on the last stone, at the time I was really disappointed, but I just thought, after that it gave me more drive to make sure I could get to Salt Lake, and you know it probably did give me more determination and fight over that next 3 years to do that, because the system changed and then the team was to be chosen over a 3 year period, how you performed internationally, so you had to make sure you got to the international competitions and then be ranked pretty high. So that 3 year period probably, you know I think probably after the '98, probably in 1998 when we were building up to that play off weekend, things changed that year, but before that, for the however many years before that, it was just a hobby, it was fun, you turned up, and if you had a big competition you would make practice a bit more, and that was it. The whole ethos of the sport just changed, overnight virtually. But I think it was big culture shock to suddenly change. It was a big change for us as well, for curling to suddenly become a really big focus in your life, but I think it was good to have that, to have been in it the way I was and then your goals and dreams change to an Olympics, it's just great, never did I dream that I would go to an Olympic Games when I was at school or anything. You know there were some people, young kids, and that's their dream, that's their goal, but that wasn't me. So you know it was great, it was a good challenge.

OG: How supportive were your family of your curling career?

A: Yeah I think it was all just a bit kind of like, here we go again, they never really took it too seriously kind of thing, they were always great and would help out with the kids and things, you know, so that was fine, there was never any issues, they were always supportive when I needed them. But there wasn't much chat about it, as I say my brothers all golfed for years and played a lot, and they do a lot of sport, rugby and stuff, so it was just seen as normal, really, until it came to the Olympics really and then they were all questioned by the media, and it was all, I've supported her all through her career and stuff, made me laugh, but no they were very good, all my brothers played a lot of sport so they were into the ethos of what you need to be, understanding it all.

OG: What would you say your most significant achievements were?

A: Well, the Olympics of course. There wasn't really anything else that stands out, you win the Scottish Championships, you win medals at Europeans and Worlds, and at that point that was a big thing, but it is not really. I mean you would come home from a Europeans or Worlds with a medal, and like nobody was there to meet you, you came home, put the medal in a cupboard, and carried on with your next day, that was it. Whereas the Olympics just brought so much attention, and then that in turn led to so many different things, like my MBE, Eurosport sports star award, all these kind of things, that you then had to, they were brilliant, but never did you think through curling, it was fun, it was a hobby, you never thought you would be getting all these awards, so getting all these awards was quite a bit thing. You start to question, not really do you deserve it but it is like, there is other people who, in their sporting world, the Olympics is probably a lot bigger to them than curling, because it was so new. So I was like, why are we getting all these awards, what is this all about. So you know from the Olympics there have been a lot of highlights of things, going to Buckingham Palace, meeting the Queen, getting an MBE, that was just like another day, that was just quite strange because you would never think you would get that, you know they put it down as services to curling, but I was just playing the sport I loved to play, a lot of people do a lot of really good work and they don't get recognised you know, so that is where it is a bit, well okay then. But is funny, being involved now in the sporting world in different sports and seeing how it all kind of, you know the Olympics is just such a huge thing, I hadn't realised, if I hadn't been I still wouldn't appreciate the difference in the Olympics Games. It has brought so much money in to the sport now, which is a shame in a way when I have left the sport, but anyway, it is good for the sport and we were just glad it got all the TV coverage, we didn't know it got as much coverage so we were quite glad that now at least people know what curling is. So I think from our point of view that was why we were happy that it got the coverage. In terms of highlights, well standing on the medal podium with the national anthem playing is definitely, you know even at a Worlds or Europeans the national anthem is playing for Scotland, you've got the crowd round about it but it is not a big crowd, whereas at the Olympics, it was what 30,000 at the medal plaza, all screaming and British flags waving. At that moment when you stand on there and the national anthem plays, that's just, it makes you think oh my god, what have you done, it's all worth it, all the hassle, all the nightmares, you just forget it all and realise that is what you came here to do and that makes it worth while.

OG: Where there any low points in your career?

A: I think there were difficult times, problems with team dynamics and, you know in a small team of 4 it's very, very difficult to get the team dynamic right so you've got issues with that, when you've got to go speak to psychologists and then, but you get over it and, I suppose there's loads of points through it all when you've got to go training and this is happening, or the kids are doing this, or it's school parents night, how do you prioritise what you do, so that nothing's suffering, and that is a very, very difficult juggling act, because you know the kids were still young at that stage, and with me curling I didn't want their lives to be affected in that, if they wanted to play hockey or rugby or do the things they do, I didn't want them not to be able to just because I am away curling. I did feel guilty at points because you do think, I'm not away earning money for their benefit, I'm away curling, so there were points when I felt really quite bad, when they would be asking how many sleeps are you going for, but you had to juggle that guilt and just, at the end of the day for their sake, for me to stand on that podium, it was all worth while. And even then, my youngest was probably too young to appreciate what an Olympics was, but now so many people still say things, if I go and watch a rugby game other kids will be saying, wow is that your mum, can we get an autograph, and you know you think it's years down the line, and now they are kind of like, yeah that's my mum, you know, so that is good. And I wouldn't say they were affected in life from me being away at that point. I think the Olympics was a hard time because that was virtually, that was 5 weeks, they stayed at home in their routine, quite a few of the team had family out there, but I was quite happy that they stayed at home. And that was the thing, always trying to keep them in their routine. I just had to be really, really organised, and before I went away anywhere, their itinerary was written out, people knew what was happening, I just had to be organised, but then once I got away all I focused on was curling, so it was a juggling act and that was difficult, but you got through. There were many times I was severely stressed before I got away, but once you go you go. At the time you just did it, you know that way you do what you have to do. So yes, there were very stressful points throughout the years of dealing with issues. You know the kids would phone when you were abroad and say, I can't find my brownie uniform or something like that, as if I am going to be able to do something where I am, but it is just like calm down, or they'll phone in tears, saying like oh he shouted at me or such stuff, and I would be like, oh whatever, so yes there was a lot of stresses along the way. Turin was a completely different ball game in that the whole set up, everything was so different, and you didn't know until 6 weeks before who was maybe going, and then 3 weeks before they announced the team, and that was so unsettling and just an absolute nightmare. So the preparation of that and everything was just slightly different, they have changed it now and for the next time it will be better, but I think a lot of lessons had to be learnt. I think I was more upset at that one because you put in the 2 years solid hard work before Turin and it was wasted because of what they did with team dynamics. I think after Turin I was really quite angry that it had been wasted, but it is over and that's it.

OG: Is there anything you miss about being an elite curler?

A: I think I am just really competitive and I think, I always said the minute I'm standing on the ice and I'm not enjoying it I'll walk about, but that's not why I walked away so now I see curling I'm thinking, ooh, but every time, as a skip every time you step on the ice it is a different challenge, to read the ice, to play the game, to call the game, and that's what I loved, the challenge, the having to work out tactics and angles and everything else, I loved that and that's why I did it, and I miss that competitive, even now when I am on the ice coaching youngsters I am still competitive with them. It is really hard not to be on that ice. We went on the ice in September, the Olympic team did a charity thing at Braehead, and we went on the ice, and we were playing against the current teams that are out there just now, and like we won it, we were just faffing about and having fun, it was just a fun day, but I was like why am I giving this up, I can still play this game, and you play a really good shot and think, yes I've still got it. So that was quite hard, and really I decided after that that I am not playing at all, because I can't do that, I would rather just not play than play club curling, where I am thinking, I can do this, so that's quite difficult. It's a big change, you know it's been over 20 years, competitive curling has been my life, so now it is very, very different. Probably it is quite good in the job I am now in that I am so busy, so I am still involved with curling but I am so busy I haven't got time to think about the other side of it.

OG: Is there anything you don't miss?

A: I suppose the thing is you know when the alarm goes off and you don't have the stress of, right I have to do this today and I have to fit these things in, you do the training and you do the work, now I don't have that, but I've still got the stress of juggling the job with the kids and everything else, so those kind of things are still there, but in a different way. So I suppose saying I don't miss that side of it... I mean I loved it, I loved the travelling, I loved meeting people, there was nothing that I didn't really enjoy about it.

OG: Moving on to talk about your retirement, can you talk me through what made you decide to stop, when was that, and what happened after that?

A: Well basically as a single mother I had to get a house and pay bills, so I needed to get a full time job. There was no way I could work full time and give the commitment I needed to curl competitively and look after the kids, that just wasn't an option. So I kind of hummed and hawed and thought what am I going to do, so I basically thought right I can't curl, and then tried to find a job and I couldn't, I didn't appreciate how hard it was to actually get a job. I was like I'll do anything, I don't care, but you see my background was hotel catering, but I hadn't worked in it for years, any sports-area wise I had no sports degree, so people weren't interested, they just looked at the application form, saw no sports degree and binned it. I think 2006 I was pretty scunnered because of, you put in all the hard work and we weren't given the best chance to medal, and that annoyed me, and I know they have now changed the system so yeah, you would be happier being in the system now, but also they then made two full time curlers after 2006, but there were going to be no female full time curlers, only male ones, because that was obviously an option for me then.

OG: Do you know why that decision was made?

A: It was an experiment, a pilot scheme, open up a couple and see how it goes, so they did a couple of the men, I suppose they showed the potential and I was too old, so that was it. I mean yeah I can see where they're coming from. I think it was hard for me that, for years I wanted to be full time, why didn't they do that years ago. But because of our success the money's now coming in and more people supporting it, which is great for everyone else who can benefit, I mean it's good for curling at the end of the day. It was a really hard decision and the institute did try to help but when I couldn't get a job it was just, I was really panicking, and then last year after Turin I set up a good team and we won the European play-offs, it was really good fun, we all had a laugh, and I thought you know this is what it's all about but at the end of the season I thought I just can't carry on, you know the kids need me for the next however many years to be supporting them, to be there, so I thought right, no, be sensible, as much as I'd love to carry on it was a case of, right get your priorities right here and cut my losses.

OG: So how did you get from there to where you are now?

A: Well it was kind of difficult, because I couldn't find any other job, the West area, because it's such a big institute covering Glasgow right out to Lockerbie, they needed a coach full time, or full time for the season, to cover all the ice rinks. Phil here has so many sports, hard to really get his head around everything that is going on, and now because in the sport, even in the area institutes, the psychology, all the extra stuff was coming in, so he was struggling to keep up with it all, so he wanted a full time coach in here. So he said

would I be interested in doing that, and I mean it was obviously only going to be really season time, and I was like oh well, I'll think about it, and then the institute said, look we'll do an apprenticeship coach post, because the institute are needing coaches, we are very poor on coaching, so for the 6 months of the season I'll work for the west and the 6 months of the summer I'll do an apprenticeship coaching skills with the institute. So that was set up as a 2 year contract with the institute, so I thought right, okay, that's fine, I can get into that, and then I'd only been in 3 weeks and the institute put me forward for UK Sport's elite coach programme, and I was like what's that, don't even know what it is, well you go down for an interview and I was like, oh okay, it's more money, it'll be good, oh okay. So I went down and it was the most horrific experience of my life, we were in Lord's cricket ground, you had to do a presentation, I'd never done a power point presentation in my life, I had to do one to a fictional prime minister, you were tested for the whole day on politics, on other things completely out of sport, for the whole day, and we didn't know what we were going to be doing beforehand, just turn up in a suit was all we were told, and for example staff come in sexually harassed, what do you do, heads of department are fighting like cats and dogs, I had to sort them out, so you were tested on that for the whole day and I came away thinking what on earth, and I'm thinking they are testing us on our political skills really here, so I came away thinking well I'll put that down to experience, it was just horrific and never again, and then got a phone call to say I'm in, and I was like, what. It's been running for 3 years, the government have fired a lot of money into it because of 2012, but there are no winter sports on it so of course I was like, well I'll never get on, because it's all for 2012, and then of course it was like you're on. So that's a 3 year contract.

OG: And what does that mean for you?

A: A lot more work! Well, there is 5 residential weeks that they make you go to which are in the curling season, which isn't ideal, but it's brilliant, they bring in the best coaches in the world, had a week last week in Cardiff and I mean very intense, hard work, but absolutely brilliant. It tends to look at absolutely everything, I thought you'd just be sitting there listening to these coaches but they are like, you stand up and tell me this, you stand up and tell me that, and how would you coach this, and how would you do that, and they just constantly interact you, which is brilliant, that is probably what I need. I mean they are saying right, okay, a successful player, what makes them a good coach, well who knows, who knows if I'll be a good coach, there are different skills. So now I have just started that it has just all kind of, from starting this job in April, it's all kind of built up, and I'm thinking, aarg. I'm now having to employ someone who will be able to coach when I'm away on residential, and I'm thinking I took on this job so I would be at home more and I'll like, ooh. So it is difficult, but at the end of the day I don't feel guilty because I'm earning money, the kids are benefiting, and whatever, so that side of it is okay.

OG: And do you still miss curling?

A: I think after the UK Sport week last week, it made me think long and hard really about how I have to think now, because I think from retiring in April till now, it's kind of been like I've had to do that, so yeah I'm doing that, but I hadn't really gone through the whole thought process of really how this is affecting me and the changes, and it is hard, and it's not something that you can just do overnight, it will take a while, but you know I think once I get through this season and the season's over, I think it is hard watching big competitions in this country, I was up at the European play offs last weekend and I was sitting there thinking, we won this last year, and you know it's really, really difficult to change the focus of what I need to be there to do now and that is hard, it is, it will take a wee while, but I have to, I have to be able to do that to be a good coach. Because somebody said you've got to think that you're not a player any more, you're a coach, but after 20 odd years you can't do that overnight, it's not something you can do to wake up and say right, today I'm a coach, I'm not longer a player, and forget it all. I think because I've made that choice I'm not playing any club curling, and I think that will be better, because I think if I was still going on to play I would struggle with, because I played for my brother in a club game last week and I was just like, what am I doing here, we won, but I couldn't care less whether we won or lost, and I thought this is wrong, I don't want to be here, and then once you're on the ice and you're actually into the game it's fine, I just did it, but then I came off thinking, that was really silly, I didn't enjoy it, because I know I was curling but I've stopped curling, I want to move on from curling, so I think it will be easier for me to get my head round it if I just stop completely, than play bits and bobs.

OG: Do you think later in the future you might decide to go back on and play a bit?

A: I don't know, because you see now you've got seniors and all these different things, you've got seniors, and masters, so you can play in over 50s stuff, in over 60s stuff, you know abroad, and there is all this, so I don't know what I'll do in the future, but I've made the decision now that I don't want to play club curling because I need to get away from it to get my head round the difference between player and coach, I mean yes, you know, but it's different when you're in an ice rink. If I was away doing another job completely

away from curling and not playing, I would probably get over it a lot quicker, but because I'm coaching, I'm in all these ice rinks, seeing all these people, and they are all like, oh, does it not feel funny to be here, and I'm like yes it does so don't remind me. I need to build up my coaching skills, get that Alice Martin player away, and build Alice Martin the coach. Because the other stuff is past, and that's a chapter of my life that's gone, it's done and dusted and I've moved on, so it will take time but I am gradually getting my head round it.

OG: Did your life change from a social perspective when you decided to stop curling?

A: I don't know because see when you were playing, you didn't, it wasn't that you didn't have a social life, you didn't have time to go to much, because you were always away at weekends if things were on a Friday or Saturday you couldn't go, and then when I was at home I was dealing with the kids at night you know, so I felt guilty if I went out. So I suppose, yeah I tried to fit in odd things, keep up with school friends and things like that, I would do that every so often. I think since I have retired it has probably not changed because now I'm away working, and then when I'm not working I want to be at home with them, helping them with homework or whatever, so I don't arrange a lot of social events. But I still see people I curled with, I'm going out tomorrow night with them, I'm up working in Perth tomorrow during the day so I'm going out tomorrow night with folk up there, I haven't seen them for ages, so yeah you still just try and catch up, but I wouldn't say it has changed overly, I wouldn't say my social life's better.

OG: So have you kept in contact with the people you curled with, who were in your team?

A: Yes, they are the ones I'm seeing tomorrow, and we had a reunion, that charity thing that we played in in September, they stayed at mine and we had a wee reunion all together. I think after we won it was phenomenal the amount of invites you got to balls and dinners, it was just like, I didn't have any long dresses before that and then I had to buy several, and I still get invited to a lot of things, which I kind of say no to a lot now, I just think, nah, it is not a novelty any more, now it is just hassle. So I probably don't have a fantastic social calendar in that respect, but that's fine, and I've got however many years when the kids will leave me and go and do their own thing, and I'll have all the time in the world. By then I'll be a good coach and it'll all be fine.

OG: Was there a physical side to retiring?

A: It has been horrendous. That's probably the worst thing really, because you were either, well as I said I was throwing stones every day and then in the gym all the time, and then since I've retired I've honestly, and people laugh at me, but I don't have time to go to a gym, whereas before I had to make time because that was what I had to do. So I have put on about 3 stone, no about 2 and a half stone or something since April, because all I do is sit in a car and drive about the country. You know, I'm doing 3 thousand miles a month. So a culture shock from being very active, being you know, in that environment, and now sitting in the car all the time, I don't like that side of it, and I know I need to, I think I was getting my head round the new job and getting into a routine of thinking right could I go to the gym, and then with this UK Sport thing come up that's kind of thrown everything haywire again, because their stuff's mandatory, and when's that going to be, so I've actually got a meeting tomorrow to sort out a sort of schedule of all my jobs together, because the Royal Club, our governing body, they are half employing me, here is employing me, the Institute want me to do stuff, and UK Sport now, so I am going to sit there tomorrow and say that I want this to be clearer, then I am hoping to start getting back a bit more active, because I am just sitting in the car, that is it, yeah I am out in the ice rinks but I am not actively participating, I'm standing shouting at them. So, yeah, that side I really don't like.

OG: What were people's reactions when you told them you had decided to retire?

A: My team were distraught, that I was playing with last year, because as I say it was a really good team we had set up, and of course when I said I'm retiring, Debbie said well I'm going too, so the other two were like, aaahhh. They are still playing, have the qualifier this weekend, you have got to have 3 of the original team so because there is only two they need to re-qualify, so I hope they get through. So yeah, they were absolutely gutted, and like the curling world were all, people sent cards and letters, I got gifts and things from quite a few people, so the general curling population were quite, and I just stood up at the AGM last year and, I had to give my report on the Europeans, so I gave that and then just at that point said thanks for all your support and bla de bla over the years, and they were all just kind of like, well shell shocked maybe, so they all stood up and were cheering, and I was like that, don't go over the top. And I think because I had taken so long to make this decision, I was just like, I don't want a fuss, right I'm retiring, that's it. Everyone was very supportive, as I say I'm still seeing all these people, because I'm in ice rinks, so it's not like I'm never going to see them again.

OG: Do you think in general that curling as a sport encourages people enough to come back into the sport and give back?

A: Yeah, I mean people can just walk back in, you know at the end of the day they can go into a team and play, but I think there's an issue with the money that's come into the sport, the elitism, with your institute athletes, other people are just forgotten about, and we are actually really struggling for teams in the Scottish Championship now. Even the juniors, I don't know what's happened because when I was in the juniors you maybe had, throughout Scotland, like you could have 10 teams in your own ice rink, you could have over a hundred teams enter the Scottish Junior Championship, and this year there's 8. And they are now putting squads and elitism into the young ones, so the whole culture is changing. I think curling will become more of a minority sport, I think that's the way it is going to go, because I mean when we were young we paid for everything ourselves, we fought our own way, we played, you know you got the experience, that's what made us good curlers, whereas now the youngsters are being spoon fed all this stuff and it's kind of like you haven't even earned that right if you know what I mean. So there is a big divide and I think the money and the elitism has caused issues, but it's not my side of the political spectrum at the moment, thankfully.

OG: And are there enough people coaching in the sport?

A: No.

OG: And do you think there are former players out there who might get back involved if approached?

A: Probably, and they are trying to get more coaches at the moment, because it is just not there. I think now because you have got this masters and seniors and stuff, older people, from my era you know, they're still competing, not getting involved in coaching. The role of the coach now has changed as well, in years gone by they would speak to the players at the end, say you should have done this, this and this, now there is all this extra work, they are doing the video analysis and other stuff, they are doing a lot more, a lot more is asked of them. Big demands. A lot of coaches are still in it for the love of the sport, but it is attracting more like that now that is the problem. The governing body has just got somebody in, I can't remember what their title is, but they are like coach development something or other, so they are supposed to be trying to go round ice rinks at the different levels and build up the levels of coaches, try and get a bit more enthusiasm going.

OG: Is there anything else you want to tell me about your curling career or your retirement?

A: I think people need to know what they are going to move on to and decide, you know because if I hadn't had this job and been busy I think I would have found it a lot harder. I mean obviously in our sport when you retire at the end of the season you have 6 months off anyway, so it is now when the season starts in September it is like, ooh. But I think it is just know what you are going to do and just change your focus from your training and your throwing, that focus has to just change to something else. But a lot of people are very different, a lot of people that retire will still play, they'll play 5 club games a week because they love playing. That's just not me, that's not what I've decided to do to be able to jump from player to coach quicker. I have had to be able to make a switch. And I think the UK Sport thing is quite good in that you are completely focused on being an elite coach, and that is what you're doing, and so I think when I came back from that week I certainly had my head round, this is where my focus is going to be. But retirement is retirement really, it's funny, it's just like a different chapter in your life. But there is no point on dwelling, oh I'm really bitter that I'm not doing whatever, because there is no point. I mean when the sport went into the Olympics my goal was I want to win an Olympic Games, now my goal is I want to coach a team that wins an Olympic Games, you know so that focus then moves you forward. And it is just being able to do that, finding that other thing. You need to be able to fill up the time that you used to be on the ice or in the gym, so that you are not left thinking about it. But as I said to Debbie I would rather walk away myself rather than being edged out of the sport, which would be harder. At least this was my decision.

END

RACHEL (Athletics)

26th October 2007

OG: Could you start by telling me the story of your athletics career?

R: I started athletics when I was about 11 and I think I just thought it was something like, you know, going to the brownies or something, I didn't realise I was ever going to be any good at it, I just enjoyed doing it and got pretty much immediate success in the Scottish Schools Championships when I was in first year at school and I won the 60m hurdles. That led immediately to a selection for Scotland for the Celtic International which was a Scottish junior international then. So from the age of 12 basically I was within the international set up at junior level. I was a hurdler with Glasgow Athletic Club which is now called City of Glasgow and trained all through my school years, sort of maintained that standard of success, you know, winning Scottish Schools events, Scottish Junior events. I went down to the W 3 A's when I was I think about 15, and got a silver medal there in the long jump, because I was long jumping by that stage as well, I guess I was training both for hurdles and for long jump, and for my club I would also get a place in the sprint relay team as well. So I sort of maintained that level through school, and then when it came to my 5th year at school I was thinking what I would go on and do next, and I got two offers, I got one from Stirling University to do a sports bursary there and then I also got offered a sports scholarship from the University of Wyoming. So I decided that I would go to the University of Wyoming, tell them that I was going for the four years but I only ever intended to go for one year because I wanted to go to Stirling. So I went out to Wyoming and competed on the track team there and had reasonable success there as well, in our conference I was second in long jump which as a freshman was quite a reasonable thing to do and I lettered there as well so I also got a jacket. Then I came back and started at Stirling and that was actually the first time that I had trained on my own, because in Stirling there were no other athletes, I was the athletics team, and that was actually probably one of the toughest periods for me because the sports bursaries were in their infancy then as well and so there really wasn't any of the backup which is now available. So I did feel quite isolated there, I would train on my own quite a lot and my coach would come through from, well we were living in Lenzie at that time. On the track I was getting up to the senior level by that time, so it is quite a hard transition to make to go up to senior, so in the long jump I maintained, I was regularly second in the Scottish Championships and my hurdles kind of fell away at that time, I couldn't make the transition up to 2 foot 9 hurdles because my sprinting wasn't good enough. So that kind of fell by the wayside and I was concentrating full time on long jump, achieving lots of Scotland selections, not quite ever making it into the British team, just always on the fringes of that. My aim was to qualify for either the 1986 or the 1990 Commonwealth Games. I did achieve the qualifying for the '86 Games which were in Edinburgh, but that was the one that they had the big financial issues, it all fell apart, and they couldn't afford to send a very large team, so even though I had qualified they only sent one per event, so that was a big disappointment because I think that could have been a real platform on to other things, the experience of all of that. And then by the time 1990 came along, I was competing in Spain I think it was in the long jump and I remember running down the track and taking off and there was just this crunch in my knee and it was really never diagnosed what it was but it just meant from that time until I finally retired, although I did again jump over 6metres I could never really progress because I was having to have a year of physio, then I would get a year of training and competing, then it would go again. So I ended up getting a knee surgery to look into it, which was done by non-sports doctors, it was just a general NHS orthopaedic guy who did it, I never saw him again in any of the follow-up, and they didn't treat me as an athlete, they treated me as a member of the public, and I could walk and I could run and I could do almost anything so they were saying what is the problem. So I just couldn't long jump, and unfortunately for me that was the thing that I did, so when I was about, I was young, I think I was about 23, 24, I kind of had to make the decision, was I going to try and endure this, it was expensive, getting physio treatment and whatever, and travelling around to get treatment, and trying to endure the disappointment of never getting to where I wanted, I was definitely never going to be an Olympian, I could have possibly been Commonwealth Games but again that was another 4 years off, or did I need to knuckle down and earn some money which was kind of what I did need to do. And I was fortunate that my training was, at the University of Wyoming I had studied broadcasting so I got into TV studios and radio studios and at Stirling I did the media course, which I really didn't like, but that was what my degree was and I knew that I wanted to work in the media, and I was lucky when I graduated I got a job straight with the BBC as a researcher, so I mean I had a great job to fall back on and an exciting job. So the decision in the end I felt was taken away from me because my knee packed it, if I had had the choice I would have kept training and competing definitely but I didn't have the choice, but it was, you know, a less painful blow because I had a lot to fall back on which I guess other people don't.

OG: Were you ever training full time?

R: The most luxury I suppose I got in terms of training close to full time was when I was a student, but then I graduated at 21 and then the whole thing finished for me around 23 so there was only really two years in there and I was working and training side by side. I think in those days less people did train full time. I mean I see people now who are full time athletes and I am surprised because I don't feel that they are at that high a standard, but that is only comparing them to my day. My contemporaries would have been Liz McColgan and Yvonne Murray, and I suppose they maybe trained full time but I think that they had part time

jobs as well, perhaps not just at the end, when lottery funding started, but certainly as teenagers and in their early 20s I don't think they were. So athletics in that sense was less of a career than it can be now.

OG: How important would you say that your athletics was to you through that period?

R: It was everything, I mean that was how I defined myself, I was an athlete. I probably wasn't very good at anything else. In sports terms I never had the chance to do anything else because I didn't want to get injured for my athletics. I mean I was sporty, I definitely was sporty, I would have loved to have gone and skied and just done everything else, I mean all through school I did play hockey as well and you know it was really good to cross train and also have just the camaraderie of a team, but as soon as I got to university there was nothing, it was athletics and it was serious and it was from the weight training to the track sessions to the long lonely nights in winter training, there was nothing else. My studies were very secondary to it, I did enough to pass, I never excelled in my studies but I didn't really care, I just wanted my degree and if it was a 1st, 2nd, 3rd or general degree. I mean I knew that I wanted a good job at the end of it but I think perhaps also what was unique about what I did was in journalism you don't even need a degree, and certainly then you didn't need a degree, you had to do it and the people who came out with the new fangled degrees were kind of, well you still had to go and learn your trade after that, so the level of the degree didn't matter, I just wanted a degree and it was all a means and an end to doing my athletics training. So yeah, it just meant everything to me.

OG: You talk about your degree coming secondary to your athletics, were there other things in your life that you sort of sacrificed for athletics, were there other things that maybe came secondary or were put to one side?

R: I don't feel like I really sacrificed anything, but I don't think that I had, I had a very very full life, I had experiences that other teenagers definitely did not have, but I didn't have the variation in my life that other teenagers had, I didn't really care about clothes, I didn't care about make-up, I mean I had lots of boyfriends but not serious, I mean I can see that it wasn't. I had a good circle of friends, but I guess that my friends were my athletics friends, I mean when I think back about all of the fun times that I had, it was when we were away with the athletics club, maybe down at, down south at some of the UK league stuff, you know all of us in a hotel room having a big slumber party basically, and the fun that we would have on the buses driving up and down, you know, so that was my circle of friends, and I had friends from home as well, girls and boys. I had a very full social life and the sports bursars, we used to all hang out and have great times at Stirling. But I guess that I was always with like-minded people, people who respected what I did. So I didn't really do, as far as other interests I didn't go to anything else or have anything else, because I was busy, you're training, you're competing. I mean I can see that since I've stopped athletics I do far, far, far more things, but no I don't think I made any sacrifices, well, I didn't ski, that was the one thing, I love skiing and I couldn't ski, so I suppose that was the only sacrifice I made, I couldn't ski.

OG: How supportive were your family and your parents of your athletics career?

R: Massively, just massively. My mum is a PE teacher and my dad had been a racing cyclist and he played football as well, he had to kind of make the decision between going down the football or the racing cycling line and he never quite made the decision so he ended up being pretty good but not elite at either. So yes, brought up in a hugely sporting family and my dad used to take me to my athletics training in Glasgow and he ended up coaching another squad. I think that the biggest thing, that I did not realise at the time, was that when the sport scholarship offer came in from Wyoming they were so keen that I should do it, and I didn't really want to do it because I was 17, and to suddenly be bumped to the Mid-West, first time away from home, I'm an only child, so I think for them it was huge, to see their 17 year old disappear off to have this big new experience. But they saw the merit in it and I am definitely a different person because I did that and then when I came back to Stirling that was a lot easier for all of us because I was just down the road. They continued to take me to all my athletics things, and come and watch me. Financially I know it was quite tough on them, especially the Wyoming year, that was an expensive year, with regards to flights and things, those were the days when you would have paid close to £1000 to get to Wyoming and back, there was nothing cheap about the flights in those days. So they made sacrifices, they really did. I suppose I felt a bit like, not letting them down, but when I was injured I felt like, what has this all been for, all this investment that has gone into this. But having said that I did have one year when I was 16, when I was doing my highers, and I got glandular fever, and so my athletics had to stop, and they were very good at saying, no you are not going out to training because you need to get over this. So they definitely managed me as well with a very sensible approach, although they were ambitious for me, they were just very good at knowing when to push and when to back off. There was a lot of knowledge there from them and a lot of personal experience as well. I was very lucky, I saw others... my athletics club was a good life education for me as well because there were all kinds of girls there, it was a girls only club, there were ones that came from really poor backgrounds

and had absolutely nothing, and there were some that were really wealthy and it was just such a big melting pot and everybody was the same, I suppose I had quite a sort of privileged upbringing so it was the first time for me to speak to people from all different backgrounds. I know that my school friends all just lived in their little cocoons, their little bubbles of just meeting people from the same backgrounds and then they would all go off to university and do the same again, so athletics was great for me from that point of view as well.

OG: What would you say were the high points of your career? What do you look back on with the most pride?

R: Winning the Scottish Schools when I was 12, I mean I can still remember... because I had no idea if I was good or not and I won it quite easily, and I just remember crossing the line and I did one of these 'yes' things because I had seen it on the telly, it was kind of like, oh I'm first so I must do that, but I mean I was just thrilled, absolutely thrilled, to win it and it gave me a lot of incentive to keep going with this thing, because I enjoyed the winning and I enjoyed standing on the podium and getting the medal. In our school there were certainly no girls who had ever done anything in athletics so suddenly there was a lot of respect at school as well. So that was big. And then the first time I jumped over 6 metres in long jump, that was something as well, I mean I could actually feel it as I was jumping, it was as if a big gust of wind came and held me up there for a bit longer, so that was brilliant as well, you know that is the bench mark for long jumpers, if you can't jump over 6 metres you are nobody. So to do that, and I did it a few more times as well, so everything I got over that. And actually when I came back from my knee surgery and jumped over 6 metres again, that was great and it was a big relief because it was like okay I can get back to this, because at one point I thought I am never going to get back to it. The actual competitions I did, there were never any that the actual event stood out particularly for me, well the British when I went down to the WAAA's, that was a good one, I competed against Sally Gunnell in the 200 metres hurdles I think it was. There was also daft things like going down South to league matches and then seeing really famous people from the English clubs, and they were competing in the same track meet as I was, I remember we were down at one and Seb Coe was jogging by, so just the suddenly seeing your sporting idols. One time actually in Wyoming we were at an event in California and I was warming up and Carl Lewis was warming up, and I think I had on something from Scotland and he came up and started to talk to me because I had on a Scotland tracksuit or something, so that was something that was like, wow. So I was fortunate to, although I didn't quite touch the elite level myself I had a wee taste of it.

OG: What were the low points?

R: Well, apart from the injury of course, the time in Stirling was very hard actually, I don't look back positively on it, because I was so much on my own, I did a lot of training sessions on my own. The track at Stirling was crap, because it was before the new one was put down, there was no long jump facility there, so I would take the little ford fiesta van to drive through to Grangemouth on my own to carry out training sessions. And I mean the winter training sessions are hard anyway, never mind on your own. I do remember a couple of sessions just getting there and thinking, what am I doing, I don't want to do it. And I did pack in a couple of sessions, just because I felt really demotivated because I was on my own so much. And also I had just changed coach at that time, because I was going from hurdles to long jump I changed coach and I wasn't getting on that well with the coach, he was just kind of one of these, 'just do it' types, and that doesn't work for me – I discuss things, I want to understand things, I want to put forward my point of view, which he wasn't interested in so I wasn't very happy with my coach and I wasn't happy at being on my own, and the other thing was they decided that they were going to do these 8 o'clock in the morning circuit training things, which I can see why, it was bring everyone together, but it just wasn't how an athlete works, you would never do it, or it had never been done lets put it that way, and my coach was saying I don't want you doing it, because I want you to be ready for your session later on. So I was getting pulled from both sides, and it was quite stressful you know, because I had gone along in my life and everything had kind of worked, I had done fine at school, I had had good success in my athletics, everything went really smoothly, and then here for the first time I was having to go into Dr. Thomson and say, well be an adult, it was the first time I had had to do any form of negotiating, and my coach was being very inflexible about it and Dr. Thomson was being inflexible about it as well because he didn't want to make exceptions for anybody and I can understand that now, but at the time it is just kind of upsetting you know. So that was tough, and I have spoken to Ian about it since and we both realise that it wasn't a good fit. Having said that I did thoroughly enjoy my time there, but I would have done better I think, perhaps, if I had made the effort to go to Loughborough or something like that. But I had just come back off my big adventure at Wyoming so I kind of wanted just some home stability really.

OG: What was behind your decision not to go to Wyoming for all 4 years?

R: I think it was two things. I think I thought it would be an awful big step at that point, as a 17 year old, to go for 4 years, and the other thing was at that time there was a lot of snobbery about American degrees, that it was a mickey mouse degree kind of thing, which looking back is rubbish, but you are 17 and if somebody says your degree is not worth anything then you think well I better go and get a proper degree. So that was the other reason and that was why I was always going to come back. I think it was a safety net for me to know I could get back home again. I remember I cried when I was leaving my parents to go there and then I cried when I was leaving my friends to come back again, so I did love it and I settled down and so much good came of that. But Stirling seems a bit more of the wilderness years, because I was doing this really artsy course so everybody just wore black eye liner and thought doing sport was ridiculous, you know they just wanted to go and drink in the Robbins, so I didn't really socialise with any of my class mates, so the other sports bursars in our chalet, they were my real core friends and we had some good fun, but we were all doing different courses. But the other thing was, then I don't know if athletes were thick but not too many went to university, I could count on one hand the number of athletes I know who actually went away to study, because when we used to go away on Scotland trips they used to put me with Catriona Boyle the doctor, we would always be put together to room because they figured we were both kind of academic. I think they thought we must be studying all the time. So I suppose I felt a bit out on a limb, which is ironic now when I see the great things that are now going on at Stirling, it would have been very much the best place to be, but it wasn't then. And then, I guess, the injury came along. I had struggled with a few injuries, which is always quite tough, but then the big crunch came and just, well I think the fact that there was no diagnosis for it either, because knees are so bad, and it went on for too long before they finally had a look at it, I mean nowadays I guess it would have been scoped almost immediately, but I struggled on for a good year before it was ever even x-rayed I think. So that was tough, just the going all over the place to try and get treatment for it, and then the whole surgery was just so ill thought out and so... I couldn't even say who was even in charge of all of that. I don't know why I ended up at the Princes Margaret Rose hospital in Edinburgh, which was reckoned to be the orthopaedic place, I don't know why I ended up there, I don't know who sort of directed me there, I pretty much went to all of the appointments on my own, I mean I didn't have a coach or anybody, or anyone from Scottish Athletics, it just wasn't, there was no sort of team then. I can even remember when they were wheeling me through and they didn't give me a pre-med, I was very nervous and they sort of said, right what is it to be, general or local? And I had just assumed it would be general, I didn't know I could get a local anaesthetic for knee surgery and I was so uptight I just said general because I just wanted to be knocked out, but when you think about it that has got huge implications as well for an athlete. The options just weren't explained to me. And then when I went back to, I think it was one of the Edinburgh hospitals, I don't know which one it was, for the follow-up I was really looking forward to talking to the surgeon who had done it to say you know, what did you see, etc, and then the doctor was a little Indian lady who hadn't even been there. And she was going, can you do that can you do this, and the funny thing about it is that my cruciates have always been good and strong, so of course they do the whole cruciate ligament test and everything and its fine, and I can do everything, so with the whole thing, I walked out of there thinking well I know it is not right but they are telling me it is right so I'll just have to keep going. And you start to doubt yourself as well, you start to think, well maybe it is meant to hurt, maybe, you know, so it just wasn't satisfactory at all. But I guess I just got back to trying to train through it and trying to build up my knee and everything, because I had nothing else I could do. The agenda was always get back, get training, get fit, get successful.

OG: Looking back, is there anything you particularly miss about being an athlete?

R: I miss having a flat stomach (laughs). I mean not so much now because it has been such a long time since I stopped but in the immediate aftermath I missed the camaraderie of my team mates. When I knew that they were getting on the bus to go down south I just missed that and I wasn't part of that, I knew they were all going, they were all going to have a great time, so I missed that. I missed the adrenaline of competing, of warming up and knowing that there was something, that I had to react to the gun or whatever. In the immediate aftermath it was lovely not to have to train five or six times a week, I mean I just loved that so I guess I maybe needed a bit of a break from that, but that was great, just suddenly to have so much free time. So I couldn't say that I ever really missed the training, but I did miss the competition and the friendship. I never really felt though, this is where I think I was really lucky, I never felt like my identity was going because I was gaining another identity, I was doing this job that was really cool that was, at that time it was the radio, I was talking on the radio about things and that was also something that not a lot of people were doing, and I was just really, really enjoying it. I had always been very sure that I wanted to combine my own sorting interests with my job so I knew I wanted to be a sports journalist and I think the fact that I had almost the authority of having done it, of sort of having worn the t-shirt, and that got me a lot of respect from all these footballers and all these other people that I was interviewing. So this was how I could take it on, I can't take it on competing but I can take it on this way.

OG: How difficult was the decision to actually stop?

R: You know I think, I can't remember any one time when I said right that's it, I'm not doing it anymore, so maybe it wasn't such a hard decision to make, it doesn't seem to have been this epiphany of, right I'm stopping. I think it was just such a long and drawn out thing, I think it went on over about 2 years, and it was a, right we'll give it another 3 months, we'll give it another 6 months, we'll see how we get through winter, we'll do that, and then I don't know what was the straw that finally did it, I can't even remember now what happened, but it might have been that I was actually missing out on other opportunities with regard to work that... I think for me it was a smooth transition, I think I was lucky in that I had something else to go to that was just as attractive and so it was just time to step off that boat and get onto this boat and head off somewhere else. I mean there was regret that I was young, my age was the disappoint I suppose, that I never kept it going, and there was a sense of what might have been. But I think if I hadn't have done what I did at that time, I wouldn't have achieved what I had in my job, I wouldn't have been able to get that going, and I was never going to be an Olympic athlete, I was never going to make any money out of athletics, and I would have been so unhappy if I hadn't had a successful career, and I think I always knew that as well. Because you can't be an athlete forever, you are working a long time, so I just had to kind of make the decision and in the end the decision was kind of made for me, which has maybe been easier as well.

OG: In terms of friendships and your social life, how did things change when you stopped?

R: My friendships definitely changed, there was one, my best friend from athletics – Jane – I stayed very much in touch with her and we socialised together a lot, so that's been like 15 years or something, and actually I have just really lost touch with her since I have had my children, she never had any children and I don't really know if that is the reason why or what, but I have kind of lost touch with her since I have had the girls. But up until that point she was still I would say one of my best friends. The rest of the girls I never really staying in touch with them, and I suppose thinking back now, I never went to watch athletics afterwards, I never went back once, and I don't know whether that's because, well I think I would have felt a bit of a fraud at that time if I was just sitting in the stand, I don't think I would have enjoyed that. And I think also because my injury was never diagnosed, I could walk, you know, to other people I would look normal, and you know I never gained any weight or anything, so people, when I bumped into them would say oh, you look really fit, when are you coming back, and it was kind of like, you just don't understand that I can't, that I'll never do it, I'll never be able to do what I did before. So that was kind of tricky. But then my friends started to be I suppose work friends, I started seeing the people from work, and then I moved into Glasgow and just met friends, yes, I mean my whole circle of friends did change completely.

OG: You talk about people asking if you were going to come back. Did you ever consider a comeback?

R: Not really. The only time that I kind of thought, but never did anything about it, was I was seeing this guy who got a job in St Lucia in the Caribbean, and I had been working at sportscotland in their publications department and I hated the job, and he was going to be there for a year and so I thought, I'll go to St Lucia and be with him. So I went to St Lucia and it is a Commonwealth country and I thought, right well I haven't got a job, so what I could do is, I'm in the Caribbean, I could train, beautiful warm weather, I mean it was the perfect time to try and do it, there was no pressure on me financially, ideal conditions in terms of the sunshine, I don't think they had a track actually, but anyway I thought about it but then I left after about 3 months and came home, and so did he, so it never really happened but I don't think it ever really would have happened because I think my knee really was too bad. I think I would have realised about my knee quite quickly, but also I would have been there without a coach, without anyone to train with, so I would have been back to all of the stuff I hated about training by myself. But no, apart from that I don't think so. If I had given my knee long enough rest then I would have been getting into my late 20s and it was at that time I started to, I joined BBC Sport again when I was 28 so by that time I was working every Saturday, I was well into it and I couldn't compete because all of the competitions would have been on Saturdays as well. And there would have been 3 skiing holidays a year to give up as well. So no, I had moved on.

OG: You have obviously maintained contact in sport through your job, but have you maintained any other form of contact with athletics in particular?

R: No, I haven't, no. I mean, my athletics club for a while said, oh you could come down and coach long jump, but I couldn't. You know, the one thing I did wonder about was that if my knee was okay whether I would have been more tempted to do it, because I think that the asset of me going to coach long jump is that I could demonstrate, but I couldn't even do that because even the most basic kind of take off drills, it would hurt, and I mean as I sit here just now it is hurting, and I know that even if I am on the beach with the girls and we do a wee long jump competition in the sand, when I take off it hurts, so to me there was no point in going back, because technically I have never done any coaching badges or exams and I certainly don't want to get into that. But if I could have gone down and just do a wee bit of demonstration, because I think that

that does help people enormously, then I would have maybe considered that, but you know, my knee doesn't work. But Scottish Athletics, all of the people have changed so much and they wouldn't know me from Adam so I have never had any approach from them either. You might think that with my kind of job and profile that Athletics might have asked me back to get involved with some of their campaigns or something like that, but nobody ever has.

OG: Do you think that this is an area in which governing bodies could be more proactive, in keeping in touch with former athletes and giving them opportunities to stay involved?

R: Yes, I think, I mean I can only speak from the experience of the relationship between athletics and me in the media, but I think that they should look around and see who their people are or have been, and with me I think they should have definitely contacted me and said, right Rachel, athletics doesn't get the media coverage that we would like it to get, what can we do about that, how can we write a press release, when is the best time to contact the BBC to get this, just to sit down and have half an hour to talk to use my expertise, but they have never done it. I have never had a great feeling of warmth from them on the occasions that I have spoken to them, and I usually somewhat pathetically, if I am interviewing someone from athletics I will say oh I used to do athletics, you know, in the hope that this might build rapport, to trust me, to know that I am not going to ask a stupid question, because I think that a lot of sports, and call them minority sports if you like, they think that journalists don't know anything about their sport or are not interested in their sport, or are going to trivialise their sport. So I guess I tell them I used to do athletics to hopefully help them to realise that I won't be like that. But even when I have told them I have never got a reaction, questions about what I did or who I ran for, nothing. I think that they are a bit suspicious of the media in general, and they cast me as the same as everybody else which is a bit foolish as, you know I will try hard for athletics.

OG: When you were thinking about retiring, did you speak to anyone about your decision, maybe family or friends?

R: I'm sure I would have spoken to mum and dad about it, because you know we spoke about everything, and I suppose I would have spoken to my coach about it, but to be honest I can't really remember any of those conversations at all. I know I would not have spoken to anyone at Scottish Athletics about it, because you were, I felt like I was an individual who did my own thing and only became involved with Scottish Athletics at their invitation to go and compete for them in a Scotland team, but apart from that I was doing it myself and I didn't feel that they were particularly interested in what I was doing, there was certainly no conversation, no dialogue on a regular basis. The only time I would ever have gone through, we used to have Scottish event squads at weekends, so there would be a jumps coach, and I would go and do a weekends training with the jumps coach, but then I never spoke to or heard from them till the next time, there was no kind of feeling of keeping an eye on my progress or anything like that.

OG: Is there anything else you want to tell me about your athletics career or your retirement?

R: I probably shouldn't have gone to the University of Wyoming because it was one of these places that is under snow for most of the year and I didn't investigate what kind of track they had, I didn't investigate what kind of weather they had. What we ended up doing was training indoors under the football stadium, which was Astroturf on top of concrete, so the whole of the track team got shin splints. It was at 9000 feet so the altitude which was fantastic for a distance runner was not so great for me. So if I was going to do a sports scholarship I should have gone to Florida or somewhere warm that's more conducive for a fast twitch athlete. Looking back I think I probably would have, I may still have done Stirling because that was one of the few options, I mean Loughborough, yes, that might have been an option, but then you know nobody contacted me from Loughborough. I suppose I have to put this as if one of my girls was in this situation, then I would be contacting Loughborough and all the other places. I should have pushed myself more than I did, but I think in some things I kind of took the easy option without really researching it, I took the comfortable, what would have been within my comfort zone. The whole injury thing is just ridiculous, there are so many lessons to be learned from that, that would not happen now, that would just not happen. And I think now I would have had a greater feeling of a togetherness of athletics because I would have hopefully been an Institute athlete and I would have hopefully had that kind of support, and I would have had people I could have gone to and said, look this knee is still not right, do you think you could look at it, so I think it would have been much different now – but we are talking 20 years later. I don't regret the way that it happened, because to be honest if I was an athlete now I would maybe have got more into the athletics and then had to give that up when I was 30 and then had no career to fall back on. I see how I could have designed things to have a more successful athletics career but that could have been to the detriment of my real job.

OG: Thank you very much for your time Rachel, I really appreciate it.

END

ISABEL (Rugby)

12th October 2007

OG: Can you start by telling me the story of your rugby career.

I: I was never going to play rugby originally, because my dad and my brother played, I lived in a small town called Thurso where I was the doctors daughter, the teachers daughter, I had 2 siblings ahead of me so I was Rowan's little sister, Alex's little sister, and so when I went to uni I thought I'm not playing rugby because I will still be Rowan's little sister. So I went to try hockey, which scared me witless, with the stick and the ball flying, I didn't get it, I had never played hockey at school because Thurso is a small town and there is no-one else to play against, I did a lot of surfing. And then after trying football and hockey and everything else, eventually one of my friends in my year at uni dragged me in my second year to training, and I just found it very easy. I had been watching it my entire life, I knew all the rules, I had played it in the back garden with my brother, I knew how to tackle, I knew how to be tackled, it was all quite instinctive. Took me a while to kind of have the desire to do any fitness, I think I always had the potential to be good and play internationally, but I was at uni, it was fun, I was still only just 18, dead young, so I really enjoyed the social side of the sport for the first probably 2 years while I was still at university. When I left uni, I left in 3rd year, I worked for a year, played while I was working and took it a wee bit more seriously, and started training. I had planned on going training at the end of what would have been my fourth year, two of my friends were still doing 4th year so I was going to travel with them, but when I'd left uni something about the working ethic, something about being at work, not being at uni, not being able to go out all the time, meant I started training a bit more and fell in with a couple of girls from the rugby club who were already playing Scotland A rugby, so the difference that made just adding fitness training was just amazing, suddenly I could think about what I was doing rather than thinking about breathing and discovered that I was actually better than I thought. I got into the Scotland A squad that year and I nearly got into the 1998 squad for the World Cup. But I was going travelling in 1998 and that was that, I was definitely going, my ticket was booked, my visa for Australia, it was all done. So I went away anyway, which I think was a good decision because I don't think I would have gone at a later date. I played rugby in Australia, really enjoyed that, much more so that I think I had at home because it Australia it was a new club so I didn't have any responsibilities. In my old club I had to help out, I had to do things. Whereas this club I rocked up to training on a Tuesday and Thursday, left again, played games on a Saturday, on the same day as the men, which was a very sociable thing, all the teams playing, BBQ afterwards. Played okay out there. Played for the New South Wales state team which was great. When I came home, I think sometimes when you are away your reputation improves, they had a couple of centres playing that weren't great, and it was, oh I wish Shep was back, and so I came back and I walked straight onto the bench for the full Scotland team. Wasn't as fit as I could have been, I had been travelling for quite some time, but that summer afterwards I got myself really, really fit and I have been on the Scotland team most match days from that '99 Six Nations through to 2006, last year, I went to the World Cup at the end of 2006. A few differences along the way, and I took a year out in 2005 for work reasons. I had just started Red Sky Management in 2003, in 2004 there was a Six Nations and there was a European Championships. I went to the Europeans and then I had just had enough, couldn't take it anymore, so thought I was retiring, but as it happened I just needed a break. By the time it got to the December of that year, from the May, I was actually feeling like I wanted to play again. I had trained all the way through, hadn't really dropped the training, so I was fit enough to go and play in the Six Nations in 2006. I also went to the Canada Cup at the end of 2005, so I was only really away for the Six Nations, but I enjoyed the break and I think it was beneficial that I had it, I went back refreshed and much more positive, I was much happier with the coaches. I was able to cope with the head coach even though I didn't like him because I wasn't negative, wasn't worried about work, coped with it a bit better. I had a lot of clashes with coaches over the years, I was always quite outspoken. I really understand the game very, very well, and I think some coaches found that annoying or irritating. The other thing is I got on very well with my peers, by and large, and I think I had quite an influence on the backs in particular. At my last world cup one of the coaches said to me, if you have a good session, the backs have a good session, if you have an off day then the backs have an off day, so you cannot have an off day. I kind of wish somebody had said that sooner because I hadn't realised it, because I think that could be one of the reasons in the past why coaches left me out. Maybe it was my fault a couple of times that I was dropped because I had a bad session and this had an effect on the whole team. I'm a very, very focused person, sometimes too much so, and so I really didn't realise in the early years that I had that kind of an impact. The highlights of my career, well going to Dubai, winning the Dubai 7s in front of 30,000 people, that was the best. Winning in France against France, that is not something anyone does very often. We won a European Championship in 2003 but have no sense of pride, or involvement, in it. I was in

the squad, in the match day 22, for 3 of the games, but I only played for 30 seconds of the final, didn't agree with selection, most of the team told me they didn't agree with it, which in some ways made it worse, I almost wish they had told me I was rubbish, that might have been easier. So I have got some quite negative memories of that tournament.

OG: What was going on in your life alongside rugby, before you set up your company?

I: From '99 to 2003 I worked for a hospitality company, predominantly I was a sales person for them, and it was very much 9 till 6. There was a problem in that the company sold hospitality at the six nations games, so usually there was a bit of a clash, particularly in the first season where I hadn't really proved myself to the company, so asking for time off at crucial times in their calendar was difficult. I ended up that first year working the day before an international, playing the Sunday, or playing the Saturday and then working on the Sunday, so it was difficult. But predominantly when I worked for them I left work at half 5, 6, went and trained, and I would say rugby was the most important thing. Because I am quite a natural sales person my job was not in the least bit difficult or stressful. It allowed me the comfort to take unpaid leave, knowing that I could make the money up, I just had to work doubly hard the week after to balance it out. To be honest my salary was pittance compared to the commission. It was a ten grand basic, but I was earning very good money for the age I was and the level of experience I had. In the summer of 2003 I set up Red Sky Management, and that was when things really changed, because the company became very important. I had to re-evaluate and re-assess. I found it really hard to miss training sessions or to reduce the effort I put into training sessions, and I think that trying to find the balance there and the pressure of setting up the company were what led to me taking the break. It all got to me and by the end of 2004, a year after I set up the company, I needed a time out, couldn't do it anymore. When I went back I think I went back with a less serious attitude to training, not that I wouldn't work hard at training but I didn't worry myself thinking about training so much, I just turned up and did it, and I actually think I was probably better as a result of that.

OG: How supportive were your family of your rugby career?

I: I actually wouldn't say that supportive to be honest. When I was away travelling for a year my mum and dad moved from Thurso to Aberdeen, and they set up their own occupational health company. They would come and watch if they were in town, and sometimes they would travel specially to see me, but they probably saw me play 5 or 6 times out of 53 caps, so not that supportive in that sense. And because they lived in Aberdeen they couldn't be supportive in the sense of doing things for me. I didn't really talk to them about the challenges of it or use them for any sort of emotional support. My friends were very supportive, and we had a very close knit group of us who played for Scotland at the same time, and played at the same rugby club and we were very supportive of one another. My brother was quite supportive, I would talk to him about how I played, he would watch videos and give me help and feedback, and we used to talk about how to talk to and deal with coaches. At one of the times when I wasn't being picked and thought I should have been I actually worked with a sport psychologist, not to deal with my rugby performance although we looked at that a bit, but mainly about how to cope with being dropped, how to work with a coach who told me that my tits got in the way when I passed and that was why I was dropped. The sport psychologist helped me to compartmentalise that, help me to realise that selection wasn't necessarily anything to do with performance, it is often about someone else's beliefs. That is probably why I can now talk about it not as a highlight or a low point, just as something that happened, whereas it would have been easy for me to have still been very bitter about it.

OG: Do you think your parents understood how important rugby was to you?

I: I'm not sure, I'm not sure if they did. I don't think that they saw it as a big deal, whereas I definitely did, but I think they understood that I saw it as a big deal.

OG: You talked about your career highlights, but what were the low points?

I: Other than the coaches, there is probably games that were lost that were really low points, where I felt we should have done better. Mainly those around times where maybe I have not performed, and you are left thinking about what if, what if I'd tried this, what if I'd tried that. I think those are the hardest ones, those are the ones that give you the sleepless nights. I remember one tackle that I missed that was completely my mistake, and those are the ones that I lose sleep over. After the World Cup I spent a lot of time thinking about the what ifs and the what could have been, because we were very, very close, we were 17 points in the points difference away from qualifying for the semi final, and it was just gutting, there was a lot of what ifs at that point, it was really tough to live with. Another low point was being stripped of the vice captaincy for Scotland because I didn't get on with the captain, and there weren't many people that did get on with her, but she had the ear of the head coach. I found that things happening in rugby did have an effect on other aspects

of my life. I wouldn't be as effective at work, particularly when I started my new company and I think that was a problem, in that if it wasn't going well at rugby it wasn't going well at work. Starting the new company I found that daily I didn't often have something to be proud of myself for, whereas I was used to selling, I used to make a sale on a daily basis in my previous job, and I would feel really proud, but when I started the company there was so much set up to do, that sometimes you are grinding away and not really seeing any return. So rugby was good in the sense that if it was going well then it gave me something to feel good about, but if it was going badly then it was just awful, it wasn't a good combination.

OG: Is there anything you particularly miss about playing rugby?

I: I miss the thrill of it. I miss the adrenaline rush of coming out and playing for Scotland. I miss the real focus of it, the challenge ahead. I was invited to play this coming November for the Wooden Spoon society, against the 7s team going to Dubai, and I kind of jumped at the chance. It was about having something to focus on, something to aim for. These days I train for fun and to fit into my jeans, I don't train for sport, but I have probably upped my training a bit for this match as I don't want to look silly, make a fool of myself, or look like the one who had let themselves go. But I find going to the gym easier, it is easier to motivate myself, because I have that target. I miss training in the gym with other players, the banter that went along with that, the camaraderie of the sport in general too, I miss all of that.

OG: Is there anything you really don't miss?

I: Definitely. I don't miss the weekend training sessions in January, or being at the beck and call of the Scotland coaches who say, oh we know it's only June but we expect you to come to a training camp and be fitness tested. I don't miss the continual pressure to be the best, I am enjoying not having to be the best. I mean I still play club rugby now, but I don't have to be the best. When I play these days I have managed to stop analysing everything I do in games, and if I throw a bad pass it is like, oh well, never mind, I don't need to make it any better, I'm as good as I am and I'm doing it for fun. So I'm really enjoying that. I'm also enjoying having time to do other things at the weekends, getting back into surfing, and I bought a body board so body boarding as well as paddle surfing, which is great fun. And if the surf is up I don't go to the gym to do weights. And if somebody says do you want to go mountain biking, I can do that, I have the time to do things. There were things that were sacrificed for rugby. I think I sacrificed some friendships actually, there were some friends that I was in college with, and I won't get time, or I didn't make time to catch up with them, for probably about the 7 years that I was playing rugby seriously, and as a result of that they are acquaintances, I still know them, I could be at the same party as them and still chat to them, but I am unlikely to go for a drink just with them now, because I don't know if I would say that they are friends anymore, well they are not friends, they are not people that I could call upon, and I think that's a shame. Do I regret it, would I change it, I don't know, but I probably wouldn't, because it would have changed what I achieved and what I didn't achieve. And then definitely other sports, other interests got sacrificed, you know things like mountain biking, skiing, never could go skiing in January because of the fear of injury before the Six Nations. I went snowboarding last Christmas and I really enjoyed it, but I would like to have learnt to snowboard when I was younger. So I probably missed out on a few things like that.

OG: Can you tell me more about the period leading up to your retirement?

I: Well I had had that year out that I had thought initially was retirement, and then I realised that actually that was too soon, I wasn't ready to give up. I went back with it pretty much in mind that I would go to the World Cup, so there was a Canada Cup, a Six Nations, and then the World Cup in 2006, and then that was going to be it. So there were a few things to focus on and this was all mapped out. I think subconsciously I had made that decision when I went back that the World Cup would be the end of it, but as I got closer and closer to the World Cup I think I probably reconfirmed that this was going to be it, enjoy it, savour it, and I made a very conscious effort of enjoying every moment. I had trained really well in the lead up to the World Cup, and surprisingly for being at my oldest I was also at my fastest. They do so that sprinters get faster round about when they are 30. I turned 30 at the World Cup and I was probably the fastest that I had been. They moved me to the right wing, something I saw as a huge demotion, but luckily I had been given some very strong hints that that was going to happen the summer before the World Cup so I had some time to adjust. So when I went to the World Cup I was determined to enjoy the 80 minutes on the pitch as much as I could, regardless of the fact that I was on the wing, and as a result I got my hand on the wing more than I had when I had been playing at 12, I was just a bit cheeky and did what I wanted. And I did enjoy it, really enjoyed the games, there was a lot of freedom, I didn't have the defensive responsibilities that I did when I was playing in the centre. I don't think I would have enjoyed that experience as much if I felt I was still going to be playing, there was the freedom of knowing I was going to retire, I almost had to enjoy it. It was like you don't have a choice but to enjoy it because it is going to be your last games, so there is no point moping about the fact that you are on the wing, you have got to enjoy it, you cannot have any regrets. It just

felt like the right time. At the end of the World Cup there were a few girls who were retiring who were a few years older than me, one was 4 years older, and I did wonder did that mean I could go to another World Cup, but this time I thought I will just sit with this for a while, and as the days went by after the World Cup I realised that it was the end, that I was happy with it. I got my 50th cap at the World Cup, which was really important to me, because having had that sort of retirement earlier I had thought that I was never going to get to that. I think a lot of those things, the 50th cap, playing on the wing, it all seemed appropriate and all helped with the feeling that it was the right time. It seemed like a turning point.

OG: How did it feel when you had played your final game and knew that was it over?

I: I was actually very upset after the final game initially when the whistle went, because we had lost, but I wasn't at all upset in the changing room afterwards. I went in, first thing I did which was very unusual was went and cracked open a beer, I shook hands with some of the girls that I had played with for years and wouldn't play with again. It was a wee bit emotional but I wasn't at all sad, I was quite happy with it. I think I had deal with a lot of it earlier in the tournament, after we lost against New Zealand, because we only needed a bonus point to qualify but we didn't get it and knew we were out, and I was absolutely crushed. So after the New Zealand game there was that feeling of that's it, I will never make a semi final of a World Cup, and that was kind of, it was a real moment of that is it over. I think I almost retiring then. We had put everything into that game and had played really well, had scored 3 tries against them that nobody else managed to do, even England in the final, we had a lot to be proud of, but we didn't do it, we didn't make it, and it was kind of like, right that is it done. So the last two games after that were like, right we can just enjoy these, stuff it.

OG: How did retiring affect the rest of your life?

I: I threw myself into work, I had a lot going on at work, but it was a bit difficult, a bit flat. I didn't really know what to do with myself, and I actually did very, very little up until about Christmas. But then I was struggling to get into my jeans, and though right, hang on a second, I had lost a bit of muscle bulk but was still the same weight, right that means it is fat, right, not great. I think initially when I gave up at the World Cup I thought I would be giving up rugby all together, as in club as well, but a couple of my other pals who also gave up also played hockey, so every weekend they still had a focus and they still had a club environment and a team environment to be part of, and I didn't really recognise that. I just saw them giving up rugby and thought I would do that too. It slowly dawned on me that I kind of needed that, I needed a sport. I had got surfing to go and do as a team sport, but I needed a team sport, I needed the competition. So I had been playing badminton weekly with some friends, that was great fun but not the same. So I went back to playing rugby in January for the club, and I think that is what sorted me out. I felt right, yeah, this is enough, training once a week, playing once a week, that was enough for me, and if I didn't want to make myself available for the team I didn't have to, there was no pressure. I was doing it because I wanted to, I was enjoying rugby, just playing. These days I'm really happy to help the younger players to, help them to progress, pass on my knowledge.

OG: How you had any moments where you have thought about a comeback?

I: Yeah, yeah, a lot. You know probably on a weekly basis I think about that. I don't think I would ever do it, in fact I know I wouldn't ever go back, but yeah I often have weak moments where I think about it. But when I think about the training, when I think about the commitment, and when I think about my dodgy back, which was a factor in retiring, I just think no. Realistically, no. One of the things that was hard actually, a week after the World Cup, there was quite a few of us that retired, and I kind of wondered if the SRU or the SWRU would make some kind of announcement about our retirements, and they didn't, and that was a little disappointing in some ways. I felt that there was no closure. I didn't want a ceremony or award or anything like that, but there was no recognition of thanks for your contribution, we recognise it, we recognise you are leaving. They also didn't engage with us to get us back involved in coaching, you really had to push yourself forward and be saying I want to coach to be able to get involved. I had sent an email offering, I said leave me alone for 6 months, and then I am happy to do a few things, I listed them, and one of them was mentoring young girls, one of them was coaching in specific areas, areas I thought I could add something, and the other one was I would be willing to go on coaching courses to get involved in other aspects. But nobody ever got back in touch to take me up on the offer. I think there is something more than can be done for people retiring. The governing bodies seem to see it as a relief, finally they have left was the impression that I got. I think sometimes the problem is that the coaching staff are sometimes involved at the governing body and so where the two should separate and the governing body should be thanking and recognising the players, the coaches are still at that stage of thank god you've left because you've been a pain. It is about helping the entire sport rather than thinking only about the specific team that they have got to get out. There is a Scottish thing there as well, I don't know if it happens in other countries, but here it is like if you leave a job they are like, go on

then, get, beat it, and then forgetting that there is an opportunity to keep engaged with that person. The annoying thing for me was that they knew the business I was in, they knew Rowan, and they knew what we were doing. Like they always struggle for coaches, and to be able to tap in to me to say would one of your young players do a kicking session with the girls, can you get in touch with so and so and see if they would volunteer. I think I could have offered lots of help, I could offer help to find sponsorship for the women's team. I had been in touch with the union and had some discussion with them, and they said they would get back in touch, bring me in, but they have never been back in contact since. I don't know whether their noses had been put out of joint because I had critiqued what they were doing. It was a very pleasant conversation we had, it ended well, and I had given positive feedback as well at the critique, and she was certainly thanking me at that stage for my help, but never followed it up. But I think I am a resource that should have been tapped into, if not for coaching then for the contacts that I have.

OG: What else do you think could be done for players at the end of their careers?

I: I think they perhaps in the lead up to retirement, in the year leading up to retirement, I think they could give some specific roles within the teams and get them involved then with coaching, perhaps with younger players who are in the development squads. That would have meant when you retired you would have had something you were still doing that was linked to the sport, it would have been easy to tap into when you were playing because you would have felt a commitment to oblige, so when you retired you might still feel that commitment. You might really enjoy it and therefore want to continue. Rather than waiting till they have finished playing and then look at what they might be able to do, you might be thinking no that is over for me, whereas this way it would be, right I have finished playing, now all I have got to do is that bit of coaching. There is no management of that transition. There was no management of how to change the physical habits that you have, from training to coaching and also volunteering, refereeing, supporting, going on the committee, I mean anything, there must be loads of jobs they could have co-opted people into. I think there is also a mental health responsibility. They say one of the sources of stress is boredom, and I can imagine that affecting athletes when they retire, not knowing what to do with their time, and I think governing bodies should be looking to do something about it, something they should be expected to do. The health and safety guidelines for businesses these days look at stress management, and governing bodies should almost see themselves as sort of pseudo-employers, okay their employees are all volunteers but does that mean Oxfam doesn't have to care about the health of the workers in their shops. And the athletes have a high level of loyalty and dedication and to the governing body, probably more than to their employer. I did before I had my own company, when I was working, I had far more loyalty to my sport. If my employer had said you can't play in the Six Nations, I would have quit my job, hands down, no questions asked. Would I have quit rugby for my employer, no chance.

OG: Did you speak to anyone when you were thinking about making the decision to retire?

I: Just my peers, the people that were also retiring, we all talked about it quite a lot, like gosh what are we going to do with our time, stuff like that. We kind of focused I guess on the things that we wouldn't miss, we spoke about those a lot, like at least we won't have to do x, y and z. We didn't really talk about what we would miss. I think we spoke to each other because we all understood, for example if I did speak to other friends who didn't play the sport or who weren't retiring, it wasn't really a conversation, it was oh well, you'll figure something out, oh you'll have loads of time to do stuff. They didn't understand how important it was, or that it was still difficult even though it was your own choice. The first time I stopped I did speak to the backs coach, it should probably have been a conversation with the head coach but I hated him, we didn't get on. The second time I didn't, but it was something that they just seemed to know. It is something about World Cups, lots of people seem to retire after these, and several of the coaches were retiring too. It is one of those things, if they had said to me, look Isabel, we have lots of people retiring after the World Cup, you are only 30, would you consider playing one more season to help bed in the other players, I probably would have. But I wasn't approach and I didn't really want to, so I wasn't going to offer. Maybe that is a discussion that should have happened. But I felt if I was going to retire that it should be at the end of a World Cup, and allow a new set of players plenty of time to settle down and develop for the next one.

OG: Is there anything else you want to tell me about your rugby career or about retirement?

I: I would definitely advice a wee bit of thought about what they were going to do immediately after retirement, and perhaps to plan a number of activities in the months following retirement, even if it only once a week I am going to play squash with a friend, even something as basic as that. I think if you are the sort of person who enjoys a team sport, then just because you are giving that up doesn't mean having to give up that group type environment, that social type activity that involves a group of people. So finding alternative activities and social events, things like that, with a variety of social circles, not necessarily just the family.

Some people say I am giving up and going to spend more time with family, husband or whatever, but you shouldn't give up all that up, the group stuff, you will be unhappy with things otherwise. It would be great if governing bodies did work harder to retain people in the sport, encouraged you to share your past experiences. I mean every athlete's experiences will be different and unique, but I think it would be great if they could take the experiences from several former athletes and were able to share that with people retiring, so that they could look at all the different experiences, and think oh right, well I don't like that bit, but I do like that bit, giving them some of their options I guess.

END

ELLIE (Hockey)

5th November 2007

OG: Can you start by telling me the story of your hockey career?

E: Basically I've played at Scottish level since I was 14, played all the age groups, U16, U18, U21, seniors. And then obviously GB. So I've played as a full international for about the last 20 years. I played in 2 Olympics, at Atlanta and Sydney, 3 Commonwealths, 2 World Championships, and a number of Europeans as well. So fairly experienced in terms of major tournaments. Other than that just basically been involved in aspects of hockey for a long, long time, so it did become your lifestyle for that level and that length of time. And then I actually retired after we failed to qualify for Athens, and then I got asked by the Scottish National coach 3 months down the line if I would come back, because for Scotland it was obviously a fairly important year coming up. I did reconsider actually for a number of weeks but initially I said no, but then I did come back so I probably retired twice officially. And that is really sort of where we are at now, so completely finished playing, really more due to a back injury, last year, that was my last season, so haven't played since.

OG: Can you tell me about how you got started in hockey?

E: It was through school initially. Basically I started playing in first year and then just basically got picked up from there and went through the process, as you do.

OG: And were you working all the way through your career, or were you full time at any stage?

E: It varies. For Scottish we were working and playing all the time, which was when we were competing pretty hard going, because you had a big, big commitment. But when we were playing for GB in the build up to the Olympics we had basically a full year off in preparation. Partly we were away all the time, on the road, and also it was very much based down south so only that time were we supported financially in terms of being able to stop work. We didn't get full salaried or that, but we had enough to live off, enough to get by. So it was a bit varied between Scottish and GB.

OG: Work wise, did you have to take a lot of time off – and were they supportive of your hockey career?

E: Yes, I mean I was fortunate that obviously, I mean I have been here for 14 years, that they were very supportive, which makes a huge difference because if they weren't it would have caused all sorts of problems. So I was really fortunate in terms of getting the time off, they got cover in and obviously my job was kept open for me. For example they gave me the time off for the Olympics and they got cover in, supply, and as I say I just came back when the hockey programme had finished.

OG: How much time would hockey take up for you on a weekly basis?

E: Well if you are thinking generally, during work, when I was working and trying to do it, I would be training 3 times a day. So it would be a session before work, a pitch session most nights after work, and a running session. So we would basically be trying to fit in weights, pitch and running sessions, so most days you were talking 2 to 3 sessions and then obviously training at weekends. So it was really demanding at that point. When we were off full time, we were based down south and it was sort of 4 days on, a couple of days off, and then we might play at weekends. But that varied quite a lot because some days we might be away on trips for 3 weeks or a month, so we were constant for that amount of time, then you had a week off. But it was substantial chunks of time though, which was the case with both ways.

OG: How important would you say hockey was to you at that time?

E: Well I loved playing the game since I started it in first year, and my ambition was always to play in the Olympics so I always had a drive and motive to achieve that. So yes, it was very important.

OG: So what effect did it have on the rest of your life?

E: It does have a massive impact because you can't have the social life that you would normally lead, even when you were at home you couldn't go out drinking or even late, you were away most weekends anyway, and also you knew you were getting up to train and do things. And also just being physically demanding you needed your sleep just to be able to do the sessions. And obviously when you were away you missed a number of things. It changes your whole lifestyle, you have to be carefully obviously with your diet and everything else, and you can't just go out and do what everyone else is doing. When you are at top level, when you are at Olympic level or top Scottish, it had a massive impact on your life.

OG: Were most of your friends involved in hockey as well?

E: A bit of a mix to be honest. I mean obviously you get very close to the girls in the squad because you are with them so much and you are training all the time so they become good friends. But I also had another group of friends outwith that as well, and they were very, very good because quite often I couldn't go out drinking, still went out with them but couldn't drink, or we were going for a meal and whereas they would maybe have gone for a Chinese or whatever you would need something different, so they were really understanding.

OG: What are your most significant achievements in hockey, the things you are most proud of?

E: I mean obviously I think being selected for my first Olympics, that was a big achievement and one of the highlights was going to the opening ceremony. Just the first Olympics was brilliant, it was just a great experience, and in American they were just over the top about everything but they were just so enthusiastic it was great. Some other highlights, probably I was a forward so probably scoring some crucial goals in terms of for qualification, for Scottish to World Cup and GB as well, it's hard to pinpoint exactly 2 or 3 but certainly selection for Olympics has to be up there and scoring in the Olympics was always satisfying. A lot of good highlights with Scotland as well, because being a smaller nation doing well in World Cups was always a big, big achievement, and I had quite a big input in getting us there in terms of goals scored. I think in terms of other honours I was the most capped Scottish player, and highest goal scorer, and I hold the European record for scoring 9 in one game, so there were a few things along the way that you often forget about a lot of the time but when you look back are probably significant achievements.

OG: Were there low points?

E: Yeah, oh yes lots of low points as well I think. One of the hardest things was losing out on the bronze medal in Atlanta on penalties. It had been a real tough tournament and we had actually finished third on the table, and then we'd to play a play-off with the Dutch and we lost on penalties, so that was hard, really hard. There's lots of ups and downs, not qualifying for Athens was a big disappointment, we had the potential we just didn't perform at the tournament. I had a couple of bad injuries, I mean throughout my whole career I have been lucky really, but I did my cruciate in my knee, and I smashed my forearm in an accident at training, got hit, so those times were always challenging in terms of getting back and you never know whether you'll be quite the same. But to be fair I had fantastic support and physio, I had a number of operations on my arm to get it right, so I was lucky I had that support at that time, medical support through GB predominantly. But because of that it made it a lot easier, but it is much more of an individual challenge then to work to get back to that level of fitness. So they were challenging times, but I think through a career at that level there's always a number of ups and downs.

OG: Is there anything you miss about being a hockey player?

E: I miss the competitiveness of playing at that level, I think it's instinctive, that's in you, so I do miss that competitive nature of just getting out and playing. And I just miss playing generally, but I think it is probably a bit easier to accept because I know that my back is not up to it now, there is a physical reason for it. I also miss just being in the group and part of the group, you miss that because you have been so involved for so long, but I do a lot of coaching and stuff so I am still very involved.

OG: Is there anything you don't miss?

E: I don't miss the hard graft. I mean I loved my training, I had no problem, but now with my back there's limitations so you think I'm glad I don't have to go and do this or that.

OG: How supportive were your parents and your family through your career?

E: Really supportive, I mean they were great. They kind of watched a lot of the tournaments. Initially my mum wasn't that supportive, not not supportive, but she didn't understand because I show jumped internationally and that was her sport, so there was a bit of tug of war when I was younger because I was obviously playing and she was waiting at the side for me to go and show jump. I show jumped internationally till I was about 21, 22, so it was tough at times. But after that they loved it, and they were totally supportive 100%. My mum is terrified of flying but she obviously she was never going to miss when we went to Atlanta so it gave her incentive to get over her fear. Eventually they came to most tournaments, because it was great fun, we had a great crowd, so there was a social side and they got to see a lot of parts of the world as well.

OG: Why did you make the decision to choose hockey over show jumping?

E: In the end it probably wasn't a hard decision because at that time, I also had decided that I was going to get a degree behind me, because the problem with show jumping is you could get one injury or one accident and that could be you and you could be left with no background or nothing to fall back on. So at the end of school I always decided I was going to go to uni, and my parents kept the horses going at home and I was back at weekends and stuff, so they did a lot of work. Also at that time show jumping financially was a massive, massive expense. And although I probably could have done it full time professionally, I would probably have needed to do it down south, and it would have been a big decision. And at that point the hockey was going well and I loved doing that. I was probably never going to go down the line of doing the show jumping professionally. I wanted a career as well. At the end of the day it probably wasn't too tough a decision, you know just the circumstances and also financial backing.

OG: Can you tell me more about your retirement from hockey.

E: I had made the decision before the tournament, well in advance, that I was going to finish after 2004, if we had got there I would have finished after the Olympics, but obviously then we didn't. It was a fairly easy cut off in terms of the next cycle, there wasn't much in the next year, it was the following year. So it was quite a good cut off point. And at that time I just felt things were changing at work, a lot busier, more responsibility, so time wise it was becoming even more difficult. So at that point it seemed the right decision to make. And I still think at that time it was the right decision. And then the Scottish management changed and the new coach said, can you come back, would you like to come back. And I said I needed to make a few decisions, and circumstances at work actually changed at that time which did free up a bit more time, so that was probably the biggest element in terms of making the decision to come back. I still had a bad back at that time, so it was under the condition that I might not be able to train every session and do everything, but if the coach was happy with that then that was fine, just I'm a senior player, need to look after me a bit. And she was happy with that, and as I say it was really because circumstances changed at work that allowed me to consider it again, so that was really why. So it was all for the build up to the Commonwealths again, and I knew in my heart of hearts and they knew that it was only going to be for that short spell. But at that moment in time Scotland needed a few old heads as well, so it worked both ways. At that phase we didn't have that many experienced players at the top level, and it does make a big difference.

OG: How difficult was it to make the first decision to retire?

E: Well as I say at that time it was probably the right decision, because at that point I'd just been promoted at work and different things, so therefore it was an easier decision because of that. If my work hadn't changed it would have been a bit more difficult I think. But I'd achieved everything I'd wanted to achieve, done everything, so therefore you think that it is a good time and the right time. And I say if circumstances hadn't changed again I probably wouldn't have gone back. But when I did decide to go back I had still been playing club hockey, still training just as hard as I had been, so I hadn't stepped back. Club hockey at the top level is still hard, and I tend to do more than most. So it wasn't a problem, I could step straight back into the programme without having to make any adjustments, so from that point it was easy as well.

OG: So then your second retirement came after 2006?

E: After 2006, yeah, we had the Commonwealths and then we had the World Cup qualifier, and we didn't qualify so that was the final thing.

OG: And if you had qualified for the World Cup in 2007, would you have stayed?

E: Well yeah, possibly, but I don't know, I'm not 100% sure. Because again I played in two World Cups and to play in the World Cup that was it, it doesn't lead to anything else, so it was just another tournament. I mean chances are that I probably would have stayed on for that further 6 months or whatever.

OG: And how much did your back influence your decision to retire the second time?

E: Yes, I mean at that point my back was definitely deteriorating. I had a lot of physio and had to look after it, so yes it definitely had a big impact on playing at that level, because I am the type of person I don't like doing things by halves, so if I can't play my game I don't want to go on and play half heartedly. Because a number of people, when I finished playing last year, were saying oh but you are still playing really well, and I said yes but I am not playing the way that I want to play. And by then I was always aching all week and just recovering by sort of Thursday or Friday, and then doing it again. And I also had to play my final year pretty much on pain killers, so from that respect, from a health point of view, it was like I have got to draw the line somewhere. I mean my back is still sore and it gets dodgy at school, even demonstrating to the kids, so there was an element of thinking about the longer term, and got to be sensible.

OG: How did the second decision to retire compare to the first one? Was there more of a feeling of finality that time?

E: Well I am sure that feeling was there both times, because the first time I thought it was the end but then with circumstances changing I was able to reconsider. But as I say I don't regret the first time or think it was the wrong decision, I think it was the right decision at that time. And the same the second time round, that was definitely the right choice.

OG: And did you stop club hockey at that point as well?

E: I played another season of club hockey, just finished last season, so I played on a bit. It was probably even a bigger change when I stopped club hockey, because now I am not playing at all, so that's almost a big, big change rather than I was not playing Scottish but I was still playing hockey. It has been funny getting used to being on the sidelines. It's a different routine, because I still coach my club side and obviously coach at school, and I am involved in Scottish U18s, and I am an institute coach as well so I am heavily involved, which I think has made the transition much easier. But it is just getting used to a different routine on a Saturday and Sunday. But I think with work, I am really busy at work, and so I think it was right, I couldn't have committed the way I would like to playing and that would frustrate me. And because I am still involved it is not as though that is it, and it is a complete cut off.

OG: Did your life change away from hockey when you retired?

E: Not greatly, because I am still involved and a lot of my friends are through hockey and stuff. I mean there are definitely elements of your social life that you have to pick up again, or trying to start another social life and being much older. That is probably the biggest thing, because you just couldn't when you were training full time and away a lot, you just couldn't have that aspect. Now you have got a bit more freedom and it is nice to be able to go out and meet friends and do things at weekends that you couldn't do before.

OG: Is there a physical element to retiring from hockey?

E: Yes, definitely. But I think again because of my back, it has been easier as well. I mean I think I did go through a phase when I was obsessed with training, and that was it. I got a lot more sensible when I got older, but there is definitely a physical element. Because when you are training so often your body is used to that and even when you missed a day when you were training you feel like it was a week, so that is a big, big aspect. It has probably taken about 2 years to tone down gradually, it definitely takes a long time to get used to, and cutting back. It is a big, big change. It is probably one of the biggest aspects I think.

OG: Are you involved in any other sports now?

E: Just socially, golf socially and stuff, but not any competitive level.

OG: When you were making the decision to retire, did you talk to anybody about what you were thinking or what was going on?

E: No, I was quite clear in my own mind, I felt I knew. I wasn't concerned about it in terms of what am I going to do, I mean I have not got a minute as it is, so I now sometimes think how did I ever possibly manage to fit all that it. But your priorities change slightly. So I was never concerned about it, thinking that I

might be sitting here doing nothing, and I knew in my own mind that it was the right thing, the right decision to make.

OG: Was telling people your decision difficult, telling team mates, telling coaches?

E: I think a lot of the girls in the Scottish squad knew that that would be my last tournament. I think when it actually comes to the final, final thing, you know at the end of the game I remember saying, everyone was gathered round, and everyone was speaking about the game, and I was like well that was my last game kind of idea. So that was probably a lot more emotional, but it wasn't difficult, you know I never had any problems with it, it was more just the emotional aspect. And they were as well because we had been so involved for so long.

OG: Do you think the sport does enough to encourage former players to come back into the sport?

E: No, I think absolutely not. I've said to managers in the past that I don't think we utilise resources at the top level, and I think that is probably a weakness of the SHU, because for me we have got a number of experienced players that would have been brilliant to come back in, help coach and do things, even talk to squads about how to cope at tournaments, all these things, and I've said it more than once that I think we don't utilise within hockey anything like what we could. So that is something that we could definitely improve on, absolutely. And I know people who have had the experience who would have no problem coming back if they were asked, come and do this for a day or whatever, because like myself they all love the sport and got a lot out of the sport, so they are pretty well in to giving back a little bit. A lot of them are still playing club and different things so they are still involved a little bit. I think at a high level individuals have to be far more proactive in setting courses and doing things, I think the SHU could be approaching a lot of these people and asking them. I do think that is a weakness, we could do a lot more to help ourselves in that front. You can't beat experience, to come in and talk to the youngsters, passing on knowledge, giving them role models and whatever.

OG: Is there anything else you want to tell me about your hockey career or your retirement?

E: Well I think they have to consider that they have got something to do once they retire, and they are not just going right I am going to retire and that's it and haven't thought about other options, either staying in the sport through coaching or other ways, or doing something completely different, but having something to do. And also I would say to them if they are fit and can play, then play as long as they can at club level and things because once it's gone, that's it. And you think oh I want to retire, and that's fine, you can tone down a lot and maybe take 3 or 6 months completely out, but I think after that it is quite nice to have a little bit of involvement, playing for the 2s or 3s or whatever, but being capable of still being able to do that. That's their choice at the end of the day but I think if they're fit enough then that is something long term that they can consider. I think a lot of it is just down to the individual. I mean I'd spoken to a few people, way back before I considering retiring, and talking to them about retiring, and they found it quite difficult. But I never as I say found it difficult as such, but I think that's obviously because there was a physical reason as well, so you have a physical limitation and you know that.

END

OLIVIA (Tennis)

23rd October 2007

OG: Can you start by telling me the story of your tennis career?

O: Well I started playing when I was 7 and then I got into competition fairly early on. Took that through to national squad level playing national tournaments and some of the tournaments in Britain as well. I played a couple of British tournaments later in my career too, in my twenties, and then I got a really sore back which just developed and developed until it became a slipped disk last year, and that is basically where I stopped.

OG: In terms of getting started in tennis then, how did that happen?

O: Through my mum, she played tennis and so she took me down the club and gave me a go.

OG: When you were at your highest level, were you part time or full time?

O: I was part time. Probably the most I was playing was when I was at school, and also attending school at the time, and then I tried to carry that on when I started working, playing as much as I could. So that meant that I was probably playing about 5 times a week, on average. And then tournaments most weekends, although more so as a junior, as the older you get the fewer tournaments there are that you can play in, without travelling too far.

OG: How important would you say tennis was to you back then?

O: I played other sports as well but it was very important, it was my main sport, and it was something when I had to stop I found it very difficult. I also played some squash, badminton, hockey when I was at school. I played squash in the Scottish squads as well, stopped that when I was about 16, because I got a few problems with my knees that made squash really difficult. I kept several things going because I think if I hadn't had other things to do I would have got bored of the tennis.

OG: How supportive were your parents of your tennis career?

O: Really supportive. My mum took me everywhere, for all my sports. She didn't push me, she was just there, took me places, and was supportive when I needed it. My dad never really liked the racquet sports that much, he played a little himself but didn't really take that much of an interest. He is a golfer and a rugby player mainly.

OG: What were you doing work-wise?

O: When I left school I was tennis coaching, part time, that was when I went to uni. And then I started an office job when I finished uni. And now I have moved into the ambulance service, into the control room. My uni course took up an awful lot of my time, it was a really intensive course, so I didn't do an awful lot of tennis in my first year, but then picked it up again gradually through the rest of it as I started to be able to balance out the work. Education has always been important, something that my parents always pushed throughout school and in uni. Then when I was working in my first office job I went to play in one of the British tour competitions down south, which was the next stage up, so I was training quite a lot. It was just a standard office job so I could focus quite a bit of time on tennis, and I decided that I wanted to really give it a go. I wanted to take a year out of work, and saved up money for it, so I could go full time. But then just at that time my back got really sore and stopped that from happening.

OG: What were your most significant achievements in tennis?

O: Playing for Scotland, definitely, I always enjoyed doing that, it is something that is good to say that you have done. I did quite well in the British tournament that I did when I was working as well. My aim had been to get into the world rankings, which would have been possible if I had gone full time and been able to play in the right tournaments.

OG: What were the low points?

O: The first one would have been when I was 16, I got dropped from the Scottish squad for not showing enough potential, which was pretty hard to take at that age. That was a kind of changing point in my life where you kind of get to 16 and your outlook on life changes a bit. So it maybe came at a good time, I took a couple of years and then came back into it properly again. The back problem was a low because it was sore for about 5 or 6 years, and I just never did anything about it which was a bad mistake, and then when I slipped a disc last year that was really hard because it put me out of everything, not just tennis. When you are used to being active and then no longer are it is a real down, because you can't do anything.

OG: Is there anything you particularly miss about playing high level tennis?

O: I miss the whole thinking through a match, the kind of problem solving part of it. I am a competitive person, have been involved in competitive things since I was small, so I miss that because there is nothing in normal life that really gives you that side of things, like I go running and swimming now but there is not the competition, it is not the same.

OG: Is there anything you don't miss?

O: Some of the arrogance, just the attitudes of some people. Some people had really bad attitudes, the psyching out off the court and things. When I played I really did it for the enjoyment, and so really didn't like all of that.

OG: Can you tell me some more about that period leading up to your retirement.

O: I had had pain in my back for a long time, and actually when I finally had to stop I was literally forced. I was playing squash at the time and I twinged my back about 5 times in the same game, and after the 5th time I could barely move, so that was it. That was the final straw. And then I was just physically weak after that, I couldn't even pick things up, I was almost having to get help just to put on shoes and socks. At that stage I thought I would be out for a little while and then I would get back in. The pain eased off and the sensation eased off, and then I went back to play squash about 2 weeks later and it just went again. So it did take me a few occasions before I finally realised that it was going to take some time.

OG: How did that make you feel, when you realised that you weren't going to be able to continue?

O: I was really depressed, it was difficult going to work and things because I just got really frustrated that I couldn't do anything outside work and it felt like I had lost everything that I was, everything that I did outside my work. I think my focused changed and I got really into my work, I was in a new job as well so that was okay, I had moved into the new job not long before all this had happened. I was really enjoying my work but I got really lethargic as well because I wasn't doing anything. I was trying to do things like go for a little run and stuff like that, so I was trying to do as much as I could, like I was going to a fitness class and cutting out the exercises that I couldn't do. I guess it took just over a year before I could really start to get back into anything properly though.

OG: Any have you thought about coming back into higher level tennis again now?

O: It is in the back of my mind that I might be able to. I think probably for a year it was that I will do it, but now it is a might, if it happens then it happens, I'm doing other things now. I would like to, because I miss it, but at the moment when I play I can't guarantee that I can get through a match. The physio has said that there are two scenarios, either it will become fine, or it will get to the stage where I can manage the pain. I should be able to get back into it, but I've got no aims or goals linked to any of that at the moment. I've got no real thought in my head that it will happen.

OG You talked about the negative effects stopping had on you. How long did you feel like that?

O: I probably felt like that for about 6 months, it was over the summer period when I should have been playing. I think things started to change when I decided to focus on other things. In the summer there was the county competition, and I did play some of that although I was serving underarm and it was sore to move around. But after that I started to get more into running, and I started to do a few other things. Even now though I still get the entry forms for the tournaments, I was doing all of them for several years, and there are still some of the people I used to hit with looking for someone to train with, and I just have to say that I am not fit to do it. I have little backward steps when I can't really play at all, and then other times when I can do a bit. It took a while for other people to understand where I was with my back. People would come up to me and say, oh well you can play this in two weeks, and I would be saying, no, that's not going to be possible, and there were a few people, particularly ones within the county, who were just not understanding how difficult it was. It almost made it harder because they were saying, oh well hopefully you will be better for this thing next month, and it was trying to get them to see that it was not going to be a short-term thing. It made it harder for me to deal with.

OG: Did you continue to have an involvement in the tennis world?

O: I kind of cut myself off a bit, but I took up line umpiring, to keep involved, which has been good but sometimes I found it hard to watch tennis and knowing I couldn't play. I have always kept in touch with the county things as well. Only a small percentage of my friends were really involved in the sport anyway. There are lots of people I know from different sports. I have lost touch with quite a few of the people I was doing sports with, it is quite easy to lose touch with people when you are no longer involved in teams and stuff, and you realise that the only time you were seeing them was when you were going down to play. The tennis team I kept in touch with because we used to do wee nights out and stuff like that and I would go along. I think that was why I got more into my work though, because it was the people I was seeing and stuff like that.

OG: Did your involvement in sports have a big impact on the social side of your life?

O: You missed some things, inevitably, because tournaments were at weekends. But it wasn't something that bothered me too much. It was more of an issue at school when I found out that my friends had gone out at the weekend and not even bothered phoning, because they presumed I was busy. For me it was about finding a balance between seeing my friends and doing the sports things that I wanted to do, it always has been. I am still working on that balance now.

OG: What was your parents reaction to your back injury and to you finishing tennis?

O: They didn't really express any opinions at first, although I think they were quite concerned about the impact that the injury had on everyday life. My dad did say recently to me that he felt guilty, worried that they had pushed me into playing too many sports, which is really strange as they never pushed me into anything. It was always me going I want to do this sport, I want to do that event, I just wanted to do everything.

OG: Did you talk to anyone about what you were going through when you had to stop playing tennis?

O: Not too much. My boyfriend at the time, I spoke to him. He noticed a change in me as well. He was probably the only person that I mentioned it to. He saw the frustrations of kind of just simple things like getting dressed, just about not being able to put socks on and things. He took on the role of trying to stop me going out and doing things that were going to be dangerous, which sometimes I paid attention to and sometimes I didn't.

OG: Do you think that is something that you could have been given help, or retiring players could be given help with, in terms of steering you towards someone you could have spoken things through with?

O: If I had been more under a governing body part of something, I would definitely have wanted that to be there. I think because I was doing everything pretty much on my own anyway I didn't expect anything, it was something I had to deal with on my own. But had I been under that it would definitely have helped. Even to have other people to speak to who had gone through the same thing, or just ideas of things you could do, the way you could deal with it, because it is a total change in your life.

OG: Is it quite common for players to not be working with the governing body, going it alone like you were?

O: It depends who you are to be honest. Some players will seem to be very involved in the structure and get lots of help etc, others will be left out for no apparent reason. I always felt that tennis had its favourites, like I never felt I was a favourite. At the stage I was at if you are not full time and focusing your attentions on your tennis then you do tend to get left to the side, I guess because you are not doing what Tennis Scotland are looking for. So that meant because I was working to I really had to just do my own thing, and fund myself too. But even when I was working I was still part-time tennis coaching, so I could get free courts at the club which was helpful. It was all about your contacts. But it does limit what events you can enter and how far you can travel when you are funding it yourself. The kind of tournaments I was looking to get into, it was a case of going in, signing in, and hoping to get into the draw, and if you are having to spend money on getting there then you don't really want to be going on the off chance you might get in.

OG: Did you find it difficult to deal with retirement from a physical perspective? How much did the back injury have an influence in this?

O: Because I had been so active, things like putting on a bit of weight. It might not be noticeable to anyone else but you knew it yourself. You feel lethargic and because of that you feel out of shape, I guess that is a big circle, because you are doing less you feel worse, but then the lethargy made it harder, a vicious circle.

OG: Is there anything else you want to tell me about your career or about retirement?

O: If someone retires because of injury, they need to find something that they can still do, some activity of some description. I would assume that most people who have been playing tennis to a fairly high level would want to do that anyway. For me it was a case of working my way through different things and finding out what I was capable of and what I couldn't do. Also for them to not get frustrated to start with if it is something that is going to get better, but it is difficult because all you think is that you just feel rubbish. I found it hard because exercise and sport are things that were central to me, and I think are very important. And I found it difficult saying that people should exercise and then not being able to do anything myself. It is also important to have other stuff, like to get a job that is going to earn you money and stuff like that, I was

quite lucky that I had that all the way through anyway, and when I had to stop I was doing a job that I was really enjoying so it did help.

END

DONNA (Athletics)

3rd October 2007

OG: Can you start by telling me how you got into athletics and about your athletics career?

D: I started when I was about 12, my dad saw an advert in the paper for an open day at a local athletics club and I had always enjoyed running and had done it at primary school. I went along and joined the club from there. After a few years I was reasonably successful, won things like the Scottish Schools and the Scottish Junior Championships, things like that. Then I went on to compete for GB at about 16 as a junior and then moved into the senior ranks. I ended up going to the World Championships twice, and the Olympics and the Commonwealth Games. I didn't win any medals in major Championships but I got to semi-final level, finalist in Commonwealth Games, European Championships.

OG: Who would you say were the major influencers in your career? I know you said your dad took you along at first, was he the most influential person?

D: Yes, I was never really pushed at all, but he saw that I had always enjoyed doing it and was quite fast just in school sports and stuff, so he thought I could go along and have a try. But then it was alongside doing lots of other things, like swimming and musical instruments, but then athletics became the thing that just kind of stuck and everything else went by the wayside. I think that as I became better at it I wanted to improve, wanted to invest more time and effort into it.

OG: At your highest point in your career, were you training full time?

D: Yes I trained full time for about 5 years or so, I was doing part-time jobs here and there but essentially I was full-time training. I graduated in 1998 and then I didn't start working full time until 2004, so it was about 6 years.

OG: So was that a decision you made to put everything else on hold at that stage?

D: Yes, I felt that if I wanted to make it to being an elite athlete I needed to make the decision to invest more time and if I was going to go full time in employment I didn't really think I could manage to make it as an athlete, so I thought well I'll give it a year and see how it goes, and if I do improve significantly then I will carry on, if I don't then I will go on and get a full time job. I did improve a lot in that year so it did seem to be worthwhile.

OG: Was that quite a difficult decision? Did you have a career in mind in terms of what else you might like to do?

D: I was a bit undecided, I didn't have a set career in mind, so it wasn't that difficult. I thought I would do athletics, see how it goes, and then if it doesn't work out then I would do something, make a decision about what I wanted. Because I did improve so much in that year athletics became such a focus in my career other things were secondary and I thought I could worry about that when I needed to.

OG: How supportive were your family through your career?

D: Yes, they were supporting me, I lived at home for the first couple of years and I didn't have to pay digs or anything like that which was really good, they were very much like you can do what you want to do and they were supportive in that way so that was a burden off me.

OG: What about your friends? Were most of them athletes or not?

D: It was a mixture, about 50-50 I would say, but obviously I was limited with what I could do socially, and travel wise, going away for a few days, that sort of thing, but my friends were all supportive and

understood that I couldn't necessarily go out as much as they would or do the same things that they wanted to do.

OG: Tell me a bit about the coach or coaches that you had. Was the one particular coach who had a major influence on you?

D: Yes, my first coach, I continued training with him until I was 25 I think, so I was with him pretty much non-stop really. Then I got to a point where my career was starting to stagnate, and he thought that he wasn't sure if he could take me any further, so then after that it was a bit of a nightmare for a couple of years, I trained with a few different people and then ultimately gave up.

OG: Do you think that change of coach had an influence on you giving up then?

D: Well, yeah, it probably did, it is hard to know, you know you can't really predict what would have happened, I was stagnated for about 3 years, so I became pretty frustrated with that as well, but moving coach does make you feel pretty unsettled. I moved away from home, I moved down to Birmingham for a year and then had injury problems, wasn't really happy down there, didn't have the family and friends support I would have had up here, and then ultimately thought do I want to be stuck down here for the next 5 years or however long it would be until I retired and really felt like it was not really worth that. So I ended up coming home and training with someone else, it didn't really work so I moved again to someone else, which wasn't great either.

OG: Did you feel that being an athlete was a major part of who you were?

D: Em, yeah, I guess it did, I really had a sort of desire to be as good as I could be but at the same time I think my life was reasonably balanced, in that I had friends outside athletics, I had interests outside, it wasn't all encompassing. Some people can get totally taken up with it and I don't feel it was ever like that.

OG: Was would you say was your biggest achievement in your eyes through your career?

D: I suppose probably making it to the Olympics I think because it is what you always think of when you are a young athlete, you always want to make it there, so I think that was it probably, although I didn't run that well when I got there, just the actual achievement of being picked for the team was probably the highlight.

OG: Are there any other achievements that stand out for you? Anything you are really proud of?

D: Well I won British titles that I was proud of because even to be the best in your own country was an achievement. I came 6th in the Commonwealth Games, although I really wanted to get a medal so initially it was a disappointment, but looking back I think coming 6th in the Commonwealth Games is not bad. But at the time it is all relative to what your aims were. Making the World Championships as well, I was proud of that, and getting through to the semi-final when I wasn't ranked to do that, so although I would have liked to have done even better it was also an achievement.

OG: Is there anything that stands out that you would have liked to have managed to do?

D: Yes, I think, well obviously I would have loved to win the Olympics and such, but in a realistic sense I would like to have got a medal at the Commonwealth Games and the European Championships and the year that I did them my best time would have easily got a medal at them and I think that was the big frustration, feeling like I didn't run well at the time and if I had run well I would have got medals at them, and then I would have felt that I retired having really achieved, not the ultimate thing but something really quite significant. So that was a bit disappointing.

OG: Is there anything in your career that you didn't enjoy or that you are not proud of?

D: I suppose probably the whole circumstance of the last couple of years, I would go back and do differently, but then it is all with hindsight I think, at the time you think that you are doing the right thing, but when you look back you think maybe I should have done something different. But if those decisions had worked out well then I wouldn't be saying that now, so I think I went with what I thought was right at the

time. Looking back I either wouldn't have moved or I would have moved to a different place, maybe I should have stuck it out longer where I was.

OG: Is there anything you didn't like about being an athlete?

D: I think the sort of all-encompassing feeling, especially when things are not going well you start to get worried that you have eaten right or you want to go to a concert but think maybe I shouldn't do that because I've got to stand for a few hours and will that effect training tomorrow. Your whole life can get taken over by it, especially when things aren't going so well. When things are going well I think you are less worried about the other aspects of your life, when things are going badly you start to over-analyse everything. It becomes the be all and end all and you are striving for something that perhaps you can't get, I didn't really enjoy that.

OG: Did you tend to find that your moods within all aspects of your life could be related to how you were doing in athletics?

D: I think I was reasonably good competitively up until my last year so I would always manage to get up for competition, it was really what I wanted to do so I didn't really have a problem with that. I generally tended to run my best races in the bigger races in the big Championships, apart from as I say that last year when I wasn't that happy and I was kind of on the verge of retiring then, I sort of felt like I don't want to be here, I think that ultimately made me think I shouldn't be doing this anymore.

OG: Can you tell me more about that period leading up to your retirement.

D: I had problems with injury and illness with a couple of years and again with the coaching situation and I just, I wasn't running quite as well and I sort of felt like the last year I'd go to competitions and I kind of almost didn't want to do them anymore, I didn't want to be there as much, which wasn't like me at all and I knew that it just wasn't like me. But I think that with deciding to give up you are scared about what you are going to do when you do give up, you have been invested in this for so long, it's been such a big part of your life, it's been your career for quite a few years, so what are you going to do when this goes. It is quite a daunting prospect, of suddenly starting from scratch, being 5 or 6 years from having graduated and wondering what is going to come next, it is quite difficult. But for me I think it just got to a stage when I thought well I am just not happy anymore so I had to give up and if it happens that I end up working in a job that isn't going anywhere for a couple of years until I get something good then so be it because it is not worth just carrying on because you are worried about what is coming next.

OG: Was it quite gradual? Did you decide, I am going to do to that competition and then stop?

D: It kind of happened, initially I thought I would keep going until the Olympics in 2004, and I thought that if I don't make it to them then that's me, I'll give up. But in the end I actually gave up before the trials, because I was just getting to the stage that I wasn't enjoying it, I wasn't happy, I was getting injured. I think it was a week or two before the trials and I just thought no that's it, I don't want to go to the trials, I know I am not going to make it at all, I don't want to put myself through it, I just want to stop. And that was it, I just stopped. I think I carried on training for a couple of weeks a bit and then thought what's the point, I actually don't want to do anymore of this, so I just stopped and that was it.

OG: And do you do any athletics type training now? Are you involved in the sport at all now?

D: No, not at all. I do a bit of just running just to keep fit but not much at all.

OG: How did you feel when you did make that decision to stop?

D: I felt quite relieved. I think I just it just felt like a big weight off my shoulders, like that's it, I have made my decision and have given up, that's me. I almost felt quite happy, I think because I knew it had been coming for at least a year. I had kind of been putting off the decision, going to training and thinking that I really did want to run well, then getting to the start of the season and getting injured, everything went backwards and then I kind of knew I'm not going to make it to the Olympics, so I kind of knew it was the end of the line and it was nice to eventually just think well that is it finished, it was a relief.

OG: So it was quite positive?

D: Yes, quite positive in a way, because I think if you keep going then you just, it is just not that nice to go to competitions and not run the way you are used to. You are just feeling bad after competition rather than feeling happy, you are just feeling bad and you find it a bit pointless.

OG: Were there any negative emotions attached to finishing?

D: Yes, I think it is really quite hard to let go of the aspirations that you had, thinking about the what ifs. When I first went full time I ran really well the first year, in the second year I was really hoping to make it to the final of the Olympics, and it wasn't an unrealistic aspiration, I didn't have to improve that much in order to do that, and that year was okay but gradually things went downhill and you are having to then kind of let go of what you thought you could do. As I said my best time would have got a medal at the Europeans and at the Commonwealths in 2002 and I didn't get it and then you start thinking, but you have to let go of that and then it is kind of a balancing act, just feeling a bit disappointed I suppose.

OG: When you started to think about stopping, did you start to plan at all, to think about what you would do when you finished?

D: I think I thought... in 2003 I was having quite a hard year, but there were two reasons I didn't give up. I was thinking it is the Olympics next year, it seems a bit short-sighted to give up, if I give it another hard year maybe I'll make it, get back to where I was, and also I didn't know what I would do if I gave up. So I suppose it was really that year that I started to think what would I do, would I go back and study or would I try and get a job. I suppose when I finally did get up I had a look around and saw what was available at the time and I was quite lucky to get a job quite quickly so it ended up not being as stressful as it maybe could have been.

OG: Do you think your whole transition out of athletics might have been more stressful if you hadn't found something you wanted to do?

D: Yeah, I think it would have been, but I had put feelers out in that I had spoken to one of my old university lecturers and he said that they would try and put something together for me for a PhD the following year, so I knew that if I found a job that I liked within the first say 6 months then I would probably go into employment, but if I hadn't then I probably would have gone on and done a PhD. It wasn't a definite, but you know I had spoken to him and he had said they would be looking for somebody and they would probably have taken me, so I knew that there would probably be something coming, even if I had to wait for a year and do a job I didn't really like for a year, I had the sort of plan that something was coming.

OG: How did your family react to you deciding to finish?

D: I think they just knew that I wasn't that happy for the year, for a couple of years before I gave up, so I suppose they just wanted me to be happy so they were quite happy for me to say that was it, it was probably a relief for them too, for me not to moan anymore. But yes, they were quite supportive of it.

OG: I know you talked about your changes of coaches, but were you being coached in that last stage at all?

D: Yes, I was being coached at that stage and my coach was very supportive. If I wanted to carry on then he was happy to coach me, or if I wanted to carry on but not take it quite as seriously as before, combine it with working full time. He was just very supportive of my decision which was great, you know, because I didn't have to worry about that.

OG: Did people who knew you see you as an athlete when you were competing? Was that something you were known for?

D: Yes definitely, that was what I was known as, if you knew people from like uni or school or whatever they were like, oh you are the one that does athletics, how is that going and stuff like that.

OG: Did you find that continued a bit after retirement?

D: Yes, I suppose if people hadn't heard that you had retired then you would still get asked if you still do it.

OG: And did that make things difficult?

D: Not really. I suppose at first it was quite difficult, probably especially the people that were in athletics, having to say that you had retired, you feel like it is quite hard to just draw a line under it, to say well that's it, it's almost like accepting that that's it finished and you were as good as you were going to be and you're not going to have quite achieved what you wanted to. It is quite hard to say that's it, so I didn't go to any competitions or anything afterwards, because you almost didn't want to have to face that, which is bad.

OG: I'm presuming that you probably didn't have any thoughts of comebacks at any stage?

D: No, no. I mean I think it is probably more so now you look back, you see things on the TV and you think it would be quite nice to do it again, but not to the extent that I would actually think about doing it again. I think I am quite a realist, I would only want to go back if I could be better than I had been before, and at the end I was training full time and I wasn't as good as I used to be, so I knew.

OG: So did you watch competitions afterwards, for example did you watch the Olympics in 2004?

D: Yes, I would have watched that, I think it didn't really bother me that much.

OG: Were you watching thinking could I have been there, anything like that?

D: I suppose there was a bit of that, you know, a little bit of thinking that you would have loved to have been there, but I think because I had had a couple of years beforehand where I had been struggling quite a lot it was looking like a very likely thing that was going to happen. Whereas I think if I had been running pretty well up until the trials and then suddenly got a bad injury or got ill or something and then not made it, it would probably have been a lot harder. I think I probably resigned myself to the fact that I was probably not going to make it a year before or whatever, and it was just well I'll train this winter and maybe I'll get back.

OG: Do you think you might get back involved in athletics at some time in the future?

D: I don't have any immediate aspirations or any plans to get back. Maybe in the future maybe I will do something because I feel like so many people give up their time to do things like officiating, sitting on committees and all this, and I benefited from that for years, so I probably should go and do something. But certainly at the moment I don't have any plans.

OG: And has anyone from the athletics world tried to encourage you to do so at any stage?

D: Well, no not really. Once one of the ladies that was involved in team management phoned me and said would I consider being almost kind of an athlete-management go-between and I said it was something that I probably would consider doing, and then nothing really came of it, I didn't pursue it and she didn't pursue it so nothing ever came of it. Nothing other than that.

OG: In terms of that period of adjustment from being an athlete to being retired, were there any adjustment from a social perspective, in terms of changing friendships and stuff like that?

D: Yes, probably, I suppose that the people you saw a lot at training, if you didn't see them socially then, you didn't end up seeing them socially so you didn't really end up seeing them again, even though you did get on well when you saw them, unless you had some social connections outside training, you often didn't see them which was a bit of a shame. Even with athletics in general you find the people you see during the season, you got on well with them when you were away on trips, you would get on great, but then you would never see them again until the following year, so as soon as you stop competing you stop having any contact with them. So unless you had some sort of constant social contact you did lose that.

OG: Did you find that you suddenly had time to do other things? How did that feel?

D: Yes, it was quite nice, it was really really nice, it was great, I mean I think I still enjoy it now although it has been three years since I gave up I still do appreciate the fact that if you friends say, we were thinking about going away for the weekend, do you fancy coming, you don't have to think, I can't go because I am training, you know, it is just nice just to have freedom to do what you want when you want. I wasn't ever very good at training alone, away from a coach and everything, so I tended to not go to things because I needed to go to the training sessions and that was the top priority and that was it. You know, occasionally I would go away and do something but hardly ever. I was quite stuck where I was really.

OG: When you were training full time did you get funding at all at any time?

D: Yes, I was lottery funded from '99 to about 2003, from Scottish lottery and from UK funding as well.

OG: Was there any kind of financial adjustment for you when you retired?

D: Finances got better for me. When I was running quite well I was relatively well off, I was fully funded from UK lottery and also I had sponsorship agreements as well and I got prize money for certain races and things so, I wasn't well off but I had a reasonable salary. And then in the last year I had no funding so I had saved up money and I just kind of had to live off that money and the part-time work that I was doing, it was just a low paid job but it was kind of enough to keep me ticking over. That was a little bit of a factor in giving up as well, I thought if I am going to keep going at a serious level, I really couldn't afford to.

OG: Did the drop to no funding come from a drop in performance?

D: Yes, that was it. I think I did have some lottery money for the last year but it was only for things like travel and competition, I didn't have any money in terms of subsistence, that kind of stopped. So after that I just had to live off my own money. SO compared to that last year certainly, when I got my job I had a relatively good salary and obviously I didn't have as many outgoings in terms of competition and petrol and all that sort of thing. I was very much aware of the fact that I was spending all my savings and that I couldn't go on like that forever. I knew that in 2004 that was it, if I didn't make it to the Olympics then I think that would just have to be it because I would have no savings left, I was earning, god I don't even know how much, I had a mortgage to pay, you were just kind of aware of it, thinking what is the point of this, why am I doing it, and then as well you are having more time away from getting a career, and you know eventually you are going to have to do something about it, you can't keep going forever so you have to have a time that you say right that's it, enough is enough.

OG: Do you think if you had made it to the Olympics you would have kept competing after that?

D: Yeah, probably, I think I probably would have. I think initially, say when I went full time, my plan was probably to keep going to the Commonwealth Games in Melbourne and then give up after that, assuming everything had gone well, my plan long term would have probably been to make it to the Olympics in 2000, run well in the Olympics in 2004, run well in the Commonwealths in 2006 and then give up. By that time I would have been 30 and I think that was a realistic time that I thought I would probably give up, unless of course you had been running superbly well and then, you know, you might have kept going.

OG: Was there any physical adjustment aspect, going from training full time to not being an athlete anymore?

D: In terms of body image? Yes, I suppose you sort of look back and you think you were obviously a lot fitter, lighter then. I look back now and probably appreciate that I did have a better body than I have now.

OG: But it wasn't anything that caused you any issues?

D: Not really, not massively, I think it was just... it would be nice to have the same sort of body I had then but without all the training and the hard work.

OG: Was there anyone you spoke to when you were thinking about retiring, talked about the concept or what you were thinking?

D: Well, my now husband, I was with him when I was thinking about retiring so we would have talked about it a lot, he was going through a sort of similar thing to me as well, he was an athlete as well, so yes I would have spoken to him a lot about it. I had friends from athletics, more so than outside athletics, that I would have spoken to. People who were around the same sort of stage as well, I have got a couple of good friends that I still see a lot now who both gave up within about a year of me, so we were all going through the same sort of feelings at the same kind of time. It was mainly people in athletics, I think people outside athletics, you sort of feel like they maybe don't understand as much, because even now I look back and can find it hard to understand how invested I was in it at the time, whereas obviously at the time it is so important to you, now I wouldn't even know if it was the Scottish Championships next week, I am so far away from it, but at the time that kind of thing was such a big deal, you feel like you are kind of a different person. And friends outside athletics will understand it to a point, but at the level to which you are involved in it yourself I don't think you can really genuinely understand what it is like and what people go through.

OG: Is there anything else you want to add about anything that we have been talking about?

D: I think knowing what I know now I would have given up earlier, but of course that is with hindsight. So in 2002, if I had known what I know now. My best year was '99 and then I had a gradual decline and then a real drop down, so I wasn't running as well as I had the year before or even two years before, if I had then I would probably have medalled. Yes, I think I probably would have given up then, but I don't think I felt ready at the time, and you can only give up at a time when you sort of feel ready. Otherwise I think you are more likely to try to make a comeback, after a year or two, if you really felt that you hadn't drawn it to a conclusion, and those do not normally work out that well, especially when you get older and you are more injury prone.

OG: Do you think once retirement is in your head, it is inevitable that you are going to slide towards that?

D: Yeah, I do personally, I mean I think so because once it's in your head your motivation is probably starting to go a bit if you have it in your head. I don't know, I suppose I can't say that it is the same for everyone and I guess people probably have different reactions. I do think that once it's there you are then starting to think about what you are going to do afterwards, you are maybe enjoying it less, you are starting to think that you would rather be a spectator than a competitor and then that's the wrong attitude to have so it is then downhill from there. I think people tend to be quite sure in their own mind when they are ready, but I suppose you have to be sure that you are ready and that you're not making some sort of rash decision on which you will look back and regret it.

END

NANCY (Hockey)

19th November 2007

OG: Can you start by telling me the story of your hockey career?

N: I started playing hockey at school, like most people do, the sort of school where it was the only sport that the girls played in the winter time, you got hockey in the winter and either athletics or tennis in the summer. I was fortunate in that my two best friends at school were also fairly sporty and so enjoyed hockey, and as a consequence of that we probably were more enthusiastic than most at that kind of age. I started playing club hockey when I was maybe about 14, 15, as well as the school stuff, and then also got picked for Scotland U16s which was really my first experience of international hockey. I should probably say at this point I was goalkeeper. I was the worst outfield player that the school had ever had, and my decision to go in goal was mainly based on the fact that I thought I would get on the first team in goal whereas I was never going to get in the first team as an outfield player. So once I played U16s I then played U18s when I was still at school. At that point, I was living in Aberdeen throughout my schooling, I was making a decision about where I was going to go to university. I knew that hockey was a big part of my life at that stage but also I suppose probably more parental pressure to pick a degree of choice rather than the degree to justify what was going on in the sport. If it was up to me I would probably have gone and done PE, because the majority of people that I was playing hockey with were going to go and do PE, wanted to become PE teachers, it seemed the sort of logical progression from the involvement in sport. But I ended up doing a law degree at Aberdeen. At the same time I was fortunate, the whole sport thing comes down to coincidences and opportunities and

timing, and at that moment in time Glasgow Western who were at that point, and to a certain extent still are, one of the best teams in Scotland, were looking for a new goalkeeper. So they asked me if I would join them down in Glasgow, and that was probably, amongst all my experiences that probably opened the door to me being involved at senior international level. So I was doing a commute, at university, staying at home during the week and then I would go down to Glasgow at weekends for hockey, and at that point also for U21 training and full squad training. Same story again with the international squad, one of the keepers got injured, I was probably the best junior although there were probably 2 or 3 other keepers who were in line to sort of step in to the senior squad. So I played my first international when I was 18, and I basically was in the international squad from then on until I retired in 2003. So that was 1988 I played my first international. And I was very fortunate that I didn't ever suffer an injury that meant I couldn't be picked for a squad, so in terms of continuity if I was there and I was available I was picked. So I probably didn't have in the Scottish sense too many of the highs and lows in terms of selection issues. Fortunate, but I guess at the time you don't realise or acknowledge that. You realise that there are people on the fringes of the squad, picked for some events and not others, find it much harder to establish themselves. It did take me probably about 4 years before I was playing regularly, and then over the course of about 6 or 7 years there was myself and one other keeper who were pretty much neck and neck and whoever was playing best at the time would probably get the start. Then she retired in about '97, and then I was first choice keeper and various other keepers would come in as sort of back up. So that was the Scottish experience. As an add on to that my GB experiences were not as positive, put it that way. I was first involved in GB in '93 and went to the champions trophy then. I was then in the squad for Atlanta in '96. I was one of 3 keepers, they take 2, I was the third, so I lost out. It was literally you had the kit, you had been measured for the kit, and you didn't go. I said after that experience I wouldn't put myself through that again, and needless to say when it came round to it in Sydney I did exactly the same thing again, did all the training, which compared with the Scottish stuff which was weekend training and trips away, with GB we were down south 4 days a week, effectively full time for about 5 months leading up to it, and once again 3 keepers and I was 3rd out of the 3 and didn't go again. So my GB experiences were horrible compared with my Scottish experiences, but that was a lot to do with selection, it was a lot to do with the group you were in being, whether you like it or not there are certain squads pulled together and you are the minority group in a much larger group. There were maybe 1 or 2 others of my friends or peers in amongst 16 or more who weren't friends in that sense, because I hadn't got to know them well enough. And when you are with them you are being very competitive because you have got the Olympics, the ultimate carrot. Being like an individual in a team. So the GB stuff, over 7 years I played 8 times for Britain, compared with what 150 something for Scotland, so the 2 experiences were really very different. I think, if I was completely honest, if I had gone to an Olympics, getting there would have been the pinnacle. And I suspect there is a lot of athletes who go there and for them they have already achieved, rather than getting there and then be like now I want to do this or that. At the time, in '96 and 2000, you are at your lowest point because of the effort you have put in, what you have given up to get there, and you know that you are never going to be able to say I was an Olympic athlete. And that does detract whether you like it or not from everything that you have achieved, because you never quite got as high as you thought you could. It was only ever 3 of us that were competing for 2 places for both Atlanta and Sydney, and you knew exactly who your opponents were. I found that difficult because the way I saw it the situation was being manipulated by the other two, it was in their interests to make sure that I was kept out so that it was easy for the two of them to be projected in a positive light. It was like if we can stick together we can make sure that we go. And that probably made the experience less enjoyable. Whereas the outfield players, it was never as pronounced as that because there was that little bit more flexibility between positions, people weren't going head to head against one other person for the same position. So that is pretty much the international experience. I came out of retirement, I got a call up for the Scotland indoor squad, went to a European tournament with them, which I loved because there was no pressure, but I knew then that I had retired at the right time, because I was still enjoying the playing and the competition but I wasn't enjoying the travelling. There was other things happening in my life that actually I was having to make choices between hockey and the rest of my life. I think, I always remember people saying to me stop when you are enjoying it, don't let somebody else make you stop. In other words I didn't want to phone call to say actually Nancy we think you're too old, you're not capable anymore. I didn't want to get that phone call and looking back now it was probably the right time to stop. And also the peer group had changed. I was the oldest in the team by quite a way, all the others of my peers had retired. I retired, I was like 33, and did I have another 4 years in me? Possibly. Did I have another 2 years in me to the next Olympics? Probably, though actually GB didn't qualify anyway. But at that point I knew, I wasn't confident enough, I didn't think I was as good a keeper as I had been back in 2000, and if I hadn't gone then and so unless you get a bit of luck or the timing, somebody gets injured, so it was the right time.

OG: And were you involved in Commonwealth Games hockey at all?

N: Yes. I did '98, Kuala Lumpur, the first one with hockey, and it was the closest I will ever get to an Olympic Games in terms of it being multi-sport and everybody being there, the swimmers and the athletes

and stuff, and the big opening ceremony. So I did Kuala Lumpur and then I was captain in Manchester in 2002, which I loved. The Commonwealth Games experience was tremendous and I think, it is easy to see how the distractions can work against a team in an event like that, rather than being a little bit more focused. We never performed as well at a Commonwealth Games as we should have done, looking back now, you can see that now. It is difficult because when it is your first time you have had no education on what it is going to be like, and every year you are going to have a big batch that are in that position.

OG: How did hockey fit in with the rest of your life? How much of an impact did it have?

N: It had a huge impact. I guess I made the decision as to what my priority was. In the school side of things I was fortunate because my two friends were interested in hockey and they are still playing now. They never quite got to the same level, they were always at the fringes of the junior international stuff, but they played club hockey and stuff. But because of that the social scene was driven an awful lot by the hockey. It was driven by the club that we were part of, a lot of socialising with them. From a university perspective, my university life definitely suffered as a consequence of my hockey, but then I didn't have a comparison. It wasn't like I want to do this but I also want to do that, I never tried it to know what I was missing. I was going away, normally on a Friday night, getting the train down to Glasgow, staying with someone else in the team down there and coming back up on the Sunday night. So everything was geared towards academically making sure that you had done what you needed to do in the week so you didn't need to worry about that at the weekend. And that was probably when I learnt most about time management, subconsciously, never really making an effort to say, right I am taking 2 days out of my week here, but that is sort of what happened. And I can remember my folks saying to me pretty early on, it must have been at the time I was starting university and started playing for Western because that happened in the sort of September and I remember my dad saying we'll back you in doing both, as long as your university doesn't suffer. They knew my priority wasn't the academic degree, my priority was the hockey. But I was never going to make money doing that so I had to recognise that I should get my degree. That said, my finals were in the May, and the European championships were also in the May, and I got back from the Europeans 2 days before my first final. And for me it like that I was what I was going to do, and I was going to have to plan for it. I remember sitting on the bus going to tournaments with my notes and a highlighter pen, any time you had you just studied. I didn't really think that was terribly unusual, but looking back now it probably was. But I got a degree, the bit I lost out on was the social life. Similarly finishing university and starting work, it was almost like having 2 jobs. I had my Monday to Friday, and then Saturday, Sunday. And my social life in Aberdeen was only ever Monday to Friday, and my social life in Glasgow was Saturday, Sunday. Actually when I retired it was like leaving a job and moving away, because I knew I wasn't going to see these people week in week out, you manage to keep up to date with what people were doing in their lives, socially and work wise or whatever because you were seeing them once a week, and you just knew that you weren't going to have that anymore. There were some that you couldn't care less whether you ever saw them again, but others that you knew you were only ever going to know them through the link with hockey and weren't really going to keep that up afterwards, but you would still miss that link with them, they were a big part of your life. So that was a big change at the point of retirement, because when I stopped playing internationally I stopped playing for Western. But I think I knew I couldn't stop completely so I came back and I started playing for the club that I played for when I was at school, which had now by this point merged with one of the men's sides in Aberdeen who I used to train with when I was doing all my Scottish stuff, because I trained up here during the week and then went away at weekends. So it was actually quite a nice little fit, because I knew the guys and I knew some of the players that were still playing. But I didn't go back to playing goal – I came and played outfield. There were 2 reasons for that. I didn't think it was fair on who the keeper was at the time, for me to come in and go hello remember me, I'm the former Scotland goalkeeper, I thought that that wasn't fair. Although there have been a couple of occasions since when we have had a penalty shoot out and I have been thinking should I be putting the kit on, but no, not your job anymore. And the other reason was I needed a different challenge. If I had come back and gone in goal, or they had asked me to come back and go in goal, I would have found it the most frustrating experience, because the people in front of me wouldn't have been anything like the level and I would have shouted at them, and they would have been thinking why is she shouting at me, and the whole experience wouldn't have been good. I don't know how I would have managed that if I had been an outfielder, and I think that's normally when a lot of players who have played at the very top level don't tend to come back through the ranks. Your club players do, but your international players less so. And I think it because of exactly that reason, it is just never the same as what they have been used to and what they've known. So now I talk a very good game but as it has been pointed out to me my skill level doesn't match my team play analysis, put it that way, because I know where I should be, but I can't necessarily get there or if I do get there I maybe can't do what I need to do so. To have just said I'm never playing again wouldn't have been the right thing to do.

OG: How did your hockey fit in with work?

N: Well the summers when I was still at university I worked for a couple of law firms, including a company who are actually downstairs from us now. I worked 2 summers with them and in my second summer they asked me if I wanted a traineeship, and I said yes that would be nice. I did tell them in the years after that I had reminded them about my hockey and my hockey commitments, the other interest was a play a bit of hockey, but in big capital letters! It was interesting how it developed actually because the amount of time I needed off, it increased with the GB stuff. I started work in '92 and at that point I still had weeks away with Scotland. It was easy when I was a trainee because at the end of the day I was a trainee, I didn't have a file that I was responsible, I just did the work. The rule that they always had with me was don't abuse it, we will accommodate you as far as we can, but don't come back to us at the end of the year and say can I have a weeks holiday. So I used all my time for my hockey and they would give me extra time on top of that, and they would never make me take it unpaid, they always gave me paid leave. And bearing in mind subsequently how much time I had off, I mean there was one year I reckon I was only in the office for 4 and a half, 5 months, and they gave me paid leave the whole time, they never queried it or questioned it. And I don't think there are many organisations who would do that now. I was asking one of the partners that I now work with again why they felt that they could accommodate me in that way, and he made a couple of points. He said firstly it was great for the office morale to have somebody involved at that level, to have somebody going away to the Commonwealth Games and that sort of thing, and secondly because they thought they would keep me, which is true. And they knew that I got job offers from firms down in Glasgow who would phone up and saw surely it would be much easier if you were down here, and it would be in one sense, but I had a sense of commitment and loyalty to the firm. And the third reason he gave me was that there were a number of partners who had played sport at not quite the elite level but had always wanted to get to the elite level, and they were kind of not living their dream through, but to give somebody else the opportunity to have it. So having people who understood it made a huge difference. The other interesting thing that came from that was the clients. As I got more experienced and actually started having clients, they would take an interest as well. I would be chatting to them on the Monday about a transaction and they would say, so I saw you let in 2 goals at the weekend, and you would think well how do you know that, and they would be actually checking the scores in the papers, how did Nancy's team get on, so they started to relate to the hockey as well. And yes, it probably pissed them off if I was away from the office for 2 weeks and somebody else was having to deal with the transaction, but in some ways they could understand that more than if I had been away on holiday for 2 weeks. There was a reason why I wasn't in the office. But I think the massive advantage that this all gave me, and I think this is what is so different between the time that I was starting in hockey and the time people now starting in hockey, is that I managed to run my hockey and my career in parallel. So I didn't get to an age when I retired that I was thinking, right I'm actually 5 or 6 years behind where I actually should be. I mean I went up through all my promotions and all the rest of it as I would have done, and I made partner in 2000 which was bang on schedule. Whereas nowadays I probably wouldn't have started a traineeship because people would have said, how often are you going to be away from the office, not happening. Or you wouldn't have gone up the promotion levels so quickly because you hadn't been in the office. So I managed to run all that together. I did a part time masters, started in '98, finished it in 2002, which was all linked to the work side of things with the firm saying this is what we think you need to do, can you manage it amongst all of your hockey stuff, and so I did that as well. The whole thing was just complete nonsense if you think about it because the thing that I lost in all of that time was the social life, because something had to give. I would have thought the personal life thing, until I met my husband in '99, and he says now looking back that he didn't actually see me pretty much until about 2002. He made a comment to me, because when we started going out I said well you know I am away an awful lot, because at that point I was still doing GB stuff for Sydney, and he made a comment a few months ago, said you know there is not many guys that would have tolerated the amount of time you were away. And I was really surprised by that comment, that that was a consideration that somebody else on the other side of a relationship might have taken into account. Whereas I hadn't at all, it was what you see is what you get. This is what I am doing. But you know rewind that back and that could have been, the whole reason why in the period up till '99 when I met him from the relationship point of view it didn't happen, because I just wasn't around, or the people that I could potentially have had a relationship with weren't willing to accommodate, to play second best, or third best. So I have been really fortunate that from the work side of things, from the hockey side of things, from the relationship side of things, I have come out of all of that into a really strong place, whereas I might not have been. I might literally have been retiring as of 33, and thinking right I actually have to start my life now. I think I would have retired earlier because of the work aspect, if I hadn't been able to run the two parallel, because I think from a financial point of view it would have got too difficult. If my employers had been saying to me, Nancy we love what you are doing but we can't keep giving you unpaid leave, you are going to have to start taking unpaid leave, and you have got a mortgage, you have got your lottery funding but that is not going to cover the equivalent of what your salary was at that point in time. All the students in the squad are rubbing their hands together, great I'm getting 12 grand a year, and you are thinking right that is not actually going to cover the mortgage. So I think that would have accelerated by decision to retire. But I was definitely in the right place at the right time. And I like to think I gave back to them, because I didn't go anywhere else, I stayed put, so they had me when I was here. I like to think I was far more efficient in my

manner of working when I was away more often. The comparison I draw with people is how efficient you are the week before you go on holiday, and how you clear your inbox, you clear your desk, you do stuff that had been sitting on your desk for months, yes it has been sitting there for 2 months but you are going to be away 2 weeks so it is time to get it done. I would be like that every week. If you were to say what is the biggest difference you have noticed in a work sense it is that actually I am just like everybody else now. I just kind of mosey along until, oh there is a fortnights holiday coming up and then the week before it is like I am going to clear the desk and get up to date. So the work has expanded to fit the time, and because there is more time now available. I think I do get through as much, but I don't feel as though I have the punctuation marks all the way through the year that I used to have.

OG: Tell me more about your decision to retire.

N: In 2003, September, the Scotland programme works in a 4 year cycle between Europeans, they were very 4 years although now they are every 2. 2002 had been a big year because we had had the Commonwealth Games and we had had the World Cup. I was captain of both of those and had committed to the 4 year cycle up to the Europeans in September 2003. I knew that by then I would probably have got my 150th cap which was what happened, so that was a big landmark for me. I had got to the point when I was still doing the up and down the road to Western, I had done that for 16 years, and I had really got to the stage, I think probably in the year before, the 12 months leading up to that tournament, I got to the stage where I was starting to begrudge having to do that, having to get in the car. I think I was thinking about what I could be doing if I wasn't getting in the car. Yes I really enjoyed it when I got down there, but we played at 4 o'clock in Glasgow on Saturday, I would leave Aberdeen maybe about 10 in the morning, to get through all the traffic, to make sure I was there on time, I had folk who lived 15 minutes down the road who were the ones who would be late, and I am thinking I have just driven 150 miles and made sure I am here on time, can you not make sure of that too. And then I would play the game, we were a good team, successful team, half the games in the season I wouldn't actually touch the ball, and that had been the case all the way through, this wasn't something new, but it meant that you started to think can I not just play the really good games. And then if I didn't have Scottish on the Sunday, or we didn't have a game on the Sunday, I would be getting back in the car and driving home after the game, so I would get home at about half past nine at night, knackered, and you would get in your car and think, well what was the point in that, it had just been a pointless exercise, 12 hours effectively just to stand and watch a game. I looked at it from the context of, right well I was like a spectator in that game, if I was actually a spectator would I have gone all the way down to watch that game, and the answer was no, because I don't love it enough. My love affair with actually playing for that team was starting to wane, maybe partly because I had been doing it for so long. And also I had been going out with my partner for 3 or 4 years at that point, we were having to manage the relationship around whether I was going to be back up the road on Saturday night or not. In previous years I was probably have stayed down, the whole weekend would have been in Glasgow, whereas later I was making the effort to come back but actually I wasn't achieving it because I was getting home half past nine, ten o'clock, and only wanted to go to bed. I remember we had tickets for Billy Connolly once, and I remember coming off the pitch, literally the game wasn't quite finished and I was like I have got to get up the road because the performance starts at half past 7. And all of the angst and hassle, you are creating it yourself. I think another factor was all those years I travelled on my own. You know, most teams if they are travelling, and in fact my own team if they were coming up to Dundee or through to Edinburgh, they come in a mini-bus or they would come in cars, and they had, the journey was part of the experience, whereas the journey for me was just something I had to do, a means to an end, but not actually enjoying it, because you knew you had to do it and you knew you were getting back in the car late at night again. And as I was getting busier during the week as well I was thinking, you know I could have been catching up on work stuff or catching up on other things. I started to begrudge the travel element. If I could have just clicked my fingers and been there, I probably would have carried on. But if I wasn't going to carry on playing for Western, then I couldn't carry on playing internationally, the two were linked. I went through the sort of preliminary GB stuff with the new GB coach in 2003, and we had a sort of training camp where all prospective GB athletes were invited along, and the GB coach at that time interviewed all of us, and she observed to the Scottish coach afterwards that she doesn't recall having seen me smile the entire weekend. And I wasn't aware of that at the time, but I think the whole time I was there I was thinking this is more of the same, I don't want to be here. So making that decision was another reason why, it was actually if I am not going to do the Olympics in 2004, then the next big targets are quite a long time away. If they had been saying you have got a good chance of going to the Olympics, it is just one more year, but I didn't want to do another 3 or 4 years. The last factor was that my peer group had changed, the folk that I had come up through the squads with had stopped playing. There was probably one or two friends that I still had in the squad, but it is little things like choosing your room mate for a tournament that was going to last 2 and a half weeks. And you would be thinking actually there is nobody in the squad that I would choose to spend the time with, and probably nobody in that squad is thinking I really want to share with Nancy. They all had their buddies that they had come up through juniors or U21s with. They are completely different, their music tastes, their priorities, and it was all so superficial. They were like what's

the latest trainers, what's the latest music, the latest ipod, and you are kind of thinking I don't need this kind of pressure from a 21 year old, I am too old for that. I ended up in my last tournament sharing with Rhona Simpson, who was probably in exactly the same position that I was in, in terms of her peer group had all left, she was a few years younger than I was, and the two of us in all the years that we had been in the same squad, at least 10 years, we had never shared a room in all that time, because our own peer groups were different. And all of a sudden the two of us are thrown together, the two ones left out, and actually it worked out fine because we were both coming from the same point of view which was at the end of the day we are here to do a job, we are going to be professional about the team, and our performance, and that is all that really mattered. Whereas the younger members of the team, their approach wasn't maybe as refined, and that was sometimes very frustrating as well. They were not at the 'it is more important than the rest of my life' stage, whereas I had been there, I had the t-shirt. So I definitely decided before the tournament that I was going to retire, in fact I think I had announced that I intended to retire, which is always dangerous because there is always a risk that the coach says, well don't come, we don't actually need you, but for whatever reason they were like we want you to come, you can still do a job, are still number 1. It was a very emotional experience for me that tournament, and especially the last game. And Rhona had announced her retirement as well, she actually went back for the Commonwealth Games after that, but we went through the same process of, we were standing there in the circle at the beginning of the game, knowing that was going to be your last international. I remember just saying we are going to do this, and the sticks are in, this is the plan for the next 35 minutes, but then at the end of the game just being in pieces, because it was almost like this letting go of something, and you really weren't sure how it was going to affect you going forward. You'd made that decision and you told people you're retiring, but the actual I don't have to do this anymore, not having the network and the support, which was always there before, how do you do that. You are leaving that all behind. The youngsters that I play with now in the team have no idea what I've done internationally, you know, to them it would be like, did you use to play for Scotland? And you think, in the space of 4 years, you almost become a nobody. You don't know you are going to have that experience at the time, but you have maybe seen it happen to others and so know fine well that you are going to come up against the same thing in your future life, as a former hockey player.

OG: And so how did life then change?

N: I don't know if it actually changed as much as I thought it would. To begin with it was a bit like just, not end of season but the season break. So you have go downtime or the equivalent of the summer holidays anyway, you would have had a short break, a month or 6 weeks after a tournament, so it felt like it would. I think I mainly noticed it at weekends, because I had a weekend. The first few months, I wouldn't say I wandered round the flat, but it was like what do people do on Saturdays? And you would find yourself going to the supermarket, whereas previously you would have fitted that in at half past nine on your way back from a training session from Dundee when you went round chucking things you thought you needed into the trolley. And instead you are thinking, this is what people do. B and Q, going from a coffee, garden centres, into town shopping. And I didn't adjust to that for ages. I found it all a bit meaningless, filling in time, and thinking is this all there is, and finding myself thinking, yes that is how it was going to be. What surprised me, and disappoints me looking back now, is that I went from intensively training during the week, I'd always train pretty hard during the week, at times I was doing something every day, twice a day, and almost overnight that stopped. Instead of some people who said it took them a long time to down train, being so used to going training that they couldn't not do it anymore, I became almost the opposite, which was I don't need to do this anymore so I won't. And I would pack my bag for the gym, I would take it to work with me, and I wouldn't go. I would set the alarm to go in the morning, and I would switch it off. So all the things that I had done religiously, I must be at that training session, I must get up early because I have to go to the gym before work, and you know somebody is going to be there saying were you there, yes, tick in the box. And as there was not anybody cracking the whip anymore, I let myself go. And I am not sure if that was a cathartic thing for me, sort of take charge again of my life rather than it being dictated by somebody else saying this is your training programme or not. But 4 years on I am actually really disappointed because I have found it really hard each time now, when I try to get back into some form of serious training, I can't do it, I haven't been able to do it. That really surprises me, having had so long when the mindset was all about training, if you had to be at Dundee at 6 and therefore had to leave at half 4, then you did it. I only have to train once a week with my hockey team, on a Wednesday, the training is at half past 6, which means leaving here at 6 o'clock, and how many times do I manage to do that? I'll pitch up there at half past 7, because I'll do my, gosh I really should be leaving now, but I'll just do this first. But I will go eventually, I just won't go as quickly as I should. Whereas before I wouldn't have dreamt of turning up late. I use my work now as an excuse, oh I can't get out of work, but actually I could have, if I had wanted to. And my gym bag has been sitting through there, I brought it in last Monday, so that was another week that I didn't go to the gym because I would get to lunch time and just think, no. The gym is less than a 5 minute walk away from here, I give them £40 a month, and I don't go, but I can't bring myself to cancel it because that is like a sign of weakness. I will go one day, I just don't know when. I used to enjoy the strength and conditioning stuff, I used to do that down at the

university in the morning, and I really enjoyed that because it was a social thing as well, there was a group of us, we would be down there doing our training, and probably what I should have done in hindsight is try and come to an arrangement with them whereby they would say, Nancy we are more than happy if you keep coming because you are a good example, a good role model. But I didn't suggest that to them, they said we would love to see you if you want to come in again, but there was nothing formalised that made me feel like they wanted me to go or that I should go, and I think if I'd had that, I could have kept some kind of link, it would have been a link with the things I had been doing before and that would probably have sustained it. Whereas you sever that link, there is no reason to go down there, so I will go to the gym round the corner, but actually there is nobody checking up whether Nancy actually goes there. I have signed up for 10k's, with the thought that it will make me train, but I don't, I just pitch up on the day and I do it, I don't do as good a time but I still do it. As I say, I am disappointed in myself, I thought I would have had more willpower to train, but that is the bit that went and I definitely used work as an excuse. It was almost like, well work has suffered because of hockey, and now I am going to give back. But my firm don't give a monkeys whether I am here at 7 o'clock at night or am at training, the work will get done. But work is a convenient excuse, people won't question that.

OG: Did you speak to anyone, get advice or anything, when you were making the decision to retire or when you first finished?

N: No, I think the process was very internalised. I think if I spoke to anyone about it I was telling them that that was what I was going to do, it wasn't a discussion. I think I had analysed it in the sense of, okay what keepers are coming up behind me, are they likely to be selected ahead of me, possibly, do I really want to be number 2 keeper in a squad having been there before, no, am I enjoying this as much as I thought I used to, no, are there other things I want to do with my life, yes. So it was quite inevitable, and it was just what is going to be the right time, the right event, to stop, and the Europeans was in that cycle, it gave others then a chance to grow into their role.

OG: You spoke earlier about a lot of your peer group having retired before you did. Did you speak to any of them about your retirement?

N: No. It is just sort of what happened. The majority of the ones that had retired from Scotland that were my peer group were still playing club hockey, for Western for example, and they had stopped playing internationally because they either couldn't give the time commitment because of their own work commitments, or they had made the same decisions I was making in terms of peer group and am I enjoying this anymore and do I have a life? So they were quite happy to do the club stuff but not the international. That wasn't really an option for me, I had to lose the top club stuff at the same time because I wasn't going to keep doing that, it was all integral. So in terms of them not being at Scottish anymore, it was almost a jokey thing, like oh you've got training tomorrow, I don't and I get a long lie, so you never really related that to anything, because as you saw it their lives were just pretty much the same, the only difference was they didn't have to do the Scottish stuff. The majority of them are probably PE teachers, they are doing school stuff on a Saturday morning, they are still heavily involved, rather than ones that say, right I am hanging up the stick and I never have to do that again, or never want to do it again.

OG: Is there anything else you want to tell me about your experiences?

N: The way I look at it is I split it into work, sport, and social, because at the end of the day they are the three things that you need. If you have been in competitive sport at an elite level you are going to have that competitive spirit and you are going to have to put it into something, even if not sport. So from a work point of view do they know where they are going with their career, is their career going to be fulfilling enough. From a sport point of view are they stopping entirely, are they going to keep playing in some shape or form, do they want to get into coaching. And to sort of have that lined up, or make the decision, if I don't want to do hockey anymore what am I going to fill that gap with. Also thinking about the social, the majority of people on the social side of things aren't going to be affected in the same way I was, as I wasn't living where the social network was whereas most of them will be. So their choice is okay am I still going to play club hockey and so still going to have that social network or not. I think the ones whose friends are all in hockey will be the ones who keep playing in some shape or form because if they stop playing completely they are going to lose that. One of my friends made the observation to me, she said we cut you a lot of slack because you weren't around, and I realised afterwards that I hadn't appreciated from the friends point of view, that that would have been the case. I lost count of the number of weddings I missed, the number of hen nights, birthdays, you just weren't there. Was like I can't because I'm in Holland, I can't because I'm in Italy, I can't because I've got training the next day. And there was a awful lot of can'ts, of sorry but, and I certainly didn't appreciate that from the friend's point of view, but they would just be looking at that and saying, yes but that is just how it is, what Nancy's priorities are, she just can't do. Because in my mind I didn't have a

choice, whereas looking at it from there side of things it could be different. But I was very fortunate that I had a network of friends up here as well who were accommodating of those requirements. Although I suspect I lost some friends along the way too because they weren't accommodating in the slightest. You win some, you lose some. But the ones who stick about are the ones who are going to be your close friends, who will put up with it all. I think the other point that is important from a hockey point of view is I never made a penny out of it, and therefore the retirement issues that might be associated with, for example, somebody who has played professional sport, or sport where there has been a financial incentive or element to it, the factors connected with that are just so far apart from my experiences. I am actually better off not playing hockey than I was when I was playing. And that can be a big reason why people give up too. I am pretty sure that my views on retirement from sport would be fairly different, is different the right word, they would certainly be more focused than they were, because it was a lifestyle change for me rather than a financial thing.

END

ADVISER A
8th May 2006

OG: So let's start off with some basic background information about yourself, about your work and sport experience and background and then coming into how you came into your position with the institute and where you are at now.

A: Ok, well I was an international rower for 9 years, 3 Olympic Games and I retired in 2000 and I continued to work after I retired with my as then ACE adviser, which is what is called Performance Lifestyle now. After we had gone through the kind of, all the, you know, what did I want to do and what were my areas of expertise etcetera, she said oh, do you fancy doing my job because she knew there was a job coming up and I applied for that. So I started to do this work with UKSI before the EIS were up and running and then when they were soon to be EIS I stopped and I went back to teaching which is what I had training to do, em, because I knew this job was coming up in Scotland. It took 18 months for it to come up and I applied for that and I started here at the beginning of 2004, so I have been here for nearly 2 and a half years now. So basically I guess I am a kind of proof that having somebody to assist you along the way after you retire can help considerably.

OG: So first of all, what do you think are the main issues that athletes face during transitions out of sport?

A: Well, I guess we come across, I think you can divide it up firstly and most importantly into athletes who have chosen to withdraw from international or high performance sport and those who have had it thrust upon them and I think that makes a huge difference to how they handle the transition. Generally speaking from what I've observed, I think the main roles are, em, a kind of, a lack of life experience and confidence in the normal work, real, very real issues with body image, and the whole acceptance that your athlete body will cease to exist. I think that's a real, a really under acknowledged area of difficulty. Also the identification, you know, people who have got used to introducing themselves as I'm so-and-so and I am a... in fact more than that even being introduced as this is so-and-so, she is the runner, rower, cyclist and suddenly you are not anymore and if you haven't been conscious of that whilst you've been an athlete you see, you see them struggling then you know, it's kind of well I'm not anymore, what am I? So I would say those three areas cover all of them, but obviously if you've got injuries that forced you out of your sport before your time then that adds a whole other layer of difficulty.

OG: This is quite a difficult question, but as I said at the beginning my thesis is looking to examine the experiences of Scottish female athletes in particular. Do you think that male and female athletes face the same issues, or are there some issues that are different?

A: Em, I would say generally speaking that it is such an individual thing that I don't think gender is necessarily that relevant except obviously for the time issue so if you are in your mid-thirties and you are female and you stop doing your sport then there is the whole pressure because you have a limited space of time if you want to start a family and so there is your own expectations, there is external expectations, and that I think is a very real pressure on women as distinct from men. I think with the way things are going in the workplace there is less of an expectation now that men must have a job and women can kind of choose to have a job. That isn't so relevant now as it used to be.

OG: And do you think male and female athletes maybe deal with retirement issues differently? I mean there are some suggestions in the literature that females are able to deal with the emotional issues better, or may develop identities other than their sport identity easier than men.

A: No, I wouldn't say that was true at all. I think possibly the way people deal with it is different although I am not convinced that that can be strictly divided on gender lines. I think that the body image thing is probably more of a problem for women, but I'm only saying because I hear it from female athletes, but they may feel more comfortable talking to me about it than say a male athlete would, I don't know. So, no, I think again it's an individual thing rather than a gender thing.

OG: I suspect that's probably what my study is going to find as well, I'm certainly not coming into it with any preconceived ideas or expectations about what I'm going to find. It hasn't really been looked at, which is one of the reasons I am. Now moving into your job here, could you briefly describe the services that are offered to institute athletes through the Performance Lifestyle programme?

A: Ok, well there are kind of, I suppose three areas is probably the easiest way of describing it. We have athletes who are still in education and a lot of the work we do with them is what we would call integration. So a lot of negotiation and work with schools, colleges, universities, to enable the athlete student to continue with their studies as long as is feasible. And obviously there are certain points in all athletes' lives where they need to make hard choices, but we try to enable them to carry on for as long as possible. The same sort of scenario but for athletes who are working, so a lot of negotiation with... you know flexibility in their employment and also getting employers to recognise that the things that make a good athlete actually a lot of the time make a very good employee. So they may have them for less hours in the week but chances are they will be more driven. And then the third aspect is a bit more, it's hard to round up, it's all the other... stuff that isn't dealt with by the scientists or the medics... and it can be basic handling finance, handling the media, we run workshops on nutritional cooking, all of the life stuff that can get in the way if athletes just... they either try and ignore it and eventually it comes up and bites them, or they just haven't had the time or the experience in the real world to learn how to deal with stuff like that. Find quite a lot of athletes if you like are kind of almost retarded, you know, in the normal environment because they have spent so much time devoting themselves to their sport they don't go through the same learning processes. Our job here is delivery of medals, that's the job, it's not to make them study, or make them get a job, but it's very clearly to look at the distractions that are out there, and giving the athletes the ability to control those distractions, and to make decisions about the distractions they can't control.

OG: Moving more specifically to the idea of transitions, what services are targeted specifically at, or are particularly useful for athletes who are facing transitions or indeed who are coming out of their sport?

A: Well, I don't know if you know, you've spoken to Susie haven't you so I'm sure you are aware that Performance Lifestyle is the only service that the athletes can continue to access. They get a final medical assessment and stuff but I think the most useful work can be done actually before retirement and also in other transitions, so going from school to university or university to employment, it's the preparation and it's the... actually this is what it's like for everyone and this isn't what it's like for everyone, this is different because you're an athlete. And sometimes you find athletes saying oh you know this and that, and it's like well actually that's what everyone has to deal with, that's life, whereas this actually is different for you, you know, your weekly shopping is going to be different. You know, you will need, you know on a daily basis, so time, sleep, rest, whatever are going to be different. But this is going to be annoying, you know living with revolting flatmates when you are a student is annoying for everyone but it's life. So I think it's very the preparation so that there are no, it's always going to be a shock, but if you can cover as many of the bases and say, you know, you might find this, you might find that, this is normal, feeling like this is normal, em, I think helps to lessen the impact of it and I think that's something we can do more of, but we would need more backing to spend more time doing that.

OG: In terms of the amount of time you literally have to spend with athletes?

A: We have too many athletes so... I mean we have too many active athletes so... But it is something that I'm sort of thinking about maybe looking to develop in this next year is a look at a kind of like almost an exit workshop and obviously that only covers athletes who know they are going to retire, who are going to be in a better place anyway. You know the abrupt retirees are always going to be tricky and I think they could do with more time being spent but we don't have the resources.

OG: In an ideal world an athlete will be able to choose when they retire, so in this situation how long before when they retire would you be thinking about helping them prepare for that? Is there a formula for that?

A: Well initially it depends on the sport. Generally speaking most sports operate on an annual cycle within a four year cycle. Some athletes will know this is going to be my last Olympics, so they might know four years in advance and obviously that is perfect because that gives you loads and loads of time to do little bits and pieces here and there. But also most athletes have a fairly good idea between a year and six months out, they kind of know, I think this will be my least season or they'll get through their winter training and think I'm never doing that again, I've had enough. So I would say generally speaking if it is a voluntary retirement they would know... or they would start to be thinking about a year out.

OG: So what type of things are you doing with them at that stage?

A: Well in an ideal world you would be looking at, well what have you already got in place, ok, what, you know, what ideas do you have? Still got a bit of time to try a few things out if you've not got any ideas you know. Just do a bit of work experience or, you know, almost like they're lucky in that they have a career on the go and they invariably have little bits of time when they could try out other things, so work experience is quite a good way. And also trying to build up their confidence, so we talk a lot about transferable skills, because quite often they say I don't know how to do anything else, I've never done anything else. We say, well ok, let's look at what you do do. Every day you are up at whatever, half past 4 in the morning, you are organised for a day that is going to last 15 hours, you know, you have to motivate yourself, you have to organise yourself, all of this kind of stuff. You are trying to talk them into believing that they have skills that they probably haven't recognised. And then you try and build the CV, just so... less and less is it a tool that you use to get a job now because so many jobs are application forms, but the actual process of building a CV gets them to stop and think about what they actually have done in their lives and that as a process is quite useful. Talking from personal experience it took me 6 months to, you know, even just jot things down, so you kind of anticipate that it is going to be a slow process. But that would be kind of the way we would be looking, even just to get them to start thinking about what they might want to do and if there is anything missing what can we put in place between now and then.

OG: What about those athletes then that are either injured or deselected, or in fact even area athletes who are deselected. What can we do to help them and what is in place at the moment?

A: I think, one of the things that struck me was there seems to be a bit of lack of clarity as to what deselection means. Some athletes assume that means that's it, they are out for good, not as many as I think should be aware of the fact that they may have been dropped because they haven't met their targets, but there is nothing to say that if they don't, if they come back up they can be back in. A prime example is I had a swimmer who was in the institute and then he left home, left school, came to university and had a classic first year at university and his performance dropped off and so he dropped out. But he has got himself together now and he is back in again. So I think there is an awareness there of exactly what deselection means and, you know, are they being deselected because they are deemed to have no more potential, i.e. this is as good as you are going to get, or is it that they have just had a little bit of a drop or have sort of stalled. So I think that could be explained better. I think, em, I think, I do feel we have a moral responsibility to set them up with a few tools, certainly to get them through the first 3 to 6 months. So if you take an athlete who is in a sport that is very very structured and they are used to their life being, you know, you will do this and then you will do that and then you'll do this, and then they come out and there is nothing. That's very hard to cope with and I think a kind of then, a training down programme so, ok so you are not going to train full ball, but from a health point of view I think it is generally accepted now that you shouldn't just stop, but if you can give it a structure... because what I have seen with athletes is that they tend to either just completely stop and go to pot and then end up with all sorts of other issues, or they train almost harder because it is all they know and they have to keep themselves where they are and so you get these kind of manically training athletes who aren't training for anything but it's just all they know. So I think a sort of, a tapered sort of down from full training down to a, what a normal person might consider a healthy lifestyle, I think that would help at all levels.

OG: I guess that is particularly difficult in those sports in which the athlete is very much guided in what they do by the coaches, so when that's taken away there are problems.

A: Absolutely and again, I mean, that is about resources, a time resource thing more than anything but I do think that it is important and particularly here where the athletes tend to be training a larger proportion of their day. To suddenly have that removed, you know, I guess it would be like having a 9 to 5 job and then suddenly not having a 9 to 5 job and it's like well what do you do with the time?

OG: So if that a process where you feel like the coaches, for example, should be getting involved and having a bit of responsibility?

A: Yes I think so and the medics too, because of the health implications you know and if the coach has given that tapered timetable then chances are that the athlete will follow it, because they are used to following their instructions. There is that, with some sports, not all sports it has to be said, but there is that almost institutionalised way of thinking, but you need to be weaned off as well, you can't just suddenly be expected to snap out of it. I do think that's an area that we could do better.

OG: I guess again it is just a time and resource issue, and bringing people in...

A: I think here, and I mean we bang on about it all the time, we are performance focused and it is all about the performance at the end of the day and so if you bring it up as a kind of, you know, don't we have a responsibility, shouldn't we... it's like well it's not to do with performance, therefore it's not our problem. So it's a bit of a, a kind of moral maze really.

OG: Do you think, I mean you talked a bit about it, are there differences in the issues that those who are injured or deselected face compared to those who chose to finish face?

A: Absolutely. I mean just from a purely personal, my personal experience, em, I chose when I retired, by my standards I hadn't achieved what I wanted to in my sport, but I kind of knew the answer that I had asked at the beginning which was if I do this properly how good can I be. I knew the answer and I had reached the point where I just was too grown up to put up with a lot of the other stuff anymore and so I left the sport and I have had no desire to go back. I have interest only in as much as friends of mine are still involved, em, and I am very content in the manner in which I left. I see other people who were retired out, mostly through injury it has to be said in my sport, who just can't let it go. They train furiously and want to know the inside out of what everybody is doing and can't move forward. So they'll go into coaching in the same sport because they want to stay involved but it's not really because they want to give something back, it's because they can't let go of it. I do see that very strongly and I do feel, em, I do feel kind of lucky that I'm, that I had the luxury of the choice and that I know now 6 years down the line that I absolutely chose the right time because I haven't ever had a moment where I have thought, oh I wonder if. And I don't think there are enough athletes who can say that, who can say that, you know, that they don't think oh I wonder if I, you know,

OG: It's difficult if you make the choice, because then it's am I going to make the right choice, chose the right time, and it's maybe particularly hard if you don't quite get to where you wanted to in your sport because there is always that what if...

A: I think so, I mean certainly in my sport it was easy because, em, it's very much a 4 year cycle and there wasn't really any point in, you know, doing two world championships after an Olympics because they are only there as a build up to the Olympics and there's no Commonwealth Games. So you know, it's kind of, OK well, I've never going to be able to go another 4 years, or I'm too old to go another 4 years, therefore this is the natural time and you know, so you... you know for the 4 years that that will be the end point. So I didn't have that, should I go now, should I just give it another year, you know there wasn't that.

OG: So it's maybe easier in those sports with a defined cycle because if you know it's that... particularly in a sport that's physically very hard, and I guess gymnastics is another example of this type of sport, you get to the point where it is, can I do 4 more years of this? What has been the response of athletes towards the provision of transition services? When you talk to them about planning for their retirement are they responsive?

A: Depends how old they are, to be honest with you. I mean, it's a huge generalisation, again it all comes back to the, you know, it's about the individual, but generally speaking the younger they are and almost the younger they are in sporting terms, em, they are indestructible and they are going to live forever and it's just inconceivable to them, you know, they see themselves doing their sport for 10 or 15 years and you know if you are only 15 years old then that's your entire life still to go. You know, the thought of even being 30 is unfeasible to them. So it's very much... for the younger or the younger in their sport, em, I tend to just angle it very much towards their... well you know, if you can get this done, then it's in the bank and then you'll be able to focus on other things. Just making sure they have got something in the bank because when I first started the job with UKSI, one of the first athletes I worked with was a 36 year old badminton player who had left school at 15 and he didn't even have Maths GCSE, he had nothing, he was a great bloke but he was 36 and he had not a thing. And so we are very much kind of trying to make sure we don't produce any more athletes who come out in that situation. So for the younger ones it tends to be more just getting the balance until you have to make that decision and also trying to encourage them to see education as something

you can come back to, getting away from the idea that, you know, you have to do your highers when you are 17, in fact you can do them when your 21 or whenever.

OG: Getting away from the idea that at this stage in your life you should be doing that and so on, because sport tends to move you out of that anyway.

A: Exactly. The older ones, em, I would say it's less predictable and some are happy to talk about it a year out and plan, others just don't want to... especially if they are planning to stop say after an Olympics, I don't want to talk about it until after the Games, I don't want to do anything till after the Games and you hear that all the time, after the Games. And so that's sort of fair enough then you get some of them who kind of retire and immediately want full on everything and there are others who just walk away, who don't want to, don't want to, you know, use this service at all and to be honest with you I'm completely happy with that because there are some people we can do a lot to help and there are some people, you know... I've got a 64 year old curler who frankly, you know, they've managed 64 years without my help...

OG: And also I guess that if they are strong enough just to be able to walk away and do it, quite often they have the strength of mind, they're not necessarily going through that trauma, or if they are they are funding some avenue for it, hopefully, somewhere.

A: Yeah.

OG: So a lot of the time is it just a case of going by the athlete in terms of the athlete coming to you, rather than you pushing them, saying you should be doing this, you should be doing that...

A: Well I mean we do, we kind of, we do... increasingly all of the services are trying to get the athletes into this whole yearly plan and so we have had that where you know you are going through the yearly plan and right well have you had any thoughts, because it's usually summer sports, have you had any thoughts about the autumn, you know, have you thought what you're going to be doing. And some of them might at that point say well, you know, I think this is going to be my last summer and others will say, no, I haven't thought. And oh well ok, no rush, but it might be an idea to start thinking about it. And then just kind of revisit it whenever you see them thereafter, making sure they know that door is open and they can get that information.

OG: What about the coaches, how do they respond to the provision of transition services to their athletes?

A: Depends on the sport, very strongly. A brightly shining example in here, although maybe not so much... although it is growing actually in the professional game, is rugby. I think because they have to face it a lot because of the injury rate, you know, and also the realisation when rugby turned professional and everybody jumped ship, and then went oh its really boring, we do need something else and also the, god forbid, if I break my leg or my neck or whatever in a scrum tomorrow then what am I going to do? So they are all very very welcoming and they appreciate the value of it and there is a general move, I mean Wales are streets ahead, they've had their own people on board for a long time, the Professional Rugby Association in England now has Performance Lifestyle advisers of their own and so they are starting to take that on board. I think Scottish rugby is in such a state of flux, have been in the last few years, that it is going to take a while for them to get there. But certainly the coaches here... A couple of the other sports, there is a bit less buy in full stop and a bit of resistance to the concept that athletes exist outside of the training arena. I think that is just based on a lack of understanding of what it is that we do, you know, we are not trying to persuade athletes to take up hobbies for the sake of it, that's just not what we're about. We're about helping them to keep their lives tidy so that they can train properly but, yeah, so it is very much depend on the culture in the sport and unfortunately it does tend to be the sports where you get injured the sports that are most receptive to that sort of thing.

OG: They see the athletes coming out of the sport more, being forced out more, so they are faced with that reality a little more often I guess.

A: Yes absolutely.

OG: There is a lot of work that suggests that coaches feel that sort of threat on their programme...

A: Yes, I mean there was certainly when I worked at UKSI, I mean the whole way it works down south is a bit different anyway, but there was a big resistance, oh well you will be persuading the athletes to retire [END OF SIDE 1]. We are not in the business of persuading athletes to do anything. We are about working

with you for the athlete and, you know, the whole retirement thing... as if you could persuade an athlete to retire, it's such a personal decision. So I think that's dying now, I think it's less and less, so as people become more relaxed about, you know, being less possessive over their territory I think....

OG: So then the next step is therefore getting coaches to realise that they maybe also have that obligation for the person they have looked after as an athlete for the last how ever many years, that actually when they finish that doesn't mean they fall out of their sphere of responsibility completely.

A: Yes, I think so, I mean now he's out in the real world... yes it definitely helps. Its certainly how from a sort of ethical point of view how it should go.

OG: It is interesting to hear you talk about some of the differences down south, which Susie also spoke about a little bit, saying that the Performance Lifestyle programme down at EIS does work in a slightly different way. I know a bit about that working in the university system and my knowledge of the emergence of PALS, which emerged on the back of problems with what was ACE at the time.

A: Yes, I mean there was a lot about ACE that wasn't good and I think the best thing was, was kind of withdrawing from that licensing agreement. It was very tick box, it was very... and that is something that we are lucky here to not have the pressure to do, you know, it is more about the quality of the work you do with the athletes than the number of athletes you've 'seen' this month.

OG: And whether the athlete has gone through this section and this section...

A: Exactly, no matter whether they necessarily need it. And that... it's an irrelevance, and like I said earlier you know, if I have an athlete who has absolutely no need of my time then that's fantastic, because I can then spend the time on somebody who does need it.

OG: Rather than forcing an athlete to come in, because that can be like forcing them to come in and see the headmistress then.

A: Yes absolutely. And they come in with a bad attitude because they have got a thousand things that they would be better off doing and they may not take anything out of the session so it can be a wasted time both for them and for you. And I do believe... and I follow it rigorously... I will go and see an athlete, you know if an athlete is coming in to see the doc or the physio or whatever then I'll see them here but I would rather go to somewhere that is convenient for them because... because it's all about making their lives easier and if they've got to schlep up the motorway to get here then it is kind of a contradiction of what we're trying to do, adding a problem for them instead. So I think that is one of the strengths we have here, the individualised approach.

OG: And I think it is an approach that so far seems to be working, particularly if you compare for example to what is going on down south. You've talked a little bit about maintaining contact with the athletes after they retire, as the one service they still have. Is there a protocol for how long you maintain this contact?

A: Yes. We kind of have an exit interview if you like and then, partly it's dictated by the... if they've been on as it was world class funding, podium now, em, they have access to an education award which is £1000 on a 12 month rolling basis. You are not allowed to use this for undergraduate fees but it is pretty broad apart from this. And that is available to them to apply for up to three months after they retire. So generally speaking we have an exit interview, we'll touch base after 3 months and then maybe, if we've worked with them at 3 months, then again at 6 months and then it's up to them to come back to us if they need something. But if after 3 months they're off and they're away then we don't proactively go out there, they know they can come and certainly when Alan deselected an athlete from Central he always puts in the letter that the athletes can continue to work with me for up to a year.

OG: And do you find athletes do tend to come to you in that period of time?

A: Generally not, unless I've worked with them quite intensively up to that point. So I wouldn't get an athlete who I've hardly done any work with, or maybe just touched base with, popping up 6 months later. So it would very much be the... I had a swimmer last year, no, 2004, who knew she was going to retire and I hadn't done any work with her, I mean she was a long time in her sport and very, sort of, very well set up, very organised. But about 3 months before she retired she contacted me saying that there was a course she wanted to do and could we access the education fund and she was interested in this other thing and bla... and so we worked quite closely for about those 3 months up until her retirement and then she did stay in contact then through her course which ran for another 3 months and then for 3 months after that and then I haven't

heard from her since which is fine because she'd kind of got herself to a place she wanted to be and then set up her own company and off she went. So that's fine.

OG: Is there maybe a suggestion then that the athletes who link into the programme better when they are active are the ones who have closer contact all the way through the time they are with you?

A: Yes, or maybe specifically at the end, I mean yes the ones we have close contact with all the way through are likely to stay in touch, but it tends to be the ones... if we have good contact with them at the end of their career then they will, you know, we'll still be in touch maybe 6 months or whatever later. But I have never had anyone popping up out of the blue 3 months after they retire saying can you help me, I retired 3 months ago. That doesn't happen. I think if we are not kind of on their radar before they leave the sport then they are unlikely to pop up suddenly.

OG: So do you think there's an argument for you guys more actively going out there and making more contact with them or do you think it works fine leaving the door open for them?

A: I think it's... well it's hard, to be honest with you, some athletes when they retire they just, they just want to be away from all things connected with sport and if you come chapping on their door, it's almost bringing back... and they are thinking come on, leave me alone, I have left all of that. So no I don't think so and to be honest with you, we haven't got the time to chase up... so we're more than happy to work with people if we have something ongoing or it they come to us, but we just... we just don't have the time to chase the athletes... too many athletes.

OG: What is your general opinion then of the services that are offered by the institute at the moment to athletes at the end of their sporting career? Are they comprehensive enough? Are you doing enough?

A: My personal opinion is that I think it's good that they have an exit medical and physio and I think there is, I don't know exactly, but there is provision I think if athletes are having ongoing medical treatment, then there is a period of time for that to continue which I think is exactly how it should be. But I do think that this concept of training down is something that could, and stroke should, be looked at, em, more closely because I think... and also the education thing. Now obviously if it is someone who is retired out then it needs to be a much more one on one and probably better from somebody like me who has been there who can say god yeah, wait till you get to six months and then you realise that your not abroad or, you know, whatever then that education for those athletes, for the ones who kind of almost left in a trauma I think is vital but needs to be much, much more of a one on one thing. Athletes who know they are going to retire I still think we could still do an education workshop on this is what's normal, this is how you'll feel, these are the things you need to take into consideration. You know, the 8000 calories a day is not going to work and the afternoon television that is not going to work either. You know, all of these sort of things that have become your life now will need to change and yes it is, it is a grieving process, you know, even if you've chosen to leave it is like, like a death almost. There is this sudden absence and a lack of purpose and I think you can't warn people enough about that but it's a fine line because obviously you don't want to, you don't want to distract them and you don't want to scare an athlete into staying on longer, hanging on. So I do think that's an area that needs to be explored more fully, the whole education of what's to come.

OG: And is that an area in which more ex-athletes could get involved, so bringing back ex-athletes who could talk to current athletes?

A: I think so. I think... well or yeah, or even sort of stuff that could come out of maybe a discussion forum with ex-athletes saying oh god yeah I found this really hard and I found that really hard. Even if that just pulled out common themes that you could then take and use...

OG: In terms of an athlete facing really big emotional problems coming out of sport, you know if that loss really hits them hard, if they are really struggling, do you deal with that yourself or do you have referral mechanisms so if things get to the point where you think... you know, goodness...?

A: Oh god I refer them straight away! I mean we do have kind of a, a bank of people... I mean obviously we have sport psychologists working here but sometimes you need just straight up psychologists, particularly to deal with... well depression, it is just incredibly common and as you probably know, the whole cricketers committing suicide after they stop playing cricket, you know, that whole thing is natural, but obviously with some people it sinks into something much deeper and clinical and yes, I think that we could do something there to make it easier for athletes to access people if they run into difficulties, because it may not be 3 months after, it could be, you know, 6 or 9 months after, but it's still very much a kick back from what they've been asked and expected to do. And it is really common and also athletes tend to be very self-

analytical anyway and they can think themselves into the biggest hole in the world and so maybe you know just a few talks in advance to prepare yourself. And also knowing that what you're thinking is normal and that everyone feels it.

OG: So developing coping skills and also recognising the coping skills that they can use so that they can understand what they are going through...

A: ... yeah and even just the kind of very simple, oh yeah no they did say it was going to be like this, sort of thing, I'm not going mad or whatever.

OG: What do you see as any future developments of the Performance Lifestyle programme? Where do you see it going in the next couple of years?

A: More people... more people because the quality of the service is very much dependent on the amount of time you can spend and invariably people slip through the net, you know, and every now and again I think oh no was that 2 months ago, god, I should have done that by now or... so yeah, more people and I think to be honest with you the rest is kind of developing in a very organic way, its, you know, we have a great diversity of experience within the team at the moment. So we have people from a social work/counselling background, people from a careers background, people from a teaching background, em, you know people from a performance background and that is a real strength because everybody is bringing something to the party. So I think the slow recruitment has worked in that regard, in that you know we've brought people in more slowly than the numbers of athletes would demand but I think as long as we continue to increase or improve the ratio then the service itself will get better.

OG: So about slowly recruiting the right people for the programme rather than recruiting people in haste...

A: Well yes, and it is an odd job actually, it's quite... it can be quite demanding at times because it's not just the athletes you're dealing with, it's all the people who have a vested interest, so coaches, parents, family members...

OG: I can imagine that particularly with the area athletes parents can come into that in a big way...

A: Yeah and then, you know, it is evolving as well, as the sports kind of grab hold of it so now we have tennis, so now we are meeting with teachers at primary schools because we have 10 and 11 year olds and that's a whole new world. So yeah, we are, we are you know looking, with the new funding round coming up, at maybe kind of structuring the programme slightly different, I mean I don't know if Susie spoke about this, but maybe looking... my job is quite unusual in that I work at area institute and at Scottish institute level but I lead with swimming and athletes and the individual athletes here and then I have all of the sports at central. So I work from kind of development right through to the sharp end. So I can see the whole spectrum and see that progression. But I have the strength of lots of different sports from the area so I don't get bogged down in swimming and athletics. But the other advisers at the moment are very much in their area institutes because of the nature of their jobs, you know, we only have one... Mary in the West is full time, just full time. So we are looking at maybe making it generally speaking more vertical, so then everybody has both development and performance. Because that does give you a real perspective on it and if you only ever work with the raw athletes then it is quite easy to lose sight of where they are heading and similarly if you only work at the pointy end you kind of lose the idea of where they're coming from. So we are looking to do that, which should make it a much stronger programme.

OG: What training were you provided when you started working for the institute?

A: Ha, you are talking to the person who took longer doing the grad cert than any person in the history of the universe. When I was first at UKSI I started on this graduate certificate as it was called then and there were a couple of us who started it at the same time. So we sort of did workshops and came up here and, em, went to training weekends that were delivered on different aspects of the job so kind of, you know, people questioning and body language and... you know, just all of that sort of stuff. But then I stopped working at UKSI just over a year after I started so that stopped my grad cert and then I went off and I taught and then when I came back here they were on a different version of the grad cert and then a different one.

OG: Was that going from the Australian one to the UK Sport one...

A: and then another one so I think we are on version 2 or 3 of the English one, of the UK Sport one.

OG: Was it the Australian one you started?

A: Yes... rubbish (laughs). So there were 2 Australian versions and now I think we are on the second version of the British one. Anyway, so I have finally, finally, just churned out the last essay. And I think that's quite good in that it does make you stop and think about the theories behind it and we have some really good people come and talk about research they've done and the implications of that. There is a really good man in Belgium called Wylleman and his research is great and it really kind of put a frame around what we do because it is a job where people can very easily get lost in the words. Sometimes you just need the cold hard facts and get on with the job. So yeah, I have to say the book learning, a lot of it is common sense. So you know people talk about Eagin's model and all of that and it's kind of like well you know, where are you now, how did you get here, where do you want to go and how are you going to get there. So if you sort of say it like that then its like oh is that it? Well yeah. It's just academic talk, which is not... So I thought it was going to be... the most valuable stuff actually was, you know, with watching other people do the job and having other people watch you do the job and then feedback. Seeing other people do it and thinking, oh actually I'm not far off and also coming back to the strength of the programme particularly here, but in the UK generally, is being able to pick up the phone or send out an email saying, oh what do I do about this or how do I do that, and you will always get an answer.

OG: A strong system with people willing to help each other.

A: Absolutely, because we, because we are not in competition and because we are all, kind of, slightly apart in that, em, we you know, we don't have the, I'm the best strength and conditioning coach, look at my athletes. It just doesn't work like that for us so there isn't any sense of professional competition there is just a sense of kind of, gosh, they know that, I need to know that.

OG: So coming back again to the mixed team, with people of different backgrounds and differing knowledge who can share that and all help each other. Do you think, is there any ongoing training issues that you feel need addressed? Do you still have ongoing training?

A: Yeah. I'm being sent on a course in two weeks time, in Nottingham.

OG: You look thrilled...

A: (laughs) well it is kind of an identified, well not so much a weakness as an area that, you know, I hate doing which is the presentations thing which thankfully we don't have to do very much of, but if you are going out to a school or... we are looking to deliver a workshop to parents on kind of education, on what's normal for a child becoming an athlete. To stand up in front of a room full of people you don't know, is scary. So I am being sent on a course that will fill me with enthusiasm for it (laughs), apparently! So they are very good to us, you know, because if there is something... so I have also requested, you know, I'm very self taught on the computer and I'm quite competent but there are some things, you know, you kind of thing ooh, I know there are ways of doing this a lot more efficiently than I'm doing it, or I know I could get a lot more out of this, so for instance excel and access. I could really get my teeth into this, but I need some guidance. So if you say can I go on a course, can I go on this course, they'll say yes.

OG: That's very good, very positive. You are not necessarily going to know what you need, but it is good to know if and when something comes up you can address it. Just one final question to finish us off. You talked earlier about rugby and I know that there are a couple of professional sports associations that do provide some kind of form of help, some of them are Performance Lifestyle and have come through the training, some are separate. I'm interested in whether all athletes who need it are getting support, or whether there are athletes who are falling through the net, with some governing bodies maybe not offering anything.

A: Em, within the institute network there shouldn't be anybody who doesn't... who can't access it. There are one or two of the individual athletes who were brought into the institute on a kind of limited provision understanding through their governing bodies, but in actual fact, thinking about it, I don't think there are any that is limited in Performance Lifestyle. You know, I think some of them are limited in sports medicine or whatever. So the Scottish institute and the area institute network, everybody should have access to Performance Lifestyle. The professional sports, it's a tricky one because we have football here and, em, rather controversially we have football and the athletes that we have are not the best footballers in Scotland, they are development, anyway that's a whole other argument, but when you meet with them, they will all tell you that the club has a welfare officer and an education officer, but it seems to vary hugely from... so you kind of step back because you don't want to tread on anyone's toes. But some of the clubs attend to those responsibilities far more diligently than others so the club may well have a welfare and education officer, but whether they actually do anything depends hugely on the club. So I suspect yes, maybe football would be the

exception. Rugby, if they're in the institute they get time, if they're... actually if they are in the academy, most of the people running the academies are pretty switched on, but the professional rugby players, not yet up here. But in England rugby players now do, in Wales rugby players do, and the English and Welsh cricket board have Performance Lifestyle because I think they recognise there is a real problem with cricket.

OG: So is it something that is growing?

A: Definitely, definitely and some of the football clubs in England have really bought into it, so there a lucky few people who are getting paid an absolute fortune to do my job. But, em, they have their work cut out because football takes, you know, 14 year olds and then spits 90% of them out when they are 19 and I think there... in some clubs there has been a recognition that's a problem. And I think now you are less likely to get duffed up now for daring to have qualifications than say 10 or 15 years ago in football.

OG: Developing an understanding that it is not a bad thing to have something else going on as well as football.

A: I think it is a luxury thing, it's painted as a luxury thing by many of the football clubs so it tends to be the ones who have got more money who are more willing to...

OG: And I guess it may be one of the first services to get lopped back off if money is tight. And is there an argument maybe in, for example sports that are covered by the institute such as individual athlete sports, where you might get an athlete who is not quite at the level to get into the institute system but is still pretty high level, still very invested in their sport, therefore could face issues when they come away from their sport. Do you think there is maybe a level of athlete there who is not getting the provision that they maybe need?

A: Yes, I am sure that there are some, em, I suspect not as many as you might think, because of the area institute network that picks up. But also because people who tend to have reached that level, tend to have been able to do so because they are students, em, because if you have to go out there and earn a living, age 17, chances are you are not going to be able to give the time and increasingly now the universities have, well bursary schemes that include a lifestyle element. So there will be some element of that sort of help through the university, whichever one they are at. But I mean, there are always going to be a few.

OG: But it seems to be improving, it is a lot better than I think the situation was 5, 6, 7 years ago. Scotland has improved it's understanding of the topic more and realising the need for this type of support. That is all the questions I had for you. Is there anything else you want to say on the topic? Anything I haven't asked you that you think I should be looking at or considering?

A: Em, it just really is that a lot... I think you know the, hard to say this without saying 'they should be doing that', I think there needs to be more investment in resources to give athletes a more comprehensive exit plan. So that should cover everything, nutrition, psychology, training down. In a perfect world, but I appreciate that all costs money.

OG: So it's maybe still the bit that is not getting the investment it needs, it is maybe a secondary consideration...

A: Well because the institute only gets money based on results, on performance. If they are not producing results, then why would you spend money on them?

OG: So there is no point in having athletes who are very well adjusted out, if they are not making it in the first place, because the system doesn't work then. Well, thanks very much for your time, it's very much appreciated.

A: No problem.

END

ADVISER B
6th May 2006

OG: So I think we'll maybe just start with some basic background information about your experience, your background, your job with Careers Scotland, and also how you got into your post with the institute.

B: Right, so I've been working as a careers advisor... I qualified as a careers advisor thirty years ago, so I've been kind of there for a long time. I had ten years out when I had the children so I've been working sort of I suppose for the last... well since 1988 so, what, 18 years back as a careers advisor. In conjunction with that I come from a family that was always involved in sport traditionally, it was just part of life you know, that you did sport. My mother was a lacrosse international way back in the 1930s I think it would have been and we just did sport, that's just what we did. So I have always had that background interest and then Ian was involved in sport at quite a high level and I, as a parent, I suppose supported him through that. My husband was also very much involved in sport so it was just a kind of thing. So I then got involved with the local sports council, em, because I was involved in the basketball club that Ian played in, so it all just kind of came together and my job with Careers Scotland as a careers advisor. When the post came up for... at the time when the Institute was first sort of inaugurated I suppose what, 6 years ago, 7 years ago, I applied for the post at that point and didn't get an interview. I was really disappointed because I thought... the way that the job had been described I thought I can do this, this is the kind of thing that I do plus I've got the sports, you know, in addition, so I was very disappointed at that time. And then three years on from then, well 3 years, 2 and a half years ago just now, there was another post advertised and prior to that advert going in the paper the area manager, who I happened to know phoned me up and said I think you should apply for this, you know, more or less, we want you to apply for it. So I did and I was fortunate to get the post. So its really worked really well, I mean I think the whole team, Performance Lifestyle team, brings together a whole lot of different strengths.

OG: Yes, Susie talked about that and I think that it's really important, you can kind of bounce ideas off other people.

B: That's right. Well I mean I come obviously from my background, Mary comes from the elite athlete angle and Angie and Ruth have both got social work backgrounds. Susie comes from an education background and I've obviously got the Careers Scotland background. So really between us we kind of pretty much cover most of the angles of the things that are likely to come up and Dot obviously comes from a very elite sport background as well. I think part of my appointment was about getting the kind of careers bit fitted into the team and you know that has worked really well. So in the day to day work... because so much of the work I do with area athletes is with school age pupils who I do a lot of my day to day work with in my Careers Scotland job, so that bit of it is not something I found difficult at all. You know the actual working with individuals of that age group, making the rapport and all that sort of thing, the actual I suppose interviewing – although I don't like to call it that – but the discussing the issues with individuals, its... that's pretty straight forward for me. So that's really how it all came about, em, and it's just all working really well. I have to say that the experience of actually being a parent of a child who has tried to balance all of these things has given me an insight there and also I think adds a bit of credibility to what you're doing when you are speaking to other parents or you are speaking to individuals, you kind of know what the issues are...

OG: ... easier for you to build a rapport with people if you have got that sort of background as well I think, as they can get the sense that you actually know, rather than just necessarily have read it in a book which people tend to react differently to that. Moving on to the idea... I'm going to talk about sport career transitions or disengagement, I'm trying to move away from the word retirement because for me I don't think it's necessarily the most appropriate word to apply to sport because of the images people bring up in their head when they think about retirement, you know 65 people coming to the end and for sports people that's not really how it works. So I try to use transitions or disengagement as words that I think are maybe a bit more appropriate, you know the idea of the transition from one stage to another. So when I am talking about transitions to you particularly I am not just looking at end of career transition, but also those transitions that we spoke about, either injury or deselection. What do you think are maybe the main issues that an athlete might face when they are coming to a career transition?

B: I think if we are talking about, you know, something like an injury then it is obviously, it's a major crisis in their lives, it's a loss of identity. Initially they would perceive themselves as being a sprinter or a hurdler or a swimmer or whatever and that's who they would describe themselves as being. So when that transition from being that as your core being sort of looms that must be a very difficult concept to actually then have to describe yourself as something else and you probably for a long time not really thought of yourself as anything else, whereas the average individual will have other titles that they would call themselves, or other sort of personas that they consider themselves to be. So I think that's probably the major thing. I mean there's also things like loss of status, loss of image amongst your peers and possibly even being quite disengaged from your peers because you've had this elite, em, kind of, you've been training every night, or you've been competing every weekend, so you haven't had that same sort of rapport with your peer group and your peer group has perhaps gone off and moved on in a different direction and you are maybe out there on a bit of a limb. So that's certainly another big thing. But I mean my experience of a transition, or

transitions, with area athletes, I mean I'm thinking in particular of a couple of hockey players who have been deselected from the institute but remain very successful club players and you know don't see themselves as possibly having made a transition other than that they are no longer in the institute. So they are still on the fringes of the international set up but just not quite over that hurdle, but also still young enough that they could still potentially get back in again in the future, so I think that is maybe where they are not athletes who would see themselves as coming towards the end of their career, in any sense.

OG: And in that they might face slightly different issues as well.

B: Yes and I think that's a test of their character as much as anything else, as to well, how much do I actually want this now, you know, like I've spent the last 12 years playing hockey, do I want to make a final push to try and get back into the set-up again, or do I accept that that's it as far as the national set-up and then to compromise a little bit move back to being good club players or district players.

OG: And at that stage maybe have other things therefore start going on in your life to kind of compliment that because sport's maybe not necessarily your number one focus anymore because it has kind of dropped back, that sort of change of balance.

B: Well that's right and with these two individuals that I am thinking of in particular, their sort of career, job, sport balance has shifted so that the career is now more important and they are looking at building that side of their life and if their hockey happens it will happen and if it doesn't then there's something else significant in their life.

OG: That's connected to a major thing that I am interested in, there has been a lot of research that have talked about people finishing in sport and that's them finished. Now my personal experience of coming out of a high level sport was that I didn't just chop that sport out and that wasn't the end of my involvement, I'm still involved in that sport now in various different capacities, you know I still compete to a certain extent at a lower level and I'm still involved in terms of the coaching side and things like that. I think that is the case for a lot of people, it's not a case of you finishing your sport and then you close that door and it's over. You know, there is some level of continued involvement for a lot of people.

B: Yes, I think, as I say, there is a sort of, maybe a slight delusion of it, or just a slight change in direction, but it's just that an individual might not be at the same competition level, but they still get a lot out of competing at a different level, or contributing to other people competing. So yes, I would agree with you there, I think that is definitely the case.

OG: My thesis is looking at specifically the experiences of Scottish female athletes and for me that was picked as there hasn't been very much work done in Scotland and there's been very little work done on just females. So I wanted to come from a unique angle and look at a group that hasn't really been studied. Do you think that male and female athletes maybe face different issues through sport and towards the end of their careers?

B: To be honest I haven't got a lot of experience of that, I mean I really... I can only think of one girl who has, in my own personal experience, who has come to that stage and she's one of the two hockey players I was talking about. And yes, well I haven't seen her for a wee while, I mean she was deselected almost, well about 8 months ago and I haven't really seen her since then although she's still technically part of my case load. She's about to get married and I think other things have become important to her, em, possibly she has maybe lost a bit of the competitive edge that her partner who is also a hockey player who was also in the institute, he has still maybe got that determination. How much of that is to do with personality and, you know, that's what I'm not sure about really, I wouldn't like to kind of... But I would think that yes, females possibly do have other things that, that... it's difficult, I don't know...

OG: It's not something I'm necessarily going to find, or aiming to find, I have no early ideas of whether there's going to be a difference there. For me, it's a point of interest more than anything else as to whether there is. This idea that females maybe have these extra pressures from the idea of having children in the future, or the idea that females are maybe more career orientated, therefore start to develop that side earlier on.

B: Yes, I mean I suppose it would be tempting to kind of go along that line and say that, you know, women might be more... look further ahead and look at how they're going to plan their life where a man might look at, you know, living for the day kind of thing and there isn't that same biological clock possibly for a man as there is for a woman. It would be tempting to do that, but I couldn't that with any kind of... any kind of factual point of view.

OG: I need to be careful that I don't make any kind of assumptions. It comes back to the idea that sport is a more suitable occupation for a man than for a woman, but I think that has changed a lot now as well and so that's why maybe these assumptions would have been right 20 years ago but perhaps are actually not right now because females can be just as invested in their sport role as men now and that is just as accepted by those around them, compared to, for example, for your mother.

B: Yes, well it is interesting actually, a total sort of side track here, but my mother was of a family of 6, 3 boys and 3 girls, and she was the only sort of, in inverted commas, sporty female. The men all played rugby and got blues from Oxford and so on, but as far as her, she was the kind of, you know, we'll let her play at it as long as we know she's going to go on to something else. She was the spinster sister, left at home with the elderly mother and the other two married and they didn't do any sport, you know it was not appropriate for them to do, but it was appropriate enough for my mother at that time because she wasn't married and there weren't any children on the horizon or whatever. I read letters that the brothers sent to her at the time and they were very encouraging but almost kind of patting her on the head and saying aren't you doing well. So it is an interesting take on it, but it's very different nowadays, very different.

OG: How many athletes do you deal with at the moment?

B: Well, active, in the institute in my case load, bearing in mind that I work 5 hours a week, I've got 25. Varying in age from a 10 year old tennis player to a 40 ish curler. I've got 2 or 3 curlers who are around that age. But the vast majority, the bulk of the 24 or 25 are in the 14 to 20 age group, late teens...

OG: ... which I guess is the traditional age you would expect them to be coming through the institute at...

B: Through the area, yeah. Well that's what we would hope, that they would move on through.

OG: Can you just briefly describe the services that are offered to athletes by yourself, by the Performance Lifestyle programme?

B: Ok well, I suppose, if I can sort of talk about it generally, it's really, it's just any kind of support that's required, that will allow them to perform to their best, both in training and in competition, but nothing to do with the technical side, and you know that, I'm telling you what you already know. So I would basically deal with any kind of things like relationships with their parents or with their friends, anything to do with their schooling that's maybe getting complicated, flexibility around the curriculum, assistance with time management, try to encourage that – it's a big one. Budgeting, if they are struggling budget wise, em, we can do things like help them with sponsorship applications, we do workshops, so things like self-massage, we can facilitate these kind of things. We've been running a series of parents workshops as well, trying to educate parents around what to expect their teenagers to go through and what is normal, in inverted commas, for an athlete at that level. Very generally, those are the sorts of things. I, I suppose naturally because of my background, tend to do quite a lot on the education and sort of helping with college applications or UCAS applications and that's probably... maybe I veer a little more in that direction, CV's and things like that, but we do all of that. That's probably the main things. Liaison with the coaches, liaison with the other service providers, em, I think that's probably a rough guide of what we do.

OG: In terms of the education and the career side, do you think it's important for them to be thinking about that and developing that side of them as well, trying to keep them having a few things going?

B: I think it's important and to be honest the majority of the athletes do as well. I think, you know, they see that... there are one or two who sort of are single minded going to go off and be professional golfers or whatever and don't really see that there's a need to do anything else, but the majority of the ones I've had contact with have been quite focused, have been really quite bright youngsters. So they are getting higher, they are thinking about university and they are thinking carefully about choosing which university to go to and taking into account the academic side as well as the sport.

OG: Shows another difference from all of those studies that were done in America, on college athletes there, we are looking at a different type of person here than your male professional in America who was perhaps not of the same educational background. I think it is very positive that the athletes here are looking to succeed in both fields.

B: I mean my experience certainly is that, you know, there are one or two sports where it's not the case, I mean judo for example and I don't want to say anything much about that except that the judo players that I

have been... have been youngsters who have gone into say an apprenticeship or in fact one really just wanted to play judo all the time, he just didn't want to do anything else. They are a different kind of breed somehow or other, but I don't know why that is and maybe it is just the three that I have that happen to be like that. But the other sports, without exception I would say, the young people that I've worked with have all been going on through standard grades, through highers, looking at either sport of HNC, HND or degree level study, but that may just be coincidental, it may just be the ones that have been in the programme since I've been involved.

OG: I know that at the age of 17 or 18 it's not going to be something you bring up with them in terms of retirement, but do you talk to them at all about transitions and whether they should be thinking at all about what happens if I don't kind of get through to the Scottish Institute, or what happens if I'm injured, or what happens if I decide I don't want to play anymore?

B: Yes, I do, I think it's quite important that they have that, you know, I mean it's something that, again I suppose it's part of the background of the kind of work that I do during the day – I mean I still talk about having my day job and my evening job – I mean my Careers Scotland job, I mean I'm talking about well what happens if you don't get that job or what happens if you don't get into that course. So, you know, without being very negative with an athlete, I would never do that, I would always be encouraging them to achieve the best etcetera, but I would also be saying well lets have a plan B or a safety net, and looking ahead to say, ok well lets look at the next 5 years, what are your sports aims, what would your career aims be, you know, how do you see those two fitting together. Let's look and see if there are any potential clashes, say Commonwealth Games at the same time as you are going to be doing your finals or that sort of thing. Can we therefore think about how we would sort that out and lets not say that's going to be a problem, we can sort that, but lets look ahead and make sure that we plan for it well in advance. So that would be the kind of thing that I would be... I don't shy away from that.

OG: I think that it is a delicate balance, because you don't want to be talking to them about it all the time in a way that makes them start to think negatively, like I'm not going to make it, but at the same time you need them to be realistic in the fact that not everybody does make it, or they could be the best athlete in the world but if they did get injured that could be it and at that point they need that back up plan.

B: One of the reasons, I don't know if Susie probably said to you, one of the reasons why we changed from being the ACE programme, the athlete career education programme, to being Performance Lifestyle was because of the connotations that sort of, you know, that it kind of meant that we were always going to... people had this perception that we were sort of forcing them to think about other things and that's why they moved away from that title.

OG: It seems like a positive change. Do you feel that the athletes have responded to that change of name?

B: Yeah, well I would say so. I mean it is difficult for me because I wasn't really... I was only employed in the January and then in the February they changed the name so, you know, for that first month I wasn't really even doing the job, you know, I was just kind of finding my feet. So I've really only ever been the Performance Lifestyle adviser. But yes, I think that they perceive that in a very positive light, you know, once they get a handle on what a performance lifestyle actually means, then I think they really do see that as a positive thing.

OG: And have coaches responded positively to that as well?

B: Yes, yes definitely.

OG: I guess they see you less as someone who is encroaching on their athlete and forcing them to think about other things and actually as someone who is going to help them get an athlete to where they need to be.

B: Yes, that's right. I mean that's still an ongoing education task and for some coaches that's almost going to be a permanent task, you know, there are some who are more receptive than others. And certainly the ones who are employed as coaches by the Institute are very much bought into it, but it's maybe some of the club coaches and things who don't understand the system as well, haven't been educated as much in the area,

OG: There is quite a lot of literature in which coaches are resistant to their athletes participating in any kind of career or education programme, thinking that they would act as a distraction.

B: That's right, whereas in fact what we try to do is try and explain to them the fact that will help them to make it, make them more relaxed that they have got other things sorted. I mean, that's basically what it's about, you know, minimise distractions to maximise performance is one of the things that we sort of use as, as one of the phrases, that's what we do and I think that sums it up quite well.

OG: How do you think that reactions of athletes differ between those athletes who kind of choose to finish - although I know it is harder for you to talk about these as you have less experience, but comparing those to athletes who are involuntarily disengaged, either through injury or perhaps deselection?

B: Well, as you said I really don't have, I don't think, any experience of somebody choosing not to continue, apart from again hockey seems to be my main one I can use as an example. I mean there was one individual who kind of just took himself out of the programme through again, possibly really because he didn't communicate enough with people and that was, you know there was an issue about, there was an international competition that he had been chosen to play in but it coincided with his school prom and he chose to go to the school prom which pretty much was the end of that. And that was I think that he'd got himself into a situation where, which he couldn't get himself out of and that was despite me spending quite a lot of time with him trying to, sort of, not persuade him because obviously at the end of the day it is his choice if that's what he want to do, but to say look if you make this choice this is what's going to happen... and we can be pretty sure that this is what's going to happen. But he by that stage had said to his girlfriend he would take her to the prom and he wasn't going to back down from that. So then what happens was he didn't go, his friend was then picked in as his substitute and then he was deselected from the institute and whatever so it had all fallen down round his ears. So in some ways that was him involuntarily choosing, you know, I think, I don't know, I haven't actually had any dealings with him since that moment because he has just not bought in even though we do say we provide services for the next year after they have been deselected. So I really, I guess the answer to your question is that I don't have much experience of that and I can't really give comment, you know, although I can always talk.

OG: In terms of the provision of services, I mean the services are obviously there but presumably athletes come to you in terms of wanting particular services. Have you found that there are athletes who buy into the programme more than others?

B: Yes definitely. I mean there is... I try to keep in touch with all of the athletes sort of every month or so and if they're not coming to me then I'll be texting them or emailing them or whatever. Some are great, you know, they are in touch quite regularly, others, you know, you could text them and email them till the cows came home and they wouldn't necessarily get back to you unless they actually needed something. So, you know, I have different strategies so for example for some people I will just turn up when I know they're going to have a pitch session or a gym session or whatever, I'll just turn up and catch them. And quite often you find that there is something that they want to talk to you about, but they're just not always good at coming to you. Again, it's just individual, so some are great others... and it's not, I can't even say by sport, some are better than others but just individuals you know. I think that if you have done something with them that has been helpful and that they've really seen the value of then that definitely changes their view. Once they have seen you can help them once then they are more likely to think oh actually you are the person that could help them again.

OG: So you mentioned about the institute maintaining contact with deselected players, with this official year long period of time where the athlete can still access services. Can you describe the forms in which this contact might take once the athlete is out of the system?

B: Well it is continued support really, but I suppose what happens there is it is really more... well almost down to the athlete to kind of carry that on I think. I mean we offer the support but I, I don't know whether I should be because there are things that I am not 100% sure what I am supposed to do or not supposed to do but... I'm not sure whether I am supposed to kind of actively seek to continue that support or whether it is more I'm there, the door is open and if you want to get in touch. I means that's the way that the deselection letter reads, is pretty much you are still able, I am still available for you, but whether I should be following that up is not something that anyone has actually told me.

OG: Do you think that maybe it is something that you should be?

B: I think probably we should, well I should, possibly the others do, you know, but yeah I think probably, just to sort of say well you're not in the institute now but I'm still here and how are you feeling, what would you... if there anything I can help you with to either get you back in again or to move you on in some direction.

OG: This might link to the idea that if the athlete is in denial then they may not be coming to speak to you because they are shutting themselves off, but actually they maybe do need someone there and if someone gave them a bit of a probe then that just might be sort of what they need.

B: Yes, I think that's definitely the case. I suppose, I would imagine certainly for most of us it is to do, as much as anything, with time constraints, you know, because well certainly I mean I don't anything like the number of athletes that some of the others have, but Angie and I have about the same up at Tayside, she's got about 27, I've got about 24. And that's active ones, so we've got another what, I don't know maybe about another 5 or 6 transition athletes who have been deselected. But it takes me my time to keep in touch regularly with the active ones, I suppose it's just, I should probably be making more effort with the transition ones, but with only 5 hours a week... But it is stressed that it is a minimum of 5 hours, that I can do more than that, but for me it is about how actually much other time I can actually give to it and not constantly feeling in the evenings that I should be working every night, you know. So it is just that trying to make sure that I actually have some time for myself and... because doing a job like that, which is self-employed, you know you just feel when you're at home that probably you should be doing something, so it is quite hard to balance that and divide your time up, so say for example that you don't work on a Wednesday, so say that you work Tuesdays and Thursdays, or whatever and just try and stick to that as far as possible.

OG: Which I guess can be hard because if an athlete phones you then it is hard to say well I'm sorry I'm not working today, I'll deal with your issue a week on Thursday or whatever.

B: That's right. [END OF SIDE 1]

OG: Do you think these services are comprehensive enough? Do you think the institute is doing everything it can to help transitional athletes?

B: For athletes who are transitioning from area out do you mean?

OG: Yes.

B: Em, probably not, I think, to be candid. I don't think we have the resources to do what, to do the work that probably could be generated and that's maybe why we don't generate it, because I don't think we could necessarily meet the demand. I'm speaking about a fairly small area institute with, what, 51 athletes in it approximately. So at any one time transition from that would maybe be about 10 I suppose, but we just don't, I don't think we have the resources to be able to actually meet, you know to do the kind of services which probably these athletes need.

OG: What kind of services do you think could be offered? I mean if you had all the resources, all the time, all the money, what could we see being delivered?

B: Well I think it would depend on what the athlete, what they saw as being the stage of their sports career, whether they felt that well this was the sort of downward slide now, that they were going to move back to being club athletes, or whether it was seen as a kind of minor blip you know they didn't make the times, for example, in the swimming because the swimming times are quite difficult to get, so you know maybe one year you didn't make the time because you had highers or whatever to do. So whether you saw that was just a kind of blip and you were going to be aiming to get back up. So I think what kind of services would be, would depend on obviously individual needs and individual perception of what that transition actually meant to them, but I think in order to find that out we would need to do that work, which we are not... I'm not doing, and probably should be doing. So that is something that if we are talking about transitions then, you know, and somebody has sort of slipped into a transition really and doesn't want to be there, then it's a different story from someone who's just let it all slide and doesn't really care whether they're in the institute or not.

OG: That's something that I'm hoping that my research can help the institute, in terms of doing some of that research into what the athletes themselves feel the programme could give them, to be able to feed back some of that information to Susie, for use when she is looking to move the programme forward.

B: It certainly would be really interesting to know how the athletes themselves feel when they have been deselected, you know what they feel about the fact that they are offered the service but, well in my experience don't take it up.

OG: So I'd like to find out what goes through their head, why they don't take it up, is it because they don't feel it can help them, is it just because they are in that state of shock or denial...

B: Or they maybe just don't feel that they belong to the club anymore, you know they are not in the inner circle anymore...

OG: Yes, and therefore what do they feel could be done to encourage them to do that. I'm hoping that my research further down the line, when I get to talking to the athletes, I'm hoping that I maybe fill in a few of those blanks. What do you see as the future developments of the Performance Lifestyle programme? Where can the programme develop in the next few years?

B: I think it could be further imbedded in the whole programme, you know in the whole institute programme, I mean we certainly still have inroads to make in some sports and with some coaches. Certainly I think how the Performance Lifestyle programme will develop will maybe depend to a great extent on how, you know, the integration of clubs etc into sort of partnerships, if they are going to be area partnerships or whatever, there is a lot going on in the run up to 2012 and 2014. So I am not sure exactly what kind of, what we could be doing more of or what we could be doing that we don't currently do. I think we could do more of what we do, em, and we could do it in greater detail probably and do it more often. But actually as far as new things are concerned, em, I can't think really of anything. I mean I don't think we could ever be complacent and say that we are doing everything for everybody that everybody needs, but I think the other bit of that is that we shouldn't be doing things for people anyway, we should be enabling them to do things, giving them the power. I think ongoing training for ourselves as advisers is useful and learning from each other is very useful.

OG: That leads us into my next couple of questions. The first is what training were you given when you first came to the institute and do you think that training was comprehensive enough for what you needed to do?

B: I think had I not had the background that I have, then I would have struggled. Probably where I... the training that I got to begin with was, the first couple of days in the January when I started I was down at the institute and I got the background of how the whole thing fits together, the admin side of it, you know, where UK Sport fits in and sportscotland and you know, all these different organisations and how the institute fitted in with that. And really after that, fortunately we then had the Performance Lifestyle conference in the February, the next month after I had started and at that point we had Paul Wylleman presenting at that. So that was a huge help to me because that immediately highlighted quite a lot of the things that I was going to come up against and I think again had that not happened I would really have struggled because I was just then well off you go and here's your athletes kind of thing. Fortunately because I could speak to athletes reasonably confidently... the thing I did lack was the knowledge of a really elite environment and all those things like the strength and conditioning and stuff like that, because although obviously Ian had played basketball but that was a sport which didn't have much support around it, you just went and played more or less. You know, he did a lot of training at home but there was none of the other sort of background supports there. So I lacked that understanding. And then there is a Performance Lifestyle graduate certificate which I have just finished doing, but again that was, kind of, I just had to kind of get on with it and I don't want to sound very critical of the programme because obviously I mean I appreciate my colleagues are all busy people but I didn't feel I got an awful lot of peer support, not from the point of view that they weren't all welcoming and friendly and everything else, but in actual sort of, I think I've only actually observed one of my colleagues doing any kind of athlete contact. It was all about getting me started, basically all about the numbers really, it was just well we need someone else to handle some of these numbers and I could do that bit of it and I could do most of the work that came up but it was my own... I felt that there were things, there were gaps in my knowledge and also I thought well I'm here, I'm doing this and actually nobody has ever come and watched me do it. So I'm questioning, am I doing this right, am I getting everything? So that's, I suppose, slightly worrying, I mean as I say it's almost fortunately that I've got the background that I have, but had anyone else that hadn't done that kind of work been employed, well I guess they might not have been employed, but they would have struggled without any kind of backup really. I think that's just down to numbers basically.

OG: There seems to be a definite need just to get more people, more advisers into the system. Do you feel some of those gaps have now been addressed, or do you feel you still have some ongoing training issues that you could be helped with in the future?

B: I think a lot of it has been addressed, I mean definitely for the kind of level of athletes that I'm working with. If I were working in the Scottish Institute with, you know, Olympians and Commonwealth Games medallists and people like that then I would definitely need to step up and actually get more immersed in that elite environment. The athletes that I'm working with predominantly are at sort of junior international level and so I'm kind of quite happy with that, happy at that level at the moment, but as I say if I were to step

up or if I was to be moving into the Scottish Institute then I would need to certainly get more knowledge and experience of elite competitions. I think other than that I feel fairly confident, you know, I don't actually, I can't see any particular training needs, of course the thing is you never really realise it until you are in until the situation arises. But certainly if I were to get involved in sort of anything with an athlete which was say very complicated, relationship issues or whatever then I'm really not trained to do anything like that.

OG: So do you have people that you can go to at that point, to refer that athlete on?

B: Yes, we have a referral network and I think that's really important and I, possibly even more so than some of the others would, would use that referral network rather than get in above my head I think. I've had that experience, you know, with Careers Scotland, getting into situations where youngsters are saying things to you that you don't really want to be hearing and having to say, look I'm not the person you should be saying this to. Its difficult because you want them to have someone to talk to, but I can't do anything with this, you know, you can tell me it but I'm really not the person that can help, so it can put you in a difficult situation and you have to not be saying ooh, you have to be saying right yes ok. So yes, I am very conscious of where my level of expertise ends and somebody else comes in, I'm very conscious of that. Where perhaps the ones who have got a social work background might go further than I would, but that, I think that's acceptable.

OG: So I think if you have that background then you can use it, so it is about utilising the knowledge that you have.

B: That's right, but knowing your limitations.

OG: Which is really important, though it can sometimes be quite hard for someone to accept, to put your hand up and say I can't help you on that. But important to also be able to say, I know someone who can and then taking that forward.

B: That's right and even if it's then a question of going with the athlete to meet the other person and even sitting in if they want you to, being there to support them, supporting your athlete through that situation, you know, but know necessarily being the person who can do anything about it.

OG: One other question before we finish up. I was quite interested when you showed me this DVD from the cricketers association. I'm interested to know what programmes run for athletes outside of the institute system. Performance Lifestyle seems to be the major programmes delivered to what you might describe as amateur athletes. I also know that the Professional Footballers Association have a fairly comprehensive programme. Do you guys use anything off other programmes like the cricketers one to help you with the Performance Lifestyle programme?

B: Yes well interestingly, I mean Performance Lifestyle is a programme into which the Professional Cricketer's Association buy in, so when we go to our conferences, for instance, then there are Performance Lifestyle advisers from the Professional Cricketer's Association, Professional Rugby Association, Welsh Rugby Union, em... Equestrian, can't remember what they're called, but there are some people from the Equestrian as well. So these are other organisations, but who have Performance Lifestyle advisers who have been through our Performance Lifestyle graduate certificate and some really good crossover goes on, I mean fantastic, because they've got the money of course, the professional sports, so the Welsh Rugby Union, they've got a very good programme running and now the Professional Rugby Association in England, they've brought out some really good stuff that we saw at the last conference we had just at Easter time.

OG: So I guess they link into your programme but then they can also bring things back in that then can help develop your programme as well which is good. One of the things I am going to try to examine is what else is being offered in Scotland as well as the Performance Lifestyle programme. One of the areas of interest is what is being offered to those not in professional sports but also not part of the institute network. You know, is there a gap there, is there some athletes who are not receiving any kind of support and maybe need to be, and if so is that the responsibility of the governing bodies?

B: Well, I absolutely think that there is, I mean and I know of one particular instance. My daughter happens to be a secondary teacher and she has a pupil in her... she does some guidance work and there is a pupil in her school who is a very good ice skater and she is in Livingston, but she travels to Edinburgh like sort of two mornings a week at some ungodly hour and, em, this child is what, 14 I suppose, but she's not doing her homework, she's not, you know, she's just completely... but she's not getting any support because my daughter has said you know, are you in the institute, no she's not, and yet she's at British level in ice

skating. So there are definitely gaps where some of the governing bodies are not putting any support in or not recognising the need to actually be doing that.

OG: So maybe even not acknowledging that there is a need or a requirement there. So for example are there athletes in the core sports, maybe in the team sports like hockey, who are not quite at institute level but may still be fully invested in their sport, sport may still be the major thing in their life, is there a gap there are well?

B: Well I guess that is maybe where the partnerships might pick that up. I mean my understanding of our partnerships are to work is that it should be at that kind of feeding into the institute level so with any luck if we have any kind of input into that then you know hopefully Performance Lifestyle will start at a... at that sort of pre-development stage. That was my understanding of how, that the partnership would be operating at that sort of level but I don't know... do you know if you know any more about them than I do?

OG: I don't and I'm hoping to investigate it, I'm hoping to speak to governing bodies as well and it will be quite interesting to hear what they have to say and whether they see any future developments in that area. I think that the Performance Lifestyle is doing some really good work, but I wonder whether there are these gaps and some athletes who are not being supported. And they are not the institute's responsibility, but whose are they?

B: That's right and I think an awful lot of that falls down onto the parents and that's where we maybe lose a lot of athletes because they don't have parents who are able support them, financially or in other ways and I think that's why there is a drop out rate in teenagers in sport.

OG: The parents need support as well and that is again where you guys can come in and speak to the parents and help them. If the parents don't have that support. It might be that the coaches say oh that's not important and the parents are thinking, well, yes it is. Is there anything else you want to say around this topic, anything you think I haven't mentioned but you think I should be considering?

B: No, I think you've, I think you... I'm really interested, I would be really interested to see what your findings are. I can't think of anything else that we should have mentioned that we haven't. I think it is just an exciting thing to be part of, I just wish it was more than what it is of my job, you know, at the moment, but there probably isn't any potential for it to become much more than it is.

OG: And is that sort of financially?

B: Yeah, probably and... yes, I think that's definitely the case, it is financial, with the institute and that's... I can understand that. I mean we've got a fairly small number I suppose, relatively speaking and it is manageable if I manage my time well, but as I say I think that there is just so much potential to develop it to being so much more, just by being able to do more work with the athletes and give them more support than really just kind of, you know, maybe skimming the surface sometimes.

OG: I guess it is one of those things where the more support you give, potentially the more support they then could need and...

B: That's right. The more they see the value of it, they see that you could help with this, then it is something else and, you know, it just kind of balloons. So I think at the moment you are almost kind of, you are blowing your balloon up but you've got it in a confined space.

OG: Once this study has finished then I will be sending you guys some results of what I have found out and then further down the line I am hoping you will be able to help me again when I come to get in contact with athletes, if you are able to put me in contact, particularly with those athletes who have been deselected or out through injury. So I can start to talk to them and start to build up that picture and then marry together the view point from the staff and the view point from the athletes and hopefully be able to come out with some recommendations. That is the plan for the next step.

B: That's good.

OG: Thanks very much for your time, I really appreciate the help that I have been getting from everyone involved with the programme.

END

ADVISER C
18th May 2006

OG: Maybe can we start with some basic background information about yourself, where you have come from, your work and sport experience and how you got to your current post with the institute?

C: My first degree was as a PE teacher, I went to university in America on an athletics scholarship, I'm an athlete myself, so I was in Georgia on an athletic scholarship for 4 years. I came back and was a full time athlete for a few years, didn't really sit very well with me and then I had to decide what I was doing with my life because at that point I was coming to the end, I knew I was going to have to make a decision about my athletic career. I was fortunate because I was on the institute programme and got to speak to Susie, who was my Performance Lifestyle adviser at the time. So I went back and did a masters in performance psychology, which was really interesting for me on a lot of levels both professionally and personally. Then I completed that and just as I was coming out of that fortunately they were looking for lifestyle advisers and I applied and got one of the positions and here I am, two years down the line and living to tell the tale.

OG: And you have just recently been made full time?

C: Yes, just in the last month. So it was 23 hours previous, so I have been full time for a month and a half now, which makes a big difference, a huge difference having the time.

OG: I can imagine. Can you start with providing a brief overview of the services that are provided to athletes through the Performance Lifestyle programme?

C: There are 3 big areas that the programme is dedicated towards, education support, employment support, and then lifestyle support. Education and employment are quite self-explanatory, we deal with you know... I mean education is the big one we deal with, a lot of the things we do reducing timetables, working with schools... again with employers it's working with employers, getting time off for stuff. But the lifestyle part of it is huge and I mean that could mean anything. It could mean from... you find yourself being a girlfriend-boyfriend counsellor, you are an agony aunt at times, anything to, you know, you can get into a lot of serious issues as well which at that point you have got to really pass over to a counsellor. Time management is a huge one because athletes never have enough time and are not very good at managing their time. A lot of the time we end up being just somebody that they can chat to, when they don't know really what is going on, when they don't have a real issue they just want to talk to someone and have someone understand and sort of console them. I'm finding that I am spending more and more time doing that as the athletes get to trust me.

OG: And I guess it is someone who knows and understands the sport environment but isn't connected to the selection process or anything like that.

C: Yes, absolutely, and I think that's where we have... our relationship is, I guess, special in a way because we don't have anything to do with their training, we can't comment on their training, we can't comment on selection, you know we have no other agenda other than wanting to help the athlete with whatever is going on in their life at the time, I think that is where we are quite unique.

OG: And do you think your own experiences as an athlete help with that? And do they find that it helps?

C: Absolutely, I mean it would be very difficult to do this job without having an appreciation of what an athlete has to go through on a day-to-day basis, at the grassroots what you have to do and it is the small things. I think for me it is being able to pick up on small signals and sometimes an athlete... there is something wrong that they don't know, they can't express what it is and sometimes it's like have you thought that it is this or that or the next thing and that has come from personal experience. I think from my perspective it helps me develop a rapport with the athletes, they believe that I understand what they are going through because I have been there and they know I have done it and that helps them to talk.

OG: Can you give me an idea of how many athletes you are currently working with?

C: We've got 107 in the West and then I've got possibly another 10 Scottish Institute athletes and then we work with deselected athletes as well for a further year. So currently in total we are looking at about close to 130, 140 athletes just now.

OG: Do you find that a lot of them are buying into the programme?

C: It is interesting, when I first came in we had sports that were already set up and lifestyle was part of the sport and part of their lives. We are getting new sports coming in, so it is trying to... we are past the stage now where we have to sell the service provision because it speaks for itself, you know, athletes have used it, it's worked and they know the value. For new sports coming in we are seeing that they are taking up on it a lot quicker and easier. We are getting a big buy into it now and I guess that is just going to keep evolving as the programme evolves because we are, it's still in its infancy to be honest. The whole institute system is. We don't know what else athletes need from it, I think through time, with researchers working such as yourself, we are getting feedback from athletes which is going to help us to evolve the programme in the right direction.

OG: So in terms of when an athlete first comes into the institute, do you have an initial meeting with them?

C: Yes. The way we work it in the West is athletes are inducted in, they have an induction meeting with the area manager, they are invited into this with their parents as well, and at that meeting they are told to do two things and that is to have a medical and to contact their Performance Lifestyle adviser. So I have a meeting with all my new athletes coming in and in time we do an annual review of the athletes who are already, who already have their contracts. So at minimum I should see an athlete at least once a year at the induction and then at their annual review, but it tends to be a lot more for most athletes. For some athletes it's not, they don't need the programme, they are sorted.

OG: In terms of that is it a case of its for them to come to you after the initial meeting?

C: Yes, because unfortunately I don't have the time to chase up every athlete and we are trying to... one of the aspects of the programme is to teach athletes to be more responsible, because they have to be responsible for their own actions, they have got to be taking control of their own programme. What tends to happen is that's how we leave it, but we do have review meetings, like 6 weekly review meetings with all sports and if there is a potential problem then it is flagged up then and at that point I would contact an athlete. So the programme is always in a reactive basis to athletes, if, you know, when they need it or when they are prompted to use it, but we would like to be a lot more proactive with all our sports which is difficult time wise. It is getting better, we are prioritising sports around induction times which is making it easier and putting a work plan in so each sport will know that they are going to have Performance Lifestyle... not to themselves, but they are going to be worked on more at certain times in the year, which is quite useful for both sides.

OG: Moving into the area of transitions, what do you think are the main issues that an athlete faces when they are transitioning out of sport?

C: It is their identity. If they have been, especially if they have been at a high level and they have been a full time athlete, they have been immersed in their sport, it is the whole thing of when they come out you can still ask them a year down the line, you know describe yourself, oh I'm an athlete. You know they can't get out of the whole athletic identity. It is huge for them and it is finding something to fill the void because being an athlete, you can never find anything else to fill that, to take over that feeling of winning, you know, that whole winning feeling and the high you get off training and the high you get off competition, nothing comes close to filling that void and that is a huge thing for athletes coming out. And it is a lot worse if it is... if they have been forced into to retirement, that brings up a whole agenda of issues. If it is something they have decided to do it seems to be a lot easier for them and they are more ready for it, it is their decision. If it is involuntary then it is a tough one.

OG: My thesis is looking specifically at female athletes. I am interested in whether you think that male and female athletes face different issues through their sporting careers and when they are transitioning out?

C: Yes, absolutely, and I think that comes from how males and females work. Males have got big egos and they love to win and it is all about them. As females we really need to be secure in everything that we are doing, so for us being in sport it is not a very secure vocation to be in, so to speak, so we are constantly looking to be reassured that this is OK for us and I think all through the sport that is a tougher thing to try to deal with, to try to maintain that, because we need reassurance and I think most females need reassurance from everyone around them. And you are not always going to get that in sport, especially when things start to go wrong, you know, that reassurance isn't always there, and if they don't get it, it can be a spiral and especially transitioning out of sport they don't have the security of their training schedule, of knowing what they're doing every day, of having that sport or being that athlete, they don't know who they are, so the

whole security issue has been flagged up in a lot of athletes, you know a lot of problems and issues for females coming out of sport.

OG: And have you found that working with athletes, do you see differences in the way males and females respond?

C: When they are transitioning out? Yeah, I mean men... it is usually a lot easier for them because of the big ego think so as long as they have something else to go into they can play themselves off against that and engage their ego into that so, but with females... it's more emotional for females with em... and that's how it looks, you know, when I'm working with them. For males it's like a job, for females it's their life, it's like who they are, so when they move out there are more problems. So it's linked to their athletic identity. Don't get me wrong, males have strong athletic identities as well, but I think it's easier for a male to form a new identity quicker, it takes longer for females.

OG: Talking first of all about deselected athletes, because I guess at area institute level you don't see many who are finishing at the end of their career, but you will see those who are deselected or injured, what services do you provide for those athletes?

C: When they are deselected we have an exit strategy that we put in place for them and they will all have... we are told that they are deselected and they are given a choice as to whether they want to have a meeting, because you know for some athletes the last thing they might want to do is talk about why they have been deselected. So a letter will go to them or they will be contacted by myself, to say sorry you have been deselected bla bla but the service is still here for you for the next 12 months. But the thing is, at this age, they can be deselected one year and then reselected the next, they are in and out of the programme so quickly. And with injury, it does not automatically mean deselection, when they get injured in the area institute, well in this programme especially, because there are so many services around them you know, with their rehab and Hampden and myself and psychologists and physios that it's almost like injury is looked upon as part and parcel of being an athlete, you are going to get injured and it's like, just trying to get them to deal with it as positively as possible. If they have an injury that means they have to take a period of time off then we would look at other things that they can do with their life at that point in time. It's regarded as positive, it's like well ok you've got this time, let's use it more effectively as opposed to looking at it as well I'm injured so I can't do this and I can't do that.

OG: In terms of deselected athletes, do you find that a lot of them pick up on the programme?

C: No, not really. I would say maybe 20% of them would pick back up on the programme. And that seems to be on more of a reactive basis as well, if they come across... 3 or 4 months after being deselected something will happen and they will be like, oh I don't know what to do, lets phone Mary and see if she can help me with it. So I think that is maybe somewhere we could improve the service, we could put in a better process so we are giving the athlete the service they deserve when they are deselected. I have to say that it is not our best programme. If you have only met the adviser once three years ago and you haven't been near them since, then you get deselected and get told you can contact Performance Lifestyle, I think the chances of you doing that are pretty slim.

OG: I guess it is hard when you are busy and have so many athletes to look after, but maybe there are some deselected athletes who maybe need help but are not necessarily going to come and ask for it.

C: Yes, I would totally agree with that. It is something... fortunately for myself I think it is something that is more prevalent in the Scottish Institute when they have athletes who are at the elite level. Our athletes tend to be a lot younger here, they haven't moved into the elite world class level yet. Not quite into that full time sport type mentality. I think the mentality they do have is when they are deselected it is not the end of the world, it is like oh well, I'll just go train harder and get reselected next time. It is quite a positive attitude, it is not as relevant that they are catered for. And we would be encouraging that positive attitude, for them to see it as a kick up the butt. It is about them identifying within themselves what went wrong and what they could do about it. And then they need to make the decision, do you want to work on this and get better or are you quite happy to be a club level player and just... some of them don't want to go out and train harder and make a career out of it, some of them are happy to be recreational athletes, it just so happens to be that their performance at that level gave them the opportunity to come and try to achieve at the higher level.

OG: And is there a distinction made between those athletes who are deselected because they failed to make their times or targets, and those that are deemed to have reached their potential and believed to not be able to make it any further?

C: I mean that is something I can only... I don't know for definite because I am not in the selection meetings, every individual sport has different selection criteria, but I do, I think that yes, this distinction would have to be made and there would have to be objective and subjective guidelines.

OG: And if they were in that second scenario, do you think that would have an impact on the service that might be provided by yourself?

C: Oh yes, absolutely, and that is where I think a more... a better exit strategy would be a lot better utilised in scenarios like that.

OG: So if you could put in the perfect exit strategy, what could you maybe see being put in place?

C: I think some sort of strategy where, you know, in a perfect world you would love to have, you would love to know when an athlete is going to be deselected ahead of time, you would love to have prior knowledge so you could prepare the athlete you know, for going out of the system. I think in an ideal world that would be a great thing to do, the athlete could be told 6 months beforehand look, this is a possibility that you may not be reselected based on this, that and the next thing and then in that scenario we would work with the athlete to say ok if you are deselected lets put an exit plan, lets put a pathway in place for you so if it happens they know what they are doing, they have got a plan to make it easier for them to transition out of that and if you are not deselected then fine, but you have always got that plan to fall back on. That would be ideal, but I doubt that is ever going to happen. So for where we are now, I guess just putting in formalised process where athletes automatically are put into an exit strategy and it is sort of like, ok you have been deselected, the next stage is this. So it becomes a part of the process for them, rather than this is available if you want it. And then at least you have tried, at least they know what is available to them. But I think to put a specific process in place is very difficult as it is going to be different for every athlete, so it's just having a generic plan of how they get into the exit strategy, whatever that strategy is for each athlete.

OG: Have you worked with any athletes who have had to finish their career because of injury?

C: Thankfully, not yet. We currently have an athlete who is possibly going to be going through that, you know has a very serious injury which could be career threatening and we are at the stage now where the athlete in question has been given a period of time to go away and decide whether they want to do an operation which could help or whether they want to decide they have come to the end. In that scenario I would be brought in from the very start just to be a support service to them if needed. This athlete is also going through exams so I have been like, look we are here if we are needed, but never pushing the service on them. I guess in this situation it will be that if you need it then I'll step in a lot quicker when I'm needed, I'll be here when the decision is being made and they have to be made quite soon so I'll be involved a lot during that decision process, to support the athlete.

OG: So it is obviously a difficult period for them, in terms of with the injury and the exams, the different pressures on them.

C: Yes, I mean you go through everyday life and you have got this and that going on, but that's constantly on your mind, it's like every single thing you do... it's horrid, because you get happy, you are suddenly happy about something else, but that is at the back of your mind and suddenly comes back, which is horrid, it is not a nice situation to be in. So some of it is about trying to get them to realise that it is not the only thing and not to let it effect everything else that is going on, like for this athlete not letting it effect their exams. It is a case of... in that situation, well you can't make the decision until then, nothing you can do between now and then, go and enjoy your summer, because you have never had a summer to enjoy before because you have been training. Go and enjoy your summer and do the things you have always wanted to do, then come the end of the summer we will sit down, have a discussion and then we will deal with it, but until then there is nothing you can do. You can only deal with the controllables and you cannot control what is happening so put it to one side at the moment. And that is how we have dealt with it so far. It's not nice, I really feel for them.

OG: Obviously with a young area athlete you are not going to talk to them about retirement, but are there things you can get them to start to think about and put into place?

C: We are quite lucky because a lot of them are in education so we can come at them from the education point of view. You need to have an alternative plan because you... we do address with them that you never know what is round the corner, you never know when your next injury is going to be, and god help you but you never know when the next bus might run you over. So what we try to put to them when they are going through exams and stuff is that their standard grades and then their highers, it is just 2 years of your

entire life, and it is not even the entire year, it is just buckle down and get the qualifications, put them in the bank, and then they are there, nobody can take them away from you, and whatever happens you can always go back and pick up from there. And it is the same for any athletes going to university or college. So we can hit them... we can sort of get them to think about having another path in place from the education angle, but it is something that has been a big thing is getting the athletes to be responsible about, you know, not only their sport but themselves and part of being responsible is understanding that you do have to take care of all aspects in your life, you have to have more than one thing going on in your life.

OG: In terms of the athletes you are working with at Scottish Institute, is that a new thing that is being brought in for you, or have you always been working with athletes at that level?

C: No I have always... when an athlete transitions from area level into Scottish institute sometimes they are given the option do you want to stay with the adviser you have been with and with the numbers that are at the Scottish institute it was a lot easier for me to stay with the athlete because there are so many up there that they would end up getting... they struggle to cope with the amount of athletes they have. So if the athlete was happy to stay with me then I just continued to work with them when they were at the Scottish institute. And it is pretty good because by the time you have got them to the Scottish institute you have solved a lot of what you wanted to and they can take care of themselves so it is maybe a case... they will call you up, that works more on a reactive basis, they know you are keeping track and they can call you up.

OG: You have got that relationship with them by that stage that you know they will pick up with you as and when they need to. Have you had to deal with any athletes who have retired from the Institute through having come to the end of their sports career?

C: Other than myself, no (*laughs*). No I haven't yet, not that I can think of. I guess it is something that might come later on as the athletes I do work with get further through their career.

OG: In terms of the services that are provided to athletes at that stage, it seems that Performance Lifestyle is the only service provided when an athlete is finishing, do you think that is enough?

C: No. I think some of the services... you know because when you are moving on it does... sport can mentally damage you, Performance Lifestyle has some very grey areas which overlap into psychology and therapy and I do think that service should be open to you, because if you do have to deal... athletic identity is a huge psychological issue and can have real damageing effects and I do think that provision should be offered to the athletes as well and that would really help them deal with... if they have any issues that would help them deal with those there.

OG: If you do have an athlete who is going through an emotional issue, do you deal with those issues yourself? Do you have a referral system you can use?

C: We have, we've got a big referral network. If an athlete comes to me and they are dealing with a problem, they will get emotional about things. If I think it is something that needs a referral to a specialist then we will make that referral, there is no point in us taking on things that we are not trained to deal with. Obviously with my psychology background there are some issues that overlap into that, but I wouldn't deal with them because at that point I am their lifestyle adviser, not their psychologist, so I have got to make that distinction, so I would have to pass on to the psychologist. We will make referrals as and when required.

OG: And do you think the referral network you have got at the moment is big enough, does it cover all your needs?

C: You know, I think it is never big enough and good enough, you always want it to be bigger and better. With the amount of athletes we have we don't have a huge amount of specialists who we have built up a trusting relationship with, to be able to honestly say yes this is great for you. It is something we are working around, it will never change, you know, it will always be like that.

OG: And are there times where you would refer inside the institute?

C: Yes, absolutely, we do that on a daily basis. I've got a very good working relationship with all my other service providers in here, whether it is the psychologist, the nutritionist, the strength and conditioning coaches, we are constantly sitting down round a table saying I think you could help here or strength and conditioning will give me a call and say an athlete has been in the gym and this thing and that thing, so I will get a referral that way. So we have a great internal referral system and that works very well because we have

got very good service providers who talk to each other and who trust each other. We work together as a team and that is why this programme works so well because our service providers do trust one another.

OG: What have been the coaches reactions to Performance Lifestyle? Are they supportive of it? Does it depend on the sport?

C: Yes, it depends on the sport. I would say the majority of the coaches I work with are very very receptive to it and see it now as an integral part of the athletes programme. I mean when they come for their induction they are told to come and have a meeting with myself and the majority of the coaches will hound an athlete until they have seen me because they do want to what else the athlete is doing, it is imperative for a coach to know what the athlete is up to. You know I explain to the athletes that if the coach doesn't know you are working 13 hours a day before you do a training session and then are tired at that training session then how can he effectively evaluate your session if he doesn't know what you are doing? I think a lot of the coaches and a lot of the athletes do understand that. I am really lucky, I have really good coaches that I work with.

OG: And do you work with any coaches that are not within the network, maybe with the individual athlete programme? And if so, do you find their attitude is supportive?

C: I think until they understand that you are not there to change anything about the athlete or about their programme, how you are not going in to change what they are doing. It is about speaking to the coaches and saying look this is what I provide, so if I can help you or the athlete to make the athletes life easier. So it is just a case of getting to know the coaches and just making them aware of what you are there to do, to say you are the master, you are still in control of your programme, we are just here to supplement what you do and assist the athlete. Most of them are fine once they understand it.

OG: And in terms of developing that understanding, what processes do you go through?

C: It is just dealing with the coaches, going and chatting to them and building up that rapport. Get them to the stage where they are quite happy to pick up the phone and say we have got this situation, would you mind coming to chat to me or to the athlete about it.

OG: Have you found any particular sport or sports that have either been very much less supportive or more supportive than others?

C: Just really again I am quite lucky, we have got a superb, we've got a very good rugby programme, a very good hockey programme, and a very good judo programme. Judo is just in its infancy, we have just got a whole lot of new athletes in, the coaching system is not securely in place yet but even though it's not, the coach who has come in with the athlete understands the system which makes it much easier, they understand the importance of it. I would say that the only one I am struggling with at area level is badminton. They have got a foreign coach in and I don't know if that is partly why, struggling to get them to understand the concept of it. That is something I have to work on, that is my challenge.

OG: So if you could make changes to the programme, where do you think it needs to develop? Where is the next step forward?

C: Getting more staff would be a heck of a great development. I mean, I think what we are doing just now is really really good and I wouldn't necessarily change anything we're doing just now, but I would increase the amount of personnel we have to do it.

OG: So doing more of what you are doing rather than necessarily adding extra?

C: Yeah, uh huh. Because I think we haven't seen the true extent to which we could actually impact upon a programme because we don't have the resources to really make that impact, you know the more you do the more they want. And it's not just the work you do with the athletes, it's all the paperwork, the research, the work that goes on in the background around what you are doing. So it is like for one athlete you may see them for about an hour, or two hours in a day but you are generating one or two days of work on the back of that, so the more work you do the more you are generating. And it is also a lot of the travelling, which is a huge issue because I cover the whole of the West of Scotland. So if I go down to Lockerbie to see an athlete, it's a day, it takes an entire day with the travelling [END OF SIDE 1].

OG: And do you find the parents are supportive of the programme?

C: The parents are a huge, huge area at area institute level because you are dealing with school children. They love us because it means they don't have to go into schools and battle with schools. A lot of the time we work with the parents to educate their children to take control of their diaries, to be more aware of what they are doing, you know things like packing their own kit bag. The amount of kids that have their parents pack their kit bag is unbelievable. So to type up a kit list and tick it off as they pack it the night before. So also taking responsibility over their own training diaries and having their own diary, sorting them out, so parents tend to... they find it a very good support, so even just to chat to someone. Because if a parent has never had a child who is at that level of sport, or been in sport, they don't understand what is involved, their children don't act as normal teenagers, they have all of the normal teenage things and problems but on top of it you've got all the athletic problems that come along with that. They love just to say, should they be doing that, and I can just say that is normal for sport, it is not a reflection on you, it's nothing against you, they are normal and they're behaviour is normal because they are an athlete. And educating the parents, they really like that, so I spend most of my evenings out the front talking to the parents for hours, just because they want to talk about their child, they want to talk about how this happened and that happened, get some reassurance, get someone to listen to them and answer their questions. So I have a lot of contact with a lot of the parents as they bring their athletes down to the centre to do their strength and conditioning or do their training and they wait here, so they see me and it is like woah, I want to talk to you. And it is great, because it is giving me an insight, a better insight into the athlete as well.

OG: So you can learn more about your athletes from their parents.

C: Yeah, I never tell the parents that but, yeah, you can find out a lot about the athletes from the parents which is great.

OG: And are there any times where you have got to change the parents thinking? I am thinking about things like if you are telling the parent maybe your child shouldn't take 5 highers this year or whatever it might be.

C: It is a very difficult area, especially when it comes to exams, because the parents have got the purse strings, they are the ones who ultimately... if they are saying that their education comes first then you have got to say, yeah. My agenda from that is I speak to the parents and speak to the coaches, and say to the athlete that you have got to decide between you what is going to be the priority, you know if you tell me your education is your priority then we fit everything around that, but if you are saying that you would really like to, for example, split your highers over two years and if the parents are happy with that... I will give them all of the pros and cons for it, I will explain the procedure and explain how it could effect their future. Teaching them that you don't always have to do this, that, and then the next thing, there is three million ways to skin a cat to get to university and it is educating them to understand that just because they are talking highers over two years it is not going to effect them 10 years down the line. Actually it might make them better because it is giving them an opportunity to excel in their sport, that makes them more confident, they can transfer that into their education and employment and it can make them a better person. It's all about getting the parents on side and educating them, but at no time would I ever say no, that's the wrong decision, that is not my place, the athlete has to make the decision, the athlete and the parents make the decision and I go along with that, irrespective of whether I agree with it or not. So it about giving them all the options, making sure they understand all the options, so they can make those decisions.

OG: And is there anything else you do with athletes, such as seminar sessions or workshops?

C: Yes we have a host of workshops that are available to athletes on things like time management, on nutrition, on agents and contracts, that's the big thing with our rugby players now getting their professional contracts. There is a whole host of them, you know there is media training and other stuff we can do in workshops. We are looking at... the adviser in the East is going to put together a parental workshop and I think that will be a big hit, you know about dealing with the parents issues, a session so the parents can come and ask the questions and get the answers that they really need and I think that will really work. In here we have an information centre, over there, I am in the middle of developing it and hopefully we want to get to a stage where we can run group tutorials for athletes coming up to exam time, have group study sessions, and have an area which athletes can just come and socialise in and chat about things. To get that cross-sport thing where they can meet other people, I think that will really help them and add more of a social aspect to it as well, because a lot of them come in here and hang about and I would just like to make their hanging about more effective for them, efficient for them, productive even. So that is one of my projects is facilitating this whole athletes lounge, this is my lounge (*laughs*).

OG: I guess it about making use of what is a great facility here, there are not many area institutes which have an area like this that they can utilise.

C: Yes, we are pretty lucky here because we have all the internet access, the computer access there, we have got the printer and the scanner and the photocopiers or whatever, we have got all of the past papers there for exams, books on learning languages, driving theory, computers for dummies and stuff like that, they have also got the kitchen through across there so they can go and have a meal, make their meal, come and eat their meal, study and then go and do a session. So instead of leaving school or leaving college and having to go home and rush to eat and get their stuff or whatever they can come straight here and do everything here, so making their lifestyle easier for them, so it's all about time management and them making the most effective and efficient use of their time.

OG: And have the athletes been fairly responsive to the workshops sessions that have been put on in the past?

C: We are about to run one on nutritional cooking combined with time management. We try to sort of bring the two things together. We are going to run it with hockey and other athletes have now heard about it and are saying I want to do that. It is something that is very simple but very... you know, we are not going to sit there and talk to them about nutrition, we are going to do a practical cookery workshop and as we are doing the cooking stuff we will bring up the time management part of it, like when is the best time for you to cook that, if you freeze it when do you have to bring it out so that you can eat it. It is something that is very practical and they can apply it to what they do. Theoretical stuff can just go straight over people's head, you know what it is like, you sit down and it's like 10 minutes after a training session you want to go to bed, not listen to someone mumble on and that's... I am very very proactive about if you are doing a workshop they have to be doing something, it has to be something they can take away and use, don't just stand up and talk at them about time management or whatever it is, because that just does not work, they won't learn anything from it. So we are in the process of trying to design more practical workshops that we can use and again that is going to be a big ongoing project.

OG: Do you feel that there is an avenue there for bringing in ex-athletes, for a seminar talking about their experiences or something like that? Do you think that is something that could be useful?

C: Yeah, I think that would be really good for them. They want to hear about what people have done, they want to hear about the good but they also want to hear about the bad, so they can say I am maybe doing something like that. So it can maybe aid in trying to prevent them from making the same mistakes. When I had retired from athletics I did workshops to young athletes and a lot of the time I would tell them about where I did go wrong and how I would do it differently and what effect that had on me. And they love that, they want to know that, they want to know the real nitty gritty about every day, like when did you get up and train and how did that help, and when did you fit in eating, and when did you fit in studying. They just, they lap that stuff up.

OG: And it is so relevant to them and coming from a source that they trust, someone they know has been there. And is it maybe also of benefit to the ex-athlete too?

C: Yes completely, I do think that it is therapy for a lot of ex-athletes you know, because when you go in here you still want to feel that you are important and you still want to know that you can make a difference and by going in... and it is nice to be able to go and talk to athletes and think well, they are listening to me, I can make a difference here. You know, it is good to talk, yes it is good therapy for athletes to talk about, you know... because what happens if you tell an athlete about an experience you've had that wasn't necessarily a good one, the athletes don't look at you any different, and it is nice to be able to think well I am still a good person. Because that is what it is like, if you have a bad day or a bad competition, you are automatically a bad person and I don't know how many times I have said to a person, you don't become a bad athlete overnight. And you have to experience failure if you are going to experience success, you can't win all of the time, things don't always go your way, which is a hard lesson to learn for some. Things will probably not go your way more than they will go your way and if you can take the, obviously if you have had a bad experience, always take 3 positives from it, regardless of how bad it has been, there is always something you can learn from it. You can always take something out of it, but then all of the rubbish stuff you leave that behind.

OG: Generally in Scotland do you think our sports offer enough opportunities for ex-athletes to come back in and put something back in?

C: No, no. There is a programme down south and it is the athletes commission that run it, it is open to athletes from Scotland too. We have only just found out about it and it is giving ex-athletes the opportunities to go into schools and talk to school kids. And that is fantastic, especially a primary school. That can be the

difference between us losing a potential athlete or not. I think that is a good idea and it is something that we should do more of is using the expertise of the ex-athletes we have, because I think too many people rely on, you know, qualifications and education, and it is like no, these people have done it, they have lived it, they have been out every day and done it, they know the pitfalls, let them tell athletes how it really is and how hard they really have to work if they are going to make it. And it is coming from someone who really knows what they are talking about, because they have been there, that bond is therefore very strong. It is incredible because you can stand up and talk about... they will ask how hard did you train and stuff and you go through your training schedule with them and say yeah, I was up running at 5, 6 o'clock every morning and they are like, you did what! And I would say it was the only way I could fit it in, it was the only way I could get a second session, it had to be done, so that's what we did, and they are like oh my god and I am moaning because I have to train three times a week or whatever, so it sinks in for them.

OG: And maybe gives them an insight into what they are going to need to do, particularly for area level athletes who are not at that level yet, it shows them what is ahead of them.

C: And it can come as a shock, realising that you do have to work, and you may have to make a lot of decisions, a lot of compromises, along the way.

OG: You talked about future developments of the programme in terms of increasing staff. Is there anything else you feel could be done to further develop the programme?

C: I think if we had the luxury of having more staff it would free up more time for us to develop more projects. We could do more project based, em, sort of research for one, and then we could launch some bigger projects which could, which we could open up to all athletes at one time which I think would be very very good. Again it would bring them together, that collaboration, that cross sport mixing, and I think that would give them a sense of, that community feeling, that sense of belonging to something bigger. Right now they are a hockey institute athlete or whatever, but I would like them all to come in and say I belong to the West of Scotland institute of sport. And I think when you get that sense of belonging they will take more pride in what they are doing and the institute will mean more to them and that can only benefit them as an athlete. It can bring in the big social aspect of it, we see a lot of it working in the gym, being in there at the same time and they now know each other and there is a great feeling of camaraderie in the gym and it is great to go in and see a session when they have got athletes from different sports doing their session at the same time, it is really really good. I think if we can breed that culture where they want to strive to do better that would be fantastic.

OG: We see that in the strength and conditioning sessions in Stirling too, I think it is one of the only times they will come together with athletes from other sports and they seem to really enjoy that, the athletes also get a buzz out of it.

C: I think they want to socialise with each other but often when they are training they are isolated and can't always fit that in either. So if we can facilitate that, and still make that part of their performance and their training, then that would be great.

OG: I am also investigating whether there are any other support programmes happening in Scotland as well as Performance Lifestyle. I am thinking maybe here about, for example, professional sports.

C: Well I mean there are... I don't know of any. I think that golf is a big sport now where they are identifying that they need to have people in place, rugby is another one where they are realising, yeah we do have to have lifestyle advisers. Because of the nature of the sports where athletes are away so much, you know a lot of golfers and rugby players are married, have kids, you know they are away for weeks on end, and it does put pressure on stuff, and it would help them to go through some of that, and I think people are now identifying that if they had a lifestyle adviser who could help them take care of that aspect of their life then it would be better for the athlete but also it has got to be better for the sport as well, if the athlete is not constantly worrying about what the wife and children are up to.

OG: And I guess with sports like rugby they are seeing more players being forced to retire through injury which also brings that reality home to the sport a bit more.

C: Yes, that side is huge. And the added thing in rugby and golf is the money available to them, there can be a lot of money and a lot of them form addictions. They can also start a lifestyle that they perhaps can't continue at the other end.

OG: I guess there could be a financial thing even for an institute athlete, if they are on lottery funding of maybe twenty odd thousand pounds a year, there is the realisation that whatever job they get afterwards might not get them that amount of money.

C: That's right. The thing is when an athlete comes out they are going to be on average ten years behind their peers at school because their peers at school have had the ten years experience while they have been competing and it is like, you have got to appreciate this. They can't come in and be where their peers are, they have got to take a step back and that is difficult for them as well.

OG: And that is a big step for them to get over. Do you think that perhaps in some of the individual athlete sports where there is less provision from the institute there may be athletes who are maybe not quite institute level but are very invested in their sport, working incredibly hard, who are not getting offered any kind of retirement support or lifestyle support programmes? Is there a gap in there?

C: There is a huge gap, yes, I mean you don't get any kind of support like this until you are in an institute and I think that is across most sports. I mean they have, you know in athletics they have a development squad, they have the Bank of Scotland squad and stuff, but lifestyle support is not a part of that. I went to have a chat to a Bank of Scotland athletics squad, I was invited by Hugh Murray who was athletics coach at the institute, and it was the first time they had ever had any help in this area. And I know before I was in the institute I trained like a beast, athletics was my life, and I am sure there are a huge amount of athletes who will be the same.

OG: Yes, during the Commonwealth Games I was watching the Scottish gymnasts, and I know they are not institute athletes, but I am sure they are training an incredibly large number of hours per week.

C: Gymnastics is definitely an interesting one, they come with a whole host of different issues and I really do think they could do with some help in there.

OG: Moving back to look at your job here, can you tell me what training you were provided when you first started at the institute?

C: Every lifestyle adviser goes through an accreditation process which is accredited by Loughborough University and it is a series of modules and papers that you write, so you go down to... you have weekends away where you go down to do a module on career development and then you have got a number of readings to do and then you have to write an assignment based on that. There's three separate modules you do for the initial part of it and then you have got to do a series of supervised sessions and then you have got to be supervised doing sessions and then you've got to write up some sessions where you reflect on your own performance and stuff. We are lucky because we have got Susie and Susie is very hands on, very good at helping, you know she... you can go to Susie and speak to her so she was very good at helping you through. She employed us so she trusted that we could actually do the job, we had the basic skills to do the job. But we do have to go through an accreditation process and then we can actually go on and do the full diploma after that.

OG: And have you done the diploma?

C: We are just, em... no I haven't done it yet. Now you are given the option to do it and I think I ticked the yes box but I haven't heard anything back. It is one of those things like, oh yes I'll get round to doing that at some point. Because it is modular, you can go on and do a masters in it as well, a modular masters, also through Loughborough University. That is where all of our accreditation process is done, down at Loughborough, which is pretty good.

OG: And what were your impressions of that process? Did you find it helpful?

C: Yes, I mean I think it sort of helped... because when you come in, nobody has ever done this job before, it is a new job, and you have nothing on which to grade yourself on, so it is like how do I know if I am doing it right. It is nice just to go down and get sort of theoretical and formal input, but then speak to other advisers and see how they do things, and then you are like well yes, that is actually how I do it. I mean the advisers who come in, the advisers we have are very highly educated anyway and do have skills that are, you know they've worked and have backgrounds that can help them. I think we have got a unique team because we all come from slightly different facets of the world and we all bring our own expertise into the programme which I think really helps. So the accreditation system, yes, its informative and educational, you don't really learn anything that you don't really already know, well I didn't because I had done a lot of that,

and going to university with the psychology stuff I had done most of it anyway. But it is always good to reinforce that and making that informal contact is also always useful.

OG: And you seem to have a good informal system here in Scotland where you can pick up the phone and get in touch with your colleagues easily if you have an issue.

C: Yes we do, we try to get together as much as possible, the full time advisers do anyway, but there is always... if I am unsure of anything I can always pick up the phone to one of them without a second thought, and I do, a lot. Using the strengths that other people have, it works well.

OG: In terms of ongoing training, are you offered training for any issues you feel you have? Are there formal CPD type processes?

C: CPD is open to you anytime you feel there is, if you feel you want to improve on something, I would go to Susie and say I have been thinking I would quite like to do a course on this, that, or the next thing and yeah, you always want to continually improve. I guess when I was part time, I didn't really feel, because I was in another job there wasn't the, I didn't have the scope or the... but now that I am full time it is something that I want to do, look to see where can I improve my abilities and my skills and that is something I will look to do over the next year. The institute are very supportive of this, as a professional body they understand that you have got to continue with your development, you would stagnate otherwise. And never believing that you know everything, that there is nothing you can learn.

OG: That is the end of the areas that I wanted to cover, Just to finish is there anything else you want to say on this area of research? Anything that you think I haven't covered but should be looking at?

C: I can't even think about what we have and haven't said... nothing pops to mind, nothing is there that I am thinking we really need to address that, I think we have really pretty much covered it all. The exit part of the programme is something that I really do think we need to develop and it will be really fascinating to see the results of your study.

OG: Well, thank you very much for your time, it has been really interesting.

END

ADVISER D
16th May 2006

OG: So now I've told you a bit about my research, maybe we can start with some background information about yourself, your work background and experience, where you've come from, how you got involved in the institute, so bringing that to where you are now.

D: Ok, right, well my background is in social work and a lifelong interest in sport, really, but I've never worked in any kind of sporting area. I saw the job advertised for the ACE advisers as they were then back in 1998, for the Scottish Institute, applied and got the post at that stage. That was when we were just contracted. And I suppose my interest in, in this particular job was partly personal because my son was a windsurfer in the GB youth squad and in windsurfing you have to change from one board and set of equipment to another when they get to the transition from junior to youth and he was really good and really enjoyed sailing the junior board but when he had to move onto the youth board... well his physique had changed so he was really too heavy and he just didn't take to the board, he didn't enjoy sailing it. So it finished up with him sitting on the beach in Belgium one weekend just saying I can't do this anymore and what followed was him saying but if I am not a windsurfer, who am I? So you know a real identity issue thing and... so that was one of the things that made me interested in doing the job. Plus the fact that it meant I could work in sport which I had never had the opportunity to do, but use very similar skills to the ones I use in social work, so that all fitted together. So we started off in 1998 really... there was no athletes for us to work with at that stage and the area institutes hadn't started. The idea was that we would eventually be working with the area institutes. So we did all the training and had a few athletes to practice on, but then when the area institutes opened up we were allocated to the area institutes and started to do the work there.

OG: So right in from the beginning, with the development of the programme which I am sure was interesting. Just moving into the area of transitions, what do you think are the main issues that athletes face when they are transitioning out of sport?

D: I think identity is probably the big one, em, and loss of the structure and the routine and the social circle that goes with their sport. So it's kind of a... I think loss is a big part of it, loss and bereavement are part of the things that I often talk to athletes about because they can... it then makes more sense to how they're feeling, it makes more sense to them. I think it's then looking forward and deciding what they are going to replace what they've given up or lost, for whatever reason with varying transitions. So I think, yes, those are the main areas.

OG: My thesis is looking at the transition experiences of Scottish female athletes in particular. I'm interested to know whether you think that male and female athletes face different issues, deal with transitions differently, or not?

D: I hadn't really thought about that before, it's a tough one. I mean, I have really only had in-depth experience with 2 athletes and they were both female. But I have had some sort of experience of athletes who have been in and out with injury and I guess that guys tend to minimise the impact of it on them and it is only those that have, that have got a bit more insight into their emotional selves that can really recognise what's going on. I think females are a little bit better at doing that... it depends a bit on the age, I think as well, I mean one of the females who... is a youngster and I think it took her quite a long time to recognise what was going on and I think that was a maturity thing not a gender thing. So I haven't got enough experience I don't think to say whether there is a clear difference.

OG: Do you find from your experience on the social work side that there are male and female differences in terms of facing emotional issues?

D: No I think there is a bit of a gender issue there but I think there is always a danger of generalising. If you go in with sort of preset ideas then that can effect what kind of response you are going to get. But I think, I think the guys often appreciate being able to talk at an emotional level because it is something probably with coaches and peers that they don't feel able to do. Although having said that there was a rugby player who was having a lot of injury problems and had a pal in the squad who was a close friend who understood on a very similar level to him. The emotional side was important to both of them and they were both quite in touch with their feelings and able to share that but they didn't share it outside their pairings in the rugby, which was interesting.

OG: Can you just briefly describe the services that are offered to athletes through the Performance Lifestyle programme?

D: Em, in terms of services, what exactly do you mean?

OG: Well when you are working with athletes, what do you do with them?

D: Well I suppose the first thing we do is try to identify what kind of lifestyle they've got, how that's allowing them to perform in their sport and whether there is things they want to change within that. And the kind of things that predominate in the work that I do with area institute athletes is getting them flexibility at school... or college or university, but the majority are at school. And also working with the parents to persuade them that things don't have to be done the way they have always been done, so you don't have to do 5 highers in 5th year or 8 standard grades because you know, trying to get them to look back on their education and see what has been important. And standard grades really don't feature very highly in that usually, and yet suggest to them that their child only does 6 or 7 standard grades and they are like, woah. So really getting the parents and the youngsters to think about how they can approach education differently to allow them to fit in what they want to in terms of their sport programme. And then taking that to the school and persuading the school to allow that as well. So that is quite a big part of the work. There's also work with coaches about how there has got to be some come and go, it can't all be the education giving way, that, you know, they have to be prepared to accommodate others things in the athlete's lifestyle as well. So it's about training, or not training but helping the athletes to understand how to manage their lives, in terms of planning and time management, becoming more independent. And getting the parents to allow them to become more independent as well, probably at an earlier age than their peers would be, because if they are going to be going away on their own, they are going to have to think about they need for themselves. And also identifying other areas that we need to be thinking about, like nutrition and sleep, and having some kind of social life and how to fit that in. So trying to lead a... for most of these young athletes, a sort of teenage lifestyle, without sacrificing performance.

OG: How many athletes do you currently work with?

D: Well there are about, I think at the last count about 110 athletes in the East area institute. Now obviously I'm not working with all of them, some because they haven't made contact with me and asked to see me. Ideally I like to see them all when they first come in to the programme, but some of them don't get in touch, and they are encouraged to do that by Michael. His policy is that they should get in touch with me rather than me chasing around after them and I really haven't got time to chase around after them. So those are the ones that don't get seen, though sometimes they come along later on when they realise... when they hear what is being done for other athletes and they decide that they will get in touch at some point. So I suppose I'm actually working with, I have some contact with maybe two thirds of them and it tends to be... some sports don't buy in either and you know I think that comes from the coach. If the coaches don't recognise the value of the programme or don't know enough about the programme to recognise its value, then they don't encourage the athletes to use it. So the sports where we have got institute coaches are very proactive in picking up the service, because they understand the programme. You know, we have got the team kind of working here so we are talking to each other and seeing each other informally and having regular review meetings, that works well and so it works well for those athletes.

OG: With the coaches not buying in, is it partly to do with misconceptions about the programme and what you are trying to do with the athletes? Is it a lack of understanding?

D: I think for the majority it is probably a lack of understanding, if they haven't had any experience of what the service offers to the athletes then there may be misconceptions and what we do and the effect that we have on the athletes. But I think basically it is just not knowing what it is about, and because they are not, they are not so totally associated with the area institute, they don't have the opportunity to get that information. A lot of them, if you think about athletics, a lot of them are individual coaches who are part time, working on a voluntary basis, and they haven't got time, you know, to find out about it, they don't go to the forums where they would find out about it.

OG: With area institute athletes you are unlikely to talk to them about retirement because of their age, but are you doing anything with them working on the concept of transitions?

D: Well yes, I think one of the things that we are doing all of the time really is getting them to think about a plan B, because life after sport can happen at any time really, it may not be when they would chose to retire, it may be through injury which can happen at any stage. So, you know, we are getting them to think about what their ultimate career after sport is going to be and looking at the pathways that will take them towards that but fit in with their current involvement in sport. But it also means that they have got that kind of security blanket, that they have thought about what else they are going to with their lives, which I think then gives them a bit more confidence, enables them to focus more on their sport when they are involved. I think most of them now are starting to recognise that, even sort of pro sports like rugby, they are starting to see that they do need to have something else. And I think the coaches now are more aware as to how major an impact it can have on a person if they haven't got anything else to move to or they do get an injury. So I think it's an awareness amongst the coaches as well that is encourageing them to look at doing something else with their time apart from just playing rugby or whatever. So you know right at the beginning we do kind of sow that seed as thinking about what they are going to do. I mean some of them are at school in third or fourth year or lower, they haven't even started to think about that, they are not even thinking about their sport after school, but once they get to 5th and 6th year you definitely encourage them to think about what else they might want to do and how that is going to work with their sport in the early stages anyway.

OG: In terms of deselected athletes, what do you do for them? Do you know in advance that they are going to be deselected, and what process then do they go through with you?

D: Yes I know whether they are going to be deselected, generally, I may not know until the decision has been made but I do get told when the decision is made. And if it is somebody that Michael knows that I've been working with then he will give me forewarning that that's what's on the cards. So the ones that I've been working with, we will then move into looking at what else they are going to do. I mean a lot of them continue in their sport, the fact that they have been deselected from the institute doesn't need to take them away from their sport necessarily. So if I've been working on a particular theme then we will complete that piece of work and then, you know, draw up to a conclusion. The ones that I haven't really had any contact with, when their deselected I'm afraid we don't have... they are told that they can, that they can have access to Performance Lifestyle if they want to for up to a year after their deselection. When they get their deselection letter that's part of the letter, but very few of them do pick up if I haven't had any involvement with them up to that point.

OG: Several of the advisers I have spoken to have suggested that the athletes who continue to make use of the service do tend to be the ones with whom they have had contact with while they were active. There are very few others that just pop out of the woodwork once they have been deselected.

D: Yes, that tends to be the case and it makes sense really. If you think about the way teenagers operate and you know often it is teenagers that we are talking about, you know, they will know themselves when deselection is coming along and it probably doesn't make that much of a difference in their lives at the end of the day, unless it is because of a major injury or something like that. But if it is just deselection because they haven't met their targets then, you know, I think they recognise that they come out and they know that they can come back in if they do then achieve them.

OG: So is there a difference then between those that are deselected because they have not met their targets, a blip in performance so to speak and those that are deselected because they are believed to reach the limit of their potential, in terms of that is as good as they are going to be?

D: I could imagine that there is but I haven't actually had any experience of that, no I haven't really come across that, haven't had any athletes in that situation.

OG: And have you had any experience of athletes who have had to come out through injury?

D: I haven't had anybody who has had to stop completely. I've had... it's been mainly the rugby players who have had to come out for maybe several months at a time and then went back in.

OG: And do you work with them through that injury period?

D: If it is somebody that wants to pick up then I will do, I mean I've had a couple, well one in particular of the rugby players I really gave a lot of support to through that period because he was somebody who wanted that and was able to use it and could look at the sort of, the impact on him emotionally and how it was affecting the way he was feeling and how that affected his ability to function... he was a university student, how it was affecting his ability to function as a student. He was able to look at the emotional side of it and recognise that what he was going through was really quite a normal reaction and that there wasn't anything wrong with the way he was feeling. I think he quite benefited from having that kind of support which he probably couldn't have got through anybody else in the system. And there was another one who was in a similar situation and was quite glad of the opportunity to talk through how he was feeling to somebody who was kind of on the edge of the sport but knew what was involved in the sport. Because I do think that we have that benefit that we are not directly involved, we are not involved in the selections, but we do understand sport and know what is involved in it so you know, we kind of bridge that gap.

OG: In terms of the idea of the emotional reaction either to injury or to other career transitions, if you are dealing with an athlete who is having emotional problems would you deal with those yourself? Do you have a referral network you can use?

D: Yes, em, I mean I probably deal with a bit more of it than some people would because of my background but I do try to keep my role as a Performance Lifestyle adviser clear from becoming really more of a counsellor kind of role. Although I think to do a certain amount of counselling is appropriate within our role as long as we are comfortable with it. There has been 2 occasions with female athletes where... where we were at things that needed to be addressed but I didn't feel it was in my role, but they didn't want to see anybody else, so I said to them I am no longer doing this with you as your Performance Lifestyle adviser, I am doing this more as a counsellor. And they were fine with that, it worked well, in fact one of them eventually moved on to work with a counsellor because that seemed to be the right thing to do at that stage, but she had to do a bit of work first to get there.

OG: So is a referral network there you can use though?

D: There is, yes. It's quite limited and it's something that we need to build up. But certainly if it is something like counselling we've got, well certainly in the East we've got somebody who's very good.

OG: And is that somebody who works for the institute?

D: No it is someone we just refer to, a private advisor.

OG: And are there any other services that you have referral systems for?

D: Not that I've used, I mean we do refer quite a lot within the institute network, so you know I quite often refer to sport psychologists or to the nutritionist, em, and vice versa, if they pick up something with an athlete that they think needs refer to me then they'll talk to me about it and refer it on. So we do quite a lot of what I would call internal referrals and the referrals to an external advisor are fewer.

OG: When an athlete disengages, there is a suggestion that there might be a physical detraining issue. Is that an issue that is currently addressed by the Institute? Do you think it needs to be?

D: I don't think it is addressed by the institute at the moment, em, I did have one swimmer in the fairly early days and she felt that she needed some detraining and that was provided. Michael is quite good at allowing athletes to continue to access things like the strength and conditioning programme for a period after they have been deselected. I mean it depends on the reasons for the deselection and whether they have been making good use of the programme or not, there are a lot of factors there. I don't know how official that should be, but you know unofficially it does happen. But it hasn't really been an issue with the two athletes I have worked with recently, who had come out of their high performance programmes, but I think they know themselves that they need to, they need to keep going to... they need to keep training to some extent, they can't just stop, they wouldn't have wanted to just stop. But it hasn't been part of their excellence programme as such, not something that has been offered to them, to give them advice about how to do that.

OG: If that was something that was to become part of the exit programme, are there other services within the institute that you feel should or would contribute to that?

D: I think the strength and conditioning coaches probably and maybe the nutritionists as well because obviously there can be a weight problem as well for somebody who suddenly stops training. So I think again there needs to be a team approach really to deselections, particularly if it is somebody coming out at the end of their athletic career. But also I suppose somebody coming out through injury or through being deemed no longer able to... not reaching a high enough standard. So yes, I think it is something we could do better, something to bear in mind for future developments.

OG: What has been the response of athletes to services offered when they are deselected? How many athletes have you had taking up these services?

D: Em, two... three area institute athletes and one Scottish institute athlete. That is a very very small percentage of the deselected athletes in my area, probably... just trying to think how many have been deselected in the, what six year we've been going... it's probably around about 2%, something like that, maybe 3%. Pretty small proportion.

OG: And are there athletes who have used your services whilst in the institute but when they come to being deselected they leave and don't see you?

D: I couldn't... I think most of them would be people that I haven't been working with, some of them I will maybe just have done an initial assessment with and not had any follow-up contact with. I guess that percentage was maybe a bit too small, I'm still thinking about the number of athletes who have been deselected in that time. We have only just got up to the 100 plus mark in the last year so it is probably slightly higher percentage than that, maybe about 10%...

OG: Still a small percentage though...

D: I think if I've been involved with working with an athlete up to the point that they are deselected then they continue. One of the ones I have worked with recently in some depth [END OF SIDE 1], she deselected herself before I'd actually met her, she'd come from another area institute to us so I hadn't met her. She deselected herself and then she was finding it fairly traumatic and then picked up with me. We did quite a lot of work since then but she had used the service a bit in the previous area institute. The others have been ones that I have been working with on and off throughout their time in the area institute and then, you know, they picked up... if there has been a particular thing they wanted me just to help them sort out as part of their deselection... we've continued to do the work we were doing to a sort of conclusion.

OG: I know you spoke before about not chasing athletes but waiting for them to come to you to use your services. But do you think there are some athletes who maybe need services but are just not coming?

D: Yes, yes. I mean there are some athletes whose coaches have said to me, I want her to see you and I've told her to get in touch with you, but they don't.

OG: And can you give me any thoughts on why that might be?

D: Well, with two of them, when I've spoken to them... I've actually picked the phone up and said, you know, your coach has suggested that we meet, and they say oh yes, but not now, now is not a good time and with one in particular it was because she just had some much pressure in trying to do so much. And yet, if she had made the time to see me we could probably have sorted out some of those things that were stressing her out.

OG: And again do you think that is maybe a case of athletes not maybe knowing what you can do for them in that case?

D: I think so, probably, and I think it's perhaps that you know, if they've been in the programme for quite a while and haven't picked up with me, it's like the longer you put off something the harder it is to do it. I think it is maybe a bit of that but I think it is not realising what we can offer. I mean sometimes they are like, well I can manage my own time, I can organise this, I don't need help, yeah, and that's sort of, that's as much as they think we can offer and they don't realise how much broader the service is.

OG: Do you think that is something the programme itself or maybe the institute system could do something about?

D: Well, there is always stuff in the publications that go out. I mean I write a bit for the annual report each year to sort of try giving an idea of the services that we offer and there is often a bit in Gold Zone about all the different services, so there is information there about what Performance Lifestyle is offering. But I think unless... I think word of mouth is still the best way of doing it. If one athlete speaks to another one who has had a good experience of Performance Lifestyle and recognises the help that it has had then they think oh well maybe that is something that I should do and you know they then get in touch. So it tends to go through a sport. I think that sports with the younger athletes buy in better, I mean one of the sports that hasn't really bought in very much is curling. And you know that's because... some of the athletes are older but not all of them, I mean at one stage we had a 12 year old on our curling programme. At that stage I did do a bit of work with them because I had the time at that point, but as soon as I wasn't able to be proactive in pursuing them there was no contact that came the other way. So I think the age thing has something to do with it, I mean swimming has always been very keen to work with us and athletics hasn't and I think that's because although we have got an institute coach, there are a lot of them have their own individual coaches. So if their individual coaches say oh, that is a waste of time, even if Darcy (*institute coach*) is encouraging them, saying they should do this, you can see the difference. If their personal coach is saying I wouldn't bother, then you know, they don't buy into it in the same way. There is I suppose sports that I began to work with in the early days when time wasn't so pressurised and I've managed to sort of keep the links going, badminton for example in fact where I did quite a lot of work... but then we did have an institute badminton coach who worked with the younger players who was very keen to get us involved, so that was also part of the reason I got involved at that stage, but that's... he's no longer involved, but the contact has continued with those players because they've recognised the support they can get from us.

OG: I'm interested in the change from ACE to Performance Lifestyle. What are your thoughts on that?

D: Em, I was a bit reluctant, or a bit uncertain about it to begin with, I didn't quite see what the benefits were going to be, although I could see that we had changed and developed the programme a lot from where we started and, you know, it was very much the Australian model and we did... first of all UK-ise it and then make it more Scottish-based. But I think Performance Lifestyle now says far more about what we do with the athletes, I think it makes much more sense to them and to the coaches about what we are doing than Career and Education which is what it was before, which is literally that you get us jobs and you sort out courses for us to do. I think that was the perception that was around although we knew, even then, that it was a bit broader than that. But I think Performance Lifestyle now is much more in keeping with current thinking and current language as well and it emphasises the performance aspect, that we are there to enhance performance, that we are not there to distract them, make them do things.

OG: What is your opinion of the services that are offered to athletes who are facing transitions out of sport?

D: I think it is poor, I mean I think they are just dropped. My impression is, and this may... because I don't have a lot of direct experience with athletes who are at the end of their career... that, from a coaching point of view, there is just a cut off. And there's no... there's no real coordinated approach to helping an athlete to finish from their involvement with the institute. I think that we are probably the only people that really do think about it at all at the moment and I think that's something that should really change. We are not being

fair to the athletes because we ask for a big commitment from them while they are in the institute and then once they have been deselected or whatever then they are just dropped.

OG: So you think there is an argument that Performance Lifestyle should not be the only service that continues after the end, that isn't enough?

D: Yes. Well there just needs to be a, you know, check list I suppose, which somebody sits down with them and goes through and says, you know, what about this, what about this, what about this? And if they identify any needs then those are looked at.

OG: I guess that it is particularly important in those sports where they are being coached by an institute coach and will lose this, as opposed to those with individual coaches?

D: Yes, it will be, that's right. It will be quite a different change. An argument therefore for looking more closely at support given to those athletes who are under the institute coaches when it ends. I think if it is an injury related retirement then, em, they do continue to get medical treatment until the injury is resolved, that's resolved. And I think they probably are looked after from that point of view but I think from, you know what we were talking about earlier the detraining, that kind of thing, nutrition, that isn't really thought about.

OG: In an ideal world, if the Performance Lifestyle had all the money it needed, are there any additional services that could improve the programme that is offered?

D: I suppose, it's not an additional service, but it is having the service available to everybody, having more time.

OG: So more of what is done now rather than necessarily extra services.

D: Yes, I think so. I think because we are all working pretty much flat out just delivering what we could deliver now is a challenge let alone thinking about anything else that we might... I suppose the things that we would like to do more of is more on the, on the education side of things so workshops and that kind of thing. I mean they are there in the programme but we only maybe do 3 or 4 in a year.

OG: And do you think there would be more demand for them if you could offer more?

D: I think so, I think with some... if they could see the relevance of it to their development as an athlete or as an individual then yes I think they would. I think, you know, you would need to find out what they wanted and select things that they would want to come to. But it's just having the financial resources to lay those things on and bring in good facilitators, do them well.

OG: No point in doing them half-heartedly. And has an athlete ever come to you and asked you for something specific and at the moment you haven't been able to help them?

D: Em... just trying to think... I suppose occasionally, I'm just trying to think of an example, occasionally they come and ask for something that really isn't in my remit, but if that happens then I try to put them in touch with somebody that could help them. Something that actually happened recently, I don't know how relevant it is to what you are getting at, but an athlete that I worked with way back, a curler in fact, he actually emailed me... he had been deselected for a couple of years, he moved from here to another area institute and then was deselected. He rang me this week to say would I be prepared to do some work with him privately, because he was looking at his career and his sport and how he was going to integrate them, he was wanted me to help him with that, to review that, an example of something a bit different. So I was quite interested that he had come back to use the service in a different way.

OG: What do you see as the future developments of the programme? Where do you see it going in the next couple of years?

D: More staff and I think, in the East, being much more integrated into all of the sports so that we are reaching all of the athletes and you know pro-active in developing relationships with the coaches and the athletes that aren't sort of buying into it at the moment.

OG: Do you think there are differences between the area institutes in terms of the level of integration with the sports? Are the different areas are different stages of advancement and development with this?

D: I suspect that they are, I mean it is difficult to keep tabs on that. I mean in the early days when I was working in Central as well as here it was good as I could make that comparison. But I think the smaller area institutes probably have been able to develop that at a higher level because they have got similar resources but fewer athletes. And I think it depends on the area manager as well as to what their priorities have been and how much time they've had to invest in building up that particular aspect.

OG: From what you have said Michael seems to be very supportive of what you are doing, of Performance Lifestyle. Do you think all of the managers are the same?

D: I think that the ones... I mean Vicky Strange has always been very pro Performance Lifestyle, Allan Campbell as well. I think Phil Reid is, although I haven't had a lot of contact with him, but I think when he was in Grampian, you know, he and Colin worked very closely together and, you know, I think he and Mary are working really well together so I think there has not been a problem there. The one I am not sure about is Highland, you know I don't know really enough about the way they are. Yes, so I think on the whole all the area managers, as I say apart from Highland and I don't know about them, are pretty much supportive and encouraging having the programme as fully integrated into all of the sports as possible.

OG: Do you think we have some athletes who fall through the net because they are not at a high enough level to be within the institute, maybe within the individual athlete programme, or are in, for example, a professional sport not covered by the institute? Athletes for whom their governing bodies are not providing any services?

D: That's quite hard for me to answer really, because the only governing bodies that I'm really... got any kind of knowledge of are the ones that we work with through the institute. I mean in terms of the pro sports there really couldn't be much, apart from rugby and there really hasn't been much there. I mean I know football tried to set up some kind of similar programme themselves and they are now supposed to be an institute, well they are an institute sport. I did a bit of work with Livingston and although on the surface they were very welcoming of me going in and speaking to the players that had been selected for the institute programme, when there was any sort of follow up required and, you know, I tried to get back in touch with them, there was no return of calls, no support, or anything like that, so it kind of just fell flat really.

OG: Many football clubs have their own education and welfare officers, but I am not sure how much they are actually doing in that regard.

D: I think they have maybe made it more difficult for us to get involved because parents have got an idea of what they offer and think that we'll be offering the same and therefore they are not particularly keen.

OG: I understand that there are a few sports that have bought into the Performance Lifestyle programme, for example the Professional Cricketers Association.

D: Yes they have. I don't think there has been anything in Scotland. But certainly down south they seem to have bought into it in a big way. I'm not sure if that will happen in the future in Scotland. Professional cricket is becoming more of a high profile sport in Scotland, but I don't know. They haven't got an academy set up here and I think that's the level at which it's working down south. So I can't see it somehow. One of the things that I did get a request for was from Edinburgh University rowers, wanting some input into the sort of time management, lifestyle, skills, you know area. But we had to turn that down because we haven't got the time to do it.

OG: Do you get requests like that from other groups, other bodies, other sports?

D: Well that's the only one that I've had and that was just last year. We did also go back to them and say if they did want it they would have to pay for it, because we could have provided it through one of the providers that we use for our own workshops, but I don't think they wanted to have to pay for it, they thought that they could just get it, access it through being part of the university.

OG: My last few questions are about adviser training. First of all, what training were you provided when you first started?

D: Well, the first training I went on was a week down at Bisham Abbey, which was kind of training in isolation because we didn't know exactly what the job was going to be and what we were expected to do. It was a bit like, like being in a vacuum. But it was, it was fairly intensive and in depth training about views on career development and interviewing skills, communication skills. And then subsequently each year there is a similar week in which different areas of the job are addressed and people are brought in to do that, run

workshops and stuff. And we kind of do our own in-house training now, we go away for 48 hours, you know, looking at service development, think about our training needs. We have a conference, a UK conference, where people come in and run seminars, that sort of thing.

OG: So the 2 day session that you talked about, is that just Scotland then?

D: Yes, that's just Scotland, just Performance Lifestyle staff.

OG: And at those sessions do you have people come in, deliver sessions on issues?

D: Well we haven't had that but it is something we have talked about, bringing people in, but we haven't quite got to the point of that happening. That would happen more at the UK wide conference, which is usually 2 days. We had been having these group away type sessions once or twice a year, but the institute sort of weren't keen of all the groups, all the different service providers, having their own little groups, they wanted more integration. But I think we need to develop ourselves, you know, professional development.

OG: You need to have both sessions on your own and sessions with others.

D: Yes, that's right.

OG: I guess without doing the one on your own you don't get that same contact with your fellow advisers, you don't get to develop that network which creates strength in the programme.

D: Yes, you know, coming across different experiences that we are having to deal with and being able to share that and use that as training material. How it was actually dealt with, how other people might have dealt with it or how else it could have been...

OG: Is there quite a lot of communication between advisers? Are you able to pick up the phone or email is there is an issue?

D: Oh yes, yes. We do that, we could probably do it more. But we do that, we also try to meet up, you know if Dot or Mary are coming through to Edinburgh to see somebody then, you know, we try to meet up for a coffee and have a natter, or if I'm going over to Glasgow I'll say to Mary I'm coming to Glasgow, are you going to be around, can we meet up? That kind of informal contact is quite good as well.

OG: When you have a fairly small team like you have in Scotland it maybe becomes easier to do that.

D: Yes, although it is quite easy to slip into the situation where we are all working away in our own wee corners, becoming oblivious to what else is going on and what other people are doing.

OG: Do you think the advisers in the more remote areas, working for Highland or Grampian, get less of that?

D: I think that they maybe feel that they do and because Dot, Mary and I are all employed, whereas the others are contracted, I think the perception is, from the other advisers from Tayside and Fife and up north, that we actually have a lot more contact with each other than they have contact with us or with each other. But in fact that is not the reality, but I think having the contracted and the employed advisers... it is much easier for them to feel more detached from the programme when only working a small number of hours. I think we are quite aware of the need to communicate.

OG: Have you been through the graduate certificate?

D: Yes, right at the very start, the very first one.

OG: And was that the Australian one?

D: Yes it was. I think it was... I mean I thought it was quite good. We were doing the weeks training at Bisham at that stage, so we had quite a lot of input. And then had to do quite a lot to get the portfolio of work we had done. I found it quite interesting because not having worked in sport before I had quite a lot of learning to do, although I've got a lot of the skills, it was learning to apply them in a different context. Learning about the elite sport environment, what is involved, and about the career development side of things as well.

OG: What about ongoing training. Apart from the yearly meetings and conferences you have already talked about, is there any other formal or informal ongoing training? You know, if you need training on a particular issue can you get that?

D: Yes, yes, you know I am sure that... I suppose that side of things often tends to get neglected but, I am sure if we have things we want to do then we are able to. I mean if we want to go off to training camps the option is there to do that, I mean that is one of the things that I have been going to do but haven't been done yet, just to immerse yourself in that high level environment, because although I have some experience of it with... through my son, that was as a parent and not as a provider. And I am sure things have moved on since I was doing that as well, so it is about extending that kind of knowledge. But yes, I think if we identified a particular need that we wanted, or a particular course that we wanted to do, there would be no problem about getting the... there is always funding for professional development.

OG: So it is just the case if an issue comes up for you then saying I need help with this and they will do that for you. That is really all the questions I wanted to ask you. Just to finish, is there anything else you want to say on this topic, anything you think I haven't asked about but that you think is important?

D: No, I don't think there is anything. I suppose one of the issues that has been around with the institute athlete I have been working with has been... it was actually illness that forced her retirement, but that was kind of brought on by the pressure of trying to do a second degree course in physio which would give her a career and really overstretching herself. Recognising that she was coming to the end of her career, didn't have another career to move into, wanted to do something else and... but also pushed her body, you know, too hard and was reluctant to listen to people who were trying to say to her, you are trying to do too much. You know, she was working as well, to try to get some money, so it was just... for her I think, the end came too quickly and not in the way she wanted it to do. Because of all the pressure she was putting herself under really, despite people around her trying to say to her you need to slow down, think about what your priorities... you know, prioritise things and spread it out a bit rather than trying to do it all at once. So even having support around you is not necessarily going to guarantee that an athlete is going to listen and to make changes [END OF SIDE 2]

END

AREA MANAGER A
25th June 2007

OG: Just some basic questions to start. Could you give me an idea of the number of athletes currently within the Central Area at the moment?

A: We have got 40. 40 has been our average for some time, we got up to 47 at one point, but it has come down again because selection criteria got higher, which is a good thing really, so yes, about 40.

OG: And the number of Performance Lifestyle advisers you have working with those athletes?

A: We have just got one, but we pay part of that salary so we have got, if you like, a chunk of the time to work with the athletes, shared with the Scottish Institute.

OG: And that is Dot Blackie?

A: Yes, Dot, and that works really well.

OG: Can you tell me your general opinion of Performance Lifestyle and what it can offer athletes who are at Area Institute level?

A: Okay, I think the first thing is that the athletes really appreciate having somebody outside the coaching, the strength and conditioning, that is actually thinking about other things for them, I think that is really really important. And there are, as you know, particular periods where Performance Lifestyle becomes really absolutely vital, particularly when they are leaving school. I think that's one of the biggest areas where it can really help, whether it's trying to target where they should go in terms of whether they go to University or College and giving them advice as to where to go and what to do. If they are thinking about moving abroad, the ups and downs, ins and outs of all of that. So I think there are particular areas, but then you get some issues that are specific to individual athletes. For some athletes, Performance Lifestyle is something where they say, yeah, met with Dot and that was fine, for others there will be particular issues where she can

work in depth with them, for instance athletes moving down to Nottingham, canoe slalom athletes, making the links down there for them in terms of trying to help them to get work, trying to link them into the system down there properly, because what has tended to happen is that the Scottish system has been in the past well ahead of the English system so they go from a system where there is an awful lot of support around about them, down to something where they are really struggling to find things, and that is where Performance Lifestyle can be absolutely brilliant as well. There are other things we do a wee bit of, things like time management and so on, we have not done as much of that as I thought we would do, of those and the other Performance Lifestyle courses. So it is very much individualised to each athlete, where are they in their life, where do they want to go, and how can we help them. So Performance Lifestyle for me is one of the most important things, I think, at the Area Institutes.

OG: And what is the level of uptake of Performance Lifestyle by the athletes within Central?

A: It varies an awful lot with us. All of the athletes meet with Dot once a year and in some cases Dot will just sit down with them and have a chat, they know where they are going, they are comfortable, you know, with what they are doing, whether it is at school or university or wherever, but then to the opposite extreme we can get athletes that Dot is working with, well almost on a weekly basis, you know because there are issues, it could be at university, it might be something about accommodation or any of a hundred and one things, so it really does vary immensely.

OG: What is the level of support from the other service providers within the Central Institute to Performance Lifestyle, how well does it link into the other services?

A: Okay, in some of the sport, in four of the sports, we have team meetings where we get the coach, the nutritionist, the psychologist, the doc, Performance Lifestyle, the strength and conditioning coach round the table. What we do there is we have an overview of the programme and everybody pitches into that and then we have, we look at each athlete individually and everybody pitches in about that, and that is really really good. Because our athlete numbers are small and finance, as you know, is limited, we can do it for the larger sports that we have got but if it is just one individual athlete we find it very difficult to get everybody round the table to discuss those athletes. So for the team meetings, great, total integration, a holistic approach to the athlete. Dot is very good at though, in addition to that, if there is something with an athlete, she then is proactive enough to link into the other people that she needs to, whether it is the strength and conditioning coach or the physio or the nutritionist or whoever, so, well we leave that up to Dot, she makes all those decisions, whereas in the team meetings it is more centrally organised.

OG: And what about the level of support from coaches, particularly those who are not employed by the Institute? Do they support and understand Performance Lifestyle?

A: In most sports they are supportive. We have found that the sports are pretty open to look at things like nutrition, psychology, and Performance Lifestyle. Once you make the initial, once you get through that culture barrier of I'm the coach and this is my athlete, then it is okay and we found that nearly all of the coaches really want to get involved in that sort of thing as well. There is one sport that we do have difficulty with.

OG: In an ideal world, with no restrictions on finances or resources, are there any changes or additions that you would make to Performance Lifestyle and how it is currently delivered at Area level?

A: That is a difficult one. If you had asked me about some of the other service provisions and coaching I could give you an awful lot of changes I would like to make, but with Performance Lifestyle, the only thing I feel is that Dot is stretched pretty wide and it would be great, we have got roughly a third of Dot's time. I think ideal for us would be to have more like 50% of her time, so I think it would be upping the amount of time that Dot has got, because some athletes really are high maintenance and she has to spend a lot of time with them, and of course she also has Scottish Institute of Sport athletes as well. So I think that there are times when it is, really, her work load is huge, so it would be being able to buy more of Dot's time from the Institute, that would be what we would look at.

OG: And do you think that as the system grows there is the possibility of getting more time or getting an additional person on board, is that something that is maybe being discussed?

A: I think it has, I think those things have been talked about. What's been happening recently in the Scottish Institute of Sport is, because nutrition has been a big problem area, so they're targeting nutrition at the moment and also they are targeting sports psychology, we have just got a new sport psychologist, and they are targeting those areas because they feel that there is a greater need within those areas compared to

Performance Lifestyle at the moment. And it is like all things, if you had more money you would get more of everything. Performance Lifestyle here has been a real success story, I think, because Dot is so good at what she does.

OG: So do you think a lot of the success is down to the character and personality of Dot?

A: I think so, I mean I think Performance Lifestyle can be such a vague thing in some ways to the outsider, so you need somebody who comes in with a very clear remit and that's where, well you know Dot is an ex-Olympic athlete which means she knows what it is like to be the athlete and she is very good at treating the athlete the right way. There are some athletes that you have got to, well almost mollycoddle and there are other athletes where you have got to say no, that's wrong, you have got to do this, you know, in a nice way, and Dot's very very good at that, she can lay it on the line when she needs to. So I think it is a question of the skill set of the Performance Lifestyle adviser as well and hers is very good.

OG: I described at the start that I am mostly interested in athletes facing major transitions. At Area level, I see three types of scenarios that you could come up against: those who choose to leave the institute or stop competing in their sport, those who are forced to stop due to injury reasons, and those who are deselected. Have you had any athletes who fit into these scenarios?

A: yes, we have had quite a few and what we offer the athletes in that scenario, well what we offered them in the past was one years Performance Lifestyle. Hardly any, if any, take it up. I think that because they have been committed to the sport for a period of time to a greater or lesser degree, and when it comes to something that, when they realise they are not going to make that transition, they pull back. They might still play their sport and everything but it becomes much less important to them and they tend not to take up on offers. What we do with every athlete, as I'm sure all the other Area Managers also do with Performance Lifestyle, is we ask them to come in and meet with us and discuss things, but the take up on that is very low as well which is quite surprising in some ways. I think they get to the stage they know they are not good enough, they know what the selection criteria are because they are all pretty robust, and it must be a pretty negative thing for them. What happens is the governing body, we draw up with each governing body a selection criteria and the ones that then meet that selection criteria are then nominated to the Area Institutes. Then what would tend to happen is that kids that don't make the selection criteria, so they are not nominated into the Institute, so it is actually the governing bodies that are doing it.

OG: So the whole process is therefore done at the same time, selection and deselection?

A: Yes that's right. Some athletes also go on to maybe a 6 month probationary thing if there are worries about their commitment and so on and then that is reviewed at the end of the six months, and that can be, they can be dropped at that point as well. We have very very recently had a case of an athlete who has been nominated to us and we knew there were huge problems with this athlete in terms of commitment and we discussed with the coach and the performance director of the sport about the athlete and then the athlete was supposed to turn up for a couple of things, didn't, said they couldn't come to strength and conditioning for instance, and so we said to the athlete well, if you can't commit to the programme we can't actually put on a programme for you and select you. So we have had that scenario, that is the first time that has actually happened, and we had to be really robust in what we were saying to the athlete, not in terms of you have to do this but in terms of what can you actually commit to. And it was the athlete who turned around and said I can't do that, so we had to deselect. Now that was in very very close discussion with the governing body and when we put a letter out, or the letter out we had to make, within the letter say this was a joint thing with the governing body and us. So it was a different type of scenario, the person had been nominated and then we decided jointly that we weren't going to do it. So in that situation it was us and the governing body deselecting, where in other situations it is just that the nominations don't come through.

OG: So what is the process that is followed once the nomination does not come through?

A: It is a letter from me that says that they are no longer a Central Scotland Institute of Sport athlete.

OG: Presumably everyone has an awareness of the selection criteria, so it is unlikely to come as a surprise when an athlete is not nominated again. But what kind of advanced warning are you given that an athlete may be facing a deselection?

A: It varies, but the Area Managers tend to know their athletes, we are fortunate in that we've only got 40 athletes. If you've got, like in the West they've got 110, I presume that it is more difficult, but you know in advance because you talk to the coaches, so you have got a feel for the athlete already before anything happens. And then what happens is they have the meeting where there will be one of the Area Institute

managers representing that sport, usually the National Coach or the performance director, and AN Other from the governing body to look at the nominations. So normally you have a bit of a feel beforehand that somebody is not cutting it.

OG: And within this process, at what point is the Performance Lifestyle adviser brought into the process? For example, are the advisers made aware that an athlete is potentially facing that issue?

A: Not so much on the potential side, it usually comes about when the athlete is deselected or not nominated, but in some cases, if Dot has been working closely with an athlete she will have a feel for that athlete as well. But what we try to do is that as soon as somebody is not nominated we send a letter out to everybody to say this athlete is no longer, has not been nominated, we send that out to Dot or email, it is usually just an email.

OG: And at that point is it normally left to the athlete to make the first step in terms of making contact, rather than Dot chasing them?

A: Yes, that's right.

OG: And you have said it is a fairly small percentage of athletes that actually do that?

A: Very small. I am actually trying to think how many, you know you could count them on one hand over the years, because I think obviously they see deselection as a rejection of them and they pull away from anything associated with it. I mean, I don't know peoples minds but that would be my impression.

OG: Are there any different processes that are followed if an athlete chooses to leave or has to leave due to some long term injury?

A: Yes there are two things, well Performance Lifestyle doesn't because we still support them there. If there is a long-term injury we will support that long-term injury for a period of time. That can vary, we tend to, because we are able to, give the athlete a bit more support than from some other ones, but it doesn't happen all that often. The long-term injury side with the junior athletes is much rarer than it is with the senior ones, I am quite sure. I remember when we had just started, there was a girl who had problems fitting into the programme, the programme was quite intensive, and she had an injury as well that didn't help, we were learning then, feeling our way, we weren't quite sure how to move everything forward and she pulled out of the sport altogether. I think if she had been in now she would have got more support than she did then, this was in our first year of operation, because Performance Lifestyle would have been more robust and also injury follow-on treatment would have been more robust if needed.

OG: Thinking more generally, do you think the Institute system as a whole does enough for athletes who leave the system, for whatever reason?

A: I think they could do more, it is one of these things, the problem I think we have with all of the service provisions and so on is the amount of time that everybody has got. Say Dot was working full time for us, then she could be much more proactive in doing those things, but she is working with, I don't know how many, maybe 100 athletes so it is very difficult to take that up. And some athletes will find it difficult when they are deselected, others I think will just say, know they are not good enough at that particular point to reach that particular level of performance and just get on with it, it will vary from athlete to athlete.

OG: Obviously Performance Lifestyle is the main service available to athletes once they have exited, but do you think there is a need for other service provision areas to be involved? For example, is there an argument for some of the services to be involved in some kind of down training programme?

A: Well it would be good, and it would be good if the governing bodies were able to offer something. We can't, because of the amount of stress already on Performance Lifestyle, on nutrition, on psychology, etc, etc, we just don't have the resources to do that. There should be, in some governing bodies there are definite safety nets, you know, they would still be in a squad, for instance, they'll still get their coaching, they'll still get some training and so on, still get competitions, so it doesn't mean, for an awful lot of the athletes it doesn't mean they walk away with nothing, it is the additionality, as we still call it, that they don't get.

OG: And is there maybe an argument therefore for some governing bodies to have some sort of service provision, maybe to link into that to some extent?

A: I know it sounds good, but in reality that would be almost impossible, we just don't have enough nutritionists, enough Performance Lifestyle advisers and so on. And what we have got to be really really careful of is that we don't dilute what we have got by trying to spread it too thin. We have now got the regional sports partnership here, which is a private project, and of course they want to get strength and conditioning and I know Dave Clark is looking at that, they want to get nutritional input, and we can't do it, there isn't the people. And I also I think that at that level, 90% of the athletes or maybe even more, they don't need that at that level. But it is one of these things because people say, oh they have got it there, we must have it down here. It is what does an athlete actually need for the level of athlete that they actually are, within any country, and you'll find that most countries, obviously the higher the level of the athlete the more focus of these things comes into it. As far as I know in Australia, and it is 3 years since I have been back there now, the Institute system was very, very robust, very keyed in, but if you were out of it, you were out of it, you know very focused.

OG: Is there anything more you want to tell me about Performance Lifestyle, anything in this area that you think I have missed or that you want to add?

A: No I don't think so, I think the stress is the amount of time each individual Performance Lifestyle adviser has got, that's the stumbling block bit at the moment.

OG: Thanks very much for your time, it is very much appreciated.

END

AREA MANAGER B

20th June 2007

OG: What I am wanting to do is look at how Performance Lifestyle links into the Area Institutes and your own opinions of the issues that athletes face when they retire as well as some of the issues that you might come up against with athletes who, for example, are deselected, choose to retire or leave through injury. So maybe just some basic details first of all – how many athletes do you currently have and how many Performance Lifestyle advisers you have working in Grampian at the moment?

B: Athlete-wise we... it tends to fluctuate a wee bit from year to year, but now we, we've got 37 at the moment, we've got three gymnasts coming on board shortly, that will take us up to 40. What is happening now, you are probably aware, they have moved away from the core sports and network sports, so because that pattern's changing and they've brought in more eligible sports there's a lot more on the horizon now. For example, handball is one of the next one that is coming up...

OG: So focusing more towards London 2012 sports then?

B: It is being driven very much by that, but the governing bodies still have to meet the criteria in order to get in the door, so to speak. So, as I say, we have 37 at the moment, coming up to 40 and we are probably now covering 15 sports I think, with gymnastics coming on board that will be 15 sports. Age-wise we tend to have a younger group as you would probably be aware, most of them are either in school or in university and very few... I think our oldest athlete is actually a wheelchair marathon athlete who is 44 and our youngest athlete is 12 so we have got a reasonable age range but as I say the older bracket is smaller...

OG: Focusing on the younger talent coming through, as a general rule?

B: Yes, yeah. In terms of Performance Lifestyle we've got... on paper we have 2 advisers, Colin Gallagher, who is the principal teacher of guidance at Ellon and Chris Newlands who is at Moray College in Elgin. Chris also works with Highland Institute as well, so she is kind of doubling up there, but because we don't have a lot of athletes in the Moray area – at the moment we only have 2 and only one of them is based in Moray – she doesn't have a huge amount of work with Grampian, so Colin is our main Performance Lifestyle adviser. He effectively is contracted by the Scottish Institute to complete I think it is 20 hours in a month, that is certainly what we are working with at the moment, but he probably does a lot more than that, knowing Colin, because he is pretty enthusiastic about it. What we're trying to do at the moment is we're trying to see if we can buy out some of his time from school to maybe increase it so that we can maybe get 2 days, 3 days. It doesn't look at the moment as though that is going to happen because the school have said in principal yes, but in reality perhaps not. So we might have to reduce that to a day a week, as a realistic target and if we can't get that then I know that Susie Elms has got another plan in the back of her mind that we might put into place. In terms of the way that Colin operates, he is extremely proactive, he tries to meet the

athletes as often as he possibly can, you know, he'll go and see the swimmers who work out of 2 centres probably every fortnight and he'll just touch base with them. Other than that he'll pick up the phone and he'll speak to athletes. What we have done since I moved into post, as I've only been in post for two years now, initially when I was doing an induction or a review, mainly the inductions, it would only have been myself, potentially someone from the governing body or the coach if they were prepared to come along and if they are young enough it would be parents as well. But I felt there was some value in having Colin involved because he is one of the first point of contacts that they would see, so he is now involved in that induction process right at the very beginning which also conveys the message to the parents and to the athlete that we have a team approach, I am very keen to try to put over to them that it is not just me. Then Colin would then take the next step, he would probably go and speak to them within the next two weeks after the induction, to get a bit more background, about school and so on. We've been quite proactive in terms of trying to formalise links with the schools as well. Colin has done it informally, if an athlete has come from, for example, Aberdeen Grammar School, he would go to the school, send them a letter initially and then make contact with the principal teacher of PE or one of the equivalent guidance teachers and would make sure that they knew that this athlete was in the school. But what we decided to do was to follow the lead that Tayside and Fife had done and try to get an agreement with all the local authorities, so that it didn't matter where an athlete went to, there was an agreement signed as a partnership, if you want to call it that, and that athlete would be supported. So we've had a pretty positive response from the City Council and Aberdeenshire, and actually the other Area Institutes are looking to see what we do because they are probably going to amend the policy that they have got because we have been given the feedback by the City Council about how we approach the policy and I'm now trying to put that on board. So from my perspective the Performance Lifestyle side of things is extremely beneficial. I think we have the benefit in comparison to for example the East and the West in that we don't have a huge number of athletes...

OG: So the athlete-staff ratio is perhaps better than in some of the other Areas?

B: Yes, it is still a pretty tough for Colin, 5 hours a week is not a lot and with more sports coming on board and more athletes, it is great to have more athletes but at the same time it puts more pressure on resources and on Colin.

OG: And perhaps some more diverse issues to deal with in the different sports. What is your general opinion of what Performance Lifestyle can offer athletes who are coming to the system?

B: In the main, as I say, are athletes are school age and university age and I think the greatest benefit we've had is to try and avoid the situations where they've got issues with study, exams, prelims, university exams, and they're trying to balance that with competition and training as well. Not so much the competition side, I think it's having to go away to squad camps and... the two universities that are here are partners of the Institute and are very supportive and as are the schools, but when it actually comes down to the individual members of staff, and a pupil has to deal with an individual member of staff. For example, we had a shooter that we brought in just recently and I was asking her if that was an issue for her and she said well her programme leader was very happy about it because she is quite high up in terms of Commonwealth Games and I think she is aiming for the Olympic Games as well, but her individual tutors were a different kettle of fish altogether, they didn't quite see where this all fitted in to the big picture.

OG: We certainly see that at Stirling as well, with Departments being happy to agree to academic flexibility for scholarship athletes, but sometimes individual lecturers being a bit more difficult about it when it comes down to the fine detail.

B: To be fair, I would say that is few and far between, we don't have many issues where we come up against a barrier like that. The university sector, as I say, works along similar lines. Employer wise, that's a different one altogether. I mean we have had a couple of issues where Colin has had to go out, but once you meet the right person and you explain what the Institute is all about and they get an understanding of where the athlete is then... the curler that I had in tonight said no he doesn't have any issues with his employer, he's a computer programmer, he said they're quite happy for him to go and do that because they understand what level he's working at and so on. Obviously the other areas that Colin works hard on is probably social and family issues, we've had a few from time to time and he is someone that they, the athletes feel that they can speak to knowing that they can speak in confidence. Especially if it is something in connection with their coach or something like that and they feel they can't broach the issue with their coach or they can't even talk to their parents about it because the parents have got a good relationship with the coach, it's someone external who can be a sounding board for them. Again, that doesn't happen very often but it has certainly been a big help and, because... I think we're fortunate here in Grampian because of the person we have got. I think Performance Lifestyle is very much down to the individual, it's being approachable and having the level of understanding, being able to make decisions and to guide people and I guess if you don't have the

right manner or approach you wouldn't be doing it in the first place, but at the same point I think there have been issues with other advisers that are maybe not in the system anymore where that was something that became a problem, they just maybe did not have this element of empathy with the athletes as others do. It's a, for me it's a resource that I couldn't do without, but then again the downside for me is that is Colin was to disappear tomorrow I'm really stuck, really stuck, he's been working here since the Institute started, he's been part of the building blocks, has a lot of experience. So to bring someone else in, you're not going to bring that sort of experience to the table unless it's someone coming from another Area Institute and that's unlikely. And I think we've recognised that, Susie Elms has recognised that.

OG: She was talking about development and mentoring programmes...

B: Yes, about Colin mentoring somebody, and that does make a lot of sense because it is certainly a resource I depend upon, it would be a very difficult one to deal with if he were to leave.

OG: Do you have any athletes who don't take up the Performance Lifestyle programme?

B: Well again speaking to the curler tonight when he was in and we were reviewing everything and I said what about Performance Lifestyle, he said, well because my employer's really good I have not really had a need to contact Colin, Colin would contact the curler but if everything is okay and he knows things are ticking along then, he'll say if there is an issue and you need to get back to me please do but that would be it. I don't there is any athlete who would say I don't want it, but they might not feel that they need it. Some athletes have everything under control...

OG: And I guess for them it is knowing that contact is there for them if they did need it at any point. What about, you have quite a few coaches who are external, not employed by the Institute, do you find that they are supportive of Performance Lifestyle and of what it can offer?

B: I think they are, again because of Colin's proactive approach, I mean he'll go to the swimming pool and he'll go to the hockey pitch and the athletics track, and he'll meet the coaches so he knows them, he knows most of them anyway face to face. If they happen to be outlying somewhere it might be more difficult for him to do that, so they do have a general understanding of what Colin can do and sometimes they'll approach Colin with an issue, they recognise something and they think it is worth Colin having a chat, so, again because we are a smaller Institute it is easier to have that close network. I would say in the main we do pretty well with this area.

OG: I'm not sure how many athletes you have had who have moved through the system up the Scottish Institute level, but can you comment on that transition for them, would they change adviser for example?

B: Not if they are still in our area, if they are still here they stay with Colin. We have had, we are up to 13 now that have moved through, but if they still are based in the area then Colin will remain their adviser. It would only be if they move down South, but then the same thing happens with Area Institute athletes who maybe go down to University and the decision is then left with them whether they want to remain a Grampian Institute athlete or if they want to move and transfer into the other Area Institute. For Performance Lifestyle, and Colin would agree with this, it is much better if they then make contact with the adviser so that they have got someone they can speak to there rather than having to come back up here. Although Colin will still keep contact with them and if they do come back home and if there's an issue then he would see them.

OG: In an ideal world, if resources and money weren't a concern, are there any changes you would make to how Performance Lifestyle is delivered up here? Any things that you would change or add?

B: Colin full-time would be the ideal scenario, I think that is obviously what we are trying to work towards. Mainly because it would give him a bit more flexibility to plan things out. One of the things he is quite keen to develop is a resource centre which at the moment we don't have the space for. We are going to move shortly to another building, part of the University's sports facilities further away and there is more room there and that is maybe going to give him the scope to put something in place. He can only go and see athletes in the evening and that is not always the best time to go and see them, again if he has been working Monday to Friday at the school and has been out during the evening to do visits, he sometimes has to fit them in at the weekend but sometimes that is time for himself, but if you are full-time then you have got that flexibility to do that. I know that we had a meeting with the Area Managers and Susie and the Performance Lifestyle people just a few weeks back there and Phil and Mary came up with the interesting piece of monitoring that they had done, where the resource of Performance Lifestyle had been going, what sports were using it and so on and that is something we would like to do but again it is not 100% priority for us at the moment in the time that Colin has got. I suppose everyone who say that full-time is what we would like

but, yeah, I think to get a bigger team from our full-time staff point of view would be a good way forward for us and that is hopefully what we are moving towards.

OG: I described at the start that I am mostly interested in athletes facing major transitions. At Area level, I see three types of scenarios that you could come up against: those who choose to leave the institute or stop competing in their sport, those who are forced to stop due to injury reasons, and those who are deselected. Have you had any athletes who fit into these scenarios?

B: Not a huge amount to be fair, the only retirement was actually a swimmer who, he technically is still with us because we haven't officially removed him from the programme, but he announced after the British Championships in April that he was going to retire, he is only at school so it seems quite a strange term to use, no in fact he is first year at University, he has obviously decided that he now wants to concentrate on his University studies. I know he was wavering and I know the coach was pushing him to find out what kind of commitment he was going to make to the programme, but he has got to the point where he has obviously decided that he has gone as far as he can. Colin would still keep in contact with him, probably Susie has explained to you that we have gone from 12 months of continued support down to three months, so it will be reduced and it tends to be very much down to whether the athlete wants that continued support. We have deselected a few in the way that you mentioned, where it has primarily been because they have been younger athletes and they have gone down but they have come back in again, but there are a small handful that we have deselected because we don't think they are up to the mark. Colin again will keep in contact with them initially, but then it becomes up to them, if they feel that they want to, if they need the support...

OG: And do you tend to find that the deselected athletes are less likely to pick up on that support, perhaps not wanting anything to do with the Institute?

B: Yes, in some cases they still stay in the sport, I know one particular case where the person was a National team player and wasn't adhering to the programme that we were looking for, we deselected the person but they've continued to be part of the national team set up and they have continued to develop through the national team set up and that's entirely up to them but they do that without the support of the Institute and what they could receive through ourselves. So in some instances they do have the determination to say, well, I'm going to keep going anyway. There have been one or two instances where they have been deselected and they've said that's the end of the road, but I think you tend to find that was almost going to be an inevitability anyway and this was almost like the straw that broke the camel's back, that final push.

OG: Focusing on deselections for a while, can you describe the process of deselection for me, who makes the decision to deselect, at what point is the athlete told, where does Performance Lifestyle come into it?

B: The deselection process is all part of what I suppose we call the selection process as well, because it all happens at the same time. So the athletes that are in the network are reviewed and obviously we look at the new athletes that are being put forward. Certainly I would, I can't think in any sport that I have dealt with where an athlete has been deselected but wasn't aware that it was on the horizon, mainly because in most cases they are part of a national squad and they've been spoken to by the national coach and said, look performances are not up to standard, you need to pick up, so I don't think we have ever got into a situation where it has come as a surprise, where the letter has come through the door and they have gone... you know. Actually I have had one situation, in one sport, where, it was a situation where the sport has an academy programme and the Institute programme sits alongside that, they knew that they were going to be moved out, or at least they thought that they were going to be moved out of the academy programme but they perhaps didn't appreciate that this also meant that they were going to lose the support of the Institute, so that was maybe the most difficult situation, it is the only one that I have had to deal with. So what would happen is that we would get the list of the athletes who were going to be deselected, which comes from the Governing Body as part of the selection panel who put those names forward. It would be discussed, there would have to be a good justification as to why the athlete wasn't being put forward again, we look at the selection criteria, they haven't met the selection criteria, and therefore this is the route they have to go. So my role would then be to send them out a formal letter saying that the support services are going to be stopped, but then also at the bottom of the letter is a paragraph that states that they are entitled to use Performance Lifestyle for 3 months, but we put the onus on them to make the contact, but if Colin knows that there is a situation or there has been a situation with the athlete, it is a judgement call on his part, he would make that step and he would contact them just to make sure that everything was okay. To be fair I have never had any comeback from any of the athletes to say, oh in fact I tell a lie, we deselected a hockey player, I had spoken to the hockey player several times, they were deselected in, I think it must have been December, and then the following February a letter came in from the blue about how they didn't get any Performance Lifestyle support. I guess it was something that the parents had, maybe gone into the website or something like that or heard from somebody else, but the issue wasn't flagged up at the time, it was almost like a, not even a knee jerk reaction because it

was much later than that, it was like they thought they had been treated unfairly where actually I could document back the letters they were sent, what they were offered, and say it wasn't the case. So, other than that one instance there hasn't been anything untoward.

OG: If an athlete leaves through their own choice or due to injury, does that exit process change at all?

B: No it would be, again I don't think we have had any situation where an athlete has chosen to leave... the swimmer I mentioned earlier on is the only one I can think of. But the process for that wouldn't be any different, they would still be given the same opportunity had they been deselected, if they had chosen to move away. There are situations, it hasn't happened in Grampian, but there are situations in some of the other Area Institutes where an athlete has been injured and that has maybe been one of the reasons why they have not been re-nominated, because they haven't been able to put a performance in, they might be chronic enough that it not going to get significantly better, but rather than just saying... if they have got physio or medical support up to that point, rather than cut it off we will agree to continue it on, but we will try to phase it out over a period of time, and again that is something we would try and do, so you could say it is part of the exit procedure for those athletes.

OG: And are there any other services that are phased-out in that respect, say strength and conditioning for example?

B: With most athletes, more or less the service is just stopped. For example, with the swimmer I have been talking about who has said he is retired, while he is technically still on paper an institute athlete... he did keep going, initially, to strength and conditioning and it was raised, should we still be working with him and I said yeah, if he wants to still continue then I am happy for him to do that, he is actually part of a group so it is not any additional resource that we are putting out on that athlete. But as time has gone on he has obviously decided that he is not going to do that. We wouldn't do it for an individual athlete, you know, we wouldn't continue to set up individual sessions or programmes, we wouldn't do that, where we can fit in into the resources we have already got and that we are using then I don't think there is a major problem with that. But obviously if they then started to abuse it in any way or if they were causing a disruption then we would withdraw that from them.

OG: And how many of the athletes that have exited the Institute programme have taken on the Performance Lifestyle services that are offered?

B: I would say that the majority of them don't take it up and again I think it is because there has been a realisation somewhere down the line that... that they don't want to commit to that level within their sport and it is not to do with Grampian Institute, it is their sport they are talking about, and so when they get that letter that says Performance Lifestyle is there if they want to, they tend not to. It would be a small number I would think that would take up the offer and again, if they have maybe been working with Colin on a regular basis prior to the deselection or the exit.

OG: Do you feel that the Institute system as a whole does enough to support athletes who exit from the programme?

B: That is an interesting question, the reason I say that is because I sometimes question the accountability of the athletes because I think on occasions, not a lot but on occasions some of the athletes come into the Institute, I only talk about Grampian obviously, and they end up, there is an expectation that everything is going to be laid on for them, you know it is almost like I have made it now so now I will be looked after. I don't think that is the way we should operate, I think that we have to make the athletes accountable and it is almost like, well you will only get that if you do x, y and z. So, I would probably have to look at each case in an individual basis before I made a decision, well before Colin and I made a decision about what we were going to offer. I think if the athletes weren't that bothered then I am not going to pursue it. There is an offer there, there is a pathway you can follow, but if you choose that you don't want it then fine, you are just indicating to me that you can deal with it yourself. But I think that in certain situations, maybe the example of the athlete that is injured, a long-term injury, then I think it is a responsibility to ensure that we don't just drop that athlete off and that we do give them the support, maybe beyond three months if that is necessary, it is just what they need to get them to the point that they can stand on their own two feet, either get back into their sport at a level that they want to compete at or to the point where they feel that they are now able to cope with their situation. So, it is very much as I say on a case by case basis but in general terms it is not something that we would say, we will run after you after you finish, because again as athletes go out, athletes come in, and obviously that then takes up the time of our staff.

OG: And particularly with the young athletes within the Area Institute, it is maybe not such a big issue, life maybe doesn't change that much for them?

B: That's right, and I think to be fair it would have a much greater impact at the Scottish Institute level where these athletes are maybe coming to the end of their careers, they have been a full time athlete and now all of a sudden have to go back to the reality of being out there, whereas for the younger athletes they are fitting in what they are doing around their school and around their studies.

OG: If an athlete did have major issues in this scenario, maybe outside of what Colin could deal with, do you have a network of people that Colin can send the athlete to if deemed to be needed?

B: Obviously, this is one of the benefits if you like of having Colin, because of his guidance role he has got contacts within different organisations and if there were things that came up then he has got a contact that he could go to. Clearly if it is a psychological problem, a clinical psychological problem, then we would probably refer that to Judy Ross who is our medical co-ordinator and she would then put that into place. In fact we did have one athlete who we have gone down that route with and it was Colin who really, who weeded out that situation and then went back and spoke to Judy and then we went down that route. So yes, I think that, because of Colin's situation we have got a network that we can tap into there, but again if he was to go tomorrow maybe we wouldn't have that.

OG: Is there anything more you want to tell me about Performance Lifestyle, anything in this area that you think I have missed or that you want to add?

B: Not that springs to mind I don't think, I think you have covered everything. I probably would add that the weakness of the system is the small number of people that are involved and the fact that so much is invested in a small number, I know Susie realises that now and we need to address that. If we can get somebody to help Colin, to take a wee bit of the burden from him then I think that would put his mind at ease as well to a certain extent. He is the type of person, as I know most of the Performance Lifestyle people are, that it is not an issue for him as numbers grow, he just keeps working, and going, but then good will only goes so far and I am very strong in my view that people should be given recognition for what they are doing.

OG: Thank you very much, I really appreciate you taking the time to see me today, and it has been very useful.

END

AREA MANAGER C

2nd July 2007

OG: Can we maybe start with some basic details: how many athletes you have in the East Institute at the moment and the number of Performance Lifestyle advisers who work within the area?

C: We have got 111 athletes right now, they cover 17 sports. Now that number of sports is about to increase to about 20 because things like boxing and weightlifting are going to come on board and our number of athletes will probably rise to about 120. SO we are the biggest Area Institute by about 20 athletes. We have two Performance Lifestyle advisers, we've got Ruth, who you've met before, Ruth Coker, she does 4 days a week for us and, but we do have money in the budget for a full time adviser, so what we did was we advertised a part-time position which was filled two months ago and that's Fiona McNeilly. Fiona has done some project work for us in the past, she used to be the CEO of Snowsports GB, and she has set herself up as a consultant, she does media work and things, she does sponsorship, so we have got her doing that but now she is employed one day a week and she has got curling and tennis as the sports that she leads on and Ruth has to pick up all the rest.

OG: Could you tell me a bit about your opinion of Performance Lifestyle and what it can offer athletes who are at Area level?

C: Well I am very positive about what Performance Lifestyle can do, because when I first started in this job I had no idea, it was then the ACE programme, I had no idea what they did, I was aware of its existence and I suppose I was a bit cynical, I tend to be a bit cynical anyway, I was a bit cynical about somebody sitting down with an athlete and talking about all these things. But in fact we've seen lots of examples, lots of evidence of where it's made an enormous impact and I do think it's, with certain athletes in certain circumstances it's really, really important.

OG: And what specific areas do you think it can really influence?

C: Some of the very obvious ones, like education, whether it be school or university. If you're a top level sports person then you're, at times you're looking for some flexibility either in terms of exams or assignments or whatever and even just someone to act as an advocate on your behalf without you having to do it yourself makes such a difference. A lot of our athletes say that, it's the kind of thing where they would either be scared to ask themselves, even their parents don't want to do it, talk to the school, but if there is someone coming in who represents, you know, another organisation working on their behalf, it makes it a lot easier. So there's that kind of thing, there's also the, there's things like the offering of training, when the advisers meet with the athletes one of the things in the needs analysis is to try and identify any areas where a training course might help. We've had things like time management, that's been a fairly common one we've done, self-massage was one I remember went down quite well, what else, we did a, there was a kind of nutrition combined with Performance Lifestyle course, particularly aimed at people who were away from home for the first time, like first year students, the first time in their life they are having to cook for themselves.

OG: And how to do that in ways that will not be detrimental to their performance?

C: Absolutely, because I am sure the temptation when you are a first year student is to go to McDonalds, which is not exactly what we want if they are going to try and be sports people so that was pretty successful.

OG: And have you developed any official links with schools to help with that process?

C: We used to operate on a one-by-one basis, all the Area Institutes now, we all have a very similar policy which we try to put in place, we have it in place with the 5, we have 5 local authorities in this area, Scottish Borders, Midlothian, East Lothian, West Lothian and the City of Edinburgh. We have an education policy which they have all signed up to and that identifies things that we would expect for all of our athletes who are students in their schools. We don't have that for Higher Education, Higher Education is currently done on a one-by-one basis, but the target for Ruth this year is to actually pull together a local Higher Education and Further Education group so we can possibly get them to sign up to a similar policy. The school thing is quite interesting because we, Tayside and Fife were the first to do it a few years ago and the rest of us kind of piggy-backed on that, took their policy and amended it for ourselves, and it's been quite useful, but there has been a thing, I'm not sure if you are aware of it, called Curriculum for Excellence, which the Scottish Executive education department are pushing through and there are lots of things in that that we can really link onto and say, well a lot of the things we do, a lot of the things our athletes do, fit the Curriculum for Excellence. So we are actually re-writing the policy just now to strengthen the link to the Curriculum for Excellence, because we think, we do still meet the occasional bit of resistance from occasional head teachers, so it is quite nice to be able to say, well it is not just us, and it is not just your local authority, nationally the policy is there. One of things in my understanding of the Curriculum for Excellence is that, in future, if you are a very talented sports person in that school, then you can effectively receive some kind of credit for that, I mean you are not going to receive a certificate for it but, you know, it is being recognised as being just as important as passing Higher Maths, for example.

OG: Yes, definitely. It is interesting to see how it will move forward...

C: Yes, it could be one of those typical government initiative things that somebody has the idea but nobody is willing to actually action it.

OG: What is the uptake of the Performance Lifestyle programme like by the athletes?

C: A newly nominated athlete from the governing body, we insist that they meet with a Performance Lifestyle adviser once. Beyond that what we say to them is if you meet the Performance Lifestyle adviser, and after you've heard what they have got to say you don't see any value in it, you don't feel you need it, that's your call, we're not going to force it on you. Because to be honest with 111 athletes there is no point in chasing those who don't want it. So they all have to have one meeting, and the reason we do that is because we don't think, a bit like I said at the beginning, I didn't fully understand Performance Lifestyle, I probably still don't fully understand it, you know, because I don't deal with it on a day-to-day basis, they need to hear it from the horse's mouth, if you like, to see if it has got any value to them. I would reckon we have got an uptake of about, 70% of our athletes over the course of a year will make contact with a Performance Lifestyle advisor, whether that is a one-off, I'm in some trouble, I need some help, or whether it's a planned approach, so I reckon it's about a 70% take-up.

OG: That is pretty good...

C: It is good, and it is pretty challenging for our adviser, you know, because that's, well that's about 75 athletes, which is a lot.

OG: How supportive are your coaches of the Performance Lifestyle programme, particularly those who are not employed by the Area Institute?

C: It's a really good point. I mean it varies, some of them, just because they are those kind of people, will actually want to know more about it and will find out for themselves and what we have found is where the Performance Lifestyle adviser has taken the time to go and speak to the coach, or work with the coach directly, or vice versa, it has been really appreciated by the coaches. But there are still some coaches out there, I mean there are a number of coaches we employ on a sessional basis or we jointly employ with the governing bodies and I think with them there is a good relationship and a good understanding. But the real issue we have is there are lots of club coaches and personal coaches of athletes out there who really should be more involved and we would like them to be more involved but they don't understand. We actually tried to run a, specifically aimed at that group, a training session that Ruth was going to run, to say, this is Performance Lifestyle, this is what we do for athletes, this is how we'd like you to become involved and it never happened because we actually got a zero response, not a single club or personal coach made themselves available to come along. Hopefully we are going to try again though because we do think it is really important.

OG: Yes, there is quite a bit of evidence to suggest that when a coach supports a programme, the athlete is more likely to take that up, and obviously if the coach doesn't rate it the athlete is much less likely to attend.

C: Yes, absolutely. When you came in our office this morning I was speaking to John who is our sport psychologist, we were actually talking about an issue where he is working with an athlete, the coach has some concerns about that athlete, we have another support member of staff now becoming involved and it is a discussion about, now that is not Performance Lifestyle at the moment, but a discussion about how important it is going to be to bring Performance Lifestyle into that, so there's a personal coach who is one of the more clued in ones, who's recognised that in order for his athlete to be effective she is going to have to change some things in her life. And the best way to do that is to bring Performance Lifestyle on board.

OG: In an ideal world, with no restrictions on finances or resources, are there any changes or additions that you would make to Performance Lifestyle and how it is currently delivered at Area level?

C: Em, it's probably a very obvious one, but it's more staff, you know, because we have a full time equivalent here, 4 days and 1 day with 2 members of staff, but with 111 soon to rise to 120 we can't really do all the things we want to do. I reckon we would probably need the equivalent of two full time advisers. But I think there is still some resistance to that, there is still a feeling that, you know, if we had money available to spend on support services lets spend it on something where we get a much more obvious return, lets spend it on another physiologist or another psychologist or on another strength and conditioning coach. I think there's still this kind of touchy feely view of Performance Lifestyle. And Susie is aware of that, I don't know if that came out in the discussion you had with her. We had a meeting with all the Performance Lifestyle advisers here a few weeks ago and Susie was there giving us some stats on, they're trying, they actually are trying to put a picture together of effectiveness, it is quite hard with Performance Lifestyle, but even, there has currently been no analysis of the type of work they are doing, how many visits, how many appointments with athletes, even just trying to collate that information to show the volume of work that is involved. It's hard to show the outcome because, you know, you are part of a bigger picture. But I think if Performance Lifestyle wasn't there we would soon notice the difference, you know, if somebody decided it wasn't worth investing in any longer and it was taken out I think we'd very quickly see the difference. It would make my life a lot more difficult because I would effectively become, have to become a counsellor. The minute they had a problem they would call me, whereas right now if they have a problem that is related to sport but not directly sport then they would contact Ruth, she is their point of contact there.

OG: I described at the start that I am mostly interested in athletes facing major transitions. At Area level, I see three types of scenarios that you could come up against: those who choose to leave the institute or stop competing in their sport, those who are forced to stop due to injury reasons, and those who are deselected. Have you had any athletes who fit into these scenarios?

C: Yeah, we have some that come under all of those I suppose, I can't really remember a particular injury retiral I have to say. But we have had, I mean very recently we've had an athlete who, a female athlete who in the last few weeks has just decided she doesn't want to do it anymore at that level, she's not enjoying it, she went from being a very good junior into what is youth, under 20 in her sport, then junior, under 23, she's moved into that, given it a couple of years, she has been gradually climbing the rankings but I think she's just decided, I think she's realised herself she's not ever really going to make it to the top and she's thinking, well if I'm not going to make it to the top, why am I doing this. So there is that going on just now. We've also had one of our most high profile track and field athletes last year chose to retire, which was a massive surprise to all of us, she'd been a student here at the university for a few years, she'd had, we'd given her a lot of support, she'd had a lot of injury problems which we'd helped her get over, she was for the first time training injury free and, again, just decided, just sat, graduated from here, and just sat and had a look at her life and thought, I'm not really sure I want to be doing this as well as having a career now I'm no longer a student, and just decided to retire. In both cases, the first one I told you about is very recent so Performance Lifestyle are about to become involved in that, with the other one they didn't become involved because that athlete was very self-contained and never went near Performance Lifestyle the whole time she was in with us which was 4 or 5 years.

OG: So she is unlikely to use it afterwards then?

C: Yes, she was back in our office a month ago actually, and seems very sorted, to use that expression, you know, very positive about what is going on in her life now and, I don't know, I just think some people are quite good at sport when they are younger, they keep doing it, they get better, they get into teams and so on so they stay in it, but at some stage they sit down and think, why am I really doing this, I think for a lot of people reality hits.

OG: It seems to be in a lot of female sports that they seem to specialise very early on, train intensively early on, and I wonder whether that leads to them reaching a point where they have just had enough, at what should still be a peak stage for them?

C: I just wonder whether we are missing something here, because I think you're right, I think it does happen and I think it's going to happen more often because they are now, this whole system that I'm part of is now putting more pressure on people. We're actually saying to them when they come in, whatever you have been doing now, you are about to step it up, in almost all cases, apart from swimmers who generally are already doing the high volume training, but every other sport we are having to say to them, well you are not actually training often enough, you might be doing enough technical stuff but you are not doing enough in the gym or not doing enough conditioning work, so in almost all cases we are asking for an increased commitment and some of them, very rarely do any of them say right off, I don't want to do that. We actually say to them at induction, we say look, what we just told you, all the things you can get, all the support we can give, this is not the only way to become a performance athlete, you can go and do it another way if you want, you can go and do it all by yourself, but we think this is the best way, doing it with all the support, and be honest, I'm not expecting you to tell me right now, but be honest at some stage in the future, any time in the future, if you think you don't want to do this anymore, just tell us, nobody is going to think any worse of you, but we just want you to be honest, don't stay in it if you are not enjoying it.

OG: Just maybe starting with deselections, can you describe the process: who makes the decisions and at what point does Performance Lifestyle get involved? At what point does the athlete find out?

C: It can vary, I mean it's quite rare to have a deselection... you know that we have a selection process on an annual basis for every sport, there is a time in the year when the governing body, the Area Institute, the Scottish Institute if they have athletes in that sport, all get together and a decision is made against criteria. So when that happens there obviously are then some deselections, some people who have not met the targets in that year and it is not believed that they are going to make their targets. It is not a case that if you don't make your targets you are immediately deselected, for example, if you don't make your targets because you have been injured all year but we still believe you have the potential then it is likely you are given another chance, that happens quite often. So in those circumstances after the selection meeting we will get a list of here's who's continuing next year, here are some new selections, and here are some deselections, and that is quite straight forward because we send them a letter telling them that they no longer meet the criteria for nomination to the Area Institute, they have been deselected, if they would like to talk about it here is our contacts, and they can still access Performance Lifestyle support for up to 3 months afterwards, as long as they contact the adviser within the first month, that's a fairly new thing they have brought in recently, and so that is what we do. So that's pretty straight forward and everybody understands that, I have never yet had anybody coming back, actually we did once, we had one badminton player a few years ago, who I also thought got a pretty raw deal and I made representations on his behalf and accompanied him to an appeal

against his deselection, which he didn't win, but anyway he felt better having tried. What is rarer, although still happens, is someone being deselected during the year and there is more of a process in place for that where if someone is, either their commitment to the programme or their adherence to the programme hasn't been good enough, they get a warning, usually from the Area Manager, so we might say, you're missing strength and conditioning sessions, we'll also involve the coach of that sport whoever that may be, and they are then told what we expect them to do to remedy that and are given a timescale. So the most recent one we had was a hockey player who was told, within the next two months you need to get your attendance at strength and conditioning up above 90% and keep it there for the whole two months. If you don't at the end of the two months, it is very likely you would be deselected. SO the next part of the process with that is that after whatever timescale we have set them, we will come back and review it, if they've upped their game and they've met their targets, fine, we send them a letter saying they will continue to the end of the year at least, if they haven't then we tell them they are being deselected and that is the same process as before.

OG: And with the annual deselections, will an athlete generally know, or will it come as a big surprise?

C: Yes, most of the governing bodies are quite well organised and most of them will make it plain throughout the year where people sit. Although we did have another more recent one, a judo player, who actually did appeal himself, he didn't ask us to become involved, he did appeal himself to the governing body about his deselection, but that is quite rare for most of them, you know, they get told by us or the governing body and they just accept it because they know. And there are reasons, we don't put reasons on the letter, but what we say is if you want to know more about the reasons for your deselection, contact the national governing body representative, who is usually a coach, and they will give them details of the reasons. If you are a swimmer, for example, who has been deselected, it is quite simple, you haven't made your time. It is a bit tougher in a team sport but again if you are not being picked for the squad, if you are an under 21 player and you are not making the squad then you are definitely out. But all of those who make the squad don't get area support either, it would be the cream of those in the under 21 men and the under 21 women, and under 18s as well, so that's a minimum, you need to be in the squad to even have a chance, if you are not in the squad you know you are on the way out. There is more of an issue there of athletes moving out of an under 21 programme, which happens in quite a number of sports, into a senior programme, and there is usually a bit of leeway given, there is not an expectation that you are immediately going to now be in the squad, and that is a judgement call, that is a judgement by the coaches in the sport as to whether they think they have the potential, and that's, sometimes if you are on the negative end of one of those, that can be quite hard to take, you have been an institute athlete for 3 years, you have been an under 18, an under 21, always getting selected for teams or squads, then you get to, you're now a senior player, think you are going to make it to the senior team, but the coaches don't, it is quite hard, we have had a few of those.

OG: How many athletes tend to pick up on the offer of Performance Lifestyle support when they are deselected?

C: Very few. Very few, which is surprising to me I have to say.

OG: Can you speculate as to what you think the reasons might be for this?

C: I think there is maybe, there is obviously some disappointment in some cases probably some anger, so they might be disappointed and angry with us as well, with the whole process, because we are the ones that send out the letter, the governing bodies don't because the nominations happen and that is sent to us, we are then the ones that have to break the bad news to them. So at the same time there is this, you are no longer good enough but by the way you can go and see the adviser for 3 months, you know, I am not so sure, maybe we need to look at that link, the thing is we need to tell them that, there is no, we can't just tell them they are out and then a few days later phone them up and say, oh by the way you might want to go and see the lifestyle adviser, so, I don't know, I think it might just be linked to that. I think there is also possibly, I mean I have no idea whether it is the case or not, but it could be that most of the ones who are deselected are the one who are not making use of the Performance Lifestyle scheme anyway and therefore if they haven't used it before they are unlikely to see it of any value, they are unlikely to understand what it can do for them, so there could be a bit of that.

OG: So you see a strong link between the programme whilst the athlete is in the institute to their usage of the programme afterwards?

C: I think it would be quite difficult, if you have been in and you met the adviser once 3 years ago, you haven't been near them since, then you get deselected and you get a letter saying by the way you can call Ruth and go and speak to her, I think the chances of you doing that are pretty slim really.

OG: What about if an athlete to chose, maybe in the middle of the year, or if they have to leave due to injury, are the processes different?

C: No, no the same thing, if they tell us they're leaving then we offer them Performance Lifestyle advice for the same length, so we basically say you have effectively deselected yourself, but it is exactly the same processes that happen and they are offered the same level of support. I couldn't tell you whether or not anybody has taken it up, that is actually quite a rare thing, as I said we have got one right now with a female athlete who, I am not sure if she has officially told us yet but we know it's coming.

OG: In terms of the Performance Lifestyle that is offered when an athlete leaves, is there any specific support that is in place that is offered to them in that period of time?

C: No there isn't really, I suppose, there is just the, there is all of the knowledge and experience and tools that the Performance Lifestyle adviser has that they can then apply. So if it was a kind of moving on in life kind of thing, like with the track and field athlete that I mentioned earlier, she has just graduated, she has given up her sport, looking for a career, there is obviously, the Performance Lifestyle adviser is able to give good careers advice so that might be appropriate, but there is nothing, I can't say there is anything specifically created that we have in place, just the standard things that are available. There has been talk in the past of having an employment network, which hasn't really gone anywhere.

OG: The British Olympic Association have something in place don't they?

C: Yes, they have something called OPEN, the Olympic and Paralympic Employment Network, to be honest I never hear anything about that.

OG: It is a strange one, I see it on all the websites, but it is like you can't get any further information on it.

C: Yes, I don't think it really exists in the format that they are suggesting it does, that people expect it to.

OG: That is interesting, because that was my kind of take on it as well.

C: It might be worth asking a few questions because I remember it being announced with a big fanfare 4 or 5 years ago and it then went very quiet. In fact in the early days of the Area Institutes, the then Manager of the West, a guy called Gareth McKenna he managed to make contact, I think through his former curling contacts he had a contact at the Royal Bank of Scotland in Glasgow, and he contacted them and got an agreement that they would offer part-time employment to West of Scotland Institute athletes, flexible employment so they could do shifts here and there, in their call centres and stuff and that then led to a direct cash sponsorship with the Royal Bank. Now I know at the time, the Scottish Institute and Susie in particular were very sensitive about that, because they saw it as their role, as in we'll set up the Institute Employment network, and Gareth said, well I'm not stopping you from doing that but in the meantime I have got this offer on the table that is going to benefit my athletes so I am going to go with it. And I think there is a bit of that too with the BOA one, where they would probably, if anybody tried to set up anything else they would probably say well we have already got one, someone needs to challenge them, well where is it and what is it, you know, because I don't know how to access it and I probably should with the job I am in. There must be a member of staff at the BOA who has responsibility for that, let me know if you ever get to speak to them!

OG: Although Performance Lifestyle is the only official service available to athletes when they leave, are there any instances where you might, for example, provide strength and conditioning support for a while longer or anything like that?

C: Yes, we do, both officially and unofficially. I'll deal with the official part first. Officially, if an athlete is injured for example and they are deselected, we don't just cut off, you know if their agreement ends on the 31st of May we don't say that appointment on the first of June you are now going to pay for it. What we do is we talk to the sports medics who are working with them and say at what stage can this current process be brought to a manageable conclusion, and they can't carry it on forever so I think the most we have ever done is about another 6 physio sessions, to get somebody in a position where we have dealt with that injury to the best that we can and leaving them in a reasonable position. Em, I'm just trying to think if we offer anything else officially, I mean basically anything which is started which can go beyond the end of their agreement and we can see an end fairly soon, we will continue that for them if we think it is still of benefit to them. Unofficially, there have been one or two athletes who have been deselected who we have felt a bit sorry for them being deselected and we felt as is they got a bit of a raw deal and where we have had spare

capacity in strength and conditioning we have offered them, if they want to continue coming to their strength and conditioning sessions, strictly speaking we are not supposed to do that so don't quote me, but that's what happens, and I don't see a problem with that, if you have the capacity. If we have a coach there who can cater for four athletes and there are only 2 or 3 coming in I have no problem with someone else going in. And in fact we have done it not just for athletes who were with us and then no longer with us, we have done it for athletes who've been identified to us as being, who are coming through the system and probably will become an Area Institute athlete the next time round but because it only happens on an annual basis. We had one track and field athlete last year who we gave 6 months worth of strength and conditioning support to because we were told she was going to get nominated, she ended up not getting nominated because the criteria changed, funnily enough, but I think she is just about to make it now. So that's the way it works and I just think, you know, some people like to think of things in purely bureaucratic terms, well your funding is for this and only for those athletes, and 99% of the time they are right, but I reserve the right 1% of the time to make some decisions that I think are the right thing to do, you know.

OG: Do you think the Institute system as a whole does enough to support athletes who are coming to the end of their sporting careers?

C: I find that difficult to answer because I don't know what they do, you know, I mean as you said earlier it's rare in the Area Institutes for the retirement thing to happen, but at Scottish Institute there are obviously more people who are, in most cases are at a higher level and some of those will at some stage come to the end of their career, I really don't know what Performance Lifestyle do there, I would guess from stuff that I have heard from Susie and others, they do have support in place for athletes, they have certainly spoken in the past about retirements and support for retiring athletes. Maybe it is something I should know more about but I don't really.

OG: Do you think there is a case for other services to be involved, either at Area Institute or SIS level, in some form of physiological detraining for athletes leaving the system?

C: It is something I haven't thought about, but I wouldn't rule out, I suppose it is something that would, if more people would take advantage of seeing the Performance Lifestyle adviser that is offered when deselected, it is the kind of thing that might come out then, because quite often what happens in Performance Lifestyle throughout the year is things will be raised with the adviser and the adviser has to come back to me to then go and speak to the appropriate person. If an athlete was deselected and met with either Ruth or Fiona and asked about something like this, it is something that I would probably look quite favourably on, I have no problem with that, but it hasn't been brought up yet. Maybe the athletes need to be encouraged to think in those terms.

OG: Is there anything else you want to say in this area, anything you think I haven't asked you or haven't covered?

C: There is probably just one thing, I'm not sure if you are aware of this but there is more and more pressure now for all of the services, and that includes Performance Lifestyle, to start working at a sub-Area Institute level. In this area we have now got, well you know there is a sports partnership in Central and one in Tayside and Fife, and I know there has been some pressure there, I'm not sure quite where that is going, I don't know the details of it.

OG: Yes, I don't know where Performance Lifestyle fits into the one in Central, I have heard quite a bit talked about strength and conditioning.

C: Yes, it is mainly strength and conditioning and also some sports science support. We don't have a sports partnership in this area but what has happened in the last year is City of Edinburgh Council have set up something called the Edinburgh School Academy, for the state schools in Edinburgh, and they are basically, I have been involved in that, I have been involved in the steering group, and they have kind of taken on board what we do and they are trying to create a kind of mini area institute programme, delivering sport specific stuff and also other support services and Performance Lifestyle, or lifestyle management as they are calling it, they are not allowed to call it Performance Lifestyle, is something they are keen to do. They were keen to tap into the resource already here, but the Scottish Institute are a bit sensitive about that, as you can imagine. Now my view of it is I wouldn't, we can't afford any of the time Ruth and Fiona have got, but someone like Fiona, she was appointed and has now been working for about 2 months, she is getting more and more experience, she is self-employed anyway, she is only working for us for a day, I really think there is an opportunity for someone like Fiona to start working with the Edinburgh Schools Academy doing lifestyle management. Good development for her, and then in we start getting athletes coming through from that

scheme then they understand what it's about. So I raised that and I don't think I got that positive a response from Susie, but it is not really my business after that, you know.

OG: And I guess there are some that would argue that at that age and stage they might not need this form of support?

C: Yes, and to be honest what Edinburgh Schools Academy are proposing is not to have one-to-one support but to have more of the group type sessions, like having a time management course etc. So there is Edinburgh Schools Academy, West Lothian are doing a similar thing called the West Lothian Schools Excellence Project, with kind of senior pupils, the Borders have just set something up down there, all of these I have been involved in steering groups.

OG: In terms of the City of Edinburgh project, it would be very interesting to speak to someone involved in that, to find out more. Can you point me in the direction of an appropriate contact?

C: Robin Yellowlees is the person who set it up, and they are going to have it up and running by August of this year.

OG: I think it would be useful to be able to speak with him

C: Absolutely, and I know Robin has met with Susie, because I put them in touch with each other, and the feedback I got from that meeting, I subsequently met with Susie and was saying I don't want our Performance Lifestyle advisers stretched too far either but I think there's good reasons why we want to create a link here.

OG: And at least support them in what they do, even if not resource-wise.

C: Yes, so Robin then, Robin might have something interesting to say about all of that.

OG: That's excellent. I just want to say thanks very much for your time and all the information you have provided, it has been really useful.

END

AREA MANAGER D
28th June 2007

OG: So maybe just some basic details first of all – to give me an idea of how many athletes you currently have and how many Performance Lifestyle advisers you have working with them?

D: We currently have, I think something in the region of 85 to 90 athletes, it tends to hover around the 90 to 100 level, just depending on the time of year and selections and deselections of sports that happen at different times and we have one full-time Performance Lifestyle adviser that deals with all of those athletes, Mary McClung.

OG: Can you give me an idea of your opinion of Performance Lifestyle and what it can offer to your athletes at Area Institute level?

D: It's, it's actually something that I think is quite a difficult area to explain to people, because Performance Lifestyle can mean 100 different things for 100 different people. We have just recently completed our athlete satisfaction survey for the last year and from that information, you know, we also look at ages of athletes and bandings of athletes, about 80% of the athletes we have are in the 16-24 age group, particularly the 16-20 banding, so, so many of our athletes are towards the end of school and are at Standard Grade, Higher time at school, or are into first, second, even third year at university or college, so the academic side of things is a huge role for Performance Lifestyle with ourselves. Having said that we do have the much younger age grouping and we do have, you know, the slightly older as well. What we tend to find at the Area Institute side of things is that the older the athlete the more settled they are and the less likely to need Performance Lifestyle support, in the main, and also the very younger athletes again haven't yet reached the stage where it can make a big contribution to them, so it is really around the academic side of things that Performance Lifestyle can really provide support.

OG: And what specific type of things can your Performance Lifestyle adviser do for the athletes at that stage?

D: Well typically the good news story is, that the athlete give to us is they'll say things like, it's been a fantastic help in terms of working out school timetabling to allow them to train more during the day, to fiddle around with study periods and things like that, to allow greater access during the day to training or indeed during the day to be able to do study and homework at specific times within the school day to allow them, to free them up to do their training before and after school. Or other things like sorting out that athletes don't have to miss out specific events they have been selected for, so they can sit examinations overseas. Similar again at universities, just to, you know, look at flexible study within that programme to help athletes and just trying to work along with the universities and colleges to flag up in advance where there might be certain situations might crop up and try to identify in advance so they don't become major situations at the time and, you know, they can work around that, whether it is examinations again, maybe it is sitting examinations prior to going out for events, or post events, or helping them again so they don't fall behind in their studies when they are overseas or away on training camps.

OG: And do you have any official arrangements or agreements with, for example, the schools, or is it just done on an individual, one-by-one basis?

D: Well, in the West of Scotland we have, as I say, 90-100 athletes across 13 local authority areas within the West of Scotland, so consequently there are hundreds and hundreds of schools. It wouldn't be best use of time to try and introduce ourselves to every school, so what we do is, it tends to be with the athletes, so as soon as an athlete comes to us, Mary McClung will meet, do an initial assessment with the athletes and find out really where they are at that point in time in their life and if they are a school kid then to identify, ok they are in 2nd year at specific high school wherever, and consequently contact that school, introduce ourselves and also just make the school aware that they do have an athlete that has been identified as having talent and that consequently with that will come increased time pressure because of training commitments, competition commitments, and just making them aware of that. It is quite interesting because quite often school aren't aware how talented one of their pupils is, you know, the pupil themselves has kind of, for a variety of reasons, wants to just keep it to themselves or play it down and the school doesn't realise that they have got somebody that's really at the top level of maybe even British or European sport and they feel they're just one of their normal pupil that happens, that they know is quite decent at triathlon, for example.

OG: What is the level of uptake of the programme by the athletes?

D: Well we've, you know again if you've thought about it, if you had lets say its 100 athletes and if every athlete then has an initial assessment that might taken an hour and a half, that's 150 hours, then instantly it is 4 weeks worth of work for Mary, so the reality is we offer the service to everyone and we try to ensure that every single athlete has that initial assessment. But at the same time we do not sort of force that upon them, if athletes particularly, specifically say that they don't need any support in this area, I personally will try and convince them to at least have that initial assessment and I would probably say that 95% do. It's then what happens beyond that, because that initial assessment may flag up there are specific things or areas of support that can be provided just now, similarly it might flag up that things are actually quite sorted because, you know, Performance Lifestyle as a service, an area, its, em, some proactive parents will perform the same function with the school and help sort out timetabling issues in the school or flag things up in advance and I think particularly also within the private schools because I think there tends to be a closer relationship between the school and the parents in that case and again also the private schools tend to be keener to promote sport and the successes of their pupils so I think there tends to be a closer relationship there, em, but not always.

OG: What about the coaches in the various sports, especially the ones not employed directly by the Institute – how supportive are they of the Performance Lifestyle programme?

D: Again it comes down to the individual and, em, we can have the situation of, we have probably two full time coaches that work with our athletes in the area of hockey and the area of rugby, we also have part-time or sort of jointly funded coaches as well. The majority of our coaches are voluntary coaches or certainly are part-time in that they have other jobs that are their main source of income. It comes down to the individual then, you have, at one end of the spectrum you have the coach who is so passionate about what they do and so very, very keen to support the athlete that they plan out their programme perfectly, they also are fully aware of each different support service offered and how that will help and they will integrate that. At the other end there will be the coach who sees themselves as very much the technical and tactical coach end of story, because that is, they feel that is all the time that they can provide, supporting those areas, and it also depends, there are different cultures of coaching, you know, within different sports as well. So yes,

varying levels, but we have had some coaches who proactively seek out Performance Lifestyle for their athletes, we also have some coaches I would say that would struggle to grasp the concept of it.

OG: And do you think that if the coach struggles to grasp the concept that will have an effect on the uptake or understanding of the athletes themselves?

D: Em, I think there is no doubt that the coach is the dominant player in the whole area of support around the athlete, so even if you ignored Performance Lifestyle, if you take the area of strength and conditioning, if the coach doesn't feel that the strength and conditioning area can support the athlete, then the athlete won't access that support service, same again with the psychologist, you know it's very much coach led, coach driven, same with Performance Lifestyle as well. However, having said that, what we try to do is we try to, or I certainly try to encourage all of our athletes to have that initial assessment with Performance Lifestyle because, again as an area, it's very unlikely they'll experience this area of support prior to being involved in the Area Institute, West Institute, so consequently you want them to at least have an understanding of how it can help.

OG: So later on they can come back to that if they need to?

D: Yeah, and it is so much easier to get that support if that initial contact has been made, you know, and they've had that face-to-face initial assessment then it might be 18 months, 2 years down the line but they think, oh, I could actually phone up Mary and see if she can help with this.

OG: In an ideal world, with no restrictions on finances or resources, are there any changes or additions that you would make to Performance Lifestyle and how it is currently delivered at Area level?

D: Em, I don't necessarily know if it is finance that could make the difference, or maybe it's finance to have dedicated staff, but I would say that, that the universities, I think we've got various, varying levels of support within the universities. Now I don't know if it's utopia that every university would be able to offer flexible study to athletes, but I think what currently is deemed as flexible study isn't particularly flexible. The example I always quote to people is that the, in 1997 the World Badminton Championships were held in Glasgow and it was a Danish player called Peter Rasmussen that won the men's singles and he was studying medicine, that was in '97 and as far as I am aware he graduated in 2006 so he, that was at least 9 years that he was studying, I think possibly more than that, and during that time he was one of the top 3 players in the world, won the world title, he was able to play full-time badminton but still maintain that link with the degree that he was doing. So I think that would be great if we got to that stage and whether that means that there would need to be a dedicated, I don't know, further ed person within Performance Lifestyle or universities person who could spend, really devote the time into getting to know and to building up relationships, but yet again, you know, they could spend that time and it may never happen. So that would be something that I think would be useful. We could probably also, beyond the Area Institute level, we could probably also do with building up increased employment links, again for flexible employment opportunities for our, almost full-time athletes, the ones that are aiming at Commonwealth Games, Olympic Games.

OG: I described at the start that I am mostly interested in athletes facing major transitions. At Area level, I see three types of scenarios that you could come up against: those who choose to leave the institute or stop competing in their sport, those who are forced to stop due to injury reasons, and those who are deselected. Have you had any athletes who fit into these scenarios?

D: Oh yes definitely, I mean there's, it's probably fair to say there is a reasonably high, well, is it a high turnover or not, I don't know if it is a high turnover of athletes, but the reality is that there are selection policies for every sport, selection is not an exact science, particularly when you are dealing with selecting younger athletes, and similarly you would always expect there to be a wider base within the Area Institutes than progressions are possible to the Scottish Institute. So yeah, I mean, the athletes, quite, occasionally the athletes deselect themselves, decide it's not for them, or an athlete effectively at some stage either moves up or moves out based on performance and it is something I always make clear when I have the initial meeting with the athlete and their parents is to let them know that at some stage they will move on from the West Institute, we'll very much hope that it's a progression on to the Scottish Institute or a World Class Programme, in rugby terms onto a professional contract, but there are also cases where, based on performance the athlete, and it is very much about performance sport, but again that's no different, if you're an apprentice football player then of the 20 apprentices you'll be lucky if 2 make it through to a contract with the team. People have got to be aware of that and it is also that competitive aspect that drives sporting performance on.

OG: If we start with deselections, can you describe the process: who makes the decisions and at what point does Performance Lifestyle get involved?

D: Well again that will vary sport to sport, but our athletes are on a, typically a 12 month agreement with the Area Institute and that's based around, there is a selection policy that's agreed between the governing body, sportsScotland and the Area Institute and athletes are selected or deselected against that selection policy. If it's quite clear during the 12 month period that an athlete is really struggling to make the selection for the following year then through review meetings with the athlete that, they will be made aware of that and they will, particularly if there is a coach driving the programme the coach will be able to point out what areas they need to improve upon to ensure selection for the following year. Some sports are very straight forward and the athletes are pretty clear, if its swimming it's a time and they know, there's the time I've got to do and that's accepted within the sport. It's a bit trickier sometimes for a sport where it's more subjective and it can be more of a coach view or maybe it's tied in with selection for a national squad and the selection for the national squad is quite selective as well, so it's, yet again, within sports the athletes know what is the deal in that sport and again I would sort of compare it, if you're comparing football and swimming then to go to the Olympic Games in swimming then you know exactly what it is that you need to do, to get selected for Scotland at football, you've got to impress the manager and the manager has got to feel that you fit in with the game plan for that particular match, so you've just got to continue within your own training and competitive environment working on improvement, working on performing as well as you possibly can every time, and then there is an element of hope attached to that as well. But again, in swimming terms that's what you do, you train as hard as you possibly can, you keep working on your performance trying to improve and there's an element of hope that your times will keep improving as well. So going back to your question, we will try and flag it up during the period, the athletes are aware that there is a selection period coming up, if it is pretty clear that they won't, because there may have been a specific time that they have to achieve and the opportunities to achieve that time have gone, then they will be aware of that. Performance Lifestyle, it is an ongoing process with the athlete, but also at the time of deselection we will communicate with the athlete, inform them of the decision, we also remind them that they have the option of continued Performance Lifestyle support for 12 months post deselection, they can get that ongoing support as well. We also offer them the opportunity to meet up and discuss the deselection with ourselves, with the coaches, just whoever they want involved in that, the reality is that 99% don't want to do that because they, well again they probably feel an element of disappointment or don't want to face up to that or discuss that, it does happen occasionally. Performance Lifestyle support post deselection, again it will be, it tends to be minimal.

OG: And that tends to be through athletes choice?

D: Athlete choice definitely, because it's there, an athlete is, in Performance Lifestyle terms an athlete is entitled to as much support post-deselection as they are when they are on the programme for that 12 month period. But again what we, we have 100 athletes, we have one adviser, we have prioritised athletes within the hundred that we work with and prioritised sports we'll work with as well, we'll offer it to everyone, but the sort of nitty gritty, it might be prioritised for individuals and also within that, given 100 athletes, the, we cannot be proactively providing Performance Lifestyle to the hundred athletes, if we meet with them initially, let them know what Performance Lifestyle can do, they have the initial assessment, they have the contacts, email address and mobile number, they know that they can get in contact and for what areas of support to get in contact, then it can be down to the athletes to contact and if they choose not to then we are not going to try to force something on them. Across a whole lot of areas of support services there are, there are the energy sappers, the people that, you know, why should you spend the same amount of time chasing three or four athletes that are ignoring phone calls, emails, that aren't getting in touch, that aren't doing this, as opposed to athletes that are desperately seeking the service, who want that area of support and who, you know you can make a difference to, then it makes sense to deliver to the athletes that are seeking the support.

OG: So when an athlete leaves, they are informed by you, and that is by letter...

D: Yes...

OG: And they are told that they have Performance Lifestyle support, should they wish to take this up...

D: Yes, depending on the situation, Mary may proactively contact the athlete at that stage, and that comes down to knowing the athlete, so if the athlete has built a relationship with Performance Lifestyle then it is more likely at that stage that Mary will be proactive to speak to them just after receipt of the letter of deselection to see if there is any support that they need at that stage. If the relationship hasn't been built up then there is, there is no relationship to try and support at that particular time. So it is very much in the hands of the athlete and I will always say to athletes and parents when I meet up with them initially that they need

ultimately to drive their programme as well, that myself and everyone else that works here, we are always available by telephone or by email if they want to contact us, we'd much rather they did contact us with a question that they may think is silly, and it may be a silly question but at the same time it may be something that we can 100% support and it's a great question, so to come to us at any time with any question that they may have and also to say to them that they will get out of the Institute support what they, effectively, put into it, so what they put in, in terms of, you know, spending the time to meet up with people and get a feel for what, for how we can support and to engage then they will get more out of it on the back of that.

OG: And if it was an athlete that, for example, you knew was stopping at that level, or was one of the ones deselected because they had ultimately reached their highest level of performance, would Mary more actively chase them to see how their transition out of support is going?

D: At Area level it's rare for an athlete to have 100% devoted their time to their sport at that stage, so it's not as though you have got a full time athlete that, em, for the sake of argument, it's not as though it is Lee McConnell who has had a career ending injury that she just did not expect and there is a lot of work to do there, you know we have got 80% of our athletes who are in that 16-24 age group, you know, I can't tell you exact percentage but a very high percentage of those are in education, whether it be school or at university, so they already have another area that is of keen interest to them, so it is not as though, you know, the world has fallen apart, you know, it may feel like that to a certain extent, if it was an injury, but they do have other things that are also keen areas of attention for them. So it is a little different at Area level as opposed to I suppose at Scottish Institute level. Having said that, if it's a rugby player, our rugby players are effectively committing towards a full time career and are putting everything they have into their sport, I suppose most athletes would claim that, but the reality is that Performance Lifestyle and the sports are aware of the fact that they're trying to ensure that athletes aren't putting all of their eggs into one basket, that they do have something else that has an element of attention for them.

OG: And for me, that is one of the most important things that they are doing at Area Institute level with Performance Lifestyle, making sure that they have other things going on and therefore a number of alternative future options.

D: Yes, definitely, and it's, parents are also pretty strong on that as well, it's an absolute rarity for a parent to be saying, forget school because we want you to focus on x, y and z, or it might be that they are pretty supportive on taking gap years or on delaying going to university but they know that it's on the back burner and that they're just maybe delaying commencing first year.

OG: Thinking more generally, do you think the Institute system as a whole does enough for athletes who leave the system, for whatever reason?

D: Personally, yes, I do, and I also think that your Performance Lifestyle, there are times when Performance Lifestyle is a huge help for athletes, there's no doubt about that, it was the Scottish Institute forum last night and there were two athletes who were speaking being interviewed by Dougie Donnelly in front of the audience, a curler and a badminton player, and both, unprompted, were, identified Performance Lifestyle as the area of support that had helped them. Both interestingly were at university and it was because Susie Elms linked in with their university lecturers etc and departments to ensure that they could commit to their sport and their studies at the same time. I actually do, before Performance Lifestyle existed athletes got injured and athletes' careers were ended and, you know, I think that the smarter athletes always have maybe an eye on what is going to happen further down the line. Having said that I also think that some of the out and out achievers don't have an eye on what is happening down the line because they don't see an end to, they just have an eye firmly on sporting success, they 100% believe that they are going to achieve that so consequently don't need to think about other things and I think sometimes that drive is what makes them the ultimate champions, makes them the winners, that depends on certain sports as well.

OG: Obviously Performance Lifestyle is the main, or the only service that is still available to athletes once they have come out of the system, unless there is a medical issue. Do you think there is an argument for any of the other service areas to still stay involved?

D: Again, depending on the situation, we will, there have been situations where we have phased out strength and conditioning support so we have said, well look you are deselected and this will mean, but when I say it appears as a bolt out of the blue, sometimes athletes, everyone else sees it coming but the athlete doesn't necessarily see the deselection coming and to help them make that, if they're keen to try and get back onto the programme and they are still keen within their sport then we'll sort of support them and say, look, continue coming in, we'll give them like a, you know, two month period or something like that, which gives them a chance, so it doesn't suddenly end, it gives them an opportunity to then put in place alternative

solutions for their training, of which there are always alternative solutions for them. We do look at individual situations and individual cases, but as I said before a lot of athletes, they, whether it be a sense of embarrassment or feeling that they no longer belong or whatever, but choose to remove themselves and cut themselves off from that support. It is also because they would be in training amongst a group of people where everyone else has been retained on the programme or has been selected for the programme and they will know that this person hasn't and this person will know that the others know that they haven't, and it is a bit like the school playground situation, you know, you're no longer in with the in-crowd and so you would rather be somewhere else than be on the fringe of that crowd.

OG: Is there anything more you want to tell me about Performance Lifestyle, anything in this area that you think I have missed or that you want to add?

D: Em, I would say no, it's, Performance Lifestyle is a huge area of support for certain athletes, for others, some athletes don't need it, some athletes need to know it's there in the background but are actually very self-sufficient, other athletes have had a huge support from Performance Lifestyle because they have needed that support. I think Performance Lifestyle can sometimes, you know it's, Susie probably said this as well, that there is, there's a bit of a fine line between supporting the athlete and over-supporting the athlete, because athletes need, ultimately it's their career and their success and they need to be self-sufficient and we had situations within particular sports that we've kind of pulled back on now, but the athletes were becoming over-reliant on Performance Lifestyle because Performance Lifestyle was available when they were asking and they were pushing the boundaries of Performance Lifestyle and effectively we had to, Mary and I took a decision on it, there was some sort of hard love if you like, we sort of pulled ourselves right back from it and forced the athletes into doing things for themselves that in fact they probably should have been doing anyway and I think that's, there is that sort of area between yes supporting and trying to allow the athlete to focus in on their sport and their sporting career, but at the same time they, ultimately it's their career and they need to be in control of it and they need to be self-sufficient and they need to take responsibility themselves and, you know, sometimes that's the balance for Performance Lifestyle, between supporting athletes and still ensuring that they have the responsibility for what it is they're doing.

OG: Thank you very much, I really appreciate you taking the time to come in and meet with me today, it really has been very useful.

END

SIS ATHLETE: DIANA
4th January 2008

OG: How long were you an Institute athlete?

D: I went into the Institute in 1999, when curling became a supported programme. I was an institute supported athlete through until I retired last season.

OG: Did you use any Performance Lifestyle/ACE services during your time in the Institute?

D: No, not at all. I didn't really think there was anything they could do for me, everything was pretty sorted.

OG: So you don't think there was anything you could have been offered then?

D: Not really. We used lots of other services in the Institute, like nutrition and strength and conditioning and psychology. In the early stages the Performance Lifestyle, or ACE as it was then, was not very well formed. Not much to offer I didn't think. And then later, I didn't really think I needed them. Like I didn't want education, had a career, personal life was pretty sorted. It would just have been ticking more boxes, no point really.

OG: Can you tell me about your exit from the Institute?

D: When I decided to stop last year, I just made the decision that it was time. Made the decision, told the Institute, and I never even got a response from the head coach, who was just new but it doesn't matter, he knew who I was. So I didn't get any response, and that kind of made me think, well, they didn't care. I fired off the email and I never thought twice about it. I did get an email back from the assistant coach, Cate

Brewster, and it was really nice, saying that she would miss me and everything, and when I read that I was like, mmm, maybe I shouldn't have, but most of the time I am like, yes, I have made the right decision.

OG: Did you use any Performance Lifestyle support when you retired?

D: Well I had contact with the lifestyle person at the Institute or something, but I hadn't spoken to her in the seven years I was in the Institute or anything, and anyway it was more about how you could get time off work, she was always there to help but I had never had any problems, so I had had no contact with her and I wasn't going to sudden start talking to her about me not curling.

OG: You talked about the fact that you didn't use Performance Lifestyle at all – did they make any attempt to contact you when you retired?

D: No. As I say, the head coach didn't even reply to my email and I haven't seen him since. I'll see him this weekend, I might ask him where my programme is (laughs). But no, I didn't get any contact at all, it was just kind of, oh well that one is done. The lifestyle person didn't contact me either, it was just a cut off really.

OG: What kind of support do you think it might have been useful to have?

D: The Institute were fantastic, all my costs were covered, so I think I got everything I wanted out of the Institute. I was just hacked off that nothing was even said, there was no acknowledgement. I guess what might have been useful for me would have been someone to talk to about my retirement decision, to tell me about how things feel, stuff like that. But as I said, I didn't have any kind of relationship with the lifestyle person so I didn't feel that they were someone that I could have spoken to. So I guess having that might have helped.

OG: Do you think retirement support in general for curlers is something that is needed?

D: I think that if you know you have got other things, like I knew I had work, I knew I had my kids, so I could always make myself busy if I was really missing curling. So I think if you know that you have got all that stuff then you don't need to be looking for something to fill your time, I mean I was doing curling on top of all the things that I was still doing. I think if you are going to retire because you think it is your time then you don't need as much assistance, but I think if you are retiring because you are just not getting anywhere or you are coming up against brick walls, I think then that is when you need to ask for help from the lifestyle person, I think that is when it would be tougher. Yes, I think it would depend, if you had worked actively with the lifestyle person and then you were retiring maybe she would have contacted, if I had of done that, I don't know, I don't know if it is something that they have got in place. But you would think if there were going to do it for some people they would just have decided, as a courtesy, that they were going to do it for everybody. Susie I think her name is, I think if I had been talking to her about my career in curling, then I would maybe have considered talking to her about retiring from it, it might have been one of the discussions we had. But there was no relationship to build on.

END

SIS ATHLETE: CLAIRE
11th January 2008

OG: How long were you an Institute athlete?

C: I was taken into the Institute in 2001, when I was starting my Scottish international career. And then I was an Institute supported athlete for the rest of my swimming career, so through to my retirement in 2005.

OG: Did you use any Performance Lifestyle/ACE services during your time in the Institute?

C: A little bit, for doing some courses. I got some advice from them over time too, I wanted to maybe go down the coaching route so they helped me a bit with that too. But I think because in general I kind of knew what I wanted to do, and probably, maybe had I been there, or if it had been around before Malaysia it would have been more relevant, but by the time it was I had decided to go out to Canada and then you know, applied for the job and got the job, so that side of things was kind of sorted, and probably they thought as well that's sorted and that was really sort of all that they did at the time, if you needed career advice or anything then come along and see us.

OG: What courses did you do?

C: There was a nutritional cooking one that they did for all the swimmers, and then also a media one which was really helpful. I think there might have been others on offer, I really can't remember, but they were the only ones I did anyway.

OG: What did you think of the ones you did?

C: The media training session was really useful, because it is not something that you have any experience of really. The nutritional cooking wasn't as good, maybe better for the younger swimmers away from home for the first time, but I guess I felt I knew most of it anyway. In general though it is good to be offered a chance to develop other skills I guess. And it was a laugh in the cooking one being with the other guys, and we had a couple of curlers in there too so that was quite good.

OG: Was there was anything you could have been offered that would have been useful?

C: I don't think so. I made most of my decisions myself, and my husband gave me support and I could speak to him. My coach was really supportive too, so we tended to go and speak to him before we went to anyone else. I had a good relationship with him, he would encourage us to come and talk to him if we had any issues. He was good at directing people towards Performance Lifestyle if needed too though. I guess there maybe could have been other courses I could have done, a lot of it is that you don't know what you need until the opportunity is there, if you know what I mean.

OG: Can you tell me about your exit from the Institute?

C: Well I decided to retire after the World trials, I had family things going on, had just got married, and was searching for jobs as well. My husband and I were talking about having children, I guess it was just the right time. So it was just a case of telling my coach, and telling the institute that I was going to finish up. I think they know that I was going to anyway.

OG: Did you use any Performance Lifestyle support when you retired?

C: I did a little bit, but to be honest, I think it is a lot better now, but it wasn't that great, there wasn't anything offered about finishing, perhaps they needed to be a bit more proactive about it. I guess they helped me in the process of getting my job, in terms of job seeking skills and stuff like that, and that was it really, it wasn't, I mean I don't know, looking back it would have been really good to have something, but at the time I was like, you know it wasn't the sort of thing you thought to ask, and because it wasn't offered, it was just like, well no.

OG: Do you think retirement support in general for swimmers is something that is needed?

C: Yes. I mean at the time I would have said, that's just nonsense, but actually having done it I am like definitely. Even just to, to speak to people who have actually done it, to tell you this is how you'll feel and it's quite normal, because everybody since then that I was training with or whatever who have stopped, you know I've said to them, don't suddenly think after a few weeks that you'll want to get back in because you won't, just kind of the practicalities and things of it, and I guess just kind of dealing with how you feel and all that would be quite good.

OG: Is there anything else you want to tell me?

C: I did get some help from my coach. He gave me some detraining advice. I don't think I did anything for like 6 weeks, he said you know you need to give your body a proper rest which it has not had for how ever many years.

END

SIS ATHLETE: LISA
13th January 2008

OG: How long were you an Institute athlete?

L: When the Institute first started I was in it, I can't remember exactly when, but when the Institute was still based at the Gyle I was part of that structure there, until they dropped me, well they were going to drop me one year and then they actually discovered that they had got the javelin specification wrong because they said I hadn't improved, but actually I had improved. I think it was the season of '99 they changed the javelin specification, which basically meant that there was a 4 metre differential, so the previous year I had thrown something like 57 metres, and then the season with the new javelins I through 56, which was quite frustrating, but actually it was a 60 metre throw. But they kept the standard for all the major games at the old distances, so it had gone from 60 metres on the old spec of javelins to still 60 metres with the new spec but there was this 4 metre differential. So I had put in my lottery application and the Institute and stuff, and they said I wasn't coming back because you made 57 last year and 56 this year, so there was lots of appeals, and they said oh yes I remember something about the changing the spec. I came into the Institute again after that, and then was in up until my retirement. So I guess I was an institute athlete for about 4 years in total, in two phases. But my thoughts were that I didn't do my sport to be in the Institute, and at that time I didn't feel that the Institute really gave you that much. There was a lot of paper, but I remember having what was quite a heated discussion at one point with I think it was Nigel Hall, kind of saying whether I'm in the Institute or not it doesn't really make a difference, I've got a coach and a physio that I have kind of made contact with over the years. I'm maybe a bit cynical, but I think in some ways the way that we had to do it was better than what athletes do now, because people don't value it in anyway, it's all just put on a plate for them. I just don't think people value what they have now, at all, but I am a little bit cynical.

OG: Did you use any Performance Lifestyle/ACE services during your time in the Institute?

L: I can remember being offered the service when I first came into the Institute. I think it was just forming then, there wasn't much they could offer, but I can remember chatting with the adviser about some courses they were going to be offering. Later on I did do a couple of workshops, there was a media training thing and also a time management one. I also did have a meeting with the adviser when we looked at my CV, but I wasn't that interested at the time and then I got deselected just after that so it didn't go any further. A lot of what they were doing seemed to be about education and that wasn't something that was of interest to me I didn't want to go back into education at that stage, I had already tried university stuff and it hadn't really worked for me with my athletics.

OG: Do you think there was anything more you could have been offered?

L: No, I wasn't really that bothered about whether I was being supported or not, particularly, so I guess I maybe didn't buy in as much. For example, I was in the Scottish Institute, and got dropped by the Institute, do you know I can't even remember what year it was, say it was 2000 I think it was in fact, in 2001 I came out and threw really well when I had my torn calf, and the Institute said, oh we might take you back on. But from when I got dropped by the Institute, the area institutes existed but you didn't get taken in by them, so you got dropped out of the system, that I wasn't seriously bothered by, all it gave me really was extra funding. So I was doing my own thing, still training my ass off, the next season I came out and threw a PB, and got put back in. Now the big debate among the athletes at that time was that the whole Institute motto was we don't reward performance, we invest in potential. And this happened to one of my friends as well. Dropped when she wasn't performing well, then put in a good indoor performance and it was, oh you are back in the Institute. Hang on a minute, you are not investing in potential because if you were you would have kept her because you could see the potential. So for me at that point the Institute was an absolute joke, all that it gave me was extra funding, because if I was in the Institute I was eligible for subsistence, if I wasn't in the Institute I paid my own expenses, that was it. And even if you meet the guidelines that they produce, there is no guarantee that you are going to be taken into the system, it means you might be considered. It is just flawed, so flawed.

OG: Can you tell me about your exit from the Institute?

L: It was the end of the 2001 season that I tore my calf, was still trying to get things diagnosed, Liz Mendl told me to live with the pain, and I remember at that point my physio was there, she was an Australian girl, fantastic physio, and she just looked at me as if to say Lorna don't, and I just remember saying to Liz what. And that's why I think there are people who are in positions in both the Institute and probably Scottish Athletics who aren't there necessarily for the best of the athletes. They are probably getting paid an awful lot of money, and I say I hold my hand up and say I am very cynical, but I am cynical because of the experiences I have had. I haven't ever been approached officially by anyone in Scottish Athletics in any shape or form to become involved in javelin coaching, Hugh Murray who is the throws coach for Scotland, he said to be kind of informally do you want to think about maybe getting involved, and I am like no, and people have asked me about that and my standard answer is, there is too many muppets involved in the sport. And I wouldn't want to get involved, unless it is changed drastically. If you look at Scottish Athletics at the moment it is

living on about 2 or 3 successful athletes, but there is how much money being spent via the Institute programme and through athletics, the number of people working in the sport. I mean I am not close to it, I'm a development officer and athletics is one of my sports, but there is a lot going on in the sport that I'm not aware of, but you only need to look at the results, at the league tables, at the teams, and it is obvious there are problems. I saw snippets of the Loughborough match, against I think it was British juniors, England, Loughborough, and Loughborough uni beats half the Scottish team, which is worrying in itself.

OG: Did you use any Performance Lifestyle support when you retired?

L: Well, when you were dropped you were dropped. It was like bye bye. And I remember having to meet Meg at the Gyle and she was actually scared. I think at that point she was making quite a few decisions about people and about dropping them, and I think she had had some quite tricky meetings with some other athletes. I remember going in, and I think she looked a bit on edge, and she was like, well, you know, and I was like, am I in or out Meg, I don't really care, and she was kind of quite taken aback, and was like well you know I've pushed and all that, and I was like just tell me in or out, don't mess me about, and it was well you're out, and I was like well that's fine, that's not going to change what I am going to do, I am just going to do it on my own, so that's fine. Whereas I think a lot of people felt that they had to be in the Institute, but I just didn't care, I was going to do it regardless of whether they felt I was good enough to be in there or not.

OG: You talked about the fact that you didn't use Performance Lifestyle at all – did they make any attempt to contact you when you retired?

L: Well actually, later on I did get a bit of support. I guess after time you don't feel so bitter about it all. So I was struggling to find work that I wanted to do, and then, I think it was because I was in the Institute one day in Stirling, and I think it was through speaking to Susie Elms and seeing what they were looking for in a coach, so I kind of got into the strength and conditioning. So no, they didn't make contact with me, but I guess I did with them.

OG: Do you think retirement support in general for athletes is something that is needed?

L: I think that careers advice would be useful for those who are full time. I guess some kind of detraining advice as well, although for me it was a bit different because of the illness, and then I stayed involved anyway. But from my work now I could see how it could be useful for some athletes.

OG: Is there anything else you want to tell me?

L: Well there was one thing. In the middle of my career there was pressure put on by the Scottish system who were like, well move, and I was like I have already sacrificed everything else in my life for this, I don't want to have to sacrifice my whole life or the fact that I am really happy where I am. I think at that time there was quite a lot of pressure put on quite a few athletes to re-locate, or change coach, or head off to the States. I think it is that contradiction, do you only see them as an athlete, or do you see that they have certain things in their life that allow them to do that. And I don't know how much they take that into account, of how much they should. But I do think if you are not happy then you are not going to train well. I had a few friends that did re-locate and went for the coach that they were told to, and most of them didn't work out. But I was quite stubborn, at that point I was quite a home-body, still am really, and I think it would have been a disaster.

END

SIS ATHLETE: RHIANNA
20th January 2008

OG: How long were you an Institute athlete?

R: As soon as it went into the Olympics that was when it went into the Scottish Institute of Sport, and that was when I was in too. So as a core sport in there, they are then looking for a lot, lot more from you, but you've then got access to all the facilities and all the support staff, so that was great for curling. Before that, a curler would never have talked to a psychologist or done fitness work or, you know that was just silly, it was just unheard of. And even now there is still a lot of people quite cynical about using all this, because it is an old traditional sport that people have played for years, so why bring in change, and they can't get their heads round this. You know we had to adapt very, very quickly and believe that it was the right way to go to see all the psychologists and nutritionists, you know, we said we'll just use everybody, if they all help 1%, you

know in curling it is the skill of throwing the shot that is going to win the game, so I still maintain that if you are good enough to throw these shots and you have practiced that enough, then good, but the psychology, fitness, nutrition, they all help that 1% at the end of the day. You are always looking for that edge above your competitors, you know, because we came back from Salt Lake and people were saying, well what made that edge – but I don't know, you know at the end of the day we did everything, we tried everything, it all probably helped, but we can't just say that one thing helped us win. The video analysis is huge now in curling, and no other country uses that, and they are all now trying to buy the software. We were the first to get access to that and it was brilliant, but I wouldn't say that made us win or, you know, I think just everything, the whole package. It was about buying into that whole package, whereas before we never did any of it.

OG: Did you use any Performance Lifestyle/ACE services during your time in the Institute?

R: I did a bit. I mean the Institute, the Performance Lifestyle they do, I think it was very good for the girls to get off work, because the institute could speak to the work and things, so that was good, whereas for me it wasn't really, they helped fund child care for the full time training for the Olympics so that was a big help. I was very much of the mind to use all of the support that was being offered, to see what was going to help. It was good just to have someone to speak to sometimes too, and they definitely offered that. I guess as you get to know them then they are just someone to bounce ideas off, or have a moan to. Sometimes it might have been something that you didn't want to speak to your team-mates or your coach about, silly things really but nice to have a sort of sounding board if you like.

OG: Do you think there was anything you could have been offered?

R: There are things other athletes could have used, I guess, like help with education, and stuff, but for me because I was older I felt like I was past all of that. So it wasn't something I needed. But I do think it can be important.

OG: Can you tell me about your exit from the Institute?

R: I had to finish because I needed to get real with life, get a job, support my family. I didn't really get much reaction with the Institute, they were probably glad to get rid of me. Because I was too old, in their case, to be a funded athlete, I would probably be a problem case for them in a way. I don't know. No, I never even got a letter from the Institute saying, well I have been in the Institute since 1998, but I didn't get a letter to say, really sorry you're retiring, or anything. So that was quite disappointing actually. I think, now I've thought about it, I've thought well, I have done a lot for the sport and I'm not wanting anything from them, but from the Institutes point of view, they call on me to help them promote things, so just a bit of acknowledgement in some form would have been nice, but hey, I'm not going to go on about that. Because I knew, the Institute wanted to put out a big press announcement about it and I was like, no, I don't want it in the press, you guys know, that's all that matters, when the season starts and I'm not there... otherwise I'll get all the questions, why are you doing it, why this, no, just leave it alone, it's my decision okay. So I didn't want any media because, that's probably the worst thing from Salt Lake, that the media just own you and they can write what they like, and I don't like that, I hate that, and so I just didn't want the whole retirement thing kind of going through the press.

OG: Did you use any Performance Lifestyle support when you retired?

R: Yes, I actually used them to help me with my career stuff. I was really struggling, and I thought what am I going to do, I used to have a career in tourism but I didn't want to go back there, it had been too long, but I wasn't sure how to move forward either. I knew Performance Lifestyle give you a years support once you retire, so they had kind of looked at my CV and were trying to find me a job but again nobody was interested, so I was suddenly like, oh no, you know, I am now this age and need to get a mortgage and nobody wants to employ me. People down south were putting in offers but I was like I don't want to move down south. So it was a hard decision, really hard, I didn't want to make it, but I had no option, and I thought at the end of the day I've had my years of fun and enjoyment through it, I just have to stop. I had spoken to my adviser quite a bit when I was in the Institute and so it was easy to talk to them afterwards as well. They put a lot of effort into seeking alternatives for me, and it was through that continued contact that I eventually got offered a coaching role. It would have probably just been part time if I hadn't had help from my adviser.

OG: Is there anything else that you could have been offered support-wise from the Institute?

R: Well I think something in the area of physical detraining, diet change, that type of thing. It was an area in which I really struggled when I retired, still struggle with actually. At the end of the day I know what

I should do, it's not that, oh gosh I've retired, how do I do this, you know how you could taper the training and do it all, but I just haven't had the time to do it with the work situation and I wonder if there is anything that I could do. I guess if I went up to the guy who does the strength and conditioning to say, you know I have now retired, what should I do, he would tell me, so the network of people are there, but there is nothing formal so it is not something I have got sorted out.

OG: Do you think retirement support in general for curlers is something that is needed?

R: I don't know, I suppose the service is there at the Institute for anybody to use who wants it, so, you know yeah they helped me get my CV together and stuff but it is up to me to apply for the jobs and stuff. They were always there to help, so I mean the support is there, yes, it definitely is, you know that is what they're employed to do, so it is there. I suppose I didn't maybe use it as much as I might have, but just the way things worked out with me I didn't need to, but that support's there for a year, so I have still got another 6 months of it, I could pick up the phone and say help.

END

SIS ATHLETE: SALLY
25th January 2008

OG: How long were you an Institute athlete?

S: I was in the institute for most of my adult hockey career, so for eight years really, right up till when I decided to retire.

OG: Did you use any Performance Lifestyle/ACE services during your time in the Institute?

S: No, not at all. I can remember that there was some support on offer, but I didn't need it. I didn't need education help, I had already done my degree, and I was settled in my job so careers stuff wasn't relevant to what I was doing. So I couldn't really see how they could help me, there wasn't anything there.

OG: Were you ever offered sessions like time management or media training, workshops like that or others?

S: Can't remember anything specific. I can't really think of anything that I could have done with. I do think younger athletes could be helped by that sort of stuff, maybe I could have nearer the start, but I didn't have any though.

OG: Can you tell me about your exit from the Institute?

S: Well, my last experiences in hockey were pretty difficult. The last event I was at was the Olympics, and I was captain of the GB team. It wasn't a good tournament, from the hockey side of things. The team's relationship with the coach wasn't very good, there were so many problems with the management team and I guess I had to take the brunt of it as the captain. By the end of the tournament I knew that was it for me, I had had enough of it all, couldn't go back there. It was quite a big deal to me though, I found it pretty difficult, had a lot of issues to deal with, things were difficult for quite a while.

OG: Did you use any Performance Lifestyle support when you retired?

S: I wasn't necessarily offered anything. I think there was support that could be accessed through the Institute, but I was never offered it and I didn't have contact with anyone from before, there was nobody I felt I could just go and speak to from the Institute. No-one came to me and said what are you thinking, do you need any help, or whatever. I actually sought out advice myself, my partner put me in touch with a psychologist and I did some sessions with him, talked through my emotions, sorted things out. That was a really important process for me, otherwise I think I would have had a lot of anger still. I went through every emotion you can think of at the time in those sessions, but it means I can talk about it rationally now and I can have a relationship with hockey too – I think otherwise I would still be cut off from it.

OG: Do you think that is an area in which the Institute should have been providing support?

S: It would definitely have been good to have had it from them, to have had official support or whatever, rather than sorting it out myself. But I never got the impression that they cared that much once you

had retired, like their focus had moved on. But also, I guess because I didn't use any of the services when I was in the Institute there was nothing to build on there, they didn't know me, I guess didn't know that I was going through a tough time. I am quite an introverted person too, so I wasn't going around telling people that I was struggling with things, it was mainly all going on inside my head.

OG: Is there anything else that you think it might be useful for them to deliver?

S: I can't think of anything specific. But I do think it is something that probably could be improved in the sport in general. It is very much individual. But I think longer term it is something that could probably be enhanced a bit.

OG: Is there anything else you want to tell me?

S: Well I think if you are in the Institute and it is there then that's fine, but not everyone is therefore it probably is an area that the whole hockey family have to look at in terms of what is being offered, and if people aren't in the Institute then Scottish Hockey need to look into it a bit more. But there's probably not that many players to be honest that have been involved for so long at such a high level that it might affect quite as much, if you know what I mean. It is something I think we could probably consider and have there if need be, and just make it a little bit more obvious to players that are going through that.

END

SIS ATHLETE: JUDITH
28th January 2008

OG: How long were you an Institute athlete?

J: I was taken into the Institute near the end of 2001, and then was in it for 4 years. I was deselected from the institute a bit before the end of my career because of poor performance.

OG: Did you use any Performance Lifestyle/ACE services during your time in the Institute?

J: Well yeah, I used some employment support. I had finished uni at that stage and needed to find some work to get me a bit of money. It was kind of around the time that they were talking about having employers taking on athlete employees, having flexible working hours, but nothing really came of it initially, because it was at the kind of pilot stage. I don't know if there was just nothing available nearby. Later I ended up working at the bank for a while, which I got through the West of Scotland Institute who developed that relationship, so I guess I used their support a bit. But in terms of career wise it wasn't completely useful, because although I liked the idea of doing something more relevant to my degree at the time on a flexible basis, there was nothing around.

OG: Was there anything else you were offered?

J: There was a media training thing I think... that's really bad, I can't really remember anything else. So there was a media training workshop, and I did see a nutritionist as well. I wasn't really offered anything on time management or anything like that.

OG: Is there anything else you think could have been useful?

J: I'm not sure what other things they could have done. I had my uni degree so the education stuff wasn't something that I needed

OG: Can you tell me about your exit from the Institute?

J: I had a bad couple of years before the end, performing poorly, and really not enjoying it. As I said before I was deselected from the Institute before my career actually ended, so when I made the decision to retire I wasn't actually an Institute athlete anymore.

OG: Were you able to use any Performance Lifestyle support when you retired?

J: I think so, yes I was, I'm sure I was. I think like the service was available to me up until a year after I retired. I spoke to the lifestyle adviser person a few times, looked at CV's and stuff like that, but in the end as I said I was lucky. It was literally the day, I think, or the weekend I retired I got a New Scientist magazine and the job I eventually ended up getting was advertised in that magazine. So within two months I had it which was really just lucky. So perhaps if it had been a bit longer I might have drawn on their support further.

OG: Do you think retirement support is useful in general for athletes?

J: I think it is a good idea when somebody is retiring to have a meeting with performance lifestyle, you know, not as like a mandatory thing but as something that is actively encouraged, saying well what are your plans and what are you thinking of doing and is there any way we can help you, do you need help writing a CV or writing a covering letter or writing to apply for courses, whichever you are doing, because you have been quite a long time out of the academic world and then you are kind of stabbing in the dark a little bit, thinking what do you do. I also suppose to really help you think about your options, about what you're doing and trying to draw on any support you can get, so if you can get performance lifestyle support or whatever, try and get it.

OG: Is there anything else you want to tell me?

J: Yes, well, I think if you have got a link with a person who is running it then it must be easier to approach them. I think as far as I was concerned when I retired unless I had actively approached them to say look, I could really do with some help here, then nobody contacted me. I had met Susie Elms, I don't know if she is still there, I had met her a few times, and she was really nice and I would have had no hesitation contacting her, but in the end I didn't need it. I think if I hadn't ever had met her it would probably have been quite hard to just pick up the phone and say, you know, I know I don't know you but I have retired and could you give me a hand. So it probably is a good idea to at least know them and have had some contact with them.

END

SIS ATHLETE: NICOLA
3rd February 2008

OG: How long were you an Institute athlete?

N: The Institute came in at some point during my hockey career, it didn't exist at the beginning. And then I was part of it throughout the rest of my international career, just finishing up when I decided to retire.

OG: Did you use any Performance Lifestyle/ACE services during your time in the Institute?

N: I can remember when they came in, and I remember having a conversation with the chap who was in charge of education, the ACE person, and I knew the guy, at this point of time I was playing hockey, I was working full time at a reasonable level, and I was also doing a masters degree in construction law part time. I remember me telling him all about this and then he said right that's all very interesting Nicola but what else can you be doing to expand your horizons, and I remember saying to him, no hang on a sec here, what on earth do you possibly think I could add into the equation? But it was almost like he had his little checklist, and I'm not sure to this day exactly what else they were expecting me to be doing.

OG: So do you think there was anything you could have been offered?

N: My life was so busy, I was sorted. I think that everything they were talking about was more relevant to younger athletes, not to people so far through their career like me.

OG: Can you tell me about your exit from the Institute?

N: I made the choice to finish my career, it was time to move on and I had had enough of the travelling and everything else. For the Scottish Institute of Sport I was kind of in it but I wasn't, no that's not fair because I always was, but I couldn't do the training that they expected me to do down south. It was like training was on a Tuesday and Thursday night in Edinburgh, sorry guys but I can't do that. I can do Dundee on a Monday, Glasgow at the weekend, but that is the limitation to my training, I can't come down. If I had been new into the squad that would probably have been the difference between me being selected or not

nowadays, whereas I could say I am training with the guys up here, I had already been in the squad for quite a long time, are you going to drop me for not being in a training session on a Tuesday with you. It was never a threat, but they knew that was the parameters that I had to work within, and that my job would not have been able to accommodate that kind of time off. So, it wasn't a big thing to not be an institute athlete anymore.

OG: Did you use any Performance Lifestyle support when you retired?

N: I got a nice letter from them (laughs). Got a nice letter from the head of the Institute, a lady, I can't remember the name, she wrote and said if there is anything we can do to help let us know, which was nice. And I got a letter from Brent Deans at the SHU as well saying congratulations on your achievements. And that was it, it was like the end of the chapter. I suppose the stage I was at, I couldn't really have seen where the support might have been applied, everything was already in place. It wasn't like cutting the umbilical cord and there you go Nicola, make your own way in life. I already had a pathway, I wasn't at the extreme end of that, life was pretty much going to continue as it was. If there was anything that would have been helpful, looking back now, was if I could have had some form of tangible link to the training element, because I couldn't keep myself going with that, but I didn't know that was going to be the case at the time. I think if they had managed to keep me linked in some way, there would have been a knock on benefit for the likes of the SHU or even the Institute, in terms of me being available, for example mentoring and aspects like that. I have never turned down any request to either speak at an event or coach. What I thought would happen is that I would retire and people would say, oh actually Nicola now you are not playing can you come and do a session with our keepers, or can you come and help with the U21s, or something like that. Nobody made that call. And I haven't done anything about doing anything about it. There is, not only with me, a knowledge bank, and experience, that is just being lost. It is interesting because the work I do now is property work, real estate work, and in Scotland we have got maybe about 80 lawyers who do that sort of work and we have our annual away day type thing, and the head of real estate actually said to me, right Nicola can you speak to us at the start about what it is like to be in a successful team, and she said draw on your hockey experiences, because at the end of the day what we are doing here is team working, people all working on the same project, so they can see the links and how my hockey stuff could be of benefit. The majority of athletes who have got so much out of their sport are prepared to put something back in, but it is not being tapped. Because they are not getting in touch with us, we haven't bothered to either, because we are not at a loose end, we have a life too.

OG: Is there anything else you want to tell me?

N: No, I think we have covered everything.

END