

UNIVERSITY OF WINCHESTER

The Psychological Influencing Factors of the Practice Environment

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Doctor of Philosophy

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the University of Winchester.

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ABSTRACT

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The environments in which athletes develop and perform can have a significant impact upon performance outcomes. Previous research has predominantly focused on the psychological performance environment of athletes within, and leading up to, competitive performance events. There has been little consideration given to psychological factors in the practice environment that might influence both development and performance. As a result, the focus of this programme of research was to explore the psychological factors influencing athlete development and performance in the practice environment. To achieve this purpose five studies were completed within UK academy basketball practice environments. Using qualitative research methods that could offer rich perceptual data, the first and second studies provided an initial exploration of the psychological influencing factors in the practice environment to create a conceptual framework using interpretative phenomenological analysis and case study respectively. Study three applied the practice environment framework longitudinally within a larger UK basketball academy participant population. Study three findings suggested that the framework existed within the multiple practice environments investigated. Study four used an interpretative phenomenological analysis approach to provide a rich and deep gathering of basketball coach perception. Coach perceptual data offered both confirmation and deeper insights into influencing factors, with additions being made to the practice environment framework. Five key practice environment factors developed from the previous exploratory studies, which were high effort being a player's primary goal in the practice environment, players undertaking pre-practice performance reflection, players developing supportive communication, the

setting of common goals to enhance team performance, and an enhanced preparation period before practice, were applied as an educational strategy in study five to improve performance within a real-world basketball practice environment. The factors of influence were found to be complex, related, and highly dependent upon specific practice environment scenarios. The overall findings from the current programme of research suggest the psychological influencing factors of the practice environment are different to other sporting environments that athletes experience. In particular, effort and control, individual and team orientations, communication and negative motivation, performance expectations and social interactions, preparation, and player and coach characteristics, were highlighted as specific to the influencing factors of the practice environment. Therefore, practice could be considered as a standalone environment within the performance environments of athletes. The framework produced in the current programme of research is based on a UK academy basketball environment and could be of use to practitioners within that setting to enhance athlete development and performance in the practice environment.

Keywords: practice environment, performance, influence, basketball

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List of Abbreviations

AASE	Advanced Apprenticeship in Sporting Excellence
ATDE	Athletic Talent Development Environment
DSMP	Developmental Model of Sport Participation
DiSE	Diploma in Sporting Excellence
EABL	Elite Academy Basketball League
EDP	England Development Programme
HPE	High Performance Environment
I/O	Industrial and Organisational
IPA	Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis
MMR	Mixed Methods Research
OSI-SP	Organisational Stressor Indicator for Sport Performers
PES	Performance Environment Survey
PEM	Practice Environment Model
S&C	Strength and Conditioning
WBQ	Web-Based Questionnaire
TA	Thematic Analysis
TNA	Thematic Narrative Analysis

Chapter One: Introduction

1.1. Background and Need for the Study

The practice environment where athletes spend most of their time developing and preparing has been suggested to be a crucial factor in determining the outcomes of competition performance (Durand-Bush & Salmela, 2002). Baker, Cote, and Abernethy (2003) suggested that habitual performance influences can be gained through deliberate practice activities aimed to develop performance critical abilities, such as sport-specific skills, physical fitness, and team strategies. The importance of deliberate practice has been highlighted across a number of studies where a direct relationship between deliberate practice, skill attainment, and performance has been reported (e.g., Baker, Horton, Robertson-Wilson, & Wall, 2003; Mujika et al., 1995). In addition, it has also been suggested that the on-going long-term emotional exposure sustained through extensive activities, such as practice, can influence behaviour and performance in the present (Baumeister, Vohs, DeWall, & Zhang, 2007). Therefore, it appears that an athlete's experiences within the practice environment could provide a substantial influence upon their competitive performance.

Previous sport practice research has explored a number of the structural components of practice, which include player activity levels (e.g., Baker et al., 2003) and coach behaviours (e.g., Cushion, Ford, & Williams, 2012). The measurement of the strategic use of skills and techniques during practice has also been undertaken by Hardy, Roberts, Thomas, and Murphy (2010) but specific attention towards the psychological factors influencing athlete performance during practice appears to be scarce. A recent examination of the coach-athlete relationship by Wachsmuth, Jowett, and Harwood (2018) revealed performance influences occur far more often within practice periods than in competition. In fact, athletes identified the majority of conflict took place during practice. The time spent with coaches in practice was cited to be 95% of an athlete's total coach contact time, which further strengthens a rationale for research to engage with this extensive platform and the psychological influences experienced.

The study of performance environments has provided an examination of athlete experience at a personal level and has focused on identifying the psychological influencing performance factors generated during competition (e.g., Gould, Greenleaf, Chung, & Guinan, 2002; Pain & Harwood, 2008). However, a sole focus upon the micro-level

influences, which have been said to be temporally and organisationally linked to competition (Pain & Harwood, 2007), could provide a limited evaluation of all the possible factors influencing athlete performance. The study of the impact of organisational factors on performance environments has identified influences that are more general and holistic compared to competition only factors (e.g., Fletcher, Hanton, Mellalieu, & Neil, 2012; Fletcher & Streeter, 2016; Woodman & Hardy, 2001), but gaps still remain in our understanding of numerous environments where athletes exist (Fletcher & Wagstaff, 2009).

A study by Douglas and Carless (2006) reported performance influences stemming from a multitude of different factors other than direct competition. The authors highlighted a number of environmental factors (e.g., family relationships, social affiliation, ownership, and attitude) that influence initial sport participation experiences and core lifestyle values. These influences may not affect sport performance directly but via an intermediary variable, such as the removal of athlete autonomy that reduces the personal relevance of training and subsequently inhibits performance (Douglas & Carless, 2006). Also, Durand-Bush and Salmela (2002) reported a number of environmental factors that can influence an individual through four different stages of development, such as the impact of family members and training activities during the investment years. These influences from varying environments suggest that the psychological influencing factors experienced during competition may not solely impact athletic performance during competitive moments and that factors outside of direct competition may have an influence on performance.

Previous athletic talent development research has sought to identify the variables present within practice environments (e.g., Henriksen, Stambulova, & Roessler, 2010a). However, the research findings offered limited attention towards the psychological influencing factors that are specifically present within practice environments, despite practice being indicated as a source of performance influence. For example, Henriksen, Stambulova, and Roessler (2010b) positioned practice within a process category that focused on structural elements over entire athletic careers as well as in an objectives category, rather than giving practice its own category and offering a more detailed explanation as to its effect upon performance. Therefore, this provided little evidence of the psychological performance influences experienced during practice.

A number of generalised performance environment frameworks have been developed to try to better explain factors that contribute to, and determine, performance

outcomes. For example, Jones, Gittins, and Hardy (2009) provided a model for high performance environments. However, many of these frameworks have been underpinned by a particular focus, such as group cohesion (e.g., Woodman & Hardy, 2001) and the organisation of sport (e.g., Fletcher et al., 2012). Such focal points limit the successful provision of a psychological influencing factor framework for general purposes or for the separate environments that athletes exist in (Fletcher & Wagstaff, 2009), such as practice. The need to expand the investigation of influence into differing environments is further supported by the differences found between elite and non-elite participants (e.g., travel, accommodation, media attention, decision making), which indicates practice may vary from similar environments (Fletcher et al., 2012). Despite a lack of specific research attending to the psychological influencing factors of the practice environments, previous performance research with similarly placed employed workers (e.g., Weiss & Cropanzano, 1996) suggests it is conceivable that during practice athletes will experience an array of affective events (e.g., positive emotions such as enjoyment) that will influence performance.

Previous affective event research conducted on UK call centre employees by Wegge, Dick, Fisher, West, and Dawson (2006) reported that the creation of job satisfaction through positive and negative experiences is also correlated with job performance. However, more recent organisational psychology research has contradicted this linear relationship between job satisfaction, or positive influence, and employee performance (e.g., Davar & Bala, 2012). With this in mind, the psychological factors influencing the performance of individuals within sport tend to suggest that a linear relationship exists between factor valence and performance (e.g., Fletcher et al., 2012), which differs from that of current organisational psychology research that shows the existence of more complex relationships (e.g., Kašpárková, Vaculík, Procházka, & Schaufeli, 2018). This may be an indication of the infancy within our understanding of the psychological influencing factors in sport and the continued need to explore the complexities of performance environments.

Contradictory and confusing results and conclusions from previous performance environment research has resulted in a lack of influence clarity where both successful and non-successful athletes identified similar influencing factors. For example, in one of the largest performance environment research projects ever conducted on Olympic athletes by Gould and colleagues mental preparation was reported as a positive performance enhancing factor for both athletes who exceeded and failed to meet expectations (Gould,

Guinan, Greenleaf, Medbery, & Peterson, 1999). Also, Pain and Harwood (2008) suggested individuals with different roles perceived the same factors as having different performance outcomes. Therefore, it is difficult for individuals within the performance environment to know what influences are beneficial or harmful for performance. This lack of understanding highlights the perceptual fluidity of experience and the challenge of measuring and generalising it (Ellsworth & Scherer, 2003). These results suggest that methodological approaches that offer more richness and depth to analysis may provide a stronger evaluation of the perceptual relationship between participant and environment (Neil, Hanton, Mellalieu, & Fletcher, 2011).

As a result of the gaps that exist within the performance environment research relating to the practice environment, this programme of research aims to provide greater clarity regarding the psychological factors within the practice environment that influence performance. This programme of research used each study as a stepping stone to build knowledge (Perry, 1998) and meet the research aims.

1.1.1. The Researcher

The researcher has extensive experience of badminton practice environments as a player and coach, which inspired an initial examination of performance environment research. This initial examination identified a raft of performance environment research studies that highlighted the influencing factors in competition (e.g., Pain & Harwood, 2007) but failed to specify the practice environment. The practice environment studied in the current programme of research is a UK academy basketball environment. The researcher's experience of the basketball practice environment is from time spent as an academic teacher within the department that delivers the basketball academy (e.g., academic teaching to basketball players) and as a mental skills coach to the team. The researcher shared an office with the head and assistant coach of the basketball team and was aware of the structural and organisational processes of the team (e.g., upcoming fixtures, player information, and practice session outcomes).

1.1.2. The Organisation and Structure of EABL Practice Environment

The EABL practice environment was judged by the researcher to be the activities undertaken by the players that focused on the practising of skills to enhance performance (Baker et al., 2003). EABL teams are required to conduct a minimum of 12 hours on-court practice activities per week, which is accompanied by weekly strength and conditioning sessions and regular video scouting sessions in preparation for upcoming opponents.

During the time spent conducting the research within this thesis, the amount of teams in the EABL has varied between 15 and 18, which are divided into East and West conferences throughout the UK. The EABL is a highly competitive environment and is quoted as being “the premier junior basketball competition in the UK, featuring England Development Programme (EDP) institutions – the top Under 19 programmes in the country” (“About - EABL”, 2019).

All EABL teams are located within sixth-form college organisations and all players undertake full-time academic programmes alongside their basketball. Players are selected for the team through trials and scouting activities in pre-season. Players stay with the same team for the entirety of the season unless they withdraw from basketball activity, leave the education programme, or are dropped from the team by the coach (e.g., poor behaviour, poor academic standards, or significant decline in performance). The EABL practice environment is highly competitive, where the number of players selected to compete in competitive matches is usually outweighed by the number of players within the team. Players will be selected for competitive games by their overall ability against that of their teammates, which places the players’ performance within the practice environment as paramount to their chances of playing competitive basketball.

1.2. Research Aims

The overarching aim of this thesis was to explore the practice environment and offer a conceptual model of the psychological influencing factors acting within it. Several aims (see below) were set to achieve the overarching aim and are aligned with the research studies undertaken:

Aim one

To undertake a rich exploration of player and key stakeholder perceptions within the practice environment to identify the existence of perceived psychological influencing factors.

Aim two

To confirm the existence of previously identified psychological influencing factors and develop a conceptual model of the psychological influences present in the practice environment.

Aim three

To identify and evaluate the perceptions of coaches within the practice environment to support conceptual model development.

Aim four

To evaluate the implementation of a practice environment educational programme developed from the conceptual model to improve practice environment performance in a team throughout an entire competitive season.

1.3. Thesis Structure

This thesis contains five research studies. An overview of study procedures and participant information can be seen below in table 1.1. These studies can be viewed independently. However, they build upon each other to create a programme of research, which begins with the exploration of the practice environment and ends with the creation of a conceptual model that is tested within a basketball practice environment. Chapter two offers a review of relevant literature. Due to influencing performance factors in the practice environment having not received specific attention, this review focuses on the influencing factor literature from similar environments in sport. This chapter also addresses the sport practice literature, which highlights a lack of research towards the perceived psychological influencing factors that are present in the practice environment.

The methodological approach that underpins the current programme of research is offered in chapter three. The chapter offers an explanation as to the epistemological position this thesis was based upon and the subsequent research strategy and research technique decisions. The first research study undertaken is presented in chapter four. This initial exploration of the practice environment uses an interpretative phenomenological analysis approach. The findings from study one provided the initial psychological influencing factors of the practice environment that were taken forward into subsequent studies.

A qualitative case study of a basketball practice environment is displayed in chapter five. This study gathered data from key stakeholders from within the practice environment and its results, along with the first study, informed the development of the practice environment conceptual model in chapter six. Chapter six is a deductive study that evaluates and confirms the presence of the previously discovered practice environment factors across a larger population of basketball academy environments. The results from chapter six are also presented as a conceptual model.

The findings from the fourth study are reported in chapter seven, which evaluates the perceptions of coaches. As key stakeholders within the practice environment, coach perceptions were used to strengthen the practice environment model for its use in the fifth study. Chapter eight reports the fifth and final study. This longitudinal educational programme study takes an action research approach to evaluate the success of key psychological influencing factors from the practice environment model. A general discussion of the programme of research can be found in chapter nine. This chapter discusses the programme development and the relationship between the research studies. Practical implications of the research and future research is also discussed. Chapter ten offers a conclusion to the programme of research conducted.

Table 1.1. Overview of Studies

Study Number	Design	Participants	Data Collection	Data Analysis
1	Interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA)	5 players	Semi-structured interviews	IPA
2	Case study	15 participants (10 players, 2 coaches, S&C coach, teacher, head of sport)	Semi-structured interviews and focus groups	Inductive thematic analysis
3	Longitudinal study	58 players	Web-based questionnaire	Deductive content analysis
4	IPA	6 coaches	Semi-structured interviews	IPA
5	Action research	20 participants (18 players, 2 coaches)	Focus groups, observations, and web-based questionnaire	Thematic narrative analysis (qualitative data) and Friedman test (quantitative data)

Chapter Two: Literature Review of Psychological Factors that Influence Performance

2.1. Introduction

Athletes can be subject to a range of both external and internal psychological factors in their environment, which may enhance or hinder their performance (Woodman & Hardy, 2001). The study of psychological factors that influence performance in sport has taken many forms, including performance environment research, which has been described as the array of influencing factors that have a temporal and organisational impact upon individual and team performance in competitive situations (Pain & Harwood, 2008, p.1158). Typically, previous research has been conducted on structured/organised competitive events, which includes the study of athletes during the Olympics (e.g., Greenleaf, Gould, & Dieffenbach, 2001; Gould, Greenleaf, Chung, & Guinan, 2002; Gould, Guinan, Greenleaf, Medbery, & Peterson, 1999; Pensgaard & Duda, 2002) and athletes competing at international level (e.g., Pain & Harwood, 2007; Pain & Harwood, 2008; Nicholls, Holt, Polman, & James, 2005). The term 'organisational stress' has been used repeatedly in the sport psychology literature and refers to the environmental demands associated primarily, and directly, with the organisation within which an individual is operating (Fletcher, Hanton, & Mellalieu, 2006). Stress has been a predominant focal point for much of the previous psychological environment research within sporting organisations rather than a balanced approach that identifies both positive and negative performance influences (e.g., Fletcher & Hanton, 2003; Fletcher, Hanton, Mellalieu, & Neil, 2012; Hanton, Fletcher, & Coughlan, 2005; Kristiansen & Roberts, 2010; McKay, Niven, Lavallee, & White, 2008; Tabei, Fletcher, & Goodger, 2012; Woodman & Hardy, 2001).

Previous psychological factor research conducted on performance influences occurring away from an individual's direct competitive engagement in sport, has furthered understanding of environmental impacts (e.g., see Douglas & Carless, 2006). The investigations undertaken have revealed the enormity of the task for researchers and practitioners to understand the psychological environments in which athletes exist. For example, Douglas and Carless (2006) highlighted the importance of initial sport participation experiences on athlete development and performance. Early developmental influences on athletes were suggested to affect future relationships within, and perceptions of, the sporting environment. In a similar vein, Durand-Bush and Salmela

(2002) suggested that developmental experiences can shape the perception an athlete has of their sporting environment. Therefore, there is growing evidence in the sport psychology literature that suggests the psychological factors of influence on performance may not solely emanate from sources that are exclusively temporal or situational to competition. The array of potential influences from the various environments that sport performers experience supplies researchers with a wealth of avenues to explore when attempting to identify the psychological factors that impact performance.

This literature review aims to illustrate the development and current understanding of influencing performance factor research in sport. The growth of psychological influencing factor research in sport is addressed, which includes an overview of understudied areas and provides a rationale for the conduct of future research. The perceptual position that current research undertakes in data collection and analysis is also discussed, which is important when deciphering the psychological factors of influence on performance. An overview of a group of commonly cited psychological factors, which include coach leadership, planning and logistical, team cohesion and social, and overtraining and physical, offer the reader an understanding of factors that occur repeatedly within current research. Finally, the literature review offers a discussion on deliberate sports practice and the need for psychological influencing factor research to be undertaken in the practice environment.

2.2. Psychological Factors That Influence Performance in Sport

2.2.1. Early Research

The initial research conducted on the psychological influencing factors that are perceived from sporting environments was based on the early industrial and organisational (I/O) psychological climate studies (see Litwin & Stringer, 1968). I/O psychological climate studies analyse the interaction between employee perception of their organisation and their performance (e.g., James et al., 2008; Kim, 2008). Previous I/O psychological climate research has also provided varied attention towards several other interactions between the individual and their environment, such as evaluating the effects upon attitudes, ethics, safety, citizenship behaviour, and innovation (e.g., Kuenzi & Schminke, 2009). However, performance in both individuals and teams has been the most popular researched aspect of psychological influencing factors emanating from a sporting environment.

The earliest explorations into the psychological factors that influence performance in sport were performed by Scanlan, Stein, and Ravizza (1991) who identified sources of stress in elite athletes. Gould and colleagues provided a large scaled evaluation of the psychological influencing factors that caused stress in elite athletes competing at the 1996 summer and 1998 winter Olympic Games (see Gould et al., 1999; Gould et al., 2002). James and Collins (1997) also identified sources of stress in twenty participants who were involved in competitive sport. The aforementioned studies provided a base, which was particularly focused on causes of perceived stress, for further research to be conducted.

2.2.2. Stress-focused Research in Sport

Following developments within organisational psychology and the early sport literature, the psychological climate in which the athlete is subject to within their sport has received considerable attention (Arnold & Fletcher, 2012). During recent years the influence of organisational stressors, alongside those from competitive environments, have become the most researched areas within the field. In fact, Hanton et al. (2005) reported competitive stressors, defined as “the environmental demands associated primarily and directly with competitive performance” (Mellalieu, Hanton, & Fletcher, 2006, p.3), as having been tackled far more in empirical and applied research than organisational stressors. In contrast to this, their results highlighted a far higher frequency of organisational stressors compared to competitive stressors being reported by participants; indicating a need to look outside of competition for performance influences. Recent research shows evidence of a shift towards influences outside of direct competition, shown through a focus on organisational stress in sport that led to the development and validation of the Organisational Stressor Indicator for Sport Performers (OSI-SP) (Arnold, Fletcher, & Daniels, 2013). The OSI-SP has also received further testing across different cultures (Arnold, Ponnusamy, Zhang, & Gucciardi, 2016) and demographics (Arnold, Fletcher, & Daniels, 2016).

Much of the previous and current research conducted on psychological influencing factors has centred on negative influences that are detrimental to performance (e.g., Neil, Hanton, Mellalieu, & Fletcher, 2011). The focus on negative influence has been a continuation of the earlier literature analysing the sources of stress emanating from an athlete’s interaction with their environment (Gould, Jackson, & Finch, 1993; Scanlan et al., 1991). However, recent research is attempting to provide a more balanced approach by reporting both positive and negative influences.

2.2.3. Stimulus-based Perspective

Over the past couple of decades, sport psychology research has assessed factors of influence through a stimulus-based perspective, particularly when identifying stress (Arnold & Fletcher, 2012). A stimulus-based perspective presents participant data with either a positive or negative perception of experience and does not include neutral experience with no valence. For an individual to assess a situation or experience as positive or negative there must be an evaluation of its impact so an appraisal regarding its benefit or harm to the individual would have been undertaken (Lazarus, 1991).

When assessing stimulus-based perspectives, the gathered data will represent appraisals of either benefit (positive) or harm (negative) towards the participant and, therefore, an emotional output will be obtained (Pensgaard & Duda, 2002). For example, if an athlete is asked to identify an influence that caused them stress and contributed towards poor performance, they would likely describe an influence that they interpreted to be negative through a decision evaluated using their emotional state at that time. Therefore, emotion is at the heart of psychological influencing factor identification due to the requirement for perception to hold emotionally laden judgements (Lazarus, 1991). An emotional or affective approach has very much become the standard within the research field, which has been a continuation of the early stress studies (Gould et al., 1993; Scanlan et al., 1991).

Emotion has been reported by Wagstaff, Fletcher, and Hanton (2012) as the most integral and inseparable element of everyday life within successful social environments. Retrospective data collection methods employed months after the studied experience (e.g., Greenleaf et al., 2001) can represent experience laden with emotion due to more memorable experiences containing higher levels of emotion (Kensinger, 2009; Sharot, Martorella, Delgado, & Phelps, 2007). With the subjective sense of remembering having been reported as being greater with negative emotions (see Rimmele, Davachi, Petrov, Dougal, & Phelps, 2011; Sharot, Delgado, & Phelps, 2004) it is of no surprise that negative emotions, such as those experienced with stress, have a greater impact upon memory recall than positive emotions and have been a staple of previous research. Future research could attempt to collect data in real-time and include analyse of cognitive-based influences that may not be captured through retrospective data collection methods that are emotional biased.

2.2.4. Towards a Balanced Gathering of Positive and Negative Influence

Recent research has provided a more balanced approach to understanding psychological influences as factors do not always run along an exclusive scale between positive and negative (e.g., Pain & Harwood, 2008; Pain, Harwood, & Mullen, 2012). For example, a linear relationship was found by Pain et al. (2012) who identified a poor playing surface provided negative performance influences and a good playing surface impacting performance positively. However, Pain and Harwood (2008) cited difficulties in sleeping as having negative influence on performance, albeit it had a small magnitude of influence, but no reference was made to adequate or too much sleep having a positive performance impact. Pensgaard and Duda (2002) reported quiet facilities, which allowed athletes to gain enough sleep, influenced performance positively at the Olympics. Although, too much sleep has been suggested by Owens, Belon, and Moss (2010) to influence performance negatively, which suggests a sleep factor should not be viewed as having a simplistic positive to negative sliding scale of influence.

The popular focus upon negative psychological influencing factors seems to have been a product of psychological research during the 20th century that predominantly addressed harmful emotions and behaviours (Maddux, Snyder, & Lopez, 2004; Rozin & Royzman, 2001), with Argyle (2013) identifying significantly more research being undertaken upon depression compared to happiness. The negative-focused research emphasis addressed negative disorders rather than encouraging positive actions to promote long lasting behaviour change (Layous, Chancellor, Lyubomirsky, Wang, & Doraiswamy, 2011). Positive psychology research has suggested significant benefits to performance if an individual adopts positive thinking and behaviour, with Fredrickson's (2004) broaden and build theory providing one of the most well-known advances. Brady and Glenville-Cleave (2017) provide a thorough discussion on the benefits of positive psychology in sport. Therefore, balanced approaches towards understanding both the positive and negative psychological influencing factors should provide a greater understanding of performance effects.

Due to the clear advantages of identifying factors that positively enhance sporting performance (see McCarthy, 2011), it is refreshing to see recent influencing factor research reporting on both positive and negative performance influences (e.g., Fletcher & Streeter, 2016; Pattison & McInerney, 2016) rather than exclusively on stressors. In fact, Wagstaff et al. (2012) provided an assessment of solely positive factors that underpinned the optimal functioning of a national sport organisation. Wagstaff et al.'s ethnography also offered

insight into the psychological influencing factors present in environments away from direct sport participation that could still provide a performance influence. For example, Arnold, Hewton, and Fletcher (2015) explored the perceptions of a London 2012 Olympic preparation camp and identified several operational factors in the lead up to the games that could have an impact on athlete performance.

2.2.5. Conceptual Frameworks

Within the field of performance environment study, attempts have been made to provide conceptualised frameworks. Framework validation has been challenging, which is unsurprising due to the sheer volume of potential environmental influences that could affect an athlete and their performance. The High Performance Environment (HPE) model (see figure 2.1) was offered by Jones, Gittins, and Hardy (2009). The framework, which was based upon previous business, military, and sport research, provided performance factors within a four-factor model. The model consisted of factors set within leadership (e.g., vision, support, and challenge), performance enablers (e.g., information, instruments, incentives), and people (e.g., attitudes, behaviours, capacity), as well as influence from an organisational climate factor (achievement, wellbeing, innovation, and internal processes). The HPE model was applied to an elite high performing swimming environment by Fletcher and Streeter (2016) and findings suggest the model is capable of aiding practitioners in creating optimised performance environments for elite athletes, but the model needs further testing due to its overly holistic approach.

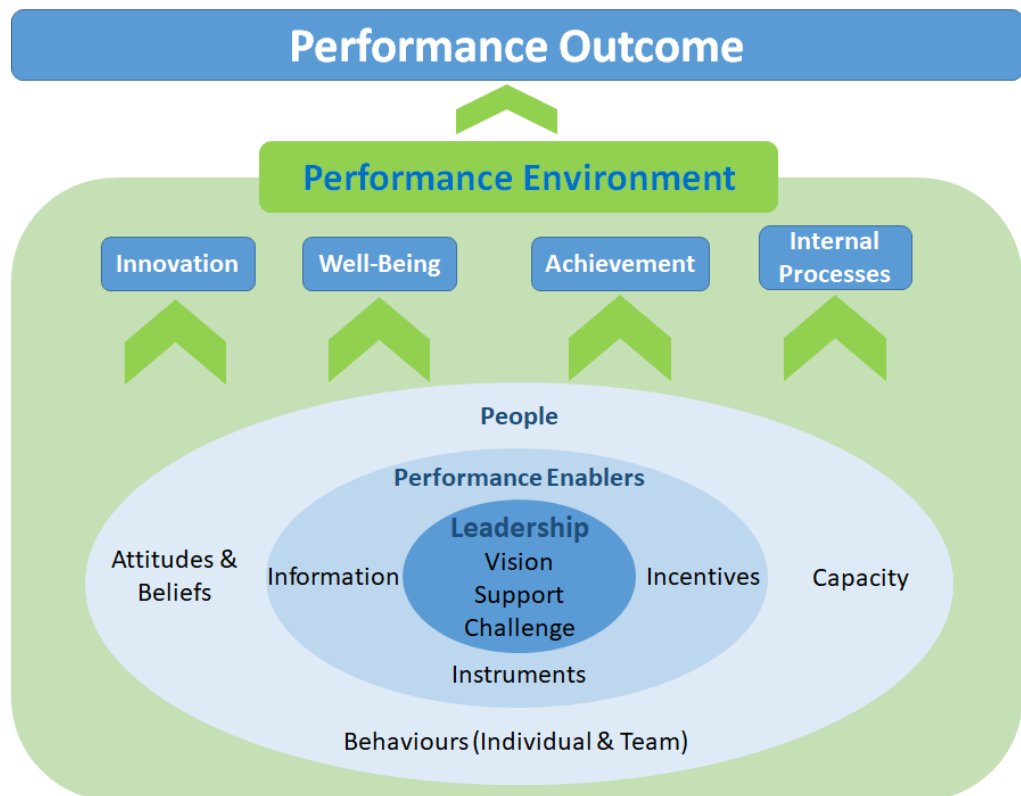


Figure 2.1. High Performance Environment Model (Jones et al., 2009)

The exploration of performance environment sub-sections, such as the organisational elements of a sport, have provided a more sensible and manageable approach to generating frameworks. For example, a meta-synthesis of organisational stressors in sport compiled a taxonomy from 34 studies that provided a useful overview of organisational stress factors (Arnold & Fletcher, 2012). However, the authors did suggest it is likely that new demands will consistently emerge over time due to the complexity of ever-evolving sport organisations. The undertaking of facet-specific assessments of climates follows the pattern of organisational climate research. The benefits of identifying psychological influencing factors within isolated and specific environments may improve the overall understanding of the athlete experience, but unique results have been questioned by Kuenzi and Schminke (2009) for their limitation towards generating general use frameworks and for environments outside of those examined.

The general lack of consensus as to what any generalised framework of psychological influencing factors in sport would look like may be due to the existence of previously unreported factors regularly appearing in new research. Also, there may be an effect from the differences between competition levels of participants producing varied results (e.g., Fletcher et al., 2012), situational participant appraisals (see Lazarus, 1991), the

use of different research methodologies (e.g., retrospective data collection versus during experience collection), sport specific context that does not cross over (e.g., Mellalieu, Neil, Hanton, & Fletcher, 2009), and the differences in authors' previous knowledge and experience that can shape data interpretation (Erlingsson & Brysiewicz, 2017; Smith & McGannon, 2017). For example, McKay et al. (2008) reported sources of strain among elite UK track athletes, and although at times the general dimensions paralleled similar research, the first and second order themes were very specific to track athletes. However, as discussed later in this review, there are common recurring higher order themes or general dimensions reported across the literature that could be applied to multiple environments.

Frameworks that have garnered more attention than just one study include that set out initially by Woodman and Hardy (2001) who investigated sources of stress for sixteen international elite performers. To identify sources of stress they used an interview guide broadly based upon group dynamics, specifically Carron's (1982) model of group cohesion. The research findings revealed four organisational stress dimensions, which were environmental issues, personal issues, leadership issues, and team issues. Due to the framework used in this study, dimensions were cohesion-based and did not report any non-cohesion performance influences within the environment. The limitation to provide non-cohesion factors highlights the subjective nature of research that is dominated by author experience and knowledge (Smith & McGannon, 2017).

Pain and Harwood (2007) produced a study that evaluated the performance environment of England youth soccer players and used a review of previous literature, advice from academic staff, accredited sport psychologists, and England Football Association sport psychology administrators to base their qualitative interview guides upon. Pain and Harwood's approach was more rounded and inclusive of many more environmental factors and the general dimensions reported were: planning and organisation, physical environment, tactical factors, development and performance philosophy, psychological factors, physical factors, social factors, and coaching. In total, 158 raw data themes were reported, all of which were labelled as having either a positive or negative influence on performance. In contrast to the bulk of previous research, participants identified more positive than negative psychological factors.

2.2.6. Separating Performance Environments

Currently, the study of psychological influencing factors in sport is diverse. There is no clear label given to its study although the terms 'organisational stress' and 'performance environment' have been popular and provide a holistic assessment of facets that make up athletic environments. Differences between environments exist through the uniqueness of each sport, performance levels, and athlete ages to name but a few. Therefore, it appears necessary to separate research across different environments so that the vast potential of all possible psychological influencing factors can be given adequate attention. For example, performance environment research has provided an insight into psychological influencing factors during competition phases in elite level sport and organisational stress research highlights the negative factors present within the structure and organisation of a sporting environment. A further reduction and segmentation of environments in the future could provide specific frameworks that can be used to better adapt and shape athletic performance, such as during the time spent away from direct sport participation and when partaking in training and development activities (e.g., Hodge, Henry, & Smith, 2014).

A holistic approach to the study of psychological influencing factors appears to suggest that influences are not rigidly fixed to the time and organisation of competition or the current moment. Instead, they can be guided and influenced by a richly holistic array of sources, suggesting the study of psychological influencing factors should consider sources that can act upon an athlete in any way and at any time. This is further supported by the impact of intermediary variables, as shown in this quote from Douglas and Carless (2006):

A specific lifestyle or environmental issue affects via an intermediary variable. The intermediary variable might be a specific task, a personal value, or a motive. For example, removing athlete autonomy can reduce the personal relevance of training which subsequently inhibits performance. Understanding the context of athletes initial participation helps explain how these intermediary variables came to be important to athletes' performance.

Advancements in understanding the psychological influencing factors within environments should continue with assessments that extend to all the aspects of an athlete's sporting and personal life. As a whole, this is a burgeoning field of enquiry that is very much in its infancy with many of its elements still undiscovered.

2.3. The Varied Perceptual Positions in Current Research

Perceptual differences between how individuals transact with their environment is common place (Lazarus, 1991), which can be seen in previous research with, for example, Olympic athletes and isolated housing (e.g., Greenleaf et al., 2001). However, perceptual differences have also been reported at different time frames of recollection. Douglas and Carless (2006) provided an exceptional view of the conflict in athlete perception between those who were interviewed as current athletes against those who had recently retired. An example of this conflict was found in funding with younger athletes finding an income source from governing bodies essential to allow them the time and facility to train. Conversely, retired athletes found the removal of funds created a hardship that acted as a necessary and valued test of commitment and motivation, as well as the resilience built from this experience impacting future success positively. Further research is required to address the pathway of influencing factors as an initially perceived negative performance factor may provide positive influences in the long term, as highlighted by Knight and Eisenkraft (2015) and Lazarus (2000). Future positive influence from initial negative influence is echoed in previous non-sport research by Arnetz, Nevedal, Lumley, Backman, and Lublin (2009) who suggested seeking out challenging and potentially harmful situations can aid with the subsequent management of demands and improve performance.

Comparisons between the perceptions of those who perform well and those who do not, although extremely valuable, are rare in performance environment research. Gould et al. (1999) provided evidence of the different psychological factors affecting Olympic athletes who met or exceeded performance expectations against those that failed to. There was evidence of factors that were only cited by one type of athlete, such as a pre-Olympic residential programme only being reported as a positive factor by participants who exceeded or met expectations. There was also a suggestion of factors providing clear performance outcomes, as seen through successful athletes claiming support from family and friends as positive towards achievement, compared to failing athletes who cited adverse performance outcomes through added pressure from family and friend support. However, many factors were shared by both successful and unsuccessful athletes. For example, the emergence of a mental preparation factor was a positive performance enhancer for athletes who both exceeded and failed to meet expectations. Therefore, it is difficult to isolate whether those factors made a significant positive or negative influence on performance.

Individuals with different roles within an environment have also been found to perceive factors to have different performance influences, as seen with the conflict between players and coaches in the Pain and Harwood (2008) study. Pain and Harwood measured the extent and magnitude of influencing factors and discovered that poor transport was cited by a relatively low number of players as having a small negative impact on performance, which may not have influenced players as much as other factors. However, staff perceptions were also analysed and it was reported that over half believed that poor transport, created by long journey times to matches, was significantly debilitating towards performance. The findings illustrate the existence of differing perceptual viewpoints between various roles within an environment. The results also suggest that some factors may not hold enough of a magnitude to effect performance and that a collection of factors, or single high magnitude factors, may be more likely influencers on performance.

Within the psychological influencing factor research in sport there is an emphasis on competition due to the ease of factors being linked directly to performance effects and outcomes. There has been, however, previous research that has evaluated temporally different aspects of influence. Pensgaard and Duda (2002) provided an insight into the preparation and competition period of an Olympic Games athlete through a daily diary approach. This method of data collection was effective in gathering experiences that were within the analysed time period that included non-competition experiences. The common method used within previous literature is to perform data collection retrospectively (e.g., Greenleaf et al., 2001; Neil et al., 2011). Therefore, a data collection method such as diary keeping allows for a potentially more accurate understanding of the athlete experience that is not affected by memory and personality trait bias from collecting data many months after the event (Grandey, Tam, & Brauburger, 2002).

The Pensgaard and Duda (2002) paper provided a raft of psychological influencing factors with its aim being to identify perceived stressors during pre-camp activities and competitive events, but was hampered by the success of the participant who won gold. It may, therefore, be difficult to accept the observed factors of stress as debilitating towards performance when the athlete's performance produced an optimal outcome. The factors of stress reported may in fact have produced positive influences that were out of the participant's reflective capabilities at that time due to a data collection method that was relatively immediate and unable to identify influences evolving and impacting performance positively.

Thelwell, Weston, and Greenlees (2007) narrowed attention to specifically analyse the sources of stress on batsmen during cricket matches. Thelwell et al.'s in-competition approach provided an important addition to the literature as it reported perceptions linked directly to competition experience. Batsmen provided experience from the performance moment when actively involved in the competitive situation of facing bowlers. However, data was retrospectively collected and it was unclear as to how long after the competitive event the data were collected. Comparatively, Pattison and McInerney (2016) used a case-study approach to assess a South African rugby club and Pain et al. (2012) used an action research approach with a UK university soccer team to assess the performance environment holistically over entire seasons. It is not to say the authors did not focus on factors influencing performance, but rather these approaches allowed for a more rounded understanding of the environmental influences outside of direct competition. The differing holistic approaches offered above allowed for practice sessions and day-to-day social encounters to be evaluated.

Previous research has varied in regards to the competitive level of athletes, although it has primarily focused on the elite level. Fletcher et al. (2012) used an organisational stress framework from non-sport research to compare elite and non-elite athletes. The authors found substantial similarities between the two groups with elite athletes, unsurprisingly, being exposed to more demands. In the main, differences between the two groups were factors that non-elite athletes would fail to experience at their sporting level, such as media attention and funding. Similarities involved the training and competition environment, exposure to hazards and risk of injury, the cultural and political environment, and referee decisions. The results suggest there are a group of psychological influencing factors that may cross over between elite and non-athlete athletes. Giacobbi, Foore, and Weinberg (2004) also assessed stress sources in non-elite golfers and found evaluating others, specific performance challenges, psycho-emotional concerns, and competitive stress were factors that caused stress.

Simplistically, the above mentioned studies have reported very different results, which is an all too common trait within the study of environmentally generated psychological performance influences. Variances between the reporting of psychological influencing factors could have come from the differences between sports, methodological approaches, and researcher preferences gained through prior knowledge and experience. Disharmony between research approaches could hinder future attempts at identifying the psychological influencing factors that provide a significant impact upon performance. One

approach in particular that alters consistently throughout previous research is that of influence valence (e.g., a focus on negative influences only). For example, the study of organisational and competition stress, which represents a considerable amount of the literature, presents only one side of the story. In fact, previous research that has reported both negative and positive environmental factors has even drawn on previous stress studies within their literature reviews and initial arguments.

Attempts to decrease negative performance influences are clearly merited (e.g., Massey, Meyer, & Naylor, 2013; Woodman & Hardy, 2001) but the promotion of positive experiences could also provide significant benefits to performance (see Fredrickson, 2004; McCarthy, 2011). A more holistic approach to future research that evaluates both positive and negative influence may reveal results that are more comparable and begin to reveal the complexities and interactions that exist within influencing factors (Arnold & Fletcher, 2012). Neil et al. (2011) was able to show that stress, or negative emotions such as anger, could actually lead to positive performance influences through a secondary appraisal of the situation. Also, negative and positive affect has been found to be unrelated with a decrease in negative affect (e.g. stress, anxiety, depression) not necessarily leading to increases in positive affect (Watson, Clark & Tellegen, 1988). Lazarus (2000) suggested that negative psychological influences could provide positive performance impacts by increasing and mobilising energy and concentration on the task at hand.

2.4. Commonly Reported Factors of Influence

To decipher the previous psychological influencing factor research and produce generalised themes and dimensions that can be used by practitioners across all sports appears to be a difficult task. The issue is further compounded by a lack of coordination towards research methodologies and authors reporting similar influencing factors in different ways. For example, Fletcher and Streeter (2016) reported a leadership dimension that included coaches, team managers, and national governing body officials, whereas Fletcher and Hanton (2003) collated leadership themes within a coach only dimension that was populated with several other factors more related to general coaching than leadership.

There is, however, evidence to suggest the existence of a group of psychological influencing factors that permeate throughout the environments of athletes that are not dependent on level, sport, age, gender or nationality. These reported factors are a coach leadership factor, planning and logistical factor, team cohesion and social factor, and

overtraining and physical preparation factor. The factors are very much in line with Arnold and Fletcher's (2012) taxonomic classification of organisational stressors who formed four higher order categories of leadership and personnel, cultural and team, logistic and environmental, and performance and personal issues; which may be an indication of the negative focus applied by researchers to sporting environments in previous years.

2.4.1 Coach Leadership Factors

Despite some research papers referring to leadership from others, such as a sporting director (e.g., Fletcher & Streeter, 2016), the majority of reported leadership factors involve coaches and the tension within the coach-athlete relationship; with Wachsmuth, Jowett, and Harwood (2018) stating tension to be a significant contributor towards a decline in athlete performance. In relation to performance, athletes who indicate having a positive team leader perceive it to positively influence performance (e.g., Gould et al., 2002). The coach is very much the engineer of this relationship through their behaviour and it is pivotal that they are trusted by the athlete, put the athlete's performance and well-being above all else, and motivate athletes to succeed (Mageau & Vallerand, 2003).

Providing leadership to athletes can be a challenge for coaches, especially within national training centres where athletes will leave their regular and well-known coaches to join up with lesser-known national coaches. Woodman and Hardy (2001) showed how this transition can cause tension by national team coaches having a limited understanding of athlete personality traits and conflicts in coaching style can ensue. Friction, misunderstandings, and contradictory messages between the coach and athlete was reported by Fletcher and Hanton (2003), which led to an athlete having a lack of trust in the coach and influenced their performance negatively. In one case during a feedback session, an inebriated coach was cited as being extremely damaging to athlete performance. Coaches need to work hard to develop trusting relationships that place the athlete at the heart of athletic programmes and allow the athlete to hold a level of autonomy. Putting each athlete first can be a challenge for coaches when dealing with multiple athletes within the same coaching environment. Therefore, as suggested by Pain and Harwood (2007), it appears coaches should focus their time and energy on ensuring strong yet flexible relationships exist with athletes.

As well as multiple athletes, the ability for multiple coaches (typically within a national training group set-up) to gel and get on is an important factor for athlete

performance. Within team sports especially, if coaches are seen to be arguing and in conflict within the performance environment then this will not promote group cohesion amongst players (Woodman & Hardy, 2001). Harmony in the relationship between coach and athlete in the performance environment, as well as between coaches, has been found to be paramount in providing excellent leadership that produces successful performance outcomes (e.g., Fletcher & Hanton, 2003; Gould et al., 2002; Hanton et al., 2005; Noblet & Gifford, 2002). Therefore, it appears it is not enough for coaches to only maintain a high level of technical skill and experience because an inability to successfully communicate their message to athletes can lead to negative performance outcomes (Eccles & Tenenbaum, 2004).

The coaching style employed by the coach within the performance environment has been suggested to be the difference between a happy and successful athlete and one that is not (e.g., Douglas & Carless, 2006; Gould et al., 2002; Woodman & Hardy, 2001). There appears to be sufficient evidence to suggest that an unsuitable coaching style can negatively influence an athlete's performance, with aggressive and indecisive styles being reported as particularly damaging by Hanton et al. (2005). However, the authors also provided evidence from one athlete who felt they performed better when put under pressure and stress by their coach. Fletcher and Hanton (2003) reported player performance decreased when put under too much pressure by coaches. Therefore, it is evident that the amount and type of stress an athlete is subject to can vary greatly and different performance outcomes can occur. The perceived level of stress experienced is a good example of how a factor can influence individuals in completely different ways and highlights the important need for coaches to understand their athletes and how they will cope and respond to different situations.

In Fletcher and Streeter's (2016) exploration of the HPE model, they found that leadership containing a strong vision and ethos towards success was beneficial towards athlete performance. The authors suggested that a sharing of responsibility and leadership positions between different group members, which included athletes, can generate a positive high performing environment. The authors also proposed leadership should focus upon more than just success and performance within the sport. Further performance suggestions included the need for supportive behaviours from leaders that provided motivational feedback with high yet realistic expectations and an appropriate management of disappointments.

Finally, it seems that coaches should attempt to put the athlete first within performance environments and always be aware of how their actions influence performance. Woodman and Hardy (2001) revealed how athletes perceived changes in their coaches at major events. Athletes felt that coaches who were visibly under pressure to prove their worth, typically to the governing body, had undesirable influences on athlete performance. Although coaches may feel the pressure of competition, research evidence suggests that they must appear to be in control and limit the perceivable changes an athlete may pick up on. Emotions provide a strong form of communication and can be contagious within a group so athletes may react to negative emotions such as fear, depression, or frustration exhibited by coaches (Sy, Côté, & Saavedra, 2005). Coaches who have experience and confidence in a competitive environment may have an advantage in this area, but those that are able to shield their emotions from their athletes at critical times may reap the performance benefits.

2.4.2. Planning and Logistical Factors

In the first study of a wider project to assess psychological factors influencing performance, Gould et al. (1999) interviewed athletes and coaches from the United States following the 1996 Atlanta Olympic Games. This seminal project did not only identify psychological influencing factors but also separated data between teams that met or exceeded expectations and those that did not. Gould et al. reported several important factors within planning and organisation that paved the way for future research to assess influences emanating from organisational sources (e.g., Arnold & Fletcher, 2012; Fletcher & Hanton, 2003; Hanton et al., 2005; Fletcher et al., 2012; Fletcher & Wagstaff, 2009; Jones et al., 2009; McKay et al., 2008; Mellalieu et al., 2009; Neil et al., 2011; Woodman & Hardy, 2001). Although the work by Gould and colleagues (Gould et al., 2002; Gould et al., 1999; Greenleaf et al., 2001) was specific to the Olympic Games, the results have been replicated in subsequent research. Teams that did not meet expectations reported excessive travelling as a factor that adversely affected performance, although this may be inevitable at an Olympic Games that spreads across several miles of a major city. A lack of foresight in this area may see team leaders not giving enough time for travel, travelling in sub-optimal conditions, and choosing residential locations too far away from competition venues.

Travel problems are not only isolated to major events like the Olympics as Pain and Harwood (2008) identified similar problems with England youth soccer players at international tournaments. The researchers measured the extent and magnitude of

psychological influencing factors and discovered noteworthy differences. Poor transport was cited by some players as having a negative impact on performance, although it held a small magnitude and may not have influenced players as much as other factors. However, staff perceptions were also analysed and it was reported that long journey times to matches was perceived as debilitating towards performance by over half of the staff. The differences highlighted above illustrate alternative perceptions on journey experience between players and coaches that can lead to confusion. A significant step in future research should further address perceptual differences between the different roles within the performance environment in an attempt to understand the importance, frequency, and magnitude of factors. It may be that player perceptions, which occur through their environmental transactions (Lazarus, 1991), are the most important to base a performance environment on but without direct evaluation between role differences this is unclear.

Further travel issues negatively influencing the performance of non-elite athletes was reported by Pain et al. (2012) as they followed a UK university soccer team for a competitive season. Due to its recurring frequency in the research, it seems travel is an extremely important facet to an athlete's competitive preparation. Remarkably to date, it appears that no research has specifically attended to athlete travel from venue to venue during major sporting events, rather the focus tends to rest upon the facilitation of international travel to host venues (e.g., Pipe, 2011; Samuels, 2012). Therefore, significant attention to planning should be given to help athletes move from venue to venue in comfort and at speed. Advice from event organisers as well as information from local travel resources should all be part of the planning process to ensure the reduction of negative performance influences. For example, an advantage of travelling to matches early may not only be beneficial to arriving without stress, but it may also aid to reduce the negative impact of another factor reported by Pain and Harwood (2008); a lack of knowledge of the ground the match will take place in. Players reported a lack of ground knowledge as a negative psychological influencing factor, albeit a factor with a small magnitude of impact, but it is an example of how effective planning and organisation can effect multiple factors to benefit the team and their performance.

Pain and Harwood (2007) emphasised how consistent approaches are beneficial within the performance environment when dealing with national age group soccer players. Coaches in the Pain and Harwood study highlighted the creation of positive performance influences through the keeping of a consistent approach to player preparation across the different age groups. The consistent approach taken meant that when players reached

older age groups they knew what to expect and were far less likely to experience stress. The above factor highlights the significance of performance factors that may not directly link to competition but may cause an unperceived affect over longer periods of time, which has been reported in previous research that assessed athletes throughout their lives (e.g., Douglas & Carless, 2006) and during the different phases of development (e.g., Durand-Bush & Salmela, 2002). In these instances, coaches appear to be able to provide a greater understanding of environments through role longevity, which highlights the need to study perceptions other than those of current players to gain a greater understanding of influences within an environment.

It is quite common within current research to find positive performance influences from factors that coaches are in control of and negative factors from those they are not. Coaches interviewed by Pain and Harwood (2007) cited how uncontrollable events, such as club priorities effecting selections, players dropping out, and players joining up with squads late, were negative influencers that contributed to disrupted performance. In fact, the majority of planning and organisational factors stated in the research are reported as negative and this could be due to the lack of control that players perceive to have over them. Douglas and Carless (2006) highlighted a lack of perceived control as negatively influencing performance, which appears to be repeated throughout the literature.

Control is a substantial performance area for team organisers to address as athletes who attempt to control uncontrollable factors can experience undue stress (e.g., busy roads, long journeys, disruptions to squad selections and distractions within competitor accommodation villages). Gould et al. (1999) stated how teams that had failed to meet expectations reported more negative planning and organisation factors than their more successful counterparts. Therefore, planning and organisation appears to be an essential area within the performance environment, which draws little positive athlete perception when done correctly, but can be highly damaging if not conducted appropriately. Arnold et al. (2015) suggest that successful teams plan and prepare for athlete distractions by having experienced staff, promotion of effort towards reconnaissance visits to competition locations, and have a united approach towards operational efficiency.

2.4.3. Team Cohesion and Social Factors

When attempting to create a successful performance environment, team cohesion and understanding between individuals has been stated as crucial by Eccles and

Tenenbaum (2004). Unless an athlete trains and competes in social isolation, group cohesion is potentially the most important factor for achievement and one of the most cited (Pain & Harwood, 2007). One may presume a lack of cohesion amongst teammates produces more of an impact on performance rather than other cohesion combinations, however, Wachsmuth et al. (2018) suggested that the coach-athlete relationship is as crucial for enhanced performance. Noblet and Gifford (2002) found Australian Football League players reported negative performance influences from coaching staff who were difficult to approach and gave sarcastic or abusive and unwanted criticism. Further support for the coach-athlete relationship having an impact within the performance environment was offered by Greenleaf et al. (2001) who cited an individual athlete who felt positive because they knew others, such as coaches, were with them during competition.

Fletcher et al. (2012) assessed the differences between elite and non-elite level athletes and found similarities. For example, both groups citing abrasive personalities, conflict between players, and conflict between players and coaching staff as influencing performance negatively. There have been many reported factors in the literature that hold a single direction (e.g. produce negative influences when present but no positive influences when absent) but team cohesion factors appear to be highly bidirectional. Therefore, higher levels of effective team cohesion is perceived as having positive impacts on performance and lower or ineffective team cohesion influences performance negatively (Gould et al., 2002).

Team cohesion issues have been reported to occur from different perspectives with Mellalieu et al. (2009) suggesting that new teammates who were perceived to not be pulling their weight created negative influences amongst established players. However, Noblet and Gifford (2002) reported how new players to the team, especially younger players, performed worse when they did not feel as part of a team, which was compounded by little effort being made by established teammates to accept them socially. A solution to this situation, as highlighted by Cope, Beauchamp, Schinke, and Bosselut (2011), might involve an established player becoming a recognised mentor to a new player and advising them how to act and behave appropriately. In fact, team cohesion should not be considered an in-sport only psychological influencing factor as strong cohesion between athletes outside of the sport has been reported to have a performance impact, and to reinforce this, social opportunities should be offered by coaching staff and leaders Greenleaf et al., 2001; Holt & Hogg, 2002; Mills, Butt, Maynard, & Harwood, 2012; Pain & Harwood, 2008; Pain et al., 2012; Pensgaard & Duda, 2002; Thatcher & Day, 2008).

Having trust and confidence in your teammates appears to be an essential ingredient for a successful environment (e.g., Gould et al., 2002). Tension and conflict between athletes has been reported by Hanton et al. (2005) to worsen if not identified at an early stage. Therefore, it is important for team leaders, coaches, and support staff to be aware of a group's general cooperation at all times. Coaches from the Pain and Harwood (2007) study stated that they would only take low maintenance players to international soccer tournaments as poor performance had been identified when the group was not working towards the same goals. The authors stated that one disruptive player is enough to cause friction and fracture a group, which suggests that coaches and members of selection panels may choose to include this characteristic when making selection decisions. Similarly, Cope et al. (2011) suggested that the expression of negative emotions can spread destructively throughout a team. Emotions have been reported to be contagious within groups (Barsade, 2002) and must be checked and controlled by the leadership elements (Sy et al., 2005). Making a performance decision based on athlete personality and their ability to fit into a cohesive group is backed up by Gould et al. (1999) with group cohesion problems being reported as a contributing factor for not meeting expectations at the Olympic Games.

The time a team spends together, both in and outside of the sport, is important to creating strong team bonds within the performance environment (Gould et al., 2002; Greenleaf et al., 2001; Pain & Harwood, 2007). Regular team bonding activities and situations that allow for social opportunities should be part of any teams programme, which includes anyone who works with the athletes and, therefore, individual athletes and their support team are not exempt. Bonding activities will be easier for athletes who are together at clubs regularly and more difficult for those that come together for sporadic international competitions. Added environmental difficulties may be present in teams where the athletes consistently change in line with selection decisions due to current form.

2.4.4. Overtraining and Physical Preparation

Psychological influencing factors regarding overtraining, fatigue, and recovery have been cited by athletes as having an impact on performance (e.g., Tabei et al., 2012). Mellalieu et al. (2009) reported that both elite and non-elite athletes perceived inadequate, inappropriate, and arduous physical preparation caused poor performance. However, despite its simplistic and frequent appearance in previous research, the influence of physical tiredness and fatigue may be more complicated than providing solely negative

impacts. Pain et al. (2012) reported the perception of physical fatigue as having a negative influence on performance following every single game of a championship winning season. Therefore, although fatigue was identified by players as an influencing factor that effected performance negatively, this was not reflected in the team's successful winning outcome. The perceived occurrence of a physical factor declined during the season and its early presence could have caused an increase in resilience, which provided future improvements in performance. It could also be that the negative perceived influence of physical fatigue, which was recorded after matches, may have had a minor or insignificant performance impact compared to that of mental fatigue (e.g., Vrijotte et al., 2018). This suggests that physical fatigue may not have a negative influence within the performance environment if the team are successful in competition play.

The potential for initially perceived negative influences from physical fatigue having positive performance outcomes in the future is further supported by the research conducted with Olympians and English youth soccer teams. Greenleaf et al. (2001) found that both successful and unsuccessful Olympic athletes perceived overtraining and fatigue as a negative performance factor despite the differing performance outcomes. Pain and Harwood (2007) found that despite most coaches reporting negative influences from youth soccer players who suffered from physical fatigue in a tournament, only one player mentioned it as detrimental towards their performance. The Pain and Harwood finding may have been due to the strategies that were in place to deal with recovery and because they prioritised physical recovery (e.g., ice baths, good nutrition, and sleep) above physical training sessions, which may have decreased the potential negative performance perception from the players.

Although the evidence is varied, the avoidance of overtraining, having access to strength and conditioning coaches during preparation phases, and being able to take rest periods to rejuvenate in the build-up to major events, seems to have a significantly positive influence on perceived performance (Greenleaf et al., 2001; Pain & Harwood, 2007; Pain & Harwood, 2008). However, this area needs far more attention before coaches start to drastically alter training programmes in favour of more rest periods as this may impact the conditioning and technical ability of athletes. Finally, injury has been reported as stressful for athletes (e.g., Evans, Wadey, Hanton, & Mitchell, 2012; Gould, Bridges, Udry, & Beck, 1997), which includes the pressure of returning from injury or to play injured (e.g., Fletcher & Hanton, 2003), isolation experienced when injured (e.g., Noblet & Gifford, 2002; Woodman & Hardy, 2001), and the risk of becoming injured (e.g., Mellalieu et al., 2009).

2.5. Terminology Reflections

While undertaking a review of the psychological influencing factor literature, the terminology, approach, and methods used to assess psychological environments where competitive athletes exist was varied. Common terminology for bracketing this field of research is consequently sparse and different from industrial and organisational literature that commonly uses the term 'psychological climate'. Earlier literature focusing on environmental or organisational stressors has evolved into research that now identifies both positive and negative influencing factors as well as investigations into different situations and time frames within an athletes sporting experience (see Wagstaff, 2019). Hardy, Jones, and Gould (1996) suggested that "athletes do not live in a vacuum; they function within a highly complex social and organisational environment, which exerts major influences on them and their performances" (p. 239-240).

One theme, however, has persisted across all of the research, which is to assess participants who compete in performance based environments usually at elite levels. Although, the term elite is difficult to quantify in the literature despite categorisations being offered (e.g., Swann, Moran, & Piggott, 2015). Despite the high prevalence of elite athlete environments being the subject of research studies, the psychological influences on non-elite participants has also been scrutinized (e.g., Fletcher et al., 2012; Giacobbi et al., 2004; Mellalieu et al., 2009). Therefore, it seems that as long as the participants are competing for performance rather than, for example, competing recreationally, the research assessing psychological influencing factors has common ground.

As mentioned previously, it would appear that performance influences are not limited to only the organisation or competitive moments of sport as Pain and Harwood (2008) have stated in their definition of a performance environment (see below). In fact, the term performance environment has been a recent addition to the field of research and draws much of its development from the previous stress studies. The recent psychological influencing factor research reports both positive and negative performance influences that emanate from a multitude of different experiences and situations that act on competitive athletes. Therefore, researchers may be getting closer to being able to provide a holistic term suitable for psychological influencing factor research. Because the literature has not contained replicated terminology, most probably due to the large variation of different environments, the ability to isolate results can be cumbersome. Bracketing the field of

investigation with appropriate terminology would aid in a concerted direction for future research to enhance our understanding of psychological influencing factors.

The Pain and Harwood (2008) definition of the performance environment reads: “the array of factors impacting individual and team performance in competitive situations. It includes only those factors that are temporally and organisationally related to the competitive situation” (p. 1158). If we were to adjust this definition by taking into account the points raised above and the holistic nature of psychological performance effects, the new definition for the performance environment would be simply: the array of psychological factors impacting individual and team competitive performance. This change would allow researchers more scope to identify the somewhat hidden and unperceived influences when using methods overly focused upon the moments of competition and allow sub-sections of the performance environment to be investigated. One of these sub-sections in particular would be the understudied area of psychological influencing factors effecting performance in the practice environment.

2.6. Deliberate Sport Practice

To better understand the practice environment of athletes it is important to recognise what the act of deliberate practice is. Deliberate sport practice has been described by Ericsson, Krampe, and Tesch-Romer (1993) as not play, not paid work, not watching the skill being performed, not inherently enjoyable, requires effort and attention from the learner, and often involves activities selected by a coach or teacher to facilitate learning. Deliberate practice in a team sport environment involves participants engaging in activities that aim to develop sport-specific skills, physical fitness, and team strategies, with several forms of training being undertaken to improve these components that include cross-training for improved physiological conditioning, skill training in sport-specific situations, and the cohesive interaction among members of the sport unit (Baker, Cote, & Abernethy, 2003).

Since the seminal studies of Chase and Simon (1973a, 1973b) that suggested a minimum of 10 years preparation was required to reach expert level, several models of deliberate practice have been put forward. The Theory of Deliberate Practice (Ericsson et al., 1993) posits that the hours engaged in an activity rather than a factor such as talent plays the most significant role in the development of expertise. The Sport Commitment Model (Carpenter, Scanlan, Simons, & Lobel, 1993) suggests that sport enjoyment, involvement activities, personal investments, social constraints, and involvement

opportunities are all important independent factors for skill development. Although both models offer different scenarios of deliberate practice producing skill development and expertise, the consequence of increased commitment and effort will see an increase in weekly practice hours resulting in performance development.

Engagement in practice activities increases with higher standards of competition (Starkes, Deakin, Allard, Hodges, & Hayes, 1996) and it seems that deliberate practice is extremely important to the competitive performance of athletes (Baker, Horton, Robertson-Wilson, & Wall, 2003). In a recent meta-analysis by Macnamara, Hambrick, and Oswald (2014) it was found that deliberate sport practice accounted for 22% of the variance in performance with a large amount of the variance unexplained. The authors suggested that the effect of deliberate practice on performance was larger for activities that are highly predictable, such as running. Therefore, within the team-sport practice environment that provides a far more unpredictable environment than those of individual and more predictable sports, there is a need to further evaluate the variance of practice influence upon performance.

The structural components of practice, such as player activity levels, have received research attention (e.g., Baker et al., 2003; Cushion, Ford, & Williams, 2012). The athletic talent development environment (ATDE) is defined as: “a young athletes social relations both inside and outside the world of sport-social relations which have a sports club or team as their core but also include the larger context in which the club or team is embedded” (Henriksen, Stambulova, & Roessler, 2010a, p. 213). Within the ATDE, practice or training is regarded as an everyday activity in the general environment. Also, the ATDE model refers only to the function and structure of practice rather than the psychological influencing factors of the practice environment that may affect performance.

A study by Massey et al. (2013) evaluated the use of self-regulation in a mixed martial arts (MMA) training camp. This study analysed athlete practice experiences over a 6-8 week period in a training camp and highlighted both external (e.g., creating and maintaining an ascetic routine) and internal factors (e.g., deliberately induced physical pain and distress). The results suggest that MMA athletes will experience negative influences during practice periods and have a series of strategies to optimise performance. However, by only evaluating the successful self-regulation activities of athletes, the authors were unable to provide a detailed view of the positive and negative psychological influences from the environment that might also have an impact on performance. To date, there

appears to be no research that attends specifically to the psychological influencing factors of the practice environment.

2.7. The Practice Environment

Within the abundance of literature assessing the psychological influencing factors that impact athletic performance either beneficially or detrimentally (Fletcher & Wagstaff, 2009), it appears that influence emanates from experiences that are not wholly derived from competitive situations. In a UK Sport funded project, Douglas and Carless (2006) referred to the reasons behind initial participation in sport and core lifestyle values as vital for understanding environmental influences on athletic performance. The core values developed in the early stages of sport participation cause individuals to interact within their environment in certain ways, thus extending the potential boundaries of environmental influencing factors. The Douglas and Carless study showed how lifestyle and past experiences may not influence an athlete's technique and performance directly but may have indirect effects through mood, emotion, behaviour, and motivation. Influences from factors outside of competitive situations have also been evident in the developmental stages of athletes (Durand-Bush & Salmela, 2002), which indicates psychological influencing factors may not only be isolated to the moments surrounding competition.

Current literature reports influencing factors gathered primarily from individual or team athletes and occasionally from coaches (e.g., Thelwell, Weston, Greenlees, & Hutchings, 2008; Schroeder, 2010), with less holistic examinations of an environment. To express the inclusive nature of performance environments, Jones et al. (2009) presented the High Performance Environment (HPE) model (see figure 2.1), which identifies optimal organisation within elite sporting groups. The framework provided performance factors that were inclusive of influences emanating from all aspects of an organisation and proposed a four-factor model consisting of a differing variety of psychological and social factors. The HPE model was not based purely on previous sport research but also on the domains of the military and business; drawing upon much of the psychological climate research previously conducted in organisations. Fletcher and Streeter (2016) applied the HPE model to an elite swimming environment and provided evidence of the framework. However, their assessment was limited to only the factors within the HPE model and factors outside of the framework were not reported, which could be a disadvantage with criteria based examinations of complex, unique, and ever evolving environments (Sparkes & Smith, 2009).

Significant research attention has been paid to the organisation of sporting environments. What constitutes the organisational environment in elite sport was suggested by Fletcher and Wagstaff (2009) to have spilled out into a wider array of areas and required clarification. Wagstaff (2019) recently identified organisational psychology in sport research to be dedicated to better understand individual behaviour and social processes in sport organisations. Wagstaff reported deliberate practice activities as influential on individual performance but the practice environment has yet to be an isolated subject of organisational research in sport. For example, practice issues were touched upon by McKay et al. (2008) within an organisational theme, which also included physical discomfort, doubts about ability, and support. Noblet and Gifford (2002) placed practice session factors within a theme indicating the demanding nature of the sport. Monotonous training and the pressure to train when injured were both factors cited by Fletcher and Hanton (2003) but were located within different themes, with the former being assessed as environmental and the latter personal. Similar results from Woodman and Hardy (2001) found training and practice factors spread across environmental, personal, and team factors, and Fletcher et al. (2012) revealed training factors to be intrinsic within the sport but was joined with several other unrelated factors. Therefore, previous research has confirmed the influence of practice factors but has not isolated the practice environment for independent evaluation.

Previous research conducted within sport practice environments has provided an evaluation of the structural components of practice, such as player activity levels (e.g., Baker et al., 2003) and coach behaviour (e.g., Cushion et al., 2012), but to date it appears no research has specifically attended to the influencing factors that athletes are subject to during practice. The lack of research attention is somewhat surprising as competitive performance athletes spend more time practising than competing (Baker et al., 2003). Also, environments of familiarity with expected influences can differ in an individual's perceived psychological influences compared to other environments, such as in competition, which contain more of an unexpected nature (Dugdale, Eklund, & Gordon, 2002). The requirement to establish environments that are favourable to player development is central to effective performance (Mills et al., 2012), which makes the practice environment an arena warranting investigation.

A recent examination of the coach-athlete relationship conducted by Wachsmuth et al. (2018) revealed performance influences may occur far more often within practice periods than in competition, which further strengthens the rationale to explore factors

emanating outside of competition as they have an influence on competitive performance; making this understudied area integral to performance research. The reason for the lack of previous research attention could well be the difficulty in linking factors perceived during practice to their influence on competitive performance. Although, research from non-sport domains, which hold similarities to sporting environments, indicate this to be possible (e.g., Davar & Bala, 2012). For example, the study of affective events within employment settings have been shown to influence performance (Weiss & Cropanzano, 1996), and the behaviours and feelings towards an organisation have been found to be interactional between the individual and the environment (Furnham, 2005).

James and James (1989) provided an early assessment of employee perceptions and interpretations of their environment against personal values, which produced similar results to those gathered in contemporary research. Leadership and support, role stress and lack of harmony, job challenge and autonomy, and cooperation and friendliness were reported as being factors of the psychological climate that influenced well-being and employee performance. Further work by Brown and Leigh (1996) explored performance, involvement, and effort in the work place, and concluded that if the environment was found to be positive towards the individual's own values then job performance would increase. In relation to sport practice environments, athlete values will also be in constant interaction with the environment and the influences on them may cause effects on performance. For example, athlete values will be aligned to the environment and if poor coach punctuality is acceptable, then the athlete will not be negativity influenced if the coach is late. Therefore, a judgement is made about the degree to which the environment is beneficial to their sense of well-being with performance being influenced (Carless, 2004).

Long-term emotional exposure, such as that experienced during extensive practice periods, has been suggested to impact behaviour and be essential to competitive performance through the way an individual approaches competition (Baumeister, Vohs, DeWall, & Zhang, 2007; Mujika et al., 1995). Therefore, although it may not be possible to directly link or measure practice influence to a competitive performance, evidence suggests that influences on performance from the practice environment can affect the competitive performance of an athlete. Therefore, the practice environment is a sub-section of the overall environment of the athlete with future research contributions aiding to overall competitive performance.

2.7.1. The Practice Environment Structure

Practice environments differ greatly depending on several factors that include the performers age and level. Throughout an individual’s sporting career they will enter into different phases of the practice environment that provides differing challenges. The Developmental Model of Sport Participation (DSMP) (Côté, Baker, & Abernethy, 2003) outlines the different paths and conditions youth sport performers follow that can lead to elite performance, recreational performance, and dropout from sport. Figure 2.2 below displays an adapted version of the DSMP offered by Buning, Coble, and Kerwin (2015). This adapted model highlights the specific deliberate practice activities undertaken at different developmental stages, which vary greatly depending on performance level. Within the practice environment in the current programme of research, performers are involved in high amounts of deliberate practice, which makes the environment highly competitive. The individuals have a focus on one sport and split their time between basketball and education.

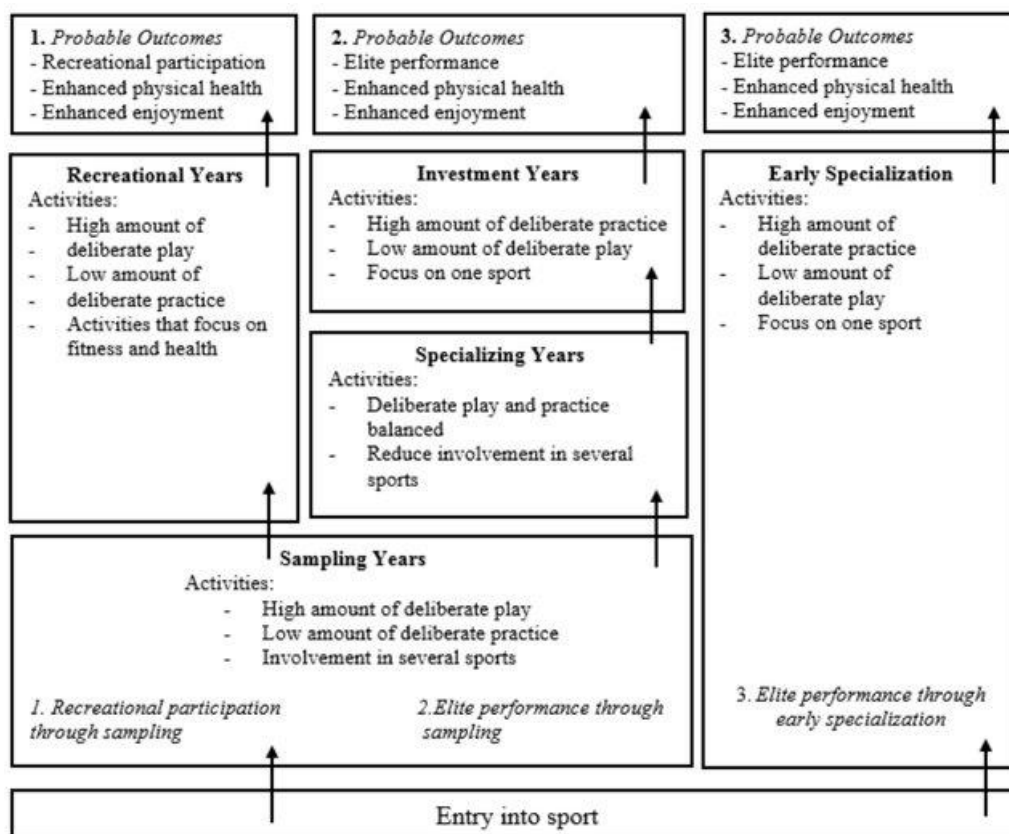


Figure 2.2. The Developmental Model of Sport Participation

The practice environment investigated in the current programme of research could be described as being near to a total institution (Anderson, 2005). The basketball practice

environment is isolated and has an enclosed social system where players will see each other within basketball and education settings. A player's immersion into the basketball environment extends to practice and competitive matches in evenings and weekends. Also, many players are from out-of-area and share lodgings together. The practice environment under investigation in the current programme of research contains on-court activities, but also includes time spent in video analysis sessions, gym training, and group physiotherapy and psychology activities. Therefore, the basketball practice environment is multifaceted and the basketball environment as a whole encompasses most of a player's time and attention.

Chapter Three: Methodology

3.1. Philosophical Underpinnings

A researcher's philosophical assumptions underpin their beliefs of how knowledge is generated and will influence their interpretation of the research process (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2017). The study of knowledge is referred to as epistemology, which at a conceptual level is focused on understanding what it means to know, and dictates the whole process of conducting research (Gray, 2014). Epistemology is built upon a researcher's ontological beliefs, which indicate the nature of being and existing (Creswell, Plano Clark, Gutmann, & Hanson, 2003). Therefore, ontology and epistemology are inextricably linked because an individual's beliefs of what existence is will inform the way they believe knowledge is generated. A framework for the design of a research study, such as that offered by Crotty (1998), places epistemology at the base from which the entire research process begins (see figure 3.1).

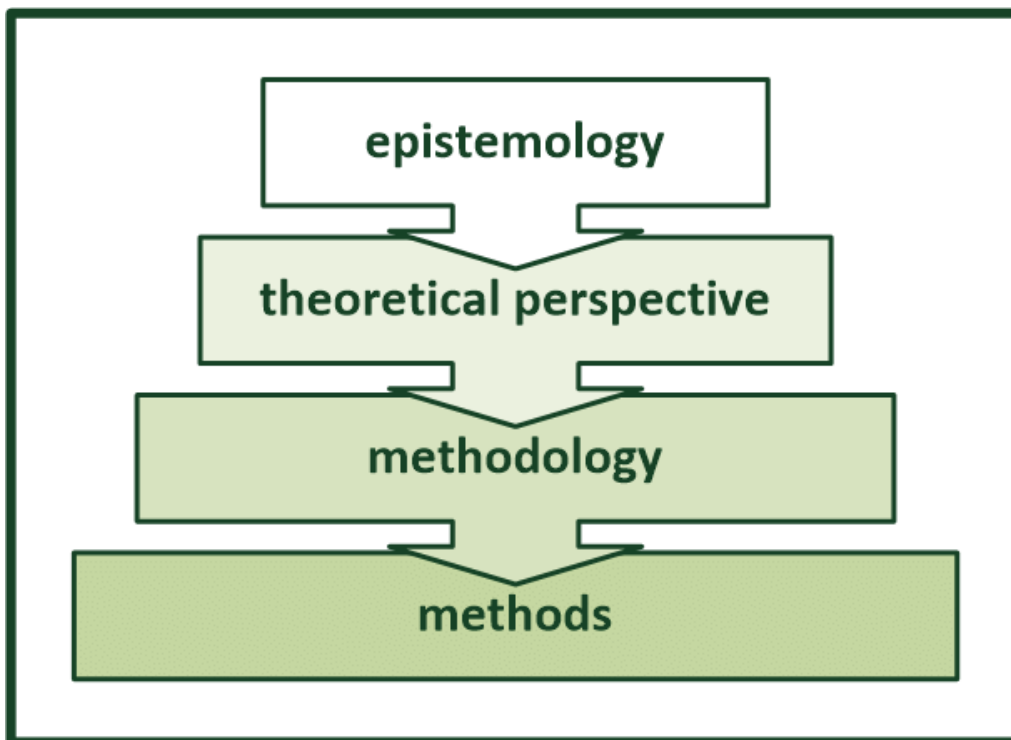


Figure 3.1. Crotty's Four Levels for Developing a Research Study (Crotty, 1998)

The epistemological stance is vital to the researcher and their understanding of potential research findings (Gringeri, Barausch, & Cambron, 2013). It is, therefore, odd that the majority of sport psychology research studies have been found to omit detailed

explanation of the epistemological stance of authors (Culver, Gilbert, & Sparkes, 2012). A greater awareness of a researcher's epistemological approach to the research process could aid in enhancing research findings. A researcher's epistemological views are vitally important to research design and will dictate the research methodology utilised in a study. When conducting research, a research methodology must be established, which informs the style and interpretation of the research process (Sapsford & Jupp, 2006). Mackenzie and Knipe (2006) suggest several research paradigms that can be established prior to conducting research, which include the approaches of positivist, constructivist or interpretivist, transformative, and pragmatist.

A positivist approach to research involves the gaining of knowledge from predominantly quantitative research strategies that offer a deterministic philosophy where causes probably determine effects (Creswell, 2013). Constructivist or interpretivist approaches to research are based on the premise that reality is socially constructed (Mertens, 2005), which relies on the researcher interpreting the participants' views of the situations being studied (Creswell, 2003). A transformative research paradigm arose from a need to address issues of social justice and marginalised people where transformative researchers felt the constructivist or interpretivist approaches failed (Creswell, 2003). A pragmatic approach to research rejects the notion of a single scientific method to access truth by placing the research problem centrally and applying whatever methodological approaches are best for understanding the problem (Mackenzie & Knipe, 2006).

The current programme of research attempts to address the lack of knowledge surrounding the psychological influencing factors of the practice environment. To understand and generate knowledge of the practice environment, the perceptions and experiences of those within the environment requires exploration. The participants' construction of reality, which requires interpretation from the researcher, indicates the aims of the current programme of research would be best underpinned by the epistemological position of constructivism (Mertens, 2005). Within a constructivist view, one's relationship with reality is paramount, with knowledge being constructed through an individual's unique interpretation of the world (Flick, 2009). The following extract from Bhattacharjee (2015) highlights the unique way individuals construct knowledge:

The theory of constructivism suggests that learners construct knowledge out of their experiences. Constructivism is a philosophy of learning founded on the premise that, by reflecting on our experiences, we construct our own

understanding of the world we live in. Each of us generates our own “rules” and “mental models,” which we use to make sense of our experiences.

A constructivist researcher believes that there is an independent reality and assumes that reality is the product of social processes (Neuman, 2003). Constructivism rejects the positivist assumption that truth and reality is free and independent of the viewer and observer (Aliyu, Bello, Kasim, & Martin, 2014), and contends that reality is subjective, multiple, and socially constructed by its participants (Lincoln & Guba 2000). Constructivism has deep roots in history, which can be seen through the teachings of Gautama Buddha (560 – 477 B.C.E.), but the most recent pioneering contributions were made by Sir Frederic Bartlett, Jean Piaget, Friedrich Hayek, and George Kelly (see Mahoney, 2002). Constructivism is now common place within the differing research paradigms and is not restrictive in the methodological approaches it can underpin (Sparkes, 2015). The constructivist position, which posits that both the researcher and the participant construct their own reality and knowledge, prescribes flexible research methodology and design in which the researcher has got unlimited freedom of movement between the steps of research (Tuli, 2010).

3.2. Research Methodology

Research methodology refers to the approaches, strategies, and techniques employed in the pursuit of knowledge (Mertens, 2014). The research methodology a researcher utilises is the strategy that translates ontological and epistemological principles into guidelines that show how research is to be conducted and how principles, procedures, and practices govern the research (Tuli, 2010). Methodological approaches to research include quantitative, qualitative, and mixed methods research (Kothari, 2004). Kothari (2004) states that quantitative research “involves the generation of data in quantitative form which can be subjected to rigorous quantitative analysis in a formal and rigid fashion” and qualitative research “is concerned with subjective assessment of attitudes, opinions and behaviour. Research in such a situation is a function of researcher’s insights and impressions” (Kothari, 2004, p5). A quantitative research approach utilises statistical data and empirical facts (Creswell, 2013). Qualitative research approaches include narrative, phenomenology, grounded theory, ethnography, and case study (Creswell & Poth, 2017).

The current programme of research is underpinned by a constructivist epistemology and utilises an array of qualitative research methods to explore the psychological influencing factors in the practice environment. A constructivist approach to

research may advocate a qualitative approach that focuses upon a singular methodology, such as ethnography or grounded theory (Crotty, 1998). However, Mackenzie and Knipe (2006) suggest that within a programme of research that includes multiple studies, it may be restrictive to apply a single methodology when attempting to understand human experience. Also, despite the current programme of research being predominantly qualitative, which fits the epistemological approach, the use of quantitative methods were employed in the final study to aid in the triangulation of an action research study to strengthen findings (Denzin, 2012; Sale, Lohfeld, & Brazil, 2002).

Performance environments have a multitude of psychological influencing factors and there is a need to examine all of the environments an athlete will experience. A constructivist approach was perceived by the researcher as the best approach to allow the complexity of the practice environment to be examined in depth. However, the need to examine the environment holistically provides a legitimacy to using different methodological approaches to address the research problem (Creswell, Klassen, Plano Clark, & Smith, 2011). Therefore, a mixed methods approach was utilised in the current programme of research to ensure the appropriate and legitimate use of research methods were used to answer the research questions (Hanson, Creswell, Clark, Petska, & Creswell, 2005).

The use of mixed methods in a constructivist research approach is illustrated by Flick, Garms-Homolova, Herrmann, Kuck, and Röhsch (2012) where support was offered towards the gathering of multiple perspectives from mixed method research approaches. Similarly, the current programme of research requires the gathering of multiple perspectives and triangulation through a mixed methods approach, and this may offer a greater understanding of the psychological influences in the practice environment (Mertens & Hesse-Biber, 2012). In the Mertens and Hesse-Biber (2012) paper on triangulation in mixed methods the authors discuss the stance of Torrance, stating:

Torrance draws on the literature from sociology, program evaluation, and qualitative methods to support his argument that mixed methods research could benefit from increased use of triangulation in the form of the involvement of respondents in the interpretation of quantitative and qualitative data, especially as a means to address issues of power. If the power for interpretation rests solely with the researcher, without input from the community, then this brings up questions of accurate representation and ethics.

Therefore, mixed methods research approaches can offer both a rigor to interpretative research and a greater understanding of the phenomenon being studied.

The structure of the current programme of research was such that an in-depth and rich exploration of the practice environment was required. The influencing performance factors from the practice environment have not been subject to sole investigation previously. The path the current programme of research took can be seen in figure 3.2. An initial exploration of the practice environment provided a richness that attempted to explore and make sense of an individual’s life experiences through interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA) (Smith & Osborn, 2003). Following this initial exploration, further research was conducted using case study, thematic analysis, and IPA to triangulate research findings and develop a conceptual model of the psychological influencing factors present with the practice environment. Finally, the model was tested within a practice environment.

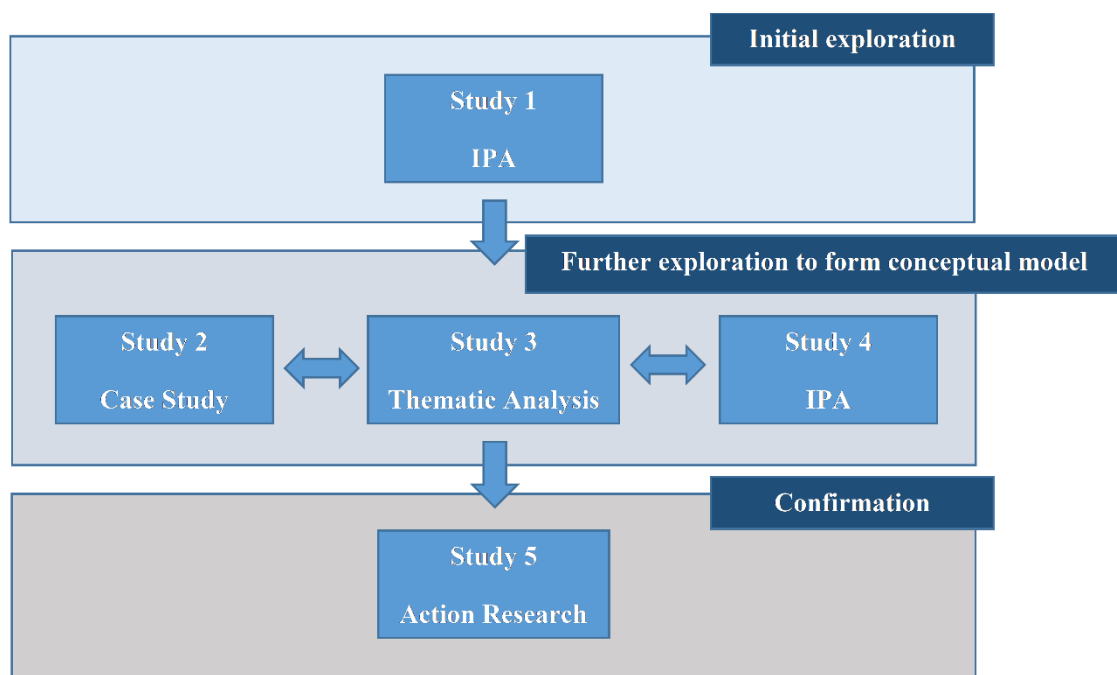


Figure 3.2. Research Path of Current Programme of Research

3.3. Quantitative Research

Quantitative research provides a measurement orientation from data that can be gathered from many individuals and trends assessed across large geographic regions (Creswell, 2008). Quantitative research has been described as “a genre which uses a special language which appears to exhibit some similarity to the ways in which scientists talk about how they investigate the natural order” (Bryman, 2003, p.12). Quantitative methods in

social research include surveys and experiments but data from these methods have been criticised if the complexity of human nature is to be assessed (Bryman, 2003). Within the current programme of research a deep and rich evaluation of the practice environment is warranted. However, in the current programme of research a triangulation of qualitative and quantitative research methods was employed within the action research approach in the fifth study (Sale et al., 2002).

The use of quantitative research methods in the current programme of research was to measure and analyse causal relationships within the practice environment (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011). Guba and Lincoln (1989) have claimed that questions of method are secondary to questions of paradigms. However, Sale et al. (2002) argued that methods are shaped by and represent paradigms that reflect a particular belief about reality. Therefore, despite a constructivist and qualitative research approach being the prominent paradigm in the current programme of research, there was a need for quantitative methods to provide triangulation. Within the current programme of research, quantitative research methods were utilised in a survey approach, which is detailed later in this chapter.

3.4. Qualitative Research

Qualitative research consists of studying the meaning that people place on phenomena in their natural settings and makes the world visual through a representation and an interpretation of field notes, interviews, conversations, photographs, recordings, and memos to the self (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005). The following definition of qualitative research has been offered by Creswell and Poth (2017):

Qualitative research begins with assumptions, a worldview, the possible use of a theoretical lens, and the study of research problems inquiring into the meaning individuals or groups ascribe to a social or human problem. To study this problem, qualitative researchers use an emerging qualitative approach to inquiry, the collection of data in a natural setting sensitive to the people and places under study, and data analysis that is inductive and establishes patterns or themes. The final written report or presentation includes the voices of participants, the reflexivity of the researcher, and a complex description and interpretation of the problem, and it extends the literature or signals a call for action.

The psychological factors of influence in the practice environment are solely created by, and affective upon, the participants within the environment. To gather participant data

that is within its natural setting and socially constructed the current programme of research employed several qualitative research approaches that included interpretative phenomenological analysis, case study, thematic analysis, and action research. Further detail of these approaches are offered later in this chapter.

3.5. Mixed Methods Research

Mixed methods research (MMR) combines elements of both qualitative and quantitative research approaches for the purposes of breadth and depth of understanding and corroboration (Johnson, Onwuegbuzie, & Turner, 2007). However, not all researchers support MMR as it has been suggested that it can dilute enquiry due to quantitative and qualitative methodologies not being truly compatible (Shank, 2006). The advantage of MMR is its ability to combine the strengths of several research methods. The advantages of using MMR is discussed by Creswell and Plano Clark (2017) and listed below:

- MMR provides more evidence for studying a research problem than either quantitative or qualitative research alone.
- MMR helps answer questions that cannot be answered by quantitative or qualitative approaches alone.
- By combining approaches, researchers gain new knowledge that is more than just the sum of the two parts.
- MMR provides a bridge across the often adversarial divide between quantitative and qualitative researchers.
- MMR encourages the use of multiple worldviews, or paradigms, rather than the typical association of certain paradigms with quantitative and qualitative research.
- MMR is practical in the sense that the researcher is free to use all methods possible to address a research problem.

The current programme of research undertook an emergent mixed methods design (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2017). This was because the practice environment has received limited research attention. Within the field of performance environments, differences have been found between the psychological influencing factors in sport. For example, Mellalieu, Neil, Hanton, and Fletcher (2009) found influencing factor differences between performance and organisational settings. McKay, Niven, Lavalley, and White (2008) positioned influencing sources across three factor categories titled competitive, organisational, and personnel. Therefore, it could be assumed that the practice

environment may differ from previous research and a research approach that offers flexibility would be the most sensible.

To gather an in-depth understanding of a phenomenon the use of multiple methods, or triangulation, is undertaken (Denzin, 2012). The combination of multiple methods can be understood as a strategy that adds rigor, breadth complexity, richness, and depth to any inquiry (Flick, 2007). Shannon-Baker (2015) stated the benefits of triangulating multiple lines of inquiry:

The implications of using limited approaches in any line of inquiry result in investigating a problem from only a single angle. As a result, we can only investigate information that is connected to those lines of inquiry. By instead engaging in multiple forms of inquiry, we can explore information that is not accessible through a single approach alone.

Of the six major designs of MMR, a sequential transformative design was employed in the current programme of research (Creswell et al., 2003). The sequential transformative design can have a predominant method that guides the project, which in the case of the current research programme was a qualitative methodology. This design allowed for the research to be guided by the theoretical perspective, namely the development of a conceptual model, rather than the use of methods alone (Creswell et al., 2003). An aim of the current research programme was to develop a conceptual model of the psychological influencing factors present within the practice environment. Therefore, it was important to use a design that prioritised the development of the model through exploration, interpretation, creation, and confirmation that was not restricted by a set method and could best serve the theoretical perspective of the researcher (Terrell, 2012). By holding the conceptual framework as the priority, it also allowed a variation of qualitative methods to be employed.

3.6. Research Strategies and Techniques

The current programme of research predominantly employed qualitative research methods in an attempt to answer the research questions. Quantitative strategies were also used where necessary to provide an enhanced level of analysis (e.g., study five). Details of the research methods utilised and a rationale for their use is given below. Full method procedures can be found in the individual study chapters that employ them. Details of the data collection and analysis techniques used in the current programme of research are

included throughout this section where appropriate. Table 3.1 below provides a justification of why the methodological approaches in the current programme of research were undertaken in the order they were.

Table 3.1. Justification of Methodological Approaches Used

	Justification	Strength	Limitations & Acceptances
Study One	IPA offers a richer understanding of one's environmental perceptions. Due to practice environments having received limited research attention in the past, the first study of the current programme of research required a deep rather than superficial exploration of participant experience.	IPA can provide an understanding of the latent meaning of experience to enhance analysis.	Lower participant numbers and homogenous sampling can reduce the ability to make generalisations to the entire EABL environment. However, as the initial study of a larger programme this was accepted at this stage.
Study Two	A case study approach provides a holistic exploration of the practice environment. This study provides a greater array of experience from many members of one EABL practice environment.	The case study approach undertaken gathered perceptual data from non-playing members of the environment. Perceptual data from individuals across the whole environment offered a rich analysis of experience.	The perceptual data gathered and analysed was indistinguishable from role-related positions within the environment. Player (study one) and coach (study four) perceptual data analysed specifically, therefore, this limitation was accepted as it evaluated the environment as a whole.
Study Three	The constructed framework of influencing factors in the practice environment was used to gather data longitudinally to assess factor existence and affect over time.	Deductive analysis provides a confirmation of the existence of perceived influencing factors.	The WBQ used to collect data lacked depth of participant experience. However, there was benefit in collecting larger amounts of data across several weeks of practice, which added to the understanding of factors and their influence.
Study Four	Coach perceptions of the practice environment have not been specifically gathered before and required a deeper exploration through IPA. Coach perceptions were gathered after the deductive study so that they were indistinguishable from the predominant player perceptions gathered so far.	IPA offered a rich exploration of coach perception that isolated coach perceptions from that of other practice environment members.	Coach perceptual data was not included in the deductive study and their experience was not confirmed within the larger population of EABL players. However, by examining coach perceptions at this point it allowed the data to be separate and give coach experience its own platform of evaluation.
Study Five	Following the development of the practice environment framework, an action research approach was undertaken to apply and test the framework in a real-world setting.	The framework of influencing factors could be applied to a real-world practice environment to judge the effects of key factors.	The breadth of factors and lack of control group enhanced the difficulties of isolating the success of the improvement programme. Because of this, an education programme rather than intervention programme (with control group) was used.

3.6.1. Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis

To conduct research through the epistemological stance of constructivism, a research strategy that draws its fundamental principles from phenomenology (the essential components of unique experience) and hermeneutics (comprehension of an individual's experience) was utilised, which was interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA). In line with constructivism (Neuman, 2003), IPA can enable the consideration of an individual's interpretation of their social and personal world providing a greater depth of meaning (Allen-Collinson, 2009) and a richer understanding of an environment's impact (Pietkiewicz & Smith, 2014). IPA promotes the identification of an individual's unique experiences without comparing to predetermined criteria, which is effective for evaluating practice environments with limited previous research (Smith, Flowers, & Larkin, 2013). A further benefit of using IPA within constructivist research is it being phenomenological by examining the participant's personal perception or account of an object or event, as opposed to an attempt to produce an objective statement of the object or event itself (Eatough & Smith, 2008).

The interpretive nature of IPA is emphasized through the dynamic process of the researcher attempting to interpret the interpretations of the participants, which creates a two-stage interpretation process, or a double hermeneutic (Warner & Dixon, 2015). Therefore, the researcher's interpretations of the data form an important part of the research process by acting as a conduit between participant and reader (Smith et al., 2013). IPA has roots in health psychology (Smith, 1996) and has recently been used in sporting contexts as an attempt to provide a better understanding of what the data means, rather than simple description (Chamberlain, 2011).

IPA has gained increased popularity amongst sport and exercise researchers since the turn of the millennium (Smith et al., 2013) due to its ability to return results that can evaluate the complexity of participants' lived experience, which makes it an ideal approach for evaluating practice environment perceptions (Callary, Rathwell, & Young, 2015). Notable examples of IPA within sport include efforts to provide richer insights into coping effectiveness (e.g., Nicholls, 2007; Nicholls, Holt, & Polman, 2005). The most common method to collect data for an IPA study is through semi-structured interviews, which were used to collect all IPA data in the current programme of research (Eatough & Smith, 2008). The data analysis procedure for IPA can be found in the individual studies within this programme of research (chapters four and seven).

3.6.2. Semi-structured Interviews

The essence of the interview is to capture the stories told by people and understand how and where the stories are produced, which sort of stories they are, and how we can put them to honest and intelligent use in theorising about social life (Miller & Glassner, 2004). Interviews are a way for researchers to “understand the thought process that exists inside, an inner look at why people behave in the way they do” (Stuckey, 2013, p.56). There are several types of interview, which include: the focused interview; the semi-structured interview; the problem-centred interview; the expert interview; and the ethnographic interview (Flick, 2009). To meet the theoretical perspectives of the current programme of research, semi-structured interviews were used to encourage a dialogue between the participant and the researcher to gain a deep and personal understanding of a subject from the perspective of the participant (DiCicco-Bloom & Crabtree, 2006). Semi-structured interviews are the most often utilised approach in IPA research (Eatough & Smith, 2008).

Semi-structured interviews allow for open-ended questions and probing by the interviewer to give participants the opportunity to respond in their own words rather than forcing them to choose from fixed responses (Mack, Woodsong, Macqueen, Guest, & Namey, 2005). In comparison with questionnaires, interviews can offer the precise meaning of questions and any participant queries can be immediately clarified (Gray, 2014). The disadvantages of using interviews include issues with honesty and anonymity as interviewers know whom they have interviewed, they are less generalizable due to participant size, logistical and operational difficulties can exist in the arrangement of interviews, and there is a high time demand to transcribe interviews (Gray, 2014).

The questioning in semi-structured interviews begin with an opening question based upon the researcher’s theoretical presuppositions, which the interviewee is able to expand upon and provide a basis for further questioning of exposed phenomenon (Flick, 2009). Due to the interviewee being able to guide the discussions with flexibility, the individuality of experience can become explicit throughout the process (Eatough & Smith, 2017). The process of conducting a semi-structured interview is detailed in this extract from Stuckey (2013):

The interviewer has a paper-based interview guide to follow, which is based on the research question. It is called semi-structured because discussions may diverge from the interview guide, which can be more interesting than the initial question

that is asked. The participant does not need to answer the questions in order. Semi-structured interviews allow questions to be prepared ahead of time, which allows the interviewer to be prepared, yet gives the participant freedom to express views with his/her own words.

There is a heavy reliance upon the ability of the interviewer to produce a question guide based around the topic area and, during the interview, steer discussions to stay within the boundaries of the topic area. The interview guides used in the current programme of research were designed around UK academy basketball practice environments by the researcher rather than the use of a previously used performance environment interview guide to ensure an unrestricted gathering of previously unidentified phenomenon (Sparkes & Smith, 2009). A strict criteria-based interview guide would not allow an “openness-to-the-world of, and faithfulness to participant-generated concepts and accounts held to be essential for phenomenological research” (Allen-Collinson, 2009, p. 21).

The path of further questioning and probing undertaken by the interviewer, which impacts on the results generated, are subjectively interpreted and places the researcher at the heart of the research process (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2007; Jamshed, 2014). Therefore, the semi-structured interview is an effective data collection method for the constructivist researcher who wishes to understand the world of human experience (Mojtahed, Nunes, Martins, & Peng, 2014). The current programme of research used semi-structured interviews throughout to gain in-depth data from participants.

3.6.3. Case Study

Following an in-depth exploration of player experience within the practice environment using IPA (study one), the researcher deemed it necessary to develop understanding by gaining the views of the multiple individuals who exist within the environment (study two). To gain a holistic assessment of the experiences of individuals who make up the practice environment, a case study approach was undertaken (Yin, 2014). Case study approaches allow for empirical inquiry of contemporary phenomenon within real-world contexts where the experiences of individuals can provide measures for assessment (Yin, 2014). The case study is especially useful when trying to identify phenomenon with limited current evidence by providing a holistic environmental assessment.

To gain a greater depth of analysis, the case study was conducted with a single practice environment (Yin, 2011), which is in line with a previous performance

environment case study conducted by Fletcher and Streeter (2016). The units of analysis within this single case were the participants and the varied positions they held. This allowed the phenomenon (the psychological influencing factors) in the certain case (the practice environment) to be assessed using a variety of perceptual lenses (Baxter & Jack, 2008), which met the epistemological position of the researcher. This granted the individuality of participant experience to drive data collection and analysis, and not a distinctive set of method criteria (Sparkes & Smith, 2009). The gathering of data for the case study in the current programme of research was undertaken through semi-structured interviews, focus groups, and observations. A thematic analysis approach was employed to analyse data.

3.6.4. Focus groups

The purpose of a focus group is to better understand and gather opinions of how people feel or think about an issue, idea, product, or service (Krueger & Casey, 2014). Focus groups are a group interview technique that capitalises on communication between research participants in order to generate data (Kitzinger, 1995). The sport practice environment is highly social with many group members having to interact, which makes the focus group an effective form of data collection to answer the research questions of the current programme of research within a constructivist epistemology. Focus groups can generate data through social interaction and group synergy that are often deeper and richer than one to one interviews, illuminate differences between perspectives, and, due to the size of the target group, generate large amounts of data in a relatively short time span (Rabiee, 2004). Focus groups can also make members feel comfortable with each other, which causes members to engage in discussion with reactions and relationships between teammates being displayed for analysis (Rabiee, 2004). Directive and nondirective approaches can be taken in focus groups and the extract below from Stewart and Shamdasani (2014) highlights the benefits of using a nondirective approach when conducting research with a constructivist epistemological stance:

Nondirective approaches provide more opportunity for group interaction and discovery and greater opportunity for the individual participants' views to emerge, rather than the researcher's framing of the issues imposed on them. Although this risks less coverage of the key research topics, it has the advantage of providing a validity check on the researcher's understanding of the problem and its relevant dimensions.

Within large participant groups, focus groups can generate faster and more cost effective results, and provide safeguarding aspects of having participants in groups rather than in a one to one situation with the researcher (Stokes & Bergin, 2006). The safeguarding benefit could be seen as effective for the participant groups in the current programme of research aged between 16 to 19 years (Stuart, 2001). Morgan (1996) offered a rule of thumb with focus groups which included: using homogeneous strangers as participants; rely on a relatively structured interview with high moderator involvement; have six to ten participants per group; and have a total of three to five groups per project. However, they stated that these rules of thumb should not constitute a standard for focus group design. For example, the current programme of research explores the experiences of practice environment members that know each other and a focus group structure that is too rigid may not allow for a greater exploration of participant views. A potential disadvantage of using focus groups with participants who know each other is their reluctance to disclose what they think and feel in front of others, especially those that they see on a regular basis (Krueger & Casey, 2014). However, the interactions between participants within a social environment can provide results that are essential to answering the research questions (Halkier, 2010).

Within the current programme of research, several focus groups were used to collect data from player participants (studies two and five). A good rapport between researcher and participants had been built through previous regular professional contact, which can be advantageous in gaining trust and honest responses from participants (Braun, Clarke, & Weate, 2016). The focus groups proceeded in a similar fashion to the semi-structured interview as detailed previously (Kitzinger, 1995) with questioning being kept to a minimum and participants encouraged to create their own lines of inquiry and react to comments made by others (Rabiee, 2004). The data generated from the focus groups were analysed using inductive thematic analysis (see below).

3.6.5. Observation

The current programme of research used unstructured observations to understand and interpret behaviour within the practice environment, which best suits constructivism (Mulhall, 2003). An unstructured observation does not mean there is not a clear instruction or method behind the observation, rather that unstructured methods are used to enter 'the field' with no predetermined notions as to the discrete behaviours that they might observe (Mulhall, 2003). There are several observational approaches that can be employed

in research that include: non-participant; participant; and ethnography (Flick, 2018). Study two in the current programme of research employed a non-participant observation method where: “simple observers follow the flow of events. Behaviour and interaction continue as they would without the presence of a researcher, uninterrupted by intrusion” (Adler & Adler, 1998, p.223). Non-participant observations within the current programme of research were conducted unobtrusively from the vantage point of a viewing gallery overlooking the practice environment. However, from a public and conspicuous position there is the potential for influence, which is a possible limitation of observation as a data collection method (Flick, 2018).

In study five of the current programme of research, a participant observation approach was utilised due to the researcher interacting with the individuals in the practice environment while collecting information, which provided an enormously rich and complex gathering of data (Jorgensen, 2015). Observations were made during activities within the practice environment, such as with the strategy development meetings with players and coaches. The benefit of employing observations within the current programme of research was to use them in triangulation with other methods. For example, within the action research study (study five), observations were used alongside quantitative and focus group approaches to enhance the effectiveness of data analysis and give a better understanding of the practice environment (Bowen, 2005). The observations also allowed for the confirmation of data generated by other means and as Mulhall (2003) stated: “often the primary reason for using observational methods is to check whether what people say they do is the same as what they actually do”.

During the observations undertaken in the current programme of research, field notes were made. From a constructivist view point it is important to acknowledge that the field notes were subject to the researcher’s professional and personal world view (Mulhall, 2003). The researcher was in a position where they were able to oversee, communicate, and act upon the elements within the practice environment (Simpson & Tuson, 2003). Therefore, the personal experience and understanding of the environment held by the researcher provided meaningful interpretation (Atkinson, 1992). Field notes can have a variety of different applications and uses (Montgomery & Bailey, 2007). In study five of the current programme of research field notes were subjected to narrative analysis (see below) and provided a running background commentary as well as offering triangulation. Whereas in study two they contributed to the keeping of a reflexive journal (see appendix B) that

encouraged a critical evaluation of the researcher's assumptions and influences on the analysis of interview and focus group data (Wagstaff, Fletcher, & Hanton, 2012).

3.6.6. Thematic analysis

The current programme of research employed both inductive and deductive thematic analysis (TA). TA has been described as more than just a method of analysis but a process in which major analytic traditions are based (Ryan & Bernard, 2000). However, TA has more recently received backing as an independent method for qualitative research (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Patton (2002) among others, provided a foundation and an original set of procedures for TA, which now includes those specifically set out for sport and exercise science (Braun et al., 2016). The following extract from Braun, Clarke, and Terry (2014) describes TA as a method:

TA is a method for systematically identifying, organizing, and offering insight into patterns of meaning (themes) across a data set. Through focusing on meaning across a data set, TA allows the researcher to see and make sense of collective or shared meanings and experiences. Identifying unique and idiosyncratic meanings and experiences found only within a single data item is not the focus of TA. This method, then, is a way of identifying what is common to the way a topic is talked or written about and of making sense of those commonalities.

TA attempts to answer a specific research question and is, therefore, flexible in the way researchers can structure their approaches and lends itself to being employed in constructivist research.

TA produces analysis through the intersection of a researcher's theoretical assumptions, disciplinary knowledge, research skills and experience, and the content of the data themselves (Braun et al., 2016). This makes TA dependant on researcher interpretation and subjectivity from the researcher's previous knowledge (Smith & McGannon, 2017). Vaismoradi, Turunen, and Bondas (2013) contested that TA was suitable for researchers who wished to employ: "a relatively low level of interpretation, in contrast to grounded theory or hermeneutic phenomenology, in which a higher level of interpretive complexity is required" (p.399). However, different views exist with respect to the meaning of description and interpretation, which depend on the methodological approach (Sandelowski, 2010). Therefore, TA is capable of providing the constructivist researcher with the flexibility required to meet the needs of the theoretical perspective.

The advantages of using TA are detailed below, as set out by Braun and Clarke (2006):

- Flexibility
- Relatively easy and quick method to learn, and do.
- Accessible to researchers with little or no experience of qualitative research.
- Results are generally accessible to educated general public.
- Useful method for working within participatory research paradigm, with participants as collaborators.
- Can usefully summarize key features of a large body of data, and/or offer a 'thick description' of the data set.
- Can highlight similarities and differences across the data set.
- Can generate unanticipated insights.
- Allows for social as well as psychological interpretations of data.
- Can be useful for producing qualitative analyses suited to informing policy development.

Disadvantages of TA include its over flexibility causing researchers difficulty in narrowing research focus due to the broad range of meaning that can be taken from the data and its inability to allow for a retained sense of continuity and contradiction through any one individual account (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

The current programme of research used inductive TA in study two to explore the experience of participants within the practice environment and followed with a confirmation study using a deductive TA approach to analyse the existence of the previously identified themes in study three. Researchers use inductive TA to code data on the basis of participants' experience, which means the researcher's analytic lens does not completely override the participant story (Braun et al., 2014). Whereas, deductive TA allows for the analysis of data against pre-existing theories or frameworks (Elo & Kyngäs, 2008). Specific protocol for TA can be found in the individual studies within the current programme of research.

3.6.7. Action Research

Action research studies are becoming increasingly popular within sport to provide long-term solutions to the real-life needs of participants (Thrower, Harwood, & Spray,

2017). Its diverse usage can be seen with, for example, psychological interventions (Wagstaff, Hanton, & Fletcher, 2013), sport education programmes (Farias, Mesquita, Hastie, & O'Donovan, 2018), and youth sport participation (Chalip & Hutchinson, 2017). This extract from Huang (2010) provides a definition of action research.

Action research is an orientation to knowledge creation that arises in a context of practice and requires researchers to work with practitioners. Unlike conventional social science, its purpose is not primarily or solely to understand social arrangements, but also to effect desired change as a path to generating knowledge and empowering stakeholders. We may therefore say that action research represents a transformative orientation to knowledge creation in that action researchers seek to take knowledge production beyond the gate-keeping of professional knowledge makers.

Action research contributes to practical problems by collaborating with the members of the system by turning them into researchers, which allows for an evaluation of the applied intervention from multiple sources within the environment and permits the individuals to make decisions that guide the research because they are best placed to do so (Bodner, Maclsaac, & White, 1999; O'Brien, 2001). Action research does not solely rely on one method of data collection. For example, Bodner et al. (1999) indicated how an evaluation of new curriculum materials in a chemistry class could not be accurately performed by only assessing end of course examination results. Bodner et al. suggested that: "by focusing on measurements that can be subjected to statistical tests we often lose the ability to measure the phenomenon in which we are interested" (p.34). Action research has been suggested to be a strategy used mainly within a pragmatic paradigm. However, action research could be an effective strategy for evaluating the highly complex social environment of practice through the use of different methods (Mackenzie & Knipe, 2006). Therefore, the variety of data collection methods utilised in action research can provide the constructivist researcher with an array of findings that interpret the experience of participants within the practice environment (Huang, 2010).

Several action research models have been developed to present the cyclical, reflective, and adaptive nature of this research strategy. The action research spiral (see figure 3.3 below) is one such model that displays the stages of action research, which is to plan, act and observe, and reflect (Kemmis, McTaggart, & Nixon, 2013). It also identifies the need for repeated iterations throughout the stages. Elliott (1978) provided a basis in

which to perform action research in an iterative cycle of four steps. These steps are outlined below:

The Reconnaissance and General Plan: an exploratory stance is adopted, where an understanding of a problem is developed and plans are made for some form of intervention.

The Action in Action Research: the intervention is then carried out.

Monitoring the Implementation: during and around the time of the intervention, pertinent observations are collected in various forms.

The Revised Plan: the data are examined for trends and characteristics, and a new strategy is developed for implementation.

In regards to the current programme of research and the implementation of an educational programme strategy in study five, the use of action research allowed the researcher to attempt to better the performance of individuals within the practice environment (Cronin & Lowes, 2016). The range of data collection methods employed in study five included focus groups, web-based questionnaires, observations, and field notes. Qualitative analysis of the data was performed through narrative analysis. Quantitative analysis of the data generated from the web-based questionnaires was performed using the Friedman test.

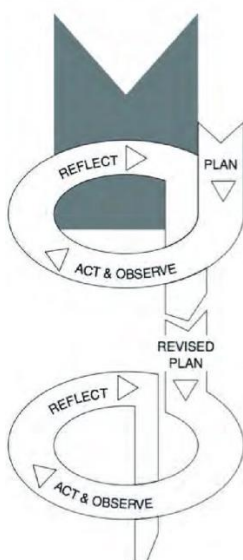


Figure 3.3. The Action Research Spiral (Kemmis et al., 2013)

3.6.8. Narrative Analysis

Telling stories about ourselves to others is one way in which our identity may be presented and is intricately connected to the social contexts within which it occurs (Griffin & Phoenix, 2016). Narrative analysis is underpinned and informed by constructive or interpretative epistemologies, such as the stance taken by the researcher in the current programme of study (Kim, 2015). Humans organise experience and memories of happenings in the form of stories and these stories are a version of reality whose acceptability is governed by convention rather than by empirical verification and logic (Bruner, 1991). The current programme of research adopted guidelines for using narrative analysis in sport and exercise by Smith (2016), which stated that:

Narrative analysis is often also underpinned by a psychosocial approach that emphasises human beings as meaning-makers who, in order to interpret, direct, and intelligibly communicate life, configure and constitute their experience and sense of who they are using narratives that their social and cultural world have passed down. A complementary core premise of narrative work is that narratives shape human emotion and conduct.

Therefore, narrative analysis allows the story of the participant and their interpretation of the world to be told with the emotions they experienced it with. It also allows the researcher, who in the case of the current programme of research was involved in the action research that was undertaken, to provide their interpretation of experience.

The participants' story that narrative analysis displays shows the reality that individuals perceive and how they make sense of their worlds and the social actions they perform (Griffin & Phoenix, 2016). Within the current programme of research, a narrative analysis is well placed to aid the researcher in interpreting the complex experience and interactions of the individuals involved within the practice environment over a sustained period of time. Smith (2016) states two methods of narrative analysis, which are known as a storyanalyst and a storyteller. A storyanalyst places narratives under analysis and communicates results via a realist tale, which is the prominent method used in the current programme of research. However, the researcher in the current programme of research was a participant themselves in study five and their interpretation of the environment was under analysis. Therefore, the researcher had a story to tell and elements of storyteller analysis are present (Carless, 2014). In essence, the researcher acted as storyanalyst when evaluating participant experience and as storyteller of the entire intervention process in

study five. The type of narrative analysis used in the current programme of research was thematic narrative analysis.

3.6.9. Thematic Narrative Analysis

The current programme of research employed thematic narrative analysis (TNA) as set out by Smith (2016), which is the most commonly used method when the researcher is operating as a storyanalyst (Riessman, 2008). TNA focuses on the content within participant stories rather than the content of all talk (Smith, 2016). TNA has been used to identify common patterns in previous research when dealing with various types of data (Ronkainen, Watkins, & Ryba, 2016). Examples of TNA in sport include those undertaken by Fasting and Sand (2015) who explored sexual harassment in sport, and Smith, Bundon, and Best (2016) who examined activist identities among elite disabled athletes. In the current programme of research, TNA is applied to several different types of data, such as interviews and focus groups. A specific protocol for using TNA can be found in chapter eight.

3.6.10. Web-Based Questionnaire

Questionnaires can be used to gather data in an array of different ways (Hurst & Bird, 2019). Questionnaires are capable of gathering both quantitative and qualitative data. Quantitative questionnaires might use Likert scales and gather large amounts of participant responses relatively quickly. However, there is a risk that respondents' interpretations of questions is different to that of the questionnaire developer (Dietrich & Ehrlenspiel, 2010). Qualitative questionnaires commonly employ open-ended questions and are able to gather richer and less biased responses from participants who are not picking responses from a predetermined list but suffer from the need for extensive coding and larger item non-response rates (Reja, Manfreda, Hlebec, & Vehovar, 2003).

Van Gelder, Bretveld, and Roeleveld (2010) suggested that traditional approaches to gathering information from participants, including face-to-face, telephone interviews, and paper questionnaires, increasingly fail to generate good qualitative results within parameters. Web-based approaches to gathering open-ended responses allows for an easier and quicker collection of participant experience, especially when collecting data from participants who are not local to a researcher and when data needs to be collected over long periods of time (Denscombe, 2009). The ability to use a web-based questionnaire (WBQ) over long periods of time to generation data is a significant strength of this data collection technique, which can offer a rigor to results through providing evidence of

consistent affect (Xanthopoulou, Bakker, Demerouti, & Schaufeli, 2012). The WBQ has also been reported by Wang et al. (2005) to generate a superior participant response rate when compared with paper-based alternatives. However, response rates have also been highlighted as a cause for concern with the WBQ (see Van Gelder et al., 2010).

The main disadvantages of using a WBQ are suggested to be low response rates, poor reliability, and poor validity of the data (Van Gelder et al., 2010). Response rate issues tend to have study implications if the coverage differential is high amongst the participant population. This is becoming less of a problem as time goes on as internet and device coverage is becoming greater across the world (Touvier et al., 2010). The participants in the current programme of research had access to the internet across a variety of devices, such as mobile phones and desktop computers, which appeared effective at removing any potential response rate issues. In fact, the use of a WBQ in a young UK participant group could be seen to have enhanced participant response rates.

In a similar vein, the issues of reliability and validity of the data proposed by Van Gelder et al. (2010) were not perceived to be suffered in the current programme of research. For example, participants were made aware of the how the questionnaire functioned and that responses had to be submitted when completed. Participants were also instructed to complete the WBQ in privacy to guard against socially desirable bias. Possibly the greatest advantage of using a WBQ in the current programme of research was to gather data in relative 'real time'. This enhanced the authenticity of participant experience compared to interviews that have been found to be repetitive of familiar cultural tales (Silverman, 2006). All participants in the study had access to internet connected devices that made the distribution of the WBQ immediate and permitted participants to complete it in privacy and at convenient times.

3.6.11. Friedman Test

The Friedman test is a non-parametric alternative test to the one-way ANOVA with repeated measures to measure the differences between groups on three or more different occasions when the dependent variable is ordinal (Green & Salkind, 2016). To use the Friedman test, several assumptions were required, which were; participants measured on three or more different occasions, the dependent variable was measured at the ordinal level, and the sample did not need to be normally distributed (Field, 2013).

The Friedman test was used in the fifth study of the current programme of research to measure the differences over time between participant Likert scale scores for

current fatigue, current stress, predicted performance, actual performance, effort, preparation, and support. The average score for each participant was calculated for the six time phases and the results of Chi-square, degrees of freedom, and significance level were reported. The findings were used as a method of triangulation against the significantly larger amounts of data gathered from qualitative methods (Denzin, 2012; Sale et al., 2002).

3.7. Insider Research Subjectivity

The researcher had an intimate knowledge of the environment and participant group that were being studied. Taylor (2011) highlights the significant attention that has been paid to the advantages of insider researcher but admits that the disadvantages have received less attention. The advantages of insider research have been reported by Greene (2014) to include: a pre-existing knowledge of the environment for enhanced accuracy; provide a greater ability for the researcher to interact with participants; and has better access to the participants within an environment. Greene (2014) also suggests insider research to have disadvantages, which include the researcher being overly subjective and biased where the researcher will make assumptions based on previous knowledge and may force their personal opinions into research results.

In an attempt to reduce the potential disadvantages of insider research, several techniques were offered by Greene (2014) and were used throughout the current programme of research. For example, field notes and a reflexive journal were employed to allow the researcher to reflect upon their decisions and interpretations. Also, the use of several research methods during the current programme of research allowed for triangulation. The interpretations of a single researcher, as expected in an independent PhD study programme, who holds a close relationship to the participants within the environment under study may produce subjective results and interpretations from the data. Therefore, it is vital that attempts are made in qualitative research to guard against potential biases.

Chapter Four: Study One – An Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis of Performance Influencing Factors within the Practice Environment

4.1. Introduction and Aim

Performance environment research has not specifically focused on the psychological influencing factors in the practice environment. To undertake an exploration of practice environment influences, an initial gathering and analysis of data that holds a richness and depth can provide a greater understanding of participant experience and perception (Pietkiewicz & Smith, 2014). Previous performance environment research has predominantly sought to identify influencing factors retrospectively through nomothetic approaches (e.g., Greenleaf, Gould, & Dieffenbach, 2001). However, these approaches may not accurately reveal the source of an influence (Lazarus, 2000).

An international youth soccer team study by Pain and Harwood (2007) highlighted a range of psychological factors that can influence performance, which include: a lack of motivation that negatively influences performance, consistent planning across age groups to provide familiarity, and high expectations producing anxiety. The results provided a significant step in improving our understanding of performance environments, but the authors did highlight difficulties during theme coding based on the positive or negative influence perspective. Therefore, an approach, such as the one taken in the current study that delves deeper into complex human experience, may reveal more accurate results that better evaluate positive and negative performance influences.

To delve deeper into the phenomenon of human experience and the perceptions of those within the practice environments, an interpretive phenomenological analysis (IPA) approach can aid researchers in understanding the intimate portrayal an individual makes of their surroundings (Smith & Osborn, 2003). Psychological influencing factors have yet to be exclusively explored within the practice environment and IPA is an approach that can provide a rich data-laden beginning to the current programme of research. IPA has roots in health psychology (Smith, 1996) and has recently been used in sporting contexts as an attempt to provide a better understanding of what the data means, rather than simple description (Chamberlain, 2011). Notable examples of IPA within sport have included efforts by Nicholls (2007) and Nicholls, Holt, and Polman (2005) to provide richer insights into coping effectiveness. However, the appropriate use of IPA in the previous Nicholls

(2007) study is questionable as the author returned superficial results from participants answering fixed diary questions, an emphasis upon frequency counts, and an inability for the researcher to probe participants further with questioning.

Idiographic approaches are capable of offering a deeper understanding of unique participant experiences (Picione, 2015), which can provide more contrast and balance to the nomothetic dominated study of performance environments, as well as providing a starting point for the exploration of a previously under researched phenomenon. As a result, the aim of the current study was to undertake a rich exploration of the psychological factors perceived to influence performance within the practice environment using an idiographic approach to provide a deeper understanding of participant perception.

4.2. Method

4.2.1. Design

The current study adopted an IPA approach. The reason for undertaking an IPA approach is detailed in chapter three. IPA is a qualitative research approach that attempts to explore and make sense of an individual's life experiences, all of which are especially useful when one is concerned with complexity, process, or novelty (Smith & Osborn, 2003). Drawing fundamentally from principles of phenomenology, hermeneutics, and idiography, IPA promotes the identification of an individual's unique experiences without comparing to predetermined criteria (Smith, Flowers, & Larkin, 2013). Potential weaknesses of IPA have been identified. These include the limited guidance towards the analysis process (Chamberlain, 2011) and previous attempts in sport that returned superficial results from participants answering fixed diary questions, an emphasis on frequency counts, and an inability for the researcher to probe participants further with questioning (Nicholls, 2007). However, IPA that is performed successfully can provide a much needed idiographic approach to performance environment research where analysis can aid researchers in the evaluation of the complex nature of participants' lived experience (Callary, Rathwell, & Young, 2015).

IPA can enable the consideration of an individual's interpretation of their social and personal world providing a greater depth of meaning (Allen-Collinson, 2009) and a richer understanding of an environment's impact (Pietkiewicz & Smith, 2014). This is in contrast to nomothetic approaches used in previous performance environment research which has generated broad universal meaning from large participant groups (e.g., Gould,

Greenleaf, Chung, & Guinan, 2002). The researcher, who conducted the interviews and data analysis, has a background in playing and coaching sport at a national level, and has spent several years working with Elite Academy Basketball League (EABL) players. This fact is important as researcher's interpretations of the data form an important part of the research process by acting as a conduit between participant and reader (Smith et al., 2013). This study adopted specific protocol guidelines set out by Smith et al. (2013) in the conducting and analysis of a phenomenological study.

4.2.2. Participants

The participants in this study were five male basketball players enrolled fulltime at a UK college that had successfully achieved Advanced Apprenticeship in Sporting Excellence (AASE) status for basketball and competed in the Elite Academy Basketball League (EABL). A participant sample of five was deemed appropriate to generate a rich and compelling case that was not subject to potential problems from data overload (Noon, 2018). The EABL is a national competition for student-athletes aged 16-19 years where participants' ability resides between the Swann, Moran, and Piggott (2015) classification of semi-elite and competitive-elite. The age range of participants was 17-19 years ($M = 18$, $SD = 0.7$) and basketball practice experience ranged between 4-8 years ($M = 5.2$, $SD = 1.8$). Participants were recruited from three academy teams from different colleges and were interviewed during a single EABL season. The interviews were conducted between the fifth and eleventh competitive match weeks. The participants were purposefully sampled from a homogenous group of EABL players who were in their third year of the programme to provide a good degree of environment experience. Participant demographic information is presented in table 4.1 below.

Table 4.1. Participant Demographic Information

	Age	Years of competitive experience	Academy
John	17	4	1
Paul	18	8	1
George	19	4	1
Richard	18	4	2
Peter	18	6	3

It was important for the researcher to develop good rapport with the participants during interviews, which has been suggested to facilitate participants to answer more

freely and honestly to generate richer data from participant experience (Pietkiewicz & Smith, 2014). IPA researchers acknowledge potential subjectivity within interviews, which is an inevitable part of an interpretation process that uses phenomenological and hermeneutic framing (Eatough & Smith, 2017). To guard against leading participants to give responses that would please the interviewer, minimal guidance was given during interviews and participants were encouraged to expand upon their experiences and perceptions. Participants were sent a copy of their interview transcript and were asked to read it to ensure their experiences were accurately recorded. No participant wished to amend a transcript. Pseudonyms were assigned to participants to protect their identity, which were John, Paul, George, Richard, and Peter.

4.2.3. Procedure

Basketball England and EABL coaches were contacted (see Appendix A for recruitment email) and they granted permission for players to be approached following the scrutinizing of ethical procedures for participant safety. Participant contact information was supplied by each participant's coach following an initial invitation to take part in the study via the coach. Participants were contacted by the researcher to participate in the study via a telephone call and were offered an interview date that suited their schedule. During this initial conversation the purpose of the study was explained and an information sheet was emailed to the participant. Participants were advised that their confidential involvement was voluntary and their anonymity was assured. Any reference made to an individual who could be identified was excluded from the study. Before the interviews took place, all participants were given the opportunity to ask questions about the study, its purpose, and the consent they were giving. When the participants were satisfied with their role in the study they gave their signed consent. Ethical approval for the study was obtained from the University of Winchester ethics committee.

4.2.4. Data Collection

The participants individually took part in confidential interviews away from the basketball environment. All interviews were audio recorded and lasted between 62 and 75 minutes ($M = 68.6$, $SD = 5.2$). Data were collected using a semi-structured interview approach to guide the discussion rather than dictate it, which allowed for individuality and flexibility throughout the process (Eatough & Smith 2017). The interview schedule contained questions designed to draw out the experience of the participants when in the practice environment (see Appendix A). The questions were not designed around a specific

framework or criteria because it would restrict gathering previously unidentified factors (Sparkes & Smith, 2009). A strict criteria-based interview schedule would be unable to provide the “openness-to-the-world of, and faithfulness to participant-generated concepts and accounts held to be essential for phenomenological research” (Allen-Collinson, 2009, p. 21). Questions and prompts were designed to elicit the positive and negative performance influences that existed within the practice environment and were influenced by the researcher’s experience of the environment under investigation (Callary et al., 2015; Pietkiewicz & Smith, 2014). At the start of each interview the participant was made aware that all questioning was specific to practice environment experience rather than competition. Example questions included: “Can you explain what influenced you to play well?”, “What do you think caused you to have a poor practice?”, and “What sort of influence do your teammates have on you?”.

Questioning was kept to a minimum and did not rigidly follow the schedule, which encouraged participants to tell their story in their own words throughout the discussion (Smith et al., 2013). If a topic of interest was elicited during the interview, the interviewer would probe the participant with additional questioning to enable the participant’s exploration of specific details and factors influencing performance (Smith et al., 2013). Example questions included, “What do you think the cause was?” and “Why do you think it affected you so much?”. The audio recording was transcribed verbatim within 48 hours of the interview and a copy sent to the participant. Participants were offered the chance to amend or change statements but none did. During transcription all text was anonymized to protect identities and stored in accordance with the Data Protection Act 1998.

4.2.5. Data Analysis

Data were analysed by the researcher using IPA (Smith et al., 2013). This analytical approach aims to explore and understand participant lived experiences and provide an insider’s perspective of the phenomenon under investigation (Nicholls et al., 2005), which offers a richness that is important to qualitative research (Tracy, 2010). Interview transcriptions were read and reread to ensure understanding of the narrative and an immersion into the world of the participant. During this phase, semantic content and language was examined on an exploratory level with the audio recording being replayed. Areas of interest were noted in the left-hand column of the script that had a clear and credible phenomenological focus by staying as close to the participant’s explicit meaning as possible and with resonance in mind, ensure the emphasis was placed on psychological factors from the EABL practice environment (Tracy, 2010).

Thought was given to the context from which each statement derived and more abstract concepts were interpreted to aid in the sense making of the participant's experience (Smith et al., 2013). Following initial comment making, the transcript was reread for a final time and previous notes were used to create tentative single data emergent themes that were written in the right hand column. The construction of themes was a collaboration between participant and researcher who foregrounded the voice of the participant to address the aims of the study (Didymus, 2017).

An example of the analysis process that provided depth, experience, and meaning to the data (Tracy, 2010) can be seen with participant George who stated: "I don't know why I just woke up feeling groggy, not feeling good, and my muscles were aching and then it came to training and nothing was going in and I was getting really frustrated with myself". Initial analysis of this text identified a negative performance influence. Further analysis of this text and the probing questions that followed revealed the participant had entered a negative spiral with no ability to control performance, experienced physical fatigue from an unknown origin, held a performance focus on tangible outcomes, had an inability to readjust performance expectations, and had a lack of reflection and understanding of why performance had declined. All of these potential psychological influencing factors were taken forward to encompass different data themes.

During data analysis, the first interview was analysed before the second took place and this pattern continued throughout analysis. This allowed complete devotion towards each interview, and although previous interviews informed future analysis, it permitted for an exhaustion of emergent themes (Tracy, 2010). Following each interview analysis the preceding total analysis was reviewed against the current analysis to interpret shared experiences and develop associated themes to complete the hermeneutic cycle; the need for phenomenological inquiry to be an iterative process that moves back and forth through participants' accounts to understand their experiences (Gill, 2015). Emergent theme data units were added to a computerized spreadsheet, which allowed data units to be moved quickly and easily.

The manual mapping of theme interrelationships, connections, and patterns was undertaken to create related theme clusters. This process involved moving data units into loosely related clusters, which evolved as further data units were added. At this stage, the researcher took a more central role in interpreting the data (Smith et al., 2013). Previous interview analysis, theme generation, and ideas were bracketed on a separate spreadsheet to allow the following interview analysis to remain idiographic and as uninfluenced as

possible from previous interviews. However, a certain amount of informing took place during subsequent interview analysis as patterns in the themes emerged through the revisiting of theme relationships between participants (Gill, 2015). Finally, following the completion of all interviews, superordinate themes were created from the clusters of subordinate themes.

4.2.6. Rigor and Quality

The use of universal criteria for qualitative research has been questioned and this is especially noteworthy for IPA research that is highly idiographic and interpretative (Smith & McGannon, 2017). However, where possible, aspects of quality that could be drawn from Tracy's (2010) eight "big-tent" criteria for excellent qualitative research were applied as long as they did not affect the theoretical underpinnings of IPA (Smith et al., 2013). For example, in an attempt to increase meaningful coherence a hierarchical content tree of superordinate and subordinate themes (see table 4.2) provides the reader with an overview and meaningful way to interpret the data for their own environment. The practice environment is an understudied performance environment domain and was deemed to be a worthy topic for investigation. Raw data items can be found in Appendix A. This study's findings are presented with direct participant quotes and each superordinate subsection within the results section contains quotes from over half of the participants in the study to add richness and sincerity to analysis. Despite its limitations as a method for enhancing research rigor (see Smith & McGannon, 2017), member checking was performed to enhance credibility by sending participants their transcriptions and asking them to confirm the accuracy. Finally, all participants' individual data items were included and accounted for within superordinate theme categorisation, which provided a true representation of experience.

4.3. Results

A total of nine superordinate themes were constructed from 24 subordinate theme categories, which are displayed in table 4.2 below. These nine superordinate themes included: player perceptions of the coach, relationships between teammates, emotional and behavioural perception, negative experiences leading to enhanced motivation, performance expectations before and during practice activities, philosophy towards the success of the team, current physical state, goal focus within the practice environment, and responsibility positions during practice activities. Richer detail of the superordinate themes is provided in this results section with extracts from participant interviews.

Additional quotes are provided in Table 4.2 to offer the reader further insight into the participants' voice in the generation of the results

Table 4.2. Influencing Practice Performance Factors Reported by EABL Players

Superordinate Themes	Subordinate Themes	Additional Data Extracts
Player perceptions of the coach	Emotions displayed	"The coach never takes responsibility, they are always blaming others when things go wrong"
	Coach faith in player	"We always put more effort in if the coach is right there on court side. I think it shows that they actual care what we are doing and that's important"
	Player perception of coach	
Relationships between teammates	Location during practice	
	Teammate understanding	"I'm not his greatest fan. Actually I can't stand him off the court. We aren't friends and that affects us on court"
	Teammate respect	"I need to respect you. If I respect you then I know I will work harder for you. I'll want to play with you and then we can click"
Socializing off-court		
Emotional and behavioural perception	Emotions displayed by players	"If I feel good then I feel like I lift the team as I won't everyone to be working hard"
	Emotional control and coping strategies	"Accepting certain things will upset me, then I can deal with it and move on. I know that if I don't get the ball then that's ok. If I get angry then I can't expect to do well and get anything out of the session"
Negative experiences leading to enhanced motivation	Motivation from negative experience	"I'd say it takes time to build on your confidence. Like, I take knocks time after time but I built myself up and then I started to play better. I struggled so I had to make improvements so it does help to fail"
Performance expectations before and during practice activities	Expectation of performance level	"I know I'm tired, yes. And I know I don't play as well. But that doesn't stop me wanting to play hard and play well. I want to play well every single time I step foot on the court regardless of how I feel, say in my legs. But yes, sometimes I'm trash in training because I expect too much."
	Current form	
Philosophy towards the success of the team	Player individual and team goals	"It's the most frustrating thing [teammate mistakes]. More frustrating than lack of ability. I'm not mucking up so why do you have to. You shouldn't be making those errors I can't play when it's like that. I don't see the point."
	Psychological safety of environment	"It probably effects the team but It's a big year for me, I need to play well so I can get a good tape together [promotional video for US scholarship]. Not that I would say it in front of the other but my performance is more important than the team's."
	Teammate mistakes and subsequent behaviour	
Current physical state	Physical state during practice	"I smashed myself [physically] last week, last week was especially brutal. I worked so hard in practice and played well but couldn't bring it out in the game [competitive match at the weekend]."
Goal focus within the practice environment	Goal setting and feedback	"I have to play right up there, like top level. If we get matched up against each other it's hard. I'm better, I'm older. He got on me at the start of the year, I guess it was a hangover from the summer. I didn't like it at all. I'm the best."
	Intra-team competition	
	Outcome focus	"It's cold in the winter, takes a while to get going. I think it can help [build resilience]."
	Standard of facility	
Responsibility positions during practice activities	Having a responsibility	"Last year we had no leaders, well not many, I tried my best. Thing is this year we got too many, everyone is trying to call it, everyone is right, it causes problems."
	Role models and leaders	

4.3.1. Player Perceptions of the Coach

Coach moods during practice were said to dictate the moods of players, which was suggested by Peter who stated: “If the coach is in a good mood it leads to players being positive” and by Paul: “I’m always aware of coach mood when negative”. Participants who perceived coaches to be in a negative mood and make unfair decisions had a negative influence on player performance, as described by Peter: “If everyone is working hard and trying to compete and you make a bad pass, it’s not that bad. But then if they [coach] are in a bad mood, then making one bad pass, they will punish us for it”. However, the extract below from Richard describes how influence has a valence fluidity, which saw a negative emotional display from a coach cause initial negative influence that led to a positive performance influence through increased motivation and player cohesion:

Good moods usually spread. A bad mood, it does tend to start off like that because if he’s [coach] in a bad mood then you’re more likely to run but a lot of the time I try to pick it up in the sense of “come on guys, it’s all fine”, but making it clear that we still need to get a good practice out of it.

Positive coach behaviour was seen in the following extract from George who described his coach enthusing him by showing faith and trust in him: “He [coach] ran the play for me and he trusted me enough to put me in that situation. When I scored it was just like he expected that and it made me feel better”. A positive coach-player relationship was centred upon coaches being perceived as professional, knowledgeable, understanding, and approachable.

4.3.2. Relationships between Teammates

The amount of socializing the team undertook, the type of communication, and the bonds of friendship within the practice environment were found to be pivotal in influencing teammate cohesion. Richard discussed how an open relationship could enhance development:

Last year my friend would be happy to tell me if I was messing up or if I was doing something wrong. He didn’t have to be rude to me he would just say ‘you’re messing up so fix it’ or if I said something to him and it didn’t sit well he would say I needed to approach it differently and this is what you should say. We were both willing to listen to each other and adapt for the sake of improving and as a team made it a lot easier for us to get along because we can settle issues within a few

seconds and move on. I don't know how we make that chemistry. I knew him for two years and we hung out a lot. We were on the same page.

The above extract indicates a successful teammate bond as having aligned goals, mutual respect, and no fear in discussing potentially sensitive performance issues. The forging of respect is shown in the extract below that states how high skill level, a relaxed attitude towards basketball, an ability to raise performance, and a willingness to help others to achieve are important for teammate cohesion:

I feel that I'm one of the few players off the court as well as on the court that everyone likes. So no one really has a problem with me and I get on really well with everyone, and I feel that everyone on the team sort of respects me in a way. I've never really taken basketball that seriously but at the same time I'm still a really good player and I'll turn up and everyone knows come a big game that I won't shy away. Come a big game I'll lift my performance up to try and win. I feel everyone has a level of respect because they like me and they like me off the court as well as on and everyone enjoys playing with me. I'm liked by the guards, I'm a big that can catch and I'll rebound for them and I'll do the stuff a lot of players won't. (George)

Losing to a lesser skilled and lesser respected teammate during intra-team competition scenarios was found to produce positive influences through anger increasing motivation and self-sacrifice for the team, which was highlighted by John: "It's even worse if I'm getting beat by someone I really shouldn't be. Although, it does get me pumped and motivated". However, it also produced negative influences due to a lack of control, as seen in this quote from Richard:

It frustrates the hell out of me. It irritates my soul and I'll either get really irritated by them or I force myself to play better than them and show them. I'll manage my anger in to a driving force so that I will play well against them and prove I am the better player, or I get frustrated and I'll play worse than I did before and play worse and worse. When this happens I sometimes give the decisions up to other players to run the point and help the team in other ways but most of the time I just get worse and act like a child.

4.3.3. Emotional and Behavioural Perception

Positive emotional and behavioural displays, putting in high levels of effort, and belief in oneself or others, had a positive influence on performance as suggested by John who stated: "If the team is working hard it makes me want to put it in". Conversely, teammates who displayed low confidence, low effort, negative behaviour, and gave

negative comments were perceived as negative performance influencers. Recipients of negative comments found them particularly negative if they were from players perceived to be of a higher standard. Emotions and behaviours were contagious as indicated by John: “The trouble with me is that when everyone around me is relaxed, I sort of relax a little bit as well and I don’t think I performed to my full ability”. Within participants, a lack of perceived control over negative emotions emerged as a negative factor. Specifically, the inability to cope with a negative situation impacted their performance, as shown in this extract from George’s interview: “I personally feel I have no control over it. It’s either going to be good or bad. I have zero say in the matter and I’ve always felt like that”.

4.3.4. Negative Experiences Leading to Enhanced Motivation

This superordinate theme suggested that experiences originally perceived as negative can produce positive performance influences in the future. This could suggest that negative influences are an important part of successful performance in practice. For example, Paul stated: “I don’t like it [negative coach feedback] but I got to look at the positives. If I think back it hurts at the time but I improve after”. Being recognised by others as playing poorly also produced a motivational response in Richard: “If I get grief from someone, they might be right if I’m playing bad, but I won’t let that lay. It’s a motivator for me and I want to show them what’s what”. These example extracts highlight successful engagement of coping strategies. Poor use of coping is highlighted in the following extract, which shows an inability to cope with a negative situation:

I’ve had a lot of bad practices but I don’t know what causes them. When I train badly I stop and try to do too much and get worse again. Some of the causes are when players get on my back but other reasons I don’t know. (John)

4.3.5 Performance Expectations Before and During Practice Activities

Psychological influencing factors that were reported by participants as having a positive impact on performance were good current form (e.g., created through recent performance in the practice environment) and the meeting of goals. Negative influencing factors occurred when participants did not reach their expected performance levels. This was especially problematic when current state was disregarded when setting performance expectations. The extract below indicates how Peter felt negative when he didn’t perform to his expected level due to being in a suboptimal physical state, and how his ability to cope diminished after his teammate accidentally fouled him: “I wasn’t hitting my shots, I couldn’t run properly, couldn’t jump properly, due to the injury and it just felt like a wasted

training session. Someone, I don't think it was on purpose, they just hit me with a really hard foul and tipped me over the edge". George also spoke of his frustration at not being able to reach his expected performance level, which indicated a naivety towards controlling performance: "That annoys me so much. I feel like I keep myself to the same standards whenever".

Teammates appeared to have an effect on an individual's expectations, particularly when practising with high ability teammates and there was a strong need to maintain a high or higher than expected level of performance, as shown in the following quote from Paul:

It was the fact that they were all much better than me, it put me down possession after possession. I wasn't getting what I would get in my age group [younger age group] at that time. The coach did try to talk to me and he told me to play with no worries and no pressure, just train, just keep your mind. He saw I was trying to do too much, like being a perfectionist, and that was coming into play too much".

The negative influence from failed expectancy to perform was best displayed in this quotation from John, which indicates his annoyance at not performing to his expected level despite his conscious decision to put in less effort:

I didn't feel motivated. On Tuesday I have two training sessions after each other, which is four hours of straight training. In the EABL sessions first, I give it my all and go for it but the under 18's training after, I just think I don't want to be here and I just want to be at home and resting up before the Wednesday game, and that normally means I'm not putting in as much effort and its quite annoying because I know I can put in the effort.

Strategies to overcome negativity created by not performing to expected levels was evident through George's interview where he spoke about using an avoidance strategy by bringing his teammates into practice routines when he was not performing well: "Instead of trying to shoot my way out of a bad slump I would try and bring my teammates into it more because I know I'm struggling". John spoke of his frustration at not performing to expected levels but used a strategy to break down the practice session and get through this difficult period:

I try to adapt if I'm tired or not having a good session and hitting my shots. I will just break it down into individual plays instead of thinking I've got to do this, this and this by the end of the session. So it's like a check list for me to say I've done that, now do this.

4.3.6. Philosophy towards the Success of the Team

This superordinate theme was characterized by the approaches to practice activities. A recurring negative influence was cited by participants who perceived teammates to be driven by goals that prioritised individual development over that of the team and how subsequent performance, both individually and collectively, declined. This was seen in the following quote from John:

At the start of the season we had a meeting and our goal was to win everything, the league, the cup. But at the moment I think everyone is focused on getting to America [student-athlete scholarship], personal goals are up there for me right now. I don't think we are currently trying to get those goals and everyone is trying to do too much in games and worry about their own stats instead of playing as a team. Last year we played as a team and won the cup

The above quote suggests players can be focused too heavily upon the future and their next step (e.g., scholarship to the US or UK university placement). Conversely, positive influences were cited by Richard who appeared to have a team-first philosophy: "I try to focus on the team more now rather than my mistakes I might make. I can't win just on my own". It seemed difficult for participants to maintain a team-first approach in the practice environment with players being treated positively and feeling safe to make errors and take risks. George's interview captured his frustration of teammate error and his negative communication; despite him acknowledging that negative communication was ineffective for team performance:

I'm awful in the way I talk to people. If someone repeatedly makes the same mistake over and over I'll keep my mouth shut the first time, say something the second time, and the third time I'll just flip and I'll start shouting at them and I know as a leader you shouldn't be like that and I'd be the worst captain known to man.

4.3.7. Current Physical State

This theme demonstrates the association between influencing factors within the practice environment and somatic perceptions. The extract below displays the holistically negative impact a challenging physical programme can have:

We are physically tired towards the end of the week. We have our team practices on Monday and Tuesday. We all feel fine as we have just come off the weekend and are rested but by Thursday, after the Wednesday game, our bodies are

broken. We have [on Thursday] strength and conditioning and extra morning workout and the same with Friday. Trying to develop and at the same time try to rest your body is tough. Physical tiredness brings you down mentally, it starts from your body and then it brings you down. You can't think through your mind when your body is screaming at you. (Paul)

The above statement provides an insight into the belief that development can only occur if the body is in a fit state and this may limit development opportunities. George stated the benefits of an effective wake-up period and good nutrition, which suggests a level of independence is required to improve physical state away from practice, especially as participants stated they did not receive any nutritional or recovery assistance outside of the practice environment. Paul identified an increased ability to support teammates during practice when he felt in good physical condition and was not preoccupied with feelings of fatigue:

On that day I lift them. There is nothing on me that I have to take extra care for, because my body is not hurting whereas on a Thursday, towards the end of the week, I'm thinking that my body is injured or I'm ill so I need to look after myself before I think about doing anything else. I need to look after myself first.

The above quotes support the possible existence of an overriding somatic influence on performance in the practice environment, which was summarised by Richard: "My body literally tells me how well I can train a lot of the time. If I'm tired then I know my training level might not be great".

4.3.8. Goal Focus within the Practice Environment

Goal driven practice sessions containing constructive coach feedback were perceived to have a positive influence on performance. Richard positively discussed coach reinforcement during practice: "He [the coach] just spoke a lot and always positive, like this is what we need to do to get better, and this is how we are going to improve, and this is how you are going to hold yourself to this standard". Practice sessions that provided no constructive feedback or lacked clear planning and focus were viewed as holding a negative performance impact. Negative factors influencing performance were cited when coaches singled out players, particularly when perceived as unfairly:

I was quite annoyed about it and I didn't go back to practice for about a week. We were doing a drill and there was one guy who kept making jokes about what I was doing and then, I'm not sure why, but my coach flipped out on me and said get your stuff and leave. He kicked me out half way through practice. I was annoyed

because I was doing what I was supposed to be doing, but the guy, I guess he was having fun about making jokes on what I was doing, and then he [the coach] must have spotted something else he didn't like in what I was doing and then he sent me home. (Peter)

Intra-team competition within the practice environment predominantly offered comments revealing it to have positive performance influences. This was advantageous with targets being set against peers, perhaps due to status within the group:

It gets my mind ready and I know he's saying this stuff, like he's better than me and he's going to do this stuff, but in my head I'm going to outdo him so it helps me to get into an attacking mind-set to ensure I go at the player and work hard to outdo him to prove to myself and to everyone else I am the better player and he isn't. (Richard)

However, Richard also stated that losing to inferior teammates caused him to experience negative performance outcomes. Pressure and stress felt in the build up to competitive matches, which also led to increased focus, was talked about by Paul who discussed the need to prepare well:

It's the external stuff as every minute of the day you need to be doing stuff to be getting you better for the game on Wednesday or the weekend. If you are not doing the right thing now the pressure is building up on you and you sort of know if you don't do that stuff you are going to be fatigued or that your confidence level is going to drop or arousal levels for the game will drop.

Finally, reference to the condition of the facilities was limited. Of what was mentioned, it was not the quality of the facility but more the condition it was in: "The floor needs to be clean, the lights working, the heating on, and no grief about using the court early from the staff [wardens]" (John). This suggests that within the practice environment, the coaches and players may be of more importance than the practice facility.

4.3.9. Responsibility Positions during Practice Activities

This superordinate theme referred to perceptions of having control within the practice environment and being accountable for overall team performance. Factors having a positive impact on performance were suggested to be from feelings of being needed within the team as commented upon by George: "I wouldn't say I'm the leader of the team but I think I gel everyone together" and by Paul: "Having leadership responsibilities gives me energy". Alternatively, the majority of negative influencing factors were from not being part of or not being able to contribute towards team performance as stated by Peter: "I got

injured and couldn't play, that killed me. When I came back I was a nothing player for ages, like I wouldn't get any serious minutes in practice. That was hard". A loss in self-worth was captured when Peter stated: "It was a bit difficult because I like to score but they [a teammate] were a more efficient scorer than me so I had to take a back seat on the scoring and focus on other things like my rebounding and my defence". However, it seems that Peter did take responsibility by accepting this position for the benefit of enhancing team performance. Participants who took responsibility for their own performance perceived it as a positive influence. Richard indicated responsibility was gained through his coach empowering him:

There's been times when the coach was negative if things were going badly, not saying I suck or anything, it was more like things are going badly, what are you going to do about it? He pins the responsibility on me because I was the main point guard and it was my responsibility to carry and lift up the team. It actually helped me a lot as I enjoy responsibility as it gives me a task and purpose. It's easier to have a goal I can envisage.

Positions of responsibility held by others in the practice environment, whether intentional or not, were important towards other's performance through helping to build confidence and provide advice, which was alluded to by Peter: "I looked up to the better, older players. People say I am really similar to one of the older guys. It was good to have the better players there as it helps me focus on where I was and where I need to be or get to in the next two to three years".

4.4. Discussion

This study aimed to explore the deeper meanings of participant experience during time spent within the practice environment. Utilising the IPA approach (Smith et al., 2013), nine superordinate themes were constructed from the data. There were a large amount of data generated in this study and the main focus of this discussion is on the unique practice environment factors influencing performance that were constructed through data interpretation. Namely, this discussion focuses on the requirement for perceived negativity within the practice environment, the effects of intra-team competition on overall team performance, the setting of performance expectations, and goal orientations. These factors, which have had limited previous research acknowledgment, suggest that practice should be viewed as a distinctive performance environment, set apart from other fields of performance inquiry.

There appeared to exist a perception amongst participants of a broad influence from the display of emotions within the practice environment that could affect performance over sustained periods (Hatfield, Cacioppo, & Rapson, 1994). For example, participants cited teammates and coaches in negative moods (e.g., angry) effecting their performance adversely, which, in some cases, was perceived as a warning sign or threat that current performance was unacceptable and required improvement. Coaches in competitive situations were recently reported by Almeida, Sarmiento, Kelly, and Travassos (2019) to have to actively control their behaviour to ensure effective team performance. However, the repetitive nature of the practice environment differs to short-term competition moments and the current study suggests coaches may be unable to consistently maintain control of their behavioural and emotional communication during practice.

Basketball requires considerable social interdependence, seen in the current study as being enhanced through socialization activities and respect for teammates, with emotions playing an important mediating role (Bartel & Saavedra, 2000). The current study suggests that emotions could be an indicator of group alignment and performance progress, and requires constant reflection and management (Martin, Ward, Achee, & Wyer, 1993). Nicholls, Earle, Earle, and Madigan (2017) reported a strong coach-athlete relationship was likely to enhance mastery goal achievement within developing athletes over a 6-month period and improve performance. Therefore, this study's findings suggest it may be easier for a coach to control, communicate, and performance manage a group within the practice environment through emotional displays if a strong relationship exists between player and coach.

Positive feedback was generally reported by participants to enhance performance. The experience of positive emotional states during sport have been suggested to produce higher levels of performance compared to negative states (see McCarthy, 2011). For example, the premise that pleasant or positive emotional states are most effective for enhanced performance was proposed by Bortoli, Bertollo, Comani, and Robazza (2011) when they analysed competence, achievement goals, and motivational climate within youth participants. Also, a recent experimental study by De Muijnck et al. (2017) reported positive normative task feedback led to a greater sense of enjoyment and autonomy but the findings were not representative of a long-duration environment, such as practice. Despite the clear merits of positive feedback, the results from the current study suggest initially perceived threats that generate negative emotions may have a future positive

influence on performance. This phenomenon may especially exist within the long-term repetitive nature of the practice environment and the affective path of these influences require much more research attention within sport.

In line with findings from the current study, Ruiz, Haapanen, Tolvanen, Robazza, and Duda (2017) evaluated the role of motivational climate and regulations in practice and found harmful pleasant states actually enhanced performance while helpful anxiety states did not. Compared to the raft of research that suggests, for example, threat is harmful for performance (see for review Hase, O'Brien, Moore, & Freeman, 2019) and negative stress factors contribute to negative performance outcomes in the performance environment (e.g., Fletcher, Hanton, Mellalieu, & Neil, 2012), it could be that some perceived negativity is functional within a practice domain. This has been touched upon in previous research where the effects of anger were related to a readiness to perform and generate energy in task execution (Ruiz & Hanin, 2011). Current study findings did indicate that coach anger was perceived to negatively influence performance but in some cases it was treated as a warning sign that improvement was required that led to improved future performance.

The complex relationship between initial and future influence (e.g., negative influence that leads to positive performance outcomes) found in this study concedes that positive factors may not always be the most effective in enhancing performance in the practice environment, while negative factors may not always cause performance decline. This conflicts with much of the current performance environment literature, such as the stance taken by Fletcher et al. (2012) who identified stress factors contributing towards negative performance outcomes. However, Joseph, Murphy, and Regel (2012) provide a post-traumatic growth model that suggests an individual can build resilience from trauma that promotes positive psychological growth in the future. Hill, Cheesbrough, Gorczynski, and Matthews (2019) reported choking incidents in sport as causing a learning experience, which positively influences future performance. Social support was a key factor in developing resilience to choking events and indicates the interrelatedness of factors within sporting environments. The minimal recognition in previous performance environment research to accept positive performance outcomes from initially perceived negative influences could be due to previous studies focusing on the finite time period during competition (e.g., Thelwell, Weston, & Greenlees, 2007) and competition preparation (e.g., Greenleaf et al., 2001), which is far different to the longer periods of time experienced within the practice environment.

The ability to convert factors originally perceived as negative into positive influences could be because of environmental transactions that cause the successful engagement of coping strategies (Lazarus, 1991). For example, Richard described how his coach was in a bad mood and he saw this as an opportunity to take responsibility to motivate the team and increase effort levels. One reason stated for this successful transition was the tacit understanding and knowledge the coach had of the participant and indicates the need for coaches to take time studying the reactions of players to different situations (Woodman & Hardy, 2001). This has been supported by Smith, Quested, Appleton, and Duda (2016) who reported a motivational enhancement within a practice environment where the coach valued the athlete perspective.

The sustained and repeated nature of the practice environment led to players reporting fatigue, although the depth of their diminished physical state was unclear (Meeusen et al., 2013). Participants also reported feeling pressure to maintain high performance standards when fatigued, which contributed negatively towards performance. Participants were in a season-long basketball programme, rather than in a short-term training camp or tournament competition (e.g., Holt & Hogg, 2002; Pensgaard & Duda, 2002) and this may have enhanced their susceptibility to physical fatigue and performance decline (Meeusen et al., 2013). Participants were definite in the environmental factors that contributed to their individual physical state, such as recovery time, physical workload, nutrition, and health. However, a deeper examination showed further performance effects through player relationships that may not be present within competition environments, which provided evidence of the interrelatedness of practice environment factors.

Players who had a good physical state were found to not only better motivate themselves (Martin, 1981) but also provide greater support to teammates, which diminished when fatigue was present. The quality of the relationship between team members declined when physical state was perceived as poor and indicates physical state perception to be a far more complex factor in practice than just providing an influence on individual performance as previously reported in the competition literature (e.g., Holt & Hogg, 2002; Pain & Harwood, 2007; Pain & Harwood, 2008; Pain, Harwood, & Mullen, 2012). However, placing physical fatigue as a wholly negative psychological influencing factor within the practice environment may deny players the opportunity to simulate match conditions and attempt to overcome those influences through the engagement of coping strategies. The current study's results suggest that fatigue should be embraced

during practice but minimised between practice sessions by employing adequate recovery strategies, such as those suggested by Pain and Harwood (2007) with international youth footballers in repeated tournament matches.

Participants reported current form (e.g., last performance in the practice environment) and goal achievement as psychological influencing factors, and on deeper examination this seemed to be due to the misalignment between expected and actual performance. As discussed above, participants were aware of when they were physically fatigued but if they did not adjust their performance expectations and lower than expected performance ensued, it had a negative performance influence. Therefore, this factor seems to be independent from current form or the perceived ability to execute a task (Feltz, Short, & Sullivan, 2008) as holding good current form and having high expectations heading into practice could lead to a negative influence if expected performance was not achieved.

Similarly, Pain and Harwood (2007) presented high performance expectations as causing anxiety, which suggests that expectations based on current form may not be as appropriate as expectations based on current perceived physical state. The current study indicated the production of performance crippling negative factors such as anger, frustration, and diminished coping abilities once performance expectations were not realised. An explanation for participants disregarding current state when approaching practice could be the overriding effect of social status (see Smith, 2003), which was alluded to by participants who referred to intra-team competition as causing performance influences. The performance influences of intra-team competition appeared to be highly related to several factors within the practice environment, such as performance expectations, perceived ranking ability, and current form.

The study of performance expectations and subsequent performance outcomes is rare but was measured previously by Greenleaf et al. (2001) in a performance environment study with Olympic athletes. The study assessed the differences in influencing factors between participants who met or exceeded expectations and those that failed to. However, rather than performance success being dependent upon the stated psychological influencing factors (e.g., social support providing positive influences and coach conflict causing negative influences), it may be that success or failure was generated from the outcome result evaluated against expectations. This may indicate why Greenleaf et al. (2001) found some factors, such as isolated housing, to be positive for those meeting or exceeding expectations and negative for those who did not. Therefore, it is unclear

whether the isolated housing factor was a causal performance factor or a response to performance outcomes.

In line with previous research (e.g., Fletcher & Hanton, 2003) the current study identified participants experiencing negative environmental factors emerging from teammates who were perceived to have selfish performance goals (e.g., only focused on personal scoring statistics) through an ego orientation (see Lochbaum, Kazak Çetinkalp, Graham, Wright, & Zazo, 2016). This was one of many factors highlighted within a philosophy theme which influenced performance in the practice environment through participant goal focus. The complexity of this situation led to effects on team performance as participants were able to separate their own performance against that of the team. This separation led to a raft of negative factors emerging, such as participants being preoccupied with the future, being too focused on their own performance statistics, and not feeling safe to fail in practice. Smith et al. (2016) reported ego-involving environments could be disempowering and maladaptive for motivation over time through an emphasis on the uncontrollable factors of ability and superiority. The participants in the current study were part of a programme where they leave after either two or three years and this may be why ego orientations existed within the practice environment.

Brown and Arnold (2019) explored perceptions of facilitating thriving in a professional rugby context and reported a fear-free environment aided the establishment of a greater connection with coaches. The coach was suggested to be an integral part of the practice philosophy in the current study through the application of clear goal focus and is an underrepresented factor in current performance environment literature; only being mentioned sparingly in a few papers (e.g., Pain & Harwood, 2008; Pain et al., 2012). Participants who understood that their success was dependent upon their teammates fared better in the way they communicated and supported others through goal clarity and alignment (Fletcher & Hanton, 2003; Woodman & Hardy, 2001). This was seen when participants revealed that negative comments given to a teammate after an error would cause a decline in teammate performance, which would have an effect on the team's overall performance. However, the platform that the EABL environment provides for players to develop their own ability and move on after only a few years may hinder the ability to foster task and team focused goals, which appeared to hinder individual and team performance.

A practice environment factor that could promote an unwanted individualistic focus may be the use of tangible, single player dependent goals when goal setting against a

teammate. Players vying for status position within the group will compare themselves against others and has been suggested by Smith (2003) to be a strong motivator. Participants in the current study experienced negative emotions when they lost out in a competence-based activity against a teammate they perceived to be less skilled, which could affect their status in the team and push them into an individualistic focus. This study suggests that engaging in intra-team competition for status purposes would benefit those who are successful but be damaging for those that fail to meet their status within the team. Therefore, intra-team competition activities should hold goals that can be obtained through team performance rather than individual performance. This finding is supported by Smith et al. (2016) who also reported negative performance influences from overly ego orientated environments.

4.5. Research Limitations

To further strengthen the credibility of data interpretation, participants could have been approached with the study analysis and results in addition to being provided with the transcribed interviews (Smith & McGannon, 2017). Participant experience within other sport practice environments was not collected but could have influenced what they shared. This study revealed the existence of psychological influencing factors evolving and changing their valence (positive or negative influence), which has received limited reporting in previous sport psychology literature. For example, initially perceived negative situations that provide a future positive performance outcome (Lazarus, 2000). A longitudinal research approach where participant data is collected at multiple time points may be able to track the fluidity of performance influence.

4.6. Future Research

Participants identified the ability to cope with negative situations in the practice environment, which enhanced performance and has been a focus of competitive performance environment research (e.g., Didymus, 2017; Holt, & Hogg, 2002; Nicholls, 2007; Nicholls et al., 2005). Massey, Meyer, & Naylor (2013) did assess coping in MMA practice but results were very sport specific. Future research could attempt to understand the use of coping strategies within the basketball practice environment. Current beliefs surrounding perceived task ability suggest high belief or high expectation is beneficial for performance (e.g., Feltz et al., 2008), although the current study offered a more complex relationship. In fact, results suggested that high performance expectations that did not take into account perceived current physical or psychological fatigue may be detrimental to

performance and future research could address whether this phenomenon exists within other practice environments or other sporting scenarios. Finally, the structure of intra-team competition within the practice environment requires research attention. There seemed to be a strong social ranking factor present and the use of tasks that promoted individual success seemed detrimental for producing a cohesive team. Therefore, intra-team competition within the practice environment should be subject to further research evaluation.

4.7. Applied implications

This study's findings indicate several practical implications for those who create and maintain practice environments. Several initially perceived negative influencing factors were cited as causing positive performance outcomes in the future. Therefore, coaches should pay close attention to the individual differences between players and subsequent performance outcomes following positive and negative situations (Coté, Saimela, Trudel, Baria, & Russell, 1995). Coaches not taking the time to understand player differences and individualise their coaching style risk creating an ineffective practice environment. There was evidence to suggest that effort and motivation within the practice environment could be enhanced by negativity resulting in positive performance effects, which could be due to effort being far more controllable than performance outcomes (Douglas & Carless, 2006; Smith et al., 2016). Therefore, the current study suggests that coaches who have limited player knowledge should communicate positivity to players unless effort is low in which case negative communication could be considered to enhance performance.

The promotion of greater team cohesion has been suggested to play an important factor within environments that focus on performance (e.g., Pain & Harwood, 2007). Within the practice environment it appears important that players are given the opportunity to achieve with others rather than individually to enhance team cohesion. Goals and emotional states should also be aligned to achieve greater team cohesion, which means players should not be singled out for good or poor performance as this does not promote a team ethos. For example, acknowledging a player for being the best trainer in a practice session will not promote team success. Also, intra-team competition in one versus one scenarios may provide negative influences and should be employed with care.

Performance expectations have been found to impact performance during competitive events (e.g., Gould et al., 1999) and this seems to be evident within the practice environment. Within the practice environment, a period of reflection undertaken

by a player imminently before practice could produce positive performance influences or aid in the cessation of negative influences. Reflection upon perceived current physical and mental state could avoid overwhelming negative influences from unrealistic high expectations. If a player is suffering from a form of fatigue that might affect performance, this should be factored into their expectations of performance in the upcoming practice session.

4.8. Conclusion

The current study proposes the existence of several psychological influencing factors previously unreported in performance environment literature. These are: the requirement for negativity within the practice environment, the effects of intra-team competition on overall team performance, the setting of performance expectations, and goal orientations. The findings suggest the practice environment may need to be viewed as a standalone investigatory field. Using an approach designed to gather richer interpretations of participant experiences in the practice environment, this study highlights the deficit in current performance environment research. Current research promotes a somewhat static relationship between perception and performance outcome (e.g., positive influencing factors cause positive performance outcomes and negative influences lead to negative performance outcomes). In reality, however, the interaction with one's environment is far more complex and future research should attempt to provide approaches that seek to delve into this relationship.

To develop the current programme of research, further exploration of the practice environment is required. The perceptions of the five individuals in this study will not offer an accurate representation of other individuals within UK academy basketball practice environments. Players are the conduit in which performance is delivered, however, they are not the only perceptual viewpoints within a practice environment. Therefore, study two builds on study one by analysing the perceptions of other stakeholders within the practice environment.

Chapter Five: Study Two – A Case Study of Factors Influencing Performance in the Practice Environment

5.1. Introduction and Aim

The practice environments of AASE (Advanced Apprenticeship in Sporting Excellence) UK basketball programmes have multiple stakeholders. The players themselves are the conduit in which performance is realised but they are not in a position to observe the entire workings of the environment, as posited in previous research (e.g., Levy, Nicholls, Marchant, & Polman, 2009; Thelwell, Weston, Greenlees, & Hutchings, 2008; Thelwell, Weston, & Greenlees, 2010). Within the performance environment literature, a case study approach was recently undertaken to evaluate the existence of the high performance environment (HPE) model (Jones, Gittins, & Hardy, 2009) within an elite swimming environment by Fletcher and Streeter (2016). The HPE model is composed of research findings from multiple domains that include the military, business, and sport. Using the HPE model criteria, Fletcher and Streeter (2016) discovered evidence of leadership, performance enablers, people, and organisational climate factors within the environment.

This deductive approach extended the HPE model literature by applying the principles to a sporting context. However, the use of a restrictive criteria-based framework that was not exclusively produced for a sporting environment may not have allowed for the emergence of sport-specific factors within a subjectively complex psychological environment containing numerous viewpoints (Sparkes & Smith, 2009). The HPE model, therefore, is currently questionable in its use within sport and it is certainly probable that it is not ready to be used with domain specific sport environments, such as the practice environment.

An inductive analysis approach to the holistic exploration of an environment can provide analysis based on participant experience, rather than against pre-determined criteria that is heavily influenced by the researcher's analytic lens (Braun, Clarke, & Terry, 2014). Therefore, a holistic exploration of the practice environment, which has had limited research attention, should remain as inductive as possible. There will, however, already exist a bias of previous knowledge from the first study of the current programme of research that will be applied to the current study (Smith & McGannon, 2017). A deductive approach using the findings from the previous study, where a limited knowledge of the practice environment was gained (e.g. perceptions from only five environmental agents),

may further detract away from undiscovered factors and a need for an inductive approach is warranted.

The practice environment is a cooperative environment between several stakeholders that provides many perceptual avenues (Fletcher & Streeter, 2016). Perceptual differences between players and coaches were reported by Pain and Harwood (2008) who indicated the importance of gaining various viewpoints, as non-player perceptions were able to provide insight and experience into factors that players were not fully aware of. As with the differences found between elite and non-elite athletes (e.g., Fletcher, Hanton, Mellalieu, & Neil, 2012), it is predicted that perceived performance influences experienced within the practice environment will differ from those in other environments.

Using a case study approach to provide a holistic assessment of the perceptions and experiences of individuals who make up the practice environment (Yin, 2014), the current study aimed to illustrate the relationships between a wide range of practice performance factors. The current study builds upon study one, which aimed to gather data solely from players, by exploring the perceptions of key stakeholders within the practice environment to develop a greater understanding of the performance influences.

5.2. Method

5.2.1. The Case and Context

Case study approaches allow for empirical inquiry of contemporary phenomenon within real-world contexts where the experiences of individuals can provide measures for assessment (Yin, 2014). They are especially useful when trying to identify phenomenon with limited current evidence by providing a holistic environmental assessment. The units of analysis within this single case were the participants and the varied positions they held. This allowed the phenomenon (the psychological influencing factors) in the certain case (practice environment) to be assessed using a variety of perceptual lenses (Baxter & Jack, 2008). Also, the individuality of participant experience could drive data collection and analysis, and not a distinctive set of method criteria (Sparkes & Smith, 2009).

The case was a purposively selected student-athlete practice environment sample of an AASE basketball team operating within a UK Sixth Form college competing in the Elite Academy Basketball League (EABL). The EABL has fifteen competing teams, but the study of a single practice environment allowed for a greater depth of analysis (Yin, 2011). The practice environment under investigation included coach led on-court basketball practice

sessions, strength and conditioning (S&C) sessions, and practice specific activities (e.g., video analysis). All players were enrolled in full-time academic programmes. The sample was indicative of a student-athlete group residing between the classifications of ‘semi-elite’ and ‘competitive elite’ (Swann, Moran, & Piggott, 2015). The team was in its seventh year of holding AASE status and competing in the EABL. The programme structure was particularly stable with the head of sport and the head coach having been involved since its inception. Players were far more transient being involved for a maximum of three years before leaving.

5.2.2. Participants

To gain a range of different perspectives of the practice environment under examination, purposive sampling was conducted to elicit the perceptions of members who had the greatest knowledge and experience of the environment to derive a holistic evaluation, which offered high construct validity (Yin, 2014). The sample was fifteen participants aged between 16 to 43 years ($M = 21.8$, $SD = 7.4$). This included all ten registered EABL players who were aged between 16 to 19 years ($M = 17.5$, $SD = 1$), head basketball coach, assistant basketball coach, S&C coach, one academic teacher who resided within the sports department, and the head of sport who operated in a directorial role. Experience within the practice environment under investigation was between 1 to 6 years ($M = 2.9$, $SD = 1.4$). Participant demographic information is displayed in table 5.1.

Table 5.1. Participant Demographic Information

Participant	Age	Years of Experience in Current Practice Environment
Player One	16	1
Player Two	17	2
Player Three	17	2
Player Four	18	3
Player Five	18	3
Player Six	16	1
Player Seven	18	3
Player Eight	18	3
Player Nine	18	3
Player Ten	19	3
Head Coach	30	6
Assistant Coach	27	3
Strength & Conditioning Coach	25	2
Academic Teacher	27	3
Head of Sport	43	6

5.2.3. Procedure

Ethical approval was obtained from the University of Winchester ethics committee. The head of sport and head coach were initially contacted and agreed to take part in the study and allowed the researcher to contact potential participants via e-mail. Sixteen participants were approached with one member of the support team declining their participation. Upon initial contact, the participants were informed of the study's purpose and were emailed an information sheet (see Appendix B). Before data collection began, all participants were explained their role within the study, assured of their anonymity, given the chance to ask questions, and subsequently provided their signed informed consent.

Due to basketball players existing within a team environment, focus groups were chosen to collect player data. This is because focus groups can generate data through social interaction and group synergy that are often deeper and richer than one to one interviews, illuminate differences between perspectives, and, due to the size of the target group, generate large amounts of data in a relatively short time span (Rabiee, 2004). Focus groups can also make members feel comfortable with each other and engage in discussion with reactions and relationships between teammates being displayed for analysis (Rabiee, 2004).

The head coach was asked to nominate players to attend one of two focus groups that were held a week apart. The focus groups took place during structured basketball practice times to provide convenience for the players. Players were asked for their preferred day and those that had no preference were invited to join a specific group to ensure manageable participant numbers. Data collection from non-playing members of the practice environment were gained from semi-structured interviews due to their limited availability through work commitments. It was beneficial to use interviews and focus groups as they captured perceptual data that was unique to the individual experience within the environment (Fletcher & Streeter, 2016). A good rapport with participants had been built through previous regular professional contact, which can be advantageous in gaining trust and honest responses from participants (Braun, Clarke, & Weate, 2016).

Due to the psychological influences of the practice environment being relatively under researched, the researcher was required to provide their own knowledge and experience when developing the focus group and interview questions (Woodman & Hardy, 2001). The interview and focus group question schedules related to the positive and negative performance influences perceived during practice (e.g., "What are the greatest

positive impacts upon team performance during practice?”). The question schedules can be found in Appendix B of this thesis. Questioning was kept to a minimum and was guided by the question schedule rather than follow it rigidly. This encouraged participants to create their own lines of inquiry and allowed the focus group members to react to comments made by others (Rabiee, 2004).

The researcher facilitated the path of discussion and only intervened if participants had exhausted all answers and a new question was needed, or the discussion had moved away from the practice environment. Upon the discovery of an area of interest that suggested, for example, a possible explanation of an influence’s cause or relationship within the environment, a deeper probing of the phenomenon was undertaken by further questioning. Following data collection, transcription took place. A copy of the transcript was sent to the participant and they were offered the chance to amend or change statements but none did. During transcription, all text was anonymised to protect identities and stored in accordance with the Data Protection Act 1998.

The interview and focus group data collection period spanned a total of 58 days. During this period, the researcher undertook four direct observations of participants within the practice environment. This acted as a reflexive instrument within an interpretative qualitative research study that was socially constructed (Hodge, Henry, & Smith, 2014). The observations were driven by the continued interview and focus group analysis that developed emergent themes during the data collection period. Field notes from the observations contributed to the keeping of a reflexive journal that encouraged a critical evaluation of the researcher’s assumptions and influences on the analysis of interview and focus group data (Wagstaff, Fletcher, & Hanton, 2012). The reflexive journal can be found in this study’s audit trail in Appendix B.

5.2.4. Data Analysis

The individual interviews ($n = 5$) ranged in duration from 61 to 88 minutes ($M = 75.2$, $SD = 10.6$) and focus groups ($n = 2$) from 93 to 107 minutes ($M = 100$, $SD = 9.9$). Although interview and focus group data were gathered through two distinct qualitative approaches, data analysis followed identical protocols. The data was analysed using an inductive thematic analysis approach provided for sport and exercise science as articulated by Braun et al. (2016). This produced analysis through intersection of the researcher’s theoretical assumptions, disciplinary knowledge, research skills and experience, and the content of the data themselves. The researcher’s data interpretations were part of the analysis process and certain bias from previous knowledge was accepted (Smith &

McGannon, 2017). The interviews and focus groups were audio recorded. The transcription undertaken by the researcher acted as a preliminary familiarisation activity to aid in the accuracy of participant interpretation (Bailey, 2008).

Inter-coder reliability was not undertaken during coding due to the inability for coders to apply theory-free knowledge (Smith & McGannon, 2017). Therefore, all coding was performed by the researcher alone, which Morse (2015) suggests offers complex, layered, and rich rather than superficial interpretation. The initial phases of analysis were a process of immersion that involved repeated reading to familiarise oneself with the text and initial coding of data (Braun et al., 2016). Coded data were added to a computerised spreadsheet for manual coding allowing for easy code manipulation and category placement. When coding the data, the original participant's message was carefully maintained to ensure data analysis held credibility and truth (Tracy, 2010). All coded data were labelled with a unique tag so that participant comments could be linked back to the original contributor.

During coding, higher order themes were developed by capturing data into broad patterns and creating clusters of code by grouping similar data items. Following the initial completion of data coding and the development of higher order themes, which became the overarching themes, a revision of code placement was undertaken to ensure a coherent, organised, and accurate analysis of the data set has been accomplished (Braun et al., 2016). The establishment of themes provided detail to the meaning related to the central organising concept of the overarching themes. A further capturing of important facets of the central organising concepts took place to create subthemes that highlighted notable distinct patterns within the themes. Throughout data collection and analysis, direct observations of the practice environment were undertaken to observe the existence of the themes being generated during data analysis. Observations contributed towards the reflexive journal. This process aided in theme refinement through identifying researcher inclinations as well as the challenge of ensuring the phenomenon of the practice environment was held as the sole focus of analysis.

5.2.5. Rigour and Trustworthiness

Where possible, Tracy's (2010) eight "big-tent" criteria for excellent qualitative research underpinned this study as much as it could through a relativistic lens. The understudied psychological influencing factors experienced within the practice environment provides a worthy topic of investigation due to its limited previous scrutiny.

This is despite evidence from previous sport research that practice can influence athlete performance (e.g., Douglas & Carless, 2006; Henriksen, Stambulova, & Roessler, 2010a; Wachsmuth, Jowett, & Harwood, 2018). Researcher interpretations of the data were aided by participant comments being retained fully without truncation or adaptation. The presentation of results have been provided within a coherent hierarchical content tree. Resonance was supported by data being collected from participants who represented high contributing positions from within the environment, which provided naturalistic generalisability of the investigated environment (Smith, 2018). Direct observations of the practice environment and the reflexive journal provided sincerity (Tracy, 2010) and robust qualitative practice (Braun & Clarke, 2013). As for credibility, the researcher had prior experience of working within the practice environment under investigation, which aided in the interpretation of data.

5.3. Results

Inductive thematic analysis yielded six overarching themes from the data set, which were: effort; individuality; status; preparation; team drive; and practice vision. The central organising concepts of each overarching theme is presented below with participant quotations. A hierarchical content tree of overarching themes, themes, and subthemes of the practice environment can be found in table 5.2.

Table 5.2. Hierarchical Content Tree of Overarching Themes, Themes and Subthemes of the Practice Environment.

Subthemes	Themes	Overarching Themes
High effort is primary focus; High effort from others	Effort	Effort
Completion of practical skills; Making improvements; Current form; Teammate mistakes and errors; Team performance; Individual teammate performance; Mistakes and errors	Current performance level	
Ability status; Social status; Player status position; Display of ability to others; Match selection; Difference in perceived ability and what others perceive	Status	
Intra-team competition; Competition between individual players	Intra-team competition	Status
Coach performance expectation; Player performance expectation	Performance expectation	
Current focus; Negative focus and reaction; Attempting to control uncontrollable events; Coping strategies	Coping ability	
Player individuality; Previous experiences	Individuality	Individuality
Practice preparation; Preparation during warm-up	Practice preparation	
Holistic approach; Success away from basketball; Non-basketball commitments; Out of practice independence; Weather	Holistic approach	Preparation
Fatigue; Physical recovery; Nutrition	Recovery	
Negative communication; Communication and feedback from coaches; Support, motivation and encouragement; Knowledge of player communication preferences	Communication	
Feedback from teammates; Praise and reward; Coach attribution of performance success; Reflection activities; Receiving punishments	Performance feedback	Team Drive
Support; Independence support; Responsibility and independence in practice	Support	
Team chemistry; Emotional alignment; Leadership	Team cohesion	
Adaptive coaches during practice; Enjoyable practice; Structure of practice; Safe environment; Information given by coaches; Player led practice; Challenging practice environment; Equality amongst players; Negative practice experience; Simulating competitive match fatigue states; Facilities and equipment	Practice structure	Practice Vision
Desire to improve and develop; Activities that benefit own development and performance; Tangible goals; Not having goals or objectives; Player goal alignment	Goal type	

5.3.1. Effort

The influence of effort was widespread and could be defined by actions that held determination, focus, and exertion towards performance. High effort levels were generally

stated as being more of a positive influence than performance outcomes. High effort levels were suggested to invoke high practice standards, as reflected upon by the Head Coach:

It's very rare to find someone who coasts or takes it easy in practice and then is consistently a high performer. You usually find the hardest workers in practice have the best results on the court in games. It's a competitive nature I think they have. They have their standards whether it's a game or practice. They have their standards of this is how hard I play and this is how hard I compete, this is my energy output and this is what I want to get out of my basketball whenever I'm on the court. So I think it's that mental drive and standards.

Effort had a contagious effect, especially when player abilities were similar as described by Player Two: "If I'm up against a teammate I'm competing with to get a starting spot and they are working really hard it makes me put in more effort". Teammates who were seen to be "mucking around" (Player One) and not applying effort towards a practice task produced negative performance influences in others. For example, Player One stated: "I'd rather practice with lesser ability high effort players than with higher ability low effort players".

Effort directed towards the team by others was perceived positively whereas effort towards one self was a negative influence, as stated by Player Five: "He [teammate] would only look for himself to score, he only cared about himself. On the other hand, [name removed] would always have your back and they would go for the team". Evidence suggested that players may have been unaware of how much effort they could exert or what was expected of them: "Maybe it's a learning process of them not knowing what I expect or they don't know how much effort they can actually put in. It's getting better with more exposure but there is still room for improvement" (S&C Coach). Finally, observations indicated that high effort levels were present when players were performing well. Players seemed more prone to a decrease in applied effort following a succession of individual or team errors.

5.3.2. Individuality

The individuality overarching theme contained the existence of unique environmental perceptions and subsequent behaviour differences in participants. For example, the following extract from the Assistant Coach discusses differences in player perceptions: "Often it's ingrained in them from a lot of influences like upbringing, personality, and characteristics. It's how they are generally day to day, are they an

introvert or extrovert?”. Player individuality existed through differing past experiences with the S&C Coach highlighting a lack of experience as providing negative influences on performance:

We’ve got some really strong athletes in the team that I know are lifting heavy but they are still comfortable in themselves, but there are some kids that make a lift that even I think actually that’s not the maximum you can lift but they are still making a meal out of it. It sets them back.

Observations indicated several differences amongst participants. Communication, style of play, self-confidence, and social interaction were amongst several participant individualities observable in the practice environment. The quotation below from Player Six indicates the differences between individuals within the practice environment during match simulation:

The other day, [player name removed] missed about four three-pointers in a row in scrimmage. That’s his shot, in practice he’s usually solid. After that you could see he was getting annoyed but [player name removed] started shouting at him as they [the team] were down. I just said to him you got this, you got this, the next one’s going in. He had a really bad day that day but I like to think I helped him out.

5.3.3. Status

This overarching theme was typified by the importance of success and failure displays in the practice environment that led to an internalised ability status set against others in the group. An individual’s opinion of their playing ability seemed to produce a perceived ranking position within the team. Social status in and outside of the practice environment also provided an impact, as shown by Player Six: “It’s great when you got good mates in the team. We all support each other far more. If I have a bad session it doesn’t bother me as much”. Players having something to prove provided evidence of status misalignment (e.g., a belief that status should be higher in the group than it is currently perceived to be), as explained by Player One who turned a negative influence into a positive:

When I was a little bit younger I was a bit taller than everyone else but everyone was like yeah you are a centre, you are a big man. But now that I’ve come to college they are saying that I’m a guard and I’ve had negativity because I’m not a guard. I can’t dribble or can’t shoot and that motivates me to want to get better.

Performance in the practice environment was perceived to be influenced not only by current individual form but by current team form. Current form was dictated to by the performance in the preceding practice session. Positive performance influences seemed to follow goal achievement and improvement, whereas negative influences followed failure, poor performance, and mistakes. However, although teammate error was a negative influence, it also produced positive influences through providing a mechanism for reflection and social support, which was highlighted by Player Five:

I feel like I try to be positive most of the time but in my head I feel sometimes I'm angry and like why did you do that [make an error]. But then I just got to remember to shut my mouth and that I make mistakes too and yeah they are trying their best so I try and be positive.

The success of tangible outcomes like shooting provided influence on current form. For example, Player Three stated: "Say that you are scoring, you feel like no one can stop you scoring, so you keep scoring". Players who were observed shooting well appeared to be positively influenced by successful outcome. During intra-team competition, successful shooting seemed to negatively affect teammates who were on the opposing team.

Competition amongst teammates appeared to cause jealousy and served as a short-term negative influence when a player was out performed by a teammate. However, Player Seven indicated it to be a motivating factor in the long-term:

I felt I was better than him, hands down, and I shouldn't be letting it happen so I'll run down the floor and I'll hit him with contact. I didn't get selected for one match and it annoyed me. I just had to focus and show the coach I'm better, which I did. I wanted my starting spot. So when it comes to game day I'll get my starting spot and if he comes on for me then yeah I want you to do well because I want the team to do well but I want to start, I want my position.

Only when a teammate was performing well for the team was it perceived as a positive factor in the short-term. For example, Player Six stated: "He was playing well in training and started [the game], I didn't want him to do well but it was a big cup game and we went through. I actually played the next game and did really well".

Intra-team competitive scenarios were seen as a positive factor as they simulated match conditions while increasing effort, focus, and motivation. However, influence valence differed with the outcome. For example, players who lost to a teammate they

perceived as possessing less ability status caused initial negative influence. One of the starting five players was observed displaying negative emotions following several unsuccessful plays against a teammate who had lesser competitive statistics and game time than him. However, Player Nine stated how losing in practice could be motivational for future performance: “He beat me to the rim so many times, I wasn’t at it. I was so bad it fired me up”. Players who competed against a perceived higher status player cited experiencing higher performance and effort regardless of success or failure, as long as their status was protected.

Performance expectations that were higher than actual performance produced negative performance influences. This was evident in the following extract from the S&C Coach:

Unfortunately for S&C it’s not a few minutes, it’s a day or two for recovery. But I have to rein that in and explain to them that it’s not because you are inferior to the other guys around you, it’s because maybe you went to bed at midnight last night and he went to bed at 10, and he had a good meal before bed and you didn’t.

Player Nine also highlighted the damage caused by high expectations that were not met: “Going into a training session I kind of put quite a lot of pressure on myself to play to that standard you are talking about, but it’s like sometimes I can set the standard a bit higher than what I actually am”. The coach’s performance expectation of players set against the actual performance was also a factor when aligned (positive) or when misaligned (negative), as portrayed in the following quote: “There will be a plan in place when we think the guys aren’t capable of doing something that brings their heads back up and then we have to weigh up our expectation against player capability”. (Assistant Coach)

Finally, maintaining status was underpinned by the coping ability of players. If players had high coping ability they seemed better equipped to turn negative status influences into more positive ones. For example, an ability to cope with poor performance was reported by Player Five: “I used to not be able to control my errors, although I feel that was more last year. I’m more confident and composed now if I start badly. I just put in more effort”. Attempts to control uncontrollable situations and being overly focused on past negative outcomes produced negative performance influences as commented upon by Player Nine: “I just end up looking at the negatives a lot, I can’t help it, and it doesn’t help my performance”.

5.3.4. Preparation

The preparation overarching theme consisted of holistic approaches, practice preparation, and recovery. A short preparation period before the practice session, which included what was done in the on-court warm-up, provided initial practice performance influences. Players who had enough time to prepare for practice felt better equipped compared to those who had to rush or were late. Waking up and going straight to practice was cited by Player One as being too much of a difference for the body to adapt to: “If you go from something else to training you’re already in the flow of the day, whereas to wake up, you then have to change”. Practice preparations during the warm-up provided positive influences if players performed well, were focused, and received positive encouragement from others.

Preparation was not isolated to the moments leading up to practice, but involved all aspects of life. The S&C Coach held a belief that off-court experience would affect performance in the practice environment: “My expectations of S&C is that it’s as crucial as the work done on court”. Also, the Teacher stated: “Their [players] standards are higher in lessons in terms of attendance and productivity if they see it as worthwhile. Classroom success is success elsewhere”. Players who understood they were not just there to play basketball but also gain an education experienced positive performance in practice: “If I stay on top of my studies I feel more relaxed with my basketball” (Player Six).

Achieving a holistic approach to basketball was aided by players who applied effort and independence away from practice. Those that did not were cited as experiencing negative performance:

They [players] are not preparing their bodies right. A lot of the off-court things are not good and often cause a negative decline. If they are tired or haven’t eaten right for the day they can’t go 100% and after 10 or 15 minutes there is a huge energy drop. (Assistant Coach)

Adequate recovery led to perceived higher performance and was achieved by appropriate nutrition and rest. Preparation for practice began the day before: “I go to bed at the same time every night because I like to wake up early and have time before practice” (Player One). Inadequate recovery led to physical and mental deficiency in the practice environment that was stated to affect not only the player’s performance but that of others: “I feel like you say stuff when you are tired that you don’t want to or that you

wouldn't say when you are fresh. I feel like when I'm tired everything gets to me more, more emotionally, everything is deeper" (Player Seven).

5.3.5. Team Drive

The team drive overarching theme contained reference to the relationships and connectedness within the practice environment. It encompassed the themes of communication, performance feedback, support, and team cohesion. Generally, relationships that were positive, motivational, and encouraging influenced performance positively. Negative communication within the environment provided negative performance influences. However, negative communication was suggested to increase the performance of a high ability player when effort was low: "I could give him serious crap. He wouldn't have his head in the game but that would pick him right up" (Player Ten). The Head Coach indicated how improved resilience was gained through overcoming negative communication:

If you can overcome that person you are coming up against who is in your ear talking. He's a good player and if you can get above that mentally and still put in a great performance then if you can deal with a challenging situation or a coach that's really challenging you and you can overcome that it's going to make you a more resilient player.

Participants found it easier to react in an emotionally natural manner with their communication but that could result in negative communication and decreased team performance: "You have to make a real effort to tiptoe around some people and be nice but naturally you just want to be able to say, what are you doing? but then they might blow up" (Player Eight). Knowledge of how an individual uses and reacts to communication was a factor indicated by Player Seven: "It's kind of hard with [player name removed] because he just doesn't look at you when you talk to him, he just looks down and does his own thing". The Head Coach discussed the use of emotion when communicating to others:

I think communication is a big one. I find our players are very emotional and speak from a place of emotion and they don't get the desired response. So they may be frustrated about something that has happened, something that maybe another player has done, and it comes out in emotion and its counter productive and makes the problem worse, rather than stepping back and thinking what kind of communication does this person respond to.

Player Four indicated that players did not need to like each other but they had to understand how they communicated: “I don’t really see all the guys socially as friends outside of basketball but I think by now I know how they all tick inside”.

Player to player feedback influenced performance in the practice environment positively if it was constructive and direct. Coach to player feedback could be more critical if it held constructive elements, players were not singled out in front of the group, feedback was truthful, and players did not receive punishments. The Assistant Coach saw performance reviewing as beneficial to improved performance in the practice environment: “If somethings not going right, let’s talk about it, let’s review it, let’s video it, let’s look at it in games and be proactive”. A Coach’s attribution of team success, if isolated to a single player, affected team performance in the practice environment negatively: “The coach would pick him out all the time, it was like we only won because of him” (Player Six). Comparatively, positive performance influences could be gained from success or failure being attributed to the team.

Support was gained socially and structurally through organised programming. However, support was found to be lacking away from scheduled practices. This negatively affected players with low independence who were unable to take responsibility for actions undertaken outside of practice. Player Two suggested that players needed to be emotionally and behaviourally aligned: “We lost a game we should have won. Next practice only a few of us were angry and annoyed. Most of the younger players didn’t even seem bothered”. Practice observations following a team loss revealed increased group cohesion amongst the older players but the newer players appeared to be more isolated.

5.3.6. Practice Vision

The practice vision overarching theme captured concepts of goal types and how practice sessions were structured to meet them. A commitment to improve and develop was cited as enhancing performance in the practice environment. Player Four suggested that he would rather partake in practice activities that benefited himself: “I would [help a teammate] but deep down I’d be thinking why am I doing this? I’m more of an individual person, I care more about myself than anybody else deep down. If someone asked me to help them then I know I’ll just get bored and think why?”. Players who held primarily individual goals that did not put team goals first were seen to influence performance negatively in the practice environment, as stated by the Head Coach in the following

extract: “You shouldn’t be out for yourself. It doesn’t actually help you achieve. If they [players] all support each other, and play hard for each other, then they all win”.

The structure of practice sessions held multiple positive influences, which included sessions being player led, safe for expression and mistake making, players being kept constantly active, and containing fun activities that were challenging. Too much information given by coaches, particularly tactical, was perceived as a negative factor and an indication of the disparity between coach expectation and player ability. The Head Coach spoke of the importance placed upon himself to adapt practice sessions if performance was poor: “If it’s going badly something has to change. We will strip it back and do something fun that takes away the frustration”. A practice session observation provided evidence of the head coach adapting a drill when players were performing poorly.

Match simulation was stated as a factor that developed performance in the practice environment through players practising when fatigued: “It’s good to compete at the end of a session as it’s just like it would be in a game, very physical and tough” (Player One). Experiencing negative situations during practice appeared to develop resilience that produced future performance benefits despite the negative short-term impact, as indicated by the Assistant Coach: “Players go hard at each other. Someone’s got to lose. But we expect the loser to respond next practice and be better”. Restricted availability of the practice court and limited equipment due to a lack of funding was only identified by the Head of Sport: “There’s a lot of equipment that we can’t afford, which could impact performance”.

5.4. Discussion

The aim of this study was to investigate the psychological factors influencing performance in the practice environment. The basketball practice environment under investigation revealed six overarching themes, which were: effort; status; individuality; preparation; team drive; and practice vision. The themes and subthemes, which provided the detail and richness contained within the overarching themes of the practice environment, will lead the discussion. Due to the vast degree of concepts revealed, the discussion will focus on the more unique practice environment findings, which have been under represented in previous performance environment research.

Data analysis suggested that effort, which was closely linked to goal alignment, was complex and multifaceted. Players focusing on high effort above task ability seemed to produce better performance. This could be due to effort being more controllable than

situational ability or talent (Douglas & Carless, 2006). Effort direction towards the team often conflicted with effort towards the self and this was explained by how players perceived themselves. Gundlach, Zivnuska, and Stoner (2006) indicated that if players identified themselves as a part of the team rather than an individual within it then players were more likely to exert effort towards team goals and performance, which was beneficial to everyone involved. Essentially, effort towards the team is effort towards the individuals within it. However, this caused conflict amongst player participants who predominantly held individual goals.

Treating players individually during team practice sessions, such as singling out with praise or criticism, seemed to damage the team ethos. For example, recognising one player as the best performer during a practice session is in direct conflict with a team ethos where success and failure should be collective and does not meet the cooperative nature of the practice environment (see Fletcher & Streeter, 2016). Pain, Harwood, and Mullen (2012) provide further support by indicating that coaching efforts towards the team over individual psychological variables is more influential on performance.

Players held their own perceived ability ranking within the team and performance in the practice environment was affected by the alignment of this perception against actual performance. Current player performance that was self-perceived and displayed to others had a dynamic relationship with expected performance. The relationship may have been expected to be linear (Feltz & Lirgg, 2001) and there were several examples where high expectations led to high performance and low expectations led to poor performance. However, during simulated practice competition between teammates, if an expected high performance outcome or perceived relative ranking position of a player was not realised, then significant negative influences were cited. The relationship between expectations and performance has been previously reported in Olympic athletes but the complexities within practice require far more investigation (Greenleaf, Gould, & Dieffenbach, 2001).

Variations existed in the long-term effects of experiencing lower than expected performance that were not solely negative. These episodes produced motivational effects and the development of resilience and empathy with poor performing teammates. Importantly, it seemed common for players to hold the same performance expectation regardless of their current physical or psychological state. Players who were able to situationally adapt their expectations were far better copers with poor performance in the practice environment. For example, players who were able to accept a diminished physical state and expect a potential drop in practice performance coped better if performance was

lower than their standard level. In comparison, a player with a diminished physical state who still expected to perform to their normal level would experience significant negative influences if performance was lower than expected. Pain et al. (2012) revealed the performance benefits of coaches adapting match preparation activities for players who were suffering from fatigue.

In their seminal study on the sources of stress in sport, Scanlan, Stein, and Ravizza (1991) suggested low personal performance expectancies can negatively affect performance. This contradicts the results from the current study where high performance expectations impacted performance negatively. Athletic performance can be relatively unstable and controllable factors such as the application of effort seemed to have more of a positive influence on performance in the practice environment compared to perceived current form and expected performance (Douglas & Carless, 2006). Coaches with high player performance expectations that were not actualised were also cited as influencing performance negatively. Coaches who were flexible, instinctive, and able to adapt ineffective sessions within a constantly changing environment were seen as a positive (Nash & Collins, 2006).

The stand out performance marker reported by participants was the result of tangible practice objectives (e.g., scoring and winning drills). This does not align itself with holding effort as the primary objective measure of performance, but does provide an outlet for displaying ability (Harwood, Hardy, & Swain, 2000). This result could indicate ego orientations (e.g., scoring more points than a teammate) as causing negative influences in the practice environment. However, the reason behind why participants valued tangible objectives so highly during practice is unclear and requires specific examination. Reflection upon the goals of practice drills and whether they align themselves towards team or individual performance, especially with intra-team competition, was not apparent. Team shooting drills with a single objective of whether the ball goes in the hoop (e.g., tangible scoring outcome) provided an avenue for individuals rather than the team, or the intra-team group, to succeed or fail.

Emotion seemed to influence communication within the practice environment and provided different outcomes when it was negative compared to stable responses when communication was positive. Negative emotions have been found to communicate threat, which could contain a future positive motivational element (Hatfield, Cacioppo, & Rapson, 1994), and was evident in the current study. Negative communication towards others, displayed through criticism, negative outbursts, and body language, appeared to be

beneficial to performance for high ability players with low effort. However, if the high ability, low effort condition did not exist then negative communication provided detrimental performance effects.

Eccles and Tenenbaum (2004) suggested detrimental performance can occur with team members who are not fully aware of team functions and are unable to interpret teammate communication due to a lack of environment experience. Players in the current study have high turnover rates with new players entering the programme annually, which was reported by Noblet and Gifford (2002) to negatively influence performance within a sporting environment. Evidence existed that suggested an extinguishing of negative and critical communication in the practice environment would lead to enhanced team functioning, coordination, and performance. It also appeared that players could detach their personal goals from those of the team. Thus, there was little reflection given to the result of negative communication given to teammates, despite the resulting decreased teammate performance effecting the entire performance of the team.

A lack of emotional control was cited by participants as one reason for giving negative communication. There was evidence of negative communication being seen as a weakness on behalf of the provider rather than a judgment of the receiver's ability. This suggests an awareness, but a lack of control, over negative emotions when in the practice environment. The only time negative emotion was accepted by the whole group and provided positive performance influence was when it was aligned. Any member of the team displaying misaligned emotions (e.g., pride in one's own performance following a loss where others felt anger and disappointment), would impact performance and team function negatively. The alignment of emotions has been cited in previous team performance research where performance outcomes were subject to the simultaneous emotional arousal within the team (De Boer & Badke-Schaub, 2008). This would suggest that the negative emotions perceived by participants in the current study provided an opportunity for the team to align itself and serve as a motivating factor to positively affect future performance.

Emotional contagion (Barsade, 2002) was evident within the practice environment but the source for the emotional position of the group was unclear. However, evidence did exist of leadership playing a significant role within the environment. Emotional reactions to events occur naturally so efforts made by leaders should attempt to ensure emotions are aligned within the group (Sy, Côté, & Saavedra, 2005). Wagstaff et al. (2012) emphasised the importance of emotions, especially their contagious effects, in the relationships of

individuals within a national sport organisation. They were found to be inherent within all social transactions and an inseparable part of everyday life within the organisation, which seems to be mirrored by the practice environment under investigation.

Poor practice facilities have been highlighted as a prominent source of stress in previous research, despite perceptual differences existing (Fletcher et al., 2012; Pain et al., 2012). Pain and Harwood (2008) reported both players and coaches finding poor facilities influenced performance negatively, while Fletcher and Streeter (2016) cited only players finding it as a factor. Facilities were only mentioned by the head of sport in the current study. This indicates that those who exist day to day within the practice environment (e.g., players and coaches) may not perceive facilities to be as influential upon performance compared to when in competitive settings. This result provides a clear example of the perceived experience within the practice environment varying from that experienced in competitive situations. This also suggests that facilities and equipment may be less important compared to the individuals within the practice environment, which is highlighted by the dominance of social factors within previous performance environment research.

A considerable amount of data suggested that actions performed outside of the practice environment had strong influences on performance when in the practice environment. These factors could exist imminently before practice sessions, such as enhancing performance through a pre-practice preparation period, or they could be from as far away as the preceding day. Fatigue due to inadequate recovery (Meeusen et al., 2013) was cited as causing negative performance influences within the practice environment. This was supported by previous research, which also suggested the negative influences of physical fatigue could be countered with effective recovery strategies (e.g., Pain & Harwood, 2007; Pain & Harwood, 2008). This should not be confused with the required fatigue felt by players during practice as this was cited as being necessary for match simulation activities. Simulated fatigue during practice was seen as a positive influence towards improved competition performance but has received limited research attention as to its psychological influence.

Evidence was reported that some player participants held low levels of general independence and responsibility when outside of designated practice sessions and received a lack of support. Evidence of this was seen with injured players who cited a lack of support as causing stress; a factor that has been found with professional athletes (Noblet & Gifford, 2002). The needed holistic approach for successful practice was seen

with a poor decision made by one player to go to bed late after eating a low value nutritional meal, despite having early morning practice the following day. The decisions made outside of the practice environment have been found to dictate sporting performance in the New Zealand rugby union team (Hodge et al., 2014) and it appears the current environment under investigation is no different. Finally, academic performance appeared to hold a relationship with performance in the practice environment. The student-athlete participants in the current study indicated positive academic performance was forged through support mechanisms and close links between academic and basketball staff.

5.5. Conclusion

The current study built upon the influencing factors developed in the first study. This study continued the current programme of research by exploring the psychological influencing factors emanating from the practice environment, which have been historically under researched. As suggested at the start of this study, participant perceptions were found to be conflicting and contradicting in several situational experiences. This conflict, coupled with the unique findings of this study, indicates the need to apply specific research attention towards the practice environment. In a direct comparison with the results from study one, the current study appeared to produce a greater array of performance influencing factors, perhaps due to a larger and more varied amount of perceptions being collected and analysed.

The framework produced by the current study, which has been informed by the first study, can be taken forward to be assessed within wider practice environment populations. Study three utilises the framework developed in the current study to perform a deductive thematic analysis to confirm the existence of previously discovered factors. This next step in the programme of research allows for the creation of a practice environment conceptual model.

Chapter Six: Study Three – Developing the Practice Environment Model

6.1. Introduction and Aim

The inductive analysis conducted in study two allowed for the development of a conceptual framework of psychological influencing factors present within the practice environment of Advanced Apprenticeship in Sporting Excellence (AASE) basketball players. To develop the framework further, a research approach that aims to confirm the existence of discovered factors within a greater population of AASE basketball players is warranted and provides a necessary next step for triangulation (Denzin, 2012). The current study adopted a deductive analysis approach, which allowed for the analysis of data against the pre-existing framework (Elo & Kyngäs, 2008).

Previous performance environment research has consistently created and tested frameworks. Fletcher and Streeter (2016) tested the theoretically generated high performance environment (HPE) model (Jones, Gittins, & Hardy, 2009) within an elite swimming environment and successfully confirmed the presence of the HPE model factors. Pain and Harwood (2007) reported eight general dimensions when evaluating the performance environment of youth international soccer players. The authors followed up with a quantitative investigation where they used the previously discovered influencing factors to devise the performance environment survey (PES) (Pain & Harwood, 2008). Woodman and Hardy's (2001) theoretical framework of organisational stressors in elite sport has been used and adapted by several researchers to base their data collection and analysis upon. For example, Fletcher and Hanton (2003) interviewed athletes from different sports and expanded on Woodman and Hardy's framework by including a travel factor within an environmental issues category as well as several raw data themes not previously identified.

The research studies mentioned above provide successful examples of confirming the existence of psychological influencing factors but their holistic nature did not allow for any specific assessment of the practice environment. Broad approaches may not be useful within specific settings, such as the practice environment, and a need to subdivide the environments of athletes, as suggested by McKay, Niven, Lavalley, and White (2008), is required to provide greater clarity of performance influences.

The testing of psychological influencing factor frameworks allows for specific and isolated variables to be assessed within different environments and can enhance our

understanding of performance environments (Fletcher & Streeter, 2016). Therefore, the current study aimed to confirm the existence of the previously generated framework from study two with a participant population that was one quarter of the total population of players within the UK-based AASE programme and develop a conceptual practice environment model. The purpose of the model is to offer a clear representation of factors needing to be considered when developing a practice environment and how these factors interact with each other. To reach these aims, a longitudinal study approach was adopted to gather data that was representative of participant experience over an entire season. Data was analysed deductively to evaluate the presence of the previously discovered psychological influencing factors in the practice environment.

6.2. Method

6.2.1. Participants

Participants were 58 males who were enrolled at a UK college holding AASE status for basketball competing in the Elite Academy Basketball League (EABL). Although the league title contains the word 'elite', the participants' ability levels, on average, resided between the classifications of 'semi-elite' and 'competitive elite' as set out by Swann, Moran, and Piggott (2015). Participants were representative of 25.1% of the total registered EABL players in the UK for the investigated season. At the beginning of data collection participants were aged between 16 and 19 years ($M = 17.7$, $SD = 0.6$), had an average competitive basketball practice experience of 6.5 years ($SD = 1.7$), and were on average in their second year of an AASE programme ($M = 2.3$, $SD = 0.7$).

Initially the Basketball England AASE coordinator was contacted and they granted permission for EABL coaches to be contacted. All EABL coaches were first sent an email from the AASE coordinator introducing the research proposal, which was followed by an email from the researcher. Four of the fifteen team coaches agreed to participate in the season-long study. The EABL is divided nationally into East and West conferences with two participating teams residing within each of the conferences. Coaches were asked to disseminate a study information sheet amongst their players to recruit participants. Players were asked by their coaches to voluntarily participate in the study and were informed that all data would be treated confidentially, and they could withdraw from the study at any time without consequences. All registered EABL players within the four teams contributed to the study and provided consent via the web-based questionnaire (WBQ) prior to any submitted entry. In line with British Psychological Society guidelines ("Code of Human

Research Ethics", 2014) parental or guardian consent was not gained because participants were over sixteen years of age, they would remain in their basketball environment, and asked to only offer their experience of the practice environment (Morrow & Richards, 1996; Stuart, 2001).

6.2.2. Procedure

Coaches were contacted before the start of the season and were provided with instructions for their participation in the study via email and a follow-up telephone conversation to clarify any issues. Information given to coaches included how players were to complete the WBQ hosted on a Google Form. The data held by the Google Form was password protected and only accessible by the researcher. The researcher had no direct contact with any player, which eliminated researcher bias and enhanced study sincerity (Tracy, 2010). Players were asked by their coaches to complete diary entries during the week preceding a competitive match in the regular EABL season, which reflected upon their experience within the practice environment.

To encourage participants to provide a holistic account, the diary consisted of two text boxes, one for positive experiences and one for negative, which were labelled: "Describe here anything that has happened within the practice environment in the last week that has made you feel positive or good" and "Describe here anything that has happened within the training environment in the last week that has made you feel negative or bad" respectively. Neither box required an entry for the form to be submitted. The Google Form included an introductory statement that advised participants to complete the diary in privacy and ensure they were honest with responses. This included a statement that the researcher would remove any information leading to the identity of an individual prior to publishing results. In order for the form to be submitted, participants were required to tick a checkbox to confirm their consent to partake in the study. At no point could participants view any data that had been submitted. The duration of data collection was 155 days.

The web-link to the Google Form containing the participant diary was sent to coaches via email and SMS text message the day before all regular season matches for dissemination amongst players. A web-based approach to gathering open-ended responses (see Denscombe, 2009) has been found to generate superior participant response rates (Wang et al., 2005). This approach to data collection also allowed for an easier and quicker collection of responses with participants who were located across the UK. Diary approaches will potentially garner data with far less authentic richness compared to in-

depth interview (Silverman, 2006) but data collected over longer periods of time can offer a rigor to results through providing evidence of consistent affect (Xanthopoulou, Bakker, Demerouti, & Schaufeli, 2012). Diary responses reported in relative real-time can also enhance the authenticity of participant experience compared to interviews that have been found to be repetitive of familiar cultural tales (Silverman, 2006).

Coaches used various methods to provide players with the web-link, which included team social media platforms such as private Facebook groups and WhatsApp group messages. These methods of distribution allowed players the opportunity to complete diary entries in privacy and at a time of their choosing using mobile devices. Ethical approval was obtained from the University of Winchester ethics committee.

6.2.3. Data Analysis

Data were analysed using a deductive content analysis approach, which allowed for the testing of a pre-existing practice environment conceptual framework (Elo & Kyngäs, 2008). The framework, which was previously generated through the first and second studies of the current programme of research, was used as a structured matrix to categorise data (Elo & Kyngäs, 2008). Once data collection was complete, diary entries were exported from the Google Form into a computerised spreadsheet. All data extracts remained in their original form, except those that threatened identity, to ensure the participants' message carried credibility and truth into further analysis (Tracy, 2010). Analysis began with the researcher becoming immersed in the data through a reading and rereading process that also created individual data items. Data items retained their original performance designation as having either a positive or negative influence. Due to data being collected through diary entries, a manifest analysis was undertaken, which describes what the informants actually say, stays very close to the text, uses the words themselves, and describes the visible and obvious in the text (Bengtsson, 2016).

The researcher began by placing all of the data items perceived by participants to influence performance positively within the categories of the structured matrix. Once this was complete the negative data were categorised. For example, "I had my best day of basketball yesterday and it made me feel accomplished and actually happy that, as a result of me persevering, improvements have been made" was placed into a 'making improvements' category, and "When our team loses a drill" was placed in an 'intra-team competition' category. Content analysis requires the researcher to tap into their intuition while maintaining a reflective understanding of how previous knowledge can influence analysis (Erlingsson & Brysiewicz, 2017). Following initial categorisation, to improve

credibility of analysis an EABL coach who had intimate understanding and expert knowledge of the AASE practice environment was invited to act as a critical friend (see Smith & McGannon, 2017) by reviewing data placement.

The EABL coach reflected upon data placement and alternate interpretations of the data were discussed with some amendments taking place. For example, a significant amendment was required with the data item “I got rim checked on a Dunk” as it was originally placed within a ‘competition between individual players’ category. However, the coach advised this terminology refers to a player attempting to dunk the ball into the basket but the ball ‘checks’ against the rim and rebounds away. Therefore, it should be placed within the ‘completion of practical skills’ category. The coach also indicated that several data items could be placed in different categories due to the richer meaning of the experience being unclear, which is expected when using manifest analysis (Bengtsson, 2016). Member reflection was not undertaken in this study due to the large participant group size, the frequent need to contact participants, and the potentially different state of mind the participant will be in if providing additional retrospective information outside of the practice environment (Tracy, 2010).

6.3. Results

A total of 409 (209 positive and 200 negative) data items were identified from 215 diary entries. All items were successfully categorised into the practice environment framework from study two. Participants declined to enter an experience on 37 occasions (11 positive and 26 negative). The placement of data items and frequency count is displayed in table 6.1 below. The higher order theme Status received the highest citation frequency with 250 data items, which received a high contribution from the middle order theme Current Performance Level with 189 data items. The Team Drive higher order theme held 70 data items and received its highest contributions from the middle order theme Team Cohesion. Higher order themes Preparation and Effort received frequency counts of 39 and 35 respectively. Finally, the higher order theme Practice Vision received 15 data item placements and the Individuality theme was not matched to any data items.

Table 6.1. Hierarchical Content Tree of Practice Environment Themes with Frequency Analysis

Higher Order Theme Category	Freq' Count	Middle Order Theme Category	Freq' Count	Lower Order Theme Category	Pos Freq' Count	Neg Freq' Count		
Effort	35	Effort	35	High effort is primary focus	10	3		
				High effort from others	12	10		
Status	250	Current performance level	189	Completion of practical skills	32	46		
				Making improvements	30	2		
				Current form	28	20		
				Teammate mistakes and errors	-	2		
				Team Performance	22	7		
				Individual Teammate performance	-	-		
				Mistakes and errors	-	-		
		Status	14	Ability status	14	Ability status	1	-
						Social status	-	-
						Player status position	1	1
						Display of ability to others	1	-
						Match selection	1	9
						Difference in perceived ability and what others perceive	-	-
		Intra-team competition	24	Intra-team competition	24	Intra-team competition	9	8
						Competition between individual players	2	5
		Performance expectation	9	Performance expectation	9	Coach performance expectation	-	-
						Player performance expectation	-	9
		Coping ability	14	Coping ability	14	Current focus	3	2
						Negative focus and reaction	-	2
						Attempting to control uncontrollable events	-	1
						Coping strategies	1	5
		Individuality	-	Individuality	-	Player individuality	-	-
						Previous experiences	-	-
		Preparation	39	Practice preparation	3	Practice preparation	2	1
						Preparation during warm-up	-	-
Holistic approach	8			Holistic approach	8	Holistic approach	2	5
						Success away from basketball Non-basketball commitments	-	1
						Out of practice independence	-	-
						Weather	-	-
Recovery	28			Recovery	28	Fatigue	-	16
						Physical recovery	6	6
		Nutrition	-			-		
Team Drive	70	Communication	34	Negative communication	3	21		
				Communication and feedback from coaches	-	1		
				Support, motivation and encouragement	5	-		

				Knowledge of player communication preferences	1	3
		Performance Feedback	3	Feedback from teammates	-	1
				Praise and reward	1	-
				Coach attribution of performance success	-	-
				Reflection activities	1	-
				Receiving punishments	-	-
		Support	2	Support	2	-
				Independence support	-	-
				Responsibility and independence in practice	-	-
		Team Cohesion	31	Team chemistry	21	8
				Emotional alignment	2	-
				Leadership	-	-
Practice Vision	15	Practice structure	13	Adaptive coaches during practice	-	-
				Enjoyable practice	1	-
				Structure of practice	7	2
				Safe environment	-	-
				Information given by coaches	-	-
				Player led practice	-	-
				Challenging practice environment	1	-
				Equality amongst players	-	-
				Negative practice experience	-	2
				Simulating competitive match fatigue states	-	-
		Facilities and equipment	-	-		
		Goal type	2	Desire to improve and develop	-	-
				Activities that benefit own development and performance	-	-
				Tangible goals	-	-
				Not having goals or objectives	-	-
				Player goal alignment	1	1

6.3.1. Status

The Status higher order category was the most frequently reported by participants. The middle order themes that coalesced into the higher order Status category were all represented within the data. These were: Current Performance Level; Status; Intra-team Competition; Performance Expectation; and Coping Ability. The Current Performance Level middle order theme provided the greatest citation frequency in the Status category with more positive (112) comments than negative (77). The completion of practical skills were evident through comments such as: “making shots” and “making simple mistakes”. However, there was also evidence of tactical skills that influenced performance, which

were evident through the following comments: “Doing plays wrong” and “Decision making in pick and roll”. The lower order themes of Current Form (e.g., “I have played consistently, limiting my turnovers”) and Team Performance (e.g., “We are not performing to the best of our ability”) also elicited a high frequency of data items.

The Intra-team Competition theme reported a closely balanced frequency count between positive (11) and negative (13) experiences. The Match Selection theme only produced one positive data item, which was: “Playing well and getting selected for the team”, compared to several negative items. Lower order theme Player Performance Expectation only reported negative data items (e.g., “unable to play to full potential”). Coping Ability held a higher frequency towards negative performance influences through an inability to cope (e.g., “Everything seems to be going from worse to worse”). Although, there was evidence of a player maintaining a “positive mind-set during practice”.

6.3.2. Team Drive

The Team Drive Higher order category was dominated by the Communication and Team Cohesion middle order themes. Negative comments (e.g., “Being criticised about how I play” and “People moaning at each other”) were cited at a higher frequency than comments of support, motivation, and encouragement (e.g., “People encouraging me when I make a good play during a drill”). The Team Cohesion middle order theme provided 31 citations, which included both positive (e.g., “Team chemistry”) and negative (e.g., “Teammates not trusting me”) effects on performance. Feedback from teammates, praise and reward, and reflection activities were representative of a Performance Feedback middle order category.

6.3.3. Preparation

The Preparation higher order category indicated the importance of physical recovery and fatigue as influences on performance. Fatigue was perceived as negative towards performance (e.g., “my hamstrings were sore after physical session” and “Being tired so not going at 100%”), which also included citations regarding physical injury (e.g., “My back injury and not being on court”). Recovering from an injury was cited as positive (e.g., “Had a good 1st practice back from injury”) and a lack of recovery as negative (e.g., “Feeling more un-athletic than usual, which is so bad”). Taking a holistic approach to practice was evident through the undertaking of independent activities (e.g., “did stretching at home”), which benefitted performance. Factors out of practice, such as “having a bad day”, “friend quitting basketball”, and “Nothing bad has happened in training

but feeling stressed off the court with psychological issues through college and out of college has just made training not as interesting” effected performance negatively. Effective preparation before practice was stated as being positive (e.g., “was on time to training and had time to prepare”), whereas “not having a full team training before our game” was suggestive of a lack of preparation being detrimental to performance.

6.3.4. Effort

The application of effort was found to influence performance. Effort applied by the player (e.g., “I played with energy” and “I worked hard and had good sessions”) produced positive performance influences. Effort exerted by teammates was perceived to produce a positive influence on player performance (e.g., “Everyone worked hard and tried to be better on Monday training”), which was mirrored by a lack of effort from others being perceived as negative (e.g., “We weren’t energetic for the whole session” and “When energy is low in the team”).

6.3.5. Practice Vision

The Practice Vision higher order category was made up of Practice Structure and Goal Type middle order categories. The Goal Type theme was evident through player goal alignment (e.g., “When everyone on the team has each other’s back and gave 100%”). Practice structure was beneficial to performance if, for example, “trainings are enjoyable”. Performance was disrupted when training was perceived as poor (e.g., “A lot of stopping and starting as some players didn't know what to do” and “we had a lack of players”).

6.3.6. Individuality

Participant responses were unable to be specifically identified against the complexity of individually differing responses to factors due to the diary approach taken to data collection. There was no replication of comments within categories that had both positive and negative valence. For example, “bad communication with teammates” was perceived as a negative influence but no such comment was perceived as positive towards performance by any participant. However, the substantial variations in participant comments suggest that individuality existed.

6.4. Discussion

The aim of the current study was to confirm the existence of the previously generated framework of psychological influencing factors within a larger AASE participant

population and develop a conceptual practice environment model. The researcher's subjective interpretation of the data, which was based on previous knowledge and experience of the environment (Smith & McGannon, 2017), placed all 409 data items within the pre-existing framework of the higher order categories of Status, Team Drive, Preparation, Effort, Practice Vision, and Individuality. The findings from the current study provide evidence for the previously devised framework in a population of participants that spans four basketball academies and over a quarter of the AASE player population.

A frequency count of data items was conducted on all categories to provide an indication of the breadth of influence relating to each factor, which suggests a measure of factor impact on performance (Noblet & Gifford, 2002). The frequency of influence citation has been said to indicate the importance of the perceived situation and commitment to goals (Nicholls, Holt, Polman, & James, 2005). Therefore, frequency offers a suggestion of factor influence. However, the frequency that influences are experienced may not be equated to their relevance, significance, meaning, or importance towards performance and psychological states (Fletcher, Hanton, Mellalieu, & Neil, 2012). For example, Pain and Harwood (2008) analysed competitive environment experiences and reported disruption to pre-match routine as only having a mild negative impact on player performance compared to coaches who saw it as a significant negative influencer. Their result suggested that some factors may not hold enough of a magnitude to effect performance, despite high frequencies of occurrence, and that a collection of factors or single high magnitude factors may be more likely influencers on performance. Therefore, the citation frequency in the current study offers a tentative suggestion towards the influence impact of performance factors.

Due to this study collecting data over an entire season, factors that held high frequency counts may be representative of consistent influence over time in the season where a specific influence was perceived at high rates. In a longitudinal study on the influence of leaders on team climate and performance by Pirola-Merlo, Härtel, Mann, and Hirst (2002) there was a time effect reported on the impact of performance influences. The authors indicated that an influence may have a high magnitude in a short-time period but that influence may lose its magnitude over longer periods of time. The current study did not assess influence magnitude. However, factors with repeated perceived influence, which could be assumed through high reported frequency counts, might suggest they had more of an influence on performance than those factors with very low frequency counts.

This is particularly important within an environment that can provide consistent influence. However, this result is unclear and indicates a limitation of the study design.

The Status higher order category held the highest frequency of all psychological influencing factors and suggests that current performance form, or most recent form, could be extremely influential during practice. This perception of current form created an expectation of performance in practice. If participants set themselves an expected standard of performance then the meeting or exceeding of this standard, or the failure to meet this standard, may influence their performance (Gould, Guinan, Greenleaf, Medbery, & Peterson, 1999). High anxiety levels have been recorded in athletes during competition who set high performance expectations (e.g., Pain & Harwood, 2007) and this appears to exist within practice.

Participants' own current performance was cited in the current study far more often than that of the team's performance, which could indicate participants holding an individualistic outlook disavowed from that of the overall team performance within the practice environment. Individuals focusing on themselves rather than the team has been cited in previous research as a negative influence on performance (e.g., Woodman & Hardy, 2001). If accurate, this is an alarming outcome for a team sport environment where the alignment of goals and measures of success are not based around the performance of the team but rather upon individual success, suggesting an ego orientation may be present (Lochbaum, Kazak Çetinkalp, Graham, Wright, & Zazo, 2016). Also, variations between regulatory focus have been suggested to interact differently with performance expectations where individuals with high expectations have suffered poor performance following promotion focus, which may suggest why participants in the current study who were trying to reach high expectations during practice sessions felt more pressure to succeed (Keller & Bless, 2008).

Evidence existed of a social factor impacting performance expectations, which could be explained by the perception of an ego-orientated peer climate where the participants' social position is paramount (Ingrell, Johnson, & Ivarsson, 2016). Within team sports an ability ranking may exist amongst teammates and, therefore, if players do not meet their expected standard of performance they will not present this status to others (Smith, 2003). Younger athletes have been suggested to be prone to search for peer acceptance and it is likely that their displayed ability within practice could hold high goal relevance (Harris, 1995). Match selection could be the clearest indicator of ability ranking

within a team and was a factor that produced negative influence when players did not get selected and positive influences when they did.

The current study suggests that players will enter the practice environment having a performance expectation based upon several factors, such as previous form and perceived ranking position within the team. If actual performance meets this standard or better it, then positive influence is experienced. However, if it is not realised then negative influences ensue. This was heavily cited in the current study as being effected by individual skill attainment but it was especially prevalent for teammates who compete against each other in practice drills. The intra-team competition between teammates produced an outcome of success and failure between those players and would influence performance, with the valence of that influence being dependent on whether the expected outcome was reached or not. For example, a player who perceived themselves to be weaker than their opponent would not experience negativity following an outcome of failure. However, if a player perceived to be of a higher ability than their opponent and lost in direct competition, then the situation would be perceived negatively. Therefore, the intra-team practice competition set by coaches should receive considerable evaluation as to the consequences of outcomes between teammates, especially in one versus one scenarios.

Performance expectations were made by players before practice sessions commenced and were influenced by a preparation period that spanned the time between the end of the previous practice and the start of the next. The physical condition of the participant was highlighted as providing influence, specifically when participants perceived to be in a state of fatigue due to inadequate recovery. An additional element to the Preparation category was injury, which stopped participants from taking part in practice activities. Noblet and Gifford (2002) identified physical injury as a cause of negative influence within a sporting environment. This negativity was due to players feeling isolated, which was compounded by players feeling left out of team activities, and suggests there is a strong psychological component to injury within the social context of team sports. This seemed to be replicated within the current study by participants indicating positive influences when they returned from injury but negative influences when they were unable to practice with the team.

Current study findings suggested that a holistic approach to practice preparation was beneficial to the practice performance of players as suggested by Hodge, Henry, and

Smith (2014), which incorporated multiple aspects of participant behaviour and decision making. If participants made decisions in the preparation periods outside of the practice environment that benefitted their physiological and psychological state, then performance within the practice environment would be improved (Arnold, Hewton, & Fletcher, 2015; De Martin-Silva, Calabria-Lopes, & Patatas, 2013; Greenleaf, Gould, & Dieffenbach, 2001). The combined contribution of participants' physical state and holistic lifestyle choices were key in the production of performance expectations. For example, participants who were able to lower their expectations due to physical tiredness and a lack of adequate recovery may receive less negative influences when in the practice environment. Therefore, a preparation factor appears to hold a strong influence on the practice environment through the creation and adjustment of performance expectations that can dictate a player's performance perception throughout practice. The results from the current study suggest that player performance expectations should be addressed before the commencement of practice due to their significant influence throughout the subsequent practice.

High effort was a factor that influenced participants both in and out of the practice environment. Due to performance being relatively uncontrollable, which can cause negative influences on performance (Douglas & Carless, 2006), it appeared that a focus on the more controllable factor of effort was more effective for enhanced performance. If high effort was the primary focus of performance expectations and goal setting within the practice environment then performance seemed to be improved and more stable. For example, it is conceivable that a player could perform well in the practice environment but then lose in a single drill to a teammate perceived to be of lesser ability with the failure experience overriding any previous good performance. This could also be seen in independent activities with a player failing to score their first three shooting attempts and experiencing negativity that could affect future shooting. Both of these example situations could be avoided if the player had prioritised high effort over tangible skill-based outcomes when they set their practice session expectations.

Previous research has suggested that teammate performance can have an influence on an individual's performance (e.g., Thelwell, Weston, & Greenlees, 2007). Players are unable to control the performance level of others, so the measurement of success within practice competition against teammates may be unpredictable in its influence. Therefore, negative influence may be caused following an exceptionally high performance because it could be disregarded in favour of a failure outcome against a teammate within the social context of the practice environment (Ingrell et al., 2016). Effort

appeared to be a factor that held a linear relationship with both individual and team performance. High effort has been reported by Mahoney, Gucciardi, Ntoumanis, and Mallet (2014) to be associated with achievement and positive affect in sport, which further suggests its need to be prioritised over uncontrollable tangible performance goals. High effort was also required to be present within activities undertaken outside of the practice environment (Hodge et al., 2014). A recent study by Benson and Bruner (2018) identified the contagious nature of teammate behaviours, such as effort, which was mirrored in the current study and was a significant factor in creating cohesion within the team.

In regards to team cohesion, positive communication between teammates produced positive influences on performance but were of a lower frequency compared to negative comments, which were reported far more frequently as influencing performance negatively. Negative emotions have been suggested to affect individuals with more intense emotional arousal compared to positive emotions and may be why negative comments were cited far more often as causing a performance influence (Harris & Pashler, 2005). Previous exploration of the practice environment in the current programme of research suggested that negative communication could be effective in increasing effort if effort was low but damaging towards performance if it was regarding a player's ability. This was replicated in the current study as no negative communication citation referred to effort. However, due to the current study's lack of depth in data collection because of the web-based diary approach employed, this study was unable to confirm if negative comments given to a participant could produce a positive response in performance (Lazarus, 2000).

During time spent within the practice environment, the alignment of goals, behaviours, and emotions undertaken by the team appeared to have an influence on overall performance. Practice session objectives that allowed teammates to succeed together rather than individually were more beneficial towards improved performance. Previous performance environment research has stated the need for clear team goals to be identified to enhance team performance (e.g., Pain & Harwood, 2008), and in particular, to be set in competitive matches by the coach (e.g., Pain, Harwood, & Mullen, 2012). The practice environment seems to be no exception to the requirement of team goals for enhanced performance. This is in spite of the differences between practice, where an individual will learn and develop more independently (Ericsson, 2008), compared to competitive situations that are reliant upon other team members for success.

Within the practice environment where individuals will attempt to personally develop and improve, it may seem more appropriate for players to have their own independently set goals and objectives as these have been found to also improve team performance (e.g., Mellalieu, Hanton, & O'Brien, 2006). Therefore, it appears a necessity for players to hold specific and individual goals in practice but those goals would be best set in relation to team goals. This is because an individual player who has a goal that does not benefit team success may have a detrimental impact upon performance (Fletcher & Hanton, 2003). The identification of team goals could be established by the players to ensure responsibility and engagement in achieving them. This process could then have a greater impact in developing the team values that clarify the path to reaching those goals (Shoenfelt, 2011).

Pattison and McInerney (2016) suggest a concerted team approach to team goals, objectives, and values can aid in the psychological alignment of teammates. For example, a player who is shooting poorly and effecting the team's objective to win the simulated practice match should be given supportive rather than negative and critical feedback that leads to the player's performance improving and giving the team a greater chance to succeed. Each player makes up an integral part of the team and if one player is experiencing negative performance influences then the team as a whole may suffer (Gould, Greenleaf, Chung, & Guinan, 2002). Therefore, supportive behaviour towards teammates is beneficial for team success (McEwan & Beauchamp, 2014). However, the practice environment under investigation was described as a 'half-way house' where players seem to be solely focused on reaching their own goals. This may indicate the existence of a latent factor of individuality and focused self-achievement that may impact on a player's ability to have a team first ethos.

The higher order category of Individuality proved difficult to detect. This factor, as suggested in the previous studies of the current programme of research, indicated that perception will differ between individuals who experience similar situations. Influence valence may evolve over time with, for example, an initially perceived negative influence causing a future motivational effect that improves performance (Lazarus, 2000). These individualities that exist within athletes are varied with identical factors having been found to produce different performance outcomes in athletes by Gould et al. (1999). Therefore, although it is difficult to provide evidence for an individuality factor in the current study there is sufficient evidence over the past decades of psychological research to suggest that athletes will appraise and react to performance situations uniquely (Uphill & Jones, 2007).

Hence, it is important to understand that players within the practice environment may react differently to similar situations. It is subsequently imperative, as highlighted in the current study, that coaches in the practice environment not only hold significant knowledge of the sport but also have an in-depth knowledge of the players within their practice environment (Coté, Saimela, Trudel, Baria, & Russell, 1995).

The individuality present within each player and their ability to create positive influences from negative ones is shown through coping ability during practice activities. The ability to use coping strategies has been identified as pivotal within successful competitive performance environments (e.g., Dugdale, Eklund, & Gordon, 2002; Giacobbi, Foore, & Weinberg, 2004). The possession of adequate coping skills during practice activities appeared to produce positive performance influences. The current study identified more negative experiences that were devoid of a coping mechanism, such as situations getting worse, than positive experiences where coping abilities were employed. This may suggest that participants were able to strategize within the practice environment to remove negative influence without particularly producing a positive experience. If no emotional tag was applied to the experience then the influence on performance would not have been recalled by the participant (MacKay & Ahmetzanov, 2005).

Overall, the current study was able to provide evidence of the previously discovered psychological influencing factors in the practice environment. To develop the application of these factors within practice environments, a model was created to provide a visual representation of the psychological influencing factors and the relationships between them in the practice environment.

6.5. The Practice Environment Model

The Practice Environment Model (PEM) is displayed in figure 6.1 below and is a visual representation of the psychological influencing factors and their relationships in the practice environment. The PEM has been developed from frameworks developed in the previous studies of the current programme of research. The following describes the model and the interrelatedness of influencing factors within the practice environment.

Psychological influencing factors begin in the time between practice sessions that acts as a preparation period for the next practice, which is influenced by lifestyle behaviours that include the athlete's focus towards recovery. A reflection period undertaken by the athlete imminently prior to the start of the practice session creates

practice performance expectations. The practice performance expectations are set against the athlete's current psychological and physiological state. The greater the accuracy of perceived current state the greater the establishment of realistic and achievable expectations. Most recent previous performance form also contributes to the setting of performance expectations. Perceived ability ranking of individuals within the team will impact and interact with performance expectations before and during practice activities. Effort is central to activities before and within the practice environment.

Real-time player performance contributes towards perceived status within the team during practice. Team drive denotes the extent to which players within the practice environment are harmonious with aligned goals and emotional states. Coaches hold a high responsibility for creating and maintaining the practice session structure. A high performing practice environment structure is suggested to put players first, is challenging yet fun, and is driven towards team success. The knowledge that coaches have of their players can influence performance, which includes preferred communication style and personality. All players within the practice environment hold unique perceptions. Individualities in players are not specific to the practice domain and can impact the player during practice preparation, such as the lifestyle behaviours away from practice. The ability to cope with negative situations is inherent within all practice environment transactions. Finally, practice is a cyclical process that may contain many repetitions before competition is undertaken. Player development and competition performance can, therefore, be enhanced through the improvement and optimisation of the practice process.

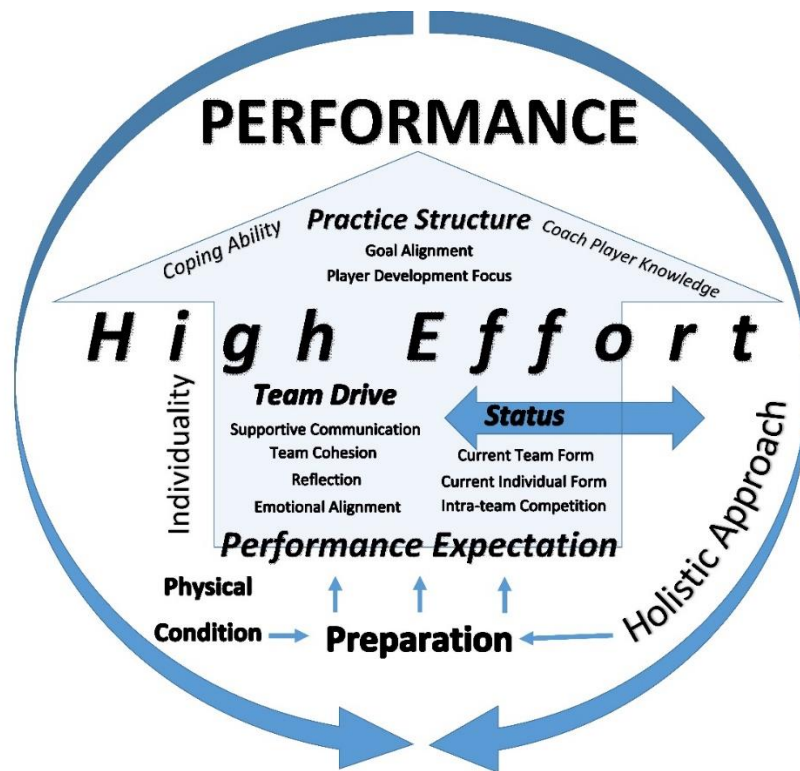


Figure 6.1. The Practice Environment Model

6.6. Study Limitations

The current study employed a data collection strategy that was effective at gathering longitudinal data from participants in various locations across the UK. The data were collected through near real-time web-based diary entries that could be less affected by memory bias (Conway, 2005; Smith, Leffingwell, & Ptacek, 1999). However, this approach did not allow for a richness and depth of participant experience to be gathered and led to some of the more complex factor categories being unpopulated during data analysis. Previous research has provided a measure of influence magnitude as well as frequency of occurrence (e.g., Pain & Harwood, 2008), which allowed for a greater understanding of influencing performance factors. Frequency counts alone may not provide an accurate assessment of the impact an influence may have on performance (Gould et al., 2002). Magnitude of influence was not captured in the current study and should be considered in future practice environment research.

Although all data items were analysed and placed within the framework, it is possible that different interpretations of the data may have produced factors that did not fit within the current framework (Flick, 2009). However, the current framework was originally produced with participants in the same environment as those sampled in the

current study compared to previous attempts that have used frameworks with participants from varied environments (e.g., Fletcher et al., 2012; Fletcher & Streeter, 2016; Pain et al., 2012). But it is plausible that new psychological influencing factors may not have emerged by using a deductive analysis approach.

The PEM provides a naturalistic generalisability of the practice environment of UK academy basketball teams, which allows the reader to assess the interpretations and depictions presented by the researcher against personal contexts (Smith, 2018). However, previous performance environment research has alluded to the unique perspective that different sporting environments offer (e.g., McKay et al., 2008) and it would be misleading to suggest the PEM would be able to be seamlessly used in contexts outside of UK basketball academy environments. To develop the robustness of the PEM, its use in other sporting environments is required.

6.7. Conclusion

The aim of the current study was to provide confirmation of the existence of the previously discovered influencing performance factors in the AASE academy basketball practice environment. Evidence was found to support the existence of previously identified factors and all data items were placed within the framework. This suggests that the investigated practice environment framework is an effective representation of the performance influences emanating from the AASE basketball practice environment.

The current study provided an assessment of player perceptions across multiple basketball practice environments. Study two of the current programme of research indicated the need to evaluate not only the perceptions of players but also those of the key stakeholders within the practice environment. As mentioned throughout the current programme of research and championed in current sport psychology research (e.g., Wachsmuth, Jowett, & Harwood, 2018), coaches play a vitally important role within the practice environment. To ensure a robust evaluation of the current practice environment framework and model is continued, a rich and deep exploration of coach perception is warranted. Study four provides an evaluation of coach perspectives from multiple AASE basketball practice environments.

Chapter Seven: Study Four – An Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis of Coach Perceptions of the Practice Environment

7.1. Introduction

Coach perceptions are commonly gathered and assessed when attempting to evaluate the psychological influencing factors within competitive environments (e.g., Gould, Greenleaf, Guinan, & Chung, 2002; Gould, Guinan, Greenleaf, Medbury, & Peterson, 1999; Mills, Butt, Maynard, & Harwood, 2012; Pain & Harwood, 2007; Pain & Harwood, 2008; Schroeder, 2010; Thelwell, Weston, Greenlees, & Hutchings, 2008). The coach is an integral part of the practice environment through their leadership of the structured activities that players will undertake. These can include the setting and monitoring of tasks and providing task adaptation to ensure continued skill development (Ericsson, 2006). This suggests that the effectiveness of the coach can influence the performance of individuals within the practice environment. Therefore, this places the coach as a perceptually significant member of the practice environment.

The perceptions of the coach have been reported to differ from that of the players within a performance environment (e.g., Pain & Harwood, 2008). The existence of these differences offers an avenue for further practice environment research and provides a triangulation opportunity against previous findings within the current programme of research. Study two captured positive and negative factors of influence from two coaches, which were amalgamated with player and other stake holder perceptions. However, because coach data was indistinguishable from other perceptions the differences were unclear. The current study's aim was to explore coach perceptions of the practice environment and identify the psychological influencing factors, which can be evaluated against previous findings. This will provide environmental perceptions that could potentially be unreported by players.

7.2. Method

7.2.1. Design

An interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA) approach was undertaken in this study to focus on the participants' understanding and perception of lived human experience (Smith, 2016). IPA has been suggested to provide a richer understanding of an environment's impact upon an individual and, therefore, should be considered as an

effective tool for investigating a sporting practice environment (Pietkiewicz & Smith, 2014). IPA draws from three fundamental principles of phenomenology (the essential components of unique experience), hermeneutics (comprehension of an individual's experience) and idiography (in-depth analysis of single cases in their unique contexts) (Smith, Flowers, & Larkin, 2013). IPA is also interpretive in that the researcher is trying to make sense of the participant trying to make sense of their personal and social world (Warner & Dixon, 2015). Smith (2016) has identified IPA as gaining increased popularity amongst sport and exercise researchers since the turn of the millennium due to its ability to return results that can evaluate the complexity of participants' lived experience, which makes it an ideal approach for evaluating the perceptions of coaches in the practice environment (Callary, Rathwell, & Young, 2015).

7.2.2. Participants

The participants in this study were six academy basketball coaches from the UK. The participants were coaches of basketball teams situated within UK further education organisations who competed in the Elite Academy Basketball League (EABL), which is a national competition for players aged between 16 and 19 years. Five participants were male and one female, were aged between 27 and 47 years ($M = 35.3$, $SD = 7.9$), and had between 3 and 10 years of experience within academy practice environments ($M = 6$, $SD = 2.8$). Participant demographic information can be found in table 7.1 below. All participants were purposefully sampled from academy basketball coaching groups in and around the central south coast region of the UK. Participants were familiar with the researcher through previous meetings of a research or professional nature, which aided in the development of good rapport and the facilitation of participants answering more freely and honestly during interviews to generate richer data (Pietkiewicz & Smith, 2014).

Table 7.1. Participant Demographic Information

Participant	Age (Years)	Years of Experience in Academy Practice Environment	Gender
Coach One	31	7	Male
Coach Two	27	4	Male
Coach Three	36	10	Female
Coach Four	42	3	Male
Coach Five	29	4	Male
Coach Six	47	8	Male

7.2.3. Procedure

The participants were contacted directly by the researcher. Participant contact information was gained from public open sources such as 'contact us' pages on club websites or was already known to the researcher. The study and its aims were explained to participants both verbally and through a written study information sheet (see Appendix D). All of the participants were asked for an appropriate and convenient time to be interviewed, and before data collection commenced, participants gave their informed consent to take part in the study. Participants were assured that their contributions would be held confidentially and with anonymity through the removal of any data that referred to specific individuals.

Participants were interviewed individually and away from the basketball environment using a semi-structured interview approach (see Appendix D for interview guide) rather than a rigid interview framework; permitting an unrestricted gathering of factors (Sparkes & Smith, 2009). This allowed for an "openness-to-the-world of, and faithfulness to participant-generated concepts and accounts held to be essential for phenomenological research" (Allen-Collinson, 2009, p. 21). Importantly, the participants were not shown the previously devised practice environment model (see figure 6.1) prior to interviews as this may have influenced their responses. A semi-structured interview guide also allowed for open discussions to take place and for individuality and flexibility during the process (Eatough & Smith, 2017). Participants were able to bring up topics and areas that are important to them, but may not have been specifically asked for by the researcher (Warner & Dixon, 2015). This helped guard against the researcher leading participants to give responses that would please the interviewer by giving minimal guidance during interviews.

During interviews the researcher used their own knowledge and experience of the practice environment under investigation to pose questions and prompts that were designed to elicit performance influences (Callary et al., 2015; Pietkiewicz & Smith, 2014). This ensured resonance by maintaining focus solely upon the practice environment (Tracy, 2010). Potential researcher bias is acknowledged and accepted when using IPA, which is an inevitable part of an interpretation process that uses phenomenological and hermeneutic framing (Eatough & Smith, 2017). An example of an initial question is: "What can effect players positively during practice?". Further questioning and probing to gain more depth to

answers was used, such as: “Can you explain why you think the player was effected by that situation?” and “What strategies, if any, do you employ to create that positive situation?”.

Questioning by the researcher was kept to a minimum to encourage the participant to tell their story in their own words (Smith et al., 2013). Interviews were audio recorded and lasted between 58 and 84 minutes ($M = 70.8$, $SD = 9.7$) in their entirety. Audio recordings were transcribed as close to the end of the interview as possible, which allowed for increased accuracy of participant meaning and acted as an initial familiarisation of the data. During transcription all text was anonymized to protect identities and stored in accordance with the Data Protection Act 2018. Ethical approval to conduct this study was obtained from the University of Winchester ethics committee.

7.2.4. Data analysis

The researcher analysed the data using IPA guidelines for qualitative research in sport and exercise (Smith, 2016). Consistent with IPA’s idiographic commitment, the analytical approach aimed to explore participant lived experiences and provide an insiders perspective of the practice environment (Nicholls, Holt, Polman, & James, 2005). The first interview transcript was read a number of times to develop deep familiarity. Interviews were analysed separately to allow for complete devotion by the researcher towards the text and although future analysis was informed by previous analysis, this permitted an exhaustion of emergent themes (Tracy, 2010).

Initial notes upon the discovery of important content were made in the left hand margin. Once initial notes had been performed on the entire transcription, the notes were translated into emergent experimental grounded themes, which were recorded on the right hand margin. During this phase of analysis, thematic statements were constructed that were both specific, dynamic, and grounded in what the respondent had said at that point in the interview, but which were also moved to a more distilled and abstract level to offer richness important to qualitative research (Tracy, 2010). The construct of themes was a collaboration between participant and researcher to foreground the voice of the participant to address the aims of the study (Didymus, 2017). The more central role taken by the researcher at this stage allowed for interpretation of the analysis (Smith et al., 2013).

Once the entire transcript was documented for emergent experimental themes, coherent inductive clusters were established and entered onto a computerised spreadsheet to allow for manual mapping of interrelationships, connections, and patterns.

All individual data themes were given a specific code relating to the participant and page number of the theme content for future retrieval. The clustering of emergent themes involved identifying and grouping similar themes. For example, 'Players being in control and taking responsibility for their own development' and 'High commitment from players to improve themselves' were clustered together in a group provisionally titled 'Player Characteristics'. Once the first transcript was analysed, the following transcripts were coded and either added to existing clusters or new clusters were created. Once all the transcripts were coded, the clusters were given a final title to best describe its content and referred to as a superordinate theme. Finally, the sections of the corpus were looked at again in the light of the whole to engage in the hermeneutic circle to deepen the analysis and strengthen the interpretation (Smith, 2016).

7.3. Results and Discussion

Analysis revealed five superordinate themes, which were: Player Characteristics, Team First Orientation, Current Performance, Coach Characteristics, and Coaching Structure. Table 7.2 below displays a selection of participant quotes that constructed the subordinate theme categories that formed the superordinate themes. In the true spirit of conducting IPA research that draws inspiration from phenomenological philosophy and hermeneutic theory, an integrated results and discussion section was deemed the most appropriate to display the engagement and interpretation of the data by the researcher (Eatough & Smith, 2017).

Table 7.2. Psychological Influencing Factor Themes and Example Raw Data Extracts

Selected quotes from participants	Subordinate themes	Superordinate themes
“players who are focused and committed with energy”	Player Mind-Set	
“a focus upon only trying to effect the controllables”	Player Coping Ability	Player Characteristics
“not allowing themselves to fully recover and fuel their bodies appropriately”	Off-Court Approach	
“players working together as one”	Team Cohesion	
“displays of negative emotions from players and coaches can decrease performance”	Communication and Behaviour	Team First Orientation
“all goals need to lead to the performance of the team and not the individual”	Player Goals	
“the best results are those like seeing the ball go in the hoop”	Tangible Success	
“success in practice is very powerful for players both in practice and upcoming matches”	Current Performance Level	Current Performance
“if I set session objectives that are too difficult for the players then practice can be really poor”	Coach Expectations	
“Coaches who have a better understanding of their players can predict player reactions to situations”	Coach Behaviour	Coach Characteristics
“if we give too much information to players in a session they can’t cope with it, especially if we add to the original session plan”	Practice Session Structure	
“celebrating team success is far better than singling out individuals as that breaks the team”	Team Culture	Coaching Structure
“if players lose in practice it can hurt them”	Intra-team Competition	
“focusing on an upcoming match increases player motivation and they perform better”	Future Opponent	

7.3.1. Player Characteristics

From early in the analysis process it was clear that a set of key player characteristics were developing that more successful players held within the practice environment. There existed a fine balance between the amounts of responsibility a player held in the practice environment. Players who performed well in the practice environment were independent and took responsibility for their own development, as shown in the following extract from Coach One:

A player who takes responsibility for themselves always improves the most and develops at faster rates. They take their basketball seriously and really want to get better. They want to be here more than anywhere else. They are always prepared for practice, have great time management, and I don't need to get on their backs. But there are some players I'm constantly chasing and they just don't have the same motivation.

Coach Two indicated that players who had a sense of responsibility for themselves could have gained this from coaches within the practice environment: "It's hard, especially when you have younger players, but we [coaches] need to give players some slack for them to pick up. If we tell them to do this and do that, when do they get the opportunity to do something for themselves?"

Within the practice environment, creating autonomous individuals who take responsibility for their own learning and development has been found to be a requirement for progression, with the means to the construction of responsibility coming from various long-term sources (Martindale, Collins, & Daubney, 2005). Responsibility, which is integral to the progress and performance of players, appears to be a skill that can be developed in long-term practice environments with the coach having a central role. As an attribute, responsibility can have influence on competitive performance as seen with players being able to problem solve in matches when a crisis occurs (e.g., Pain & Harwood, 2007).

Players that held high levels of responsibility and autonomy during practice activities perceived improved performance. This was mirrored with negative performance influences being found if players took little responsibility with a significant reduction in coach direction, which was apparent in the quotation below from Coach One:

Some players need far too much direction, they can't do anything on their own. In the past when they hit the 18's [under 18 age group] I gave them far more responsibility but most of them aren't ready to handle it. They couldn't prepare

themselves for practice and that effects the whole team. I got sick of walking onto court and players sat down on their phones not ready to go. Nowadays I have to drip feed responsibility to them but that's still no guarantee.

This extract supports the rationale to provide long-term responsibility development within the practice environment, especially during the developmental years of athletes where coaches can have a significant impact (Gould & Carson, 2008). Improved autonomy will also enhance player lifestyle decisions when engaged in activities outside of the practice environment (Hodge, Henry, & Smith, 2014).

The independence required from a player to take responsibility for their own development was described through the following quote from Coach Three:

We need players to be able to think for themselves and take on the responsibility for their development but we don't want them to be too independent that they only look out for number one. There is a difference between players who are independent and can get themselves ready for practice and those who have an independent mind-set that doesn't put the team first.

It would appear that players who are too independent risk being withdrawn from the team. A recent team conflict study by Maltarich, Kukenberger, Reilly, and Mathieu (2018) suggested that group members with mutually exclusive goals can be disruptive. The current study provided evidence of players who, within a conflict situation, held an individual win-lose approach that was not concerned with collective goals but their own achievement and influenced performance negatively. This was illustrated by Coach Six who stated: "Point scoring is a big driver. Some players might even disregard recent team instructions and go it alone. I'll take those players straight out, we don't need them, they are no go for us". Players in performance environments who hold concern for their own personal goals above that of the team were identified by Pain and Harwood (2007) to be unable to function within the team and can have a negative impact on team performance.

Further characteristics found in positive player performance included having a strong commitment and motivation to improve and a want to achieve and compete against others. Coach Four indicates below how players who seek challenge are likely to experience positive performance influences:

We love getting players [in practice] who seek to challenge themselves at every turn. They are highly motivated individuals who want to be as good as they can. There's two types of players [in practice], those who will compete well only in certain circumstances and those who will compete every time because all they

want to do is go up against others. These [latter] are the players that rise to the top.

Players experiencing positive performance influences were also described as being open and honest with high personal standards, although a high personal desire to develop led to the potential for burn out and poor performance as highlighted by Coach Five: “He had to be on top form all the time, he wouldn’t accept anything less than 100%. He would get really angry if he didn’t hit his level. He was in the gym every day and in the end we had to restrict what he did”.

Evidence of practice performance expectations that are unrealistically high have been reported in the previous studies of the current programme of research as causing negative influences on performance. For example, players suffering from fatigue before practice still expected to perform at their normal standard and were impacted negatively by substandard performance during practice sessions. The expectations for performance that were previously reported were affected by the reflective ability of players before the practice session and reflection was an effective trait stated by coaches in the current study to improve performance outcomes.

The decisions that players made away from basketball were deemed crucial by Coach Six: “They [Players] might stay up too late and not eat good foods. Focus [on basketball] shouldn’t stop when you leave the court, the more you put in outside the better you feel when you are on the court”. Coach Three stated that: “Some of the best guys in previous years put it [basketball] first. They went in the gym on their breaks, they would only ever meet up with other players outside and they were always ready to go hard at practice and matches”. The lifestyle decisions made by athletes was seen as having an impact on performance in the practice environment and Coach Five suggested this was: “all down to how much you [players] want it. If you want it then it’s your life”. In a study assessing the motivational climate of the New Zealand Rugby Union team, Hodge et al. (2014) emphasised the importance of empowering the players to take ownership and accountability of the team’s success both on and off the field. This indicates the importance of a holistic approach to performance.

An important player characteristic that emerged often within the current study was the ability to cope with negative situations. During data analysis, participants were asked to expand upon what players did to create positive moments in practice. Table 7.3 below provides a list of the emergent coping abilities of players as cited by coaches, which includes example extracts. The list of coping abilities is by no means exhaustive of the

practice environment under investigation but offers comparability against previous research that had primarily focused on coping abilities within performance environments (e.g., Giacobbi, Foore, & Weinberg, 2004; Holt & Hogg, 2002).

Table 7.3. Coping Strategies Used by Successful Players

Coping strategy	Participant extract example
Performance reflection	"I would get players to self-reflect both on the court and off the court, be open and honest, and what hasn't gone well". (Coach One)
Learning from mistakes	"It's so important players keep learning from the mistakes they make. If there's a culture of learning from losing then players will develop quicker". (Coach One)
Trying to only effect what can be controlled	"We try to work on the controllable elements of basketball. For example, players can't control whether the basket is good so why spend time worrying about it?" (Coach Four)
Accepting weaknesses	"We want our players to look for areas to develop, everyone has them". (Coach Two)
Applying diminished emotions	"You don't want players playing with much emotion as it can get on top of them and can be negative [towards performance]". (Coach One)
Embrace adversity and challenges	"He was always up for the challenge and would actively seek out them out. He dealt with clutch [difficult] moments brilliantly. He's my go to guy". (Coach Three)
Independent thinker	"Independent players who can problem solve and find their own way". (Coach Five)
Not affected by short-term poor performance	"Players can be achieving one minute and then playing terribly the next, and sometimes it doesn't take much [failure] to send them over the edge [performance decreases]". (Coach Two)
Acceptant of errors	"If players are throwing up bricks [poor shooting performance] in practice then they usually carry that on in poor practice". (Coach Six)
Focusing upon the present moment	"Poor performance comes from dwelling on what mistakes you make. We always need to be looking forward and not backwards". (Coach Three)
Previous development experiences	"Resilience is in the form of what the players have done in the years before we get them and it's much harder to increase their resilience in the time they spend with us". (Coach Four)

In comparison with the studies that have sought to identify coping strategies of athletes within performance environments, the current study's results were similar. However, some abilities or strategies that were identified may be highly specific to practice. For example, reflection has been identified as an effective coping strategy in previous research (e.g., Thelwell, Weston, & Greenlees, 2007). However, the acceptance of errors and mistakes may be unique to the practice environment, which could be due to practice being seen as an environment to trial and make mistakes, whereas competition is not.

7.3.2. Team First Orientation

A team first orientation was reported as a positive influence on performance, as indicated by Coach One: "Players buy in if they feel part of a team". This simple notion of belonging has been proposed by previous performance environment research as effective for team performance (e.g., Douglas & Carless, 2006; Pain, Harwood, & Mullen, 2012; Noblet & Gifford, 2002) and creating it within the practice environment appeared to be highly complex and difficult to achieve. Creating a team first orientation was cited by Coach Four as a significant positive performance influence: "If the players are working together its more powerful than anything else we can put together". The following discussion attempts to provide evidence of what produced a team first orientation within the practice environment under investigation.

There appeared to exist a latent conflict amongst players within the practice environment. A player within the practice environment who was primarily focused on only themselves was referred to by Coach Five as "highly driven to make it to the States [on a scholarship]", which produced "an environment of individuals focused upon themselves". The practice environment under investigation was described by Coach One as a "stepping stone for them to improve and move on", which highlighted the difficulty in producing a team first orientation amongst players. This individualistic orientation within a team sport was insightfully highlighted as negative towards individual and team performance by Coach Six in the following extract:

If they [players] are working only for themselves then that doesn't work out in this sport. Yes they may want to move on from us as better players, that's why they are here after all, but sometimes they can't get their heads around the fact that they need their teammates to succeed. So for example, [player name removed] was always negative towards one guy on the team, he wasn't like in our top two guards and didn't get many minutes, but one week he had to scrimmage [a practice

match] with [player name removed] and by the end I had to take him out the game because he got so much stick from [player name removed] that the team and everyone in it was suffering.

The above extract portrays the difficulty that players have when faced with an immediate risk of not achieving individual goals. If the player in the above extract had supported the guard to improve his performance then the player may have benefitted. Therefore, a team first orientation could have allowed the player to reach their goal of winning. To achieve a team first orientation, Coach Three suggested that coaches should be: "Setting goals only to be reached by players working together". For this to happen it was stated by Coach Two that: "all players should contribute to the team in some form". Goal misalignment was reported as one of the most frequently cited themes by Fletcher and Hanton (2003) as causing tension within the team. Shoenfelt (2011) provided an argument to not only set team goals but to set and prioritise team values that will allow the group and its members to succeed. The setting of team values was not apparent in the current study.

Annoyance towards a teammate's failure could be construed as occurring within players who hold an individualistic orientation as highlighted by Coach Four below:

Selfish players will hurt a team. If it's not going right for them then they get down on themselves and turn on other players. Last year [player name removed] squared up to [player name removed] because he wasn't passing to him despite the team playing really well and it surprised me because I didn't think he should have passed to him in those situations anyway."

The above extract suggests that a team first orientated player would have accepted not being passed to as long as the correct decision was made for the team. Ego orientated individuals have been suggested to measure performance against individual success and failure against others, and these individuals have been reported to negatively influence team performance (see Lochbaum, Kazak Çetinkalp, Graham, Wright, & Zazo, 2016). In fact, it appeared that negative behaviour from players in the current study could be an indication of an individualistic orientation as the following quote from Coach Three regarding intra-team competition suggests: "He's only interested in his scoring stats and getting one up on teammates. At practice he can make some really bad decisions and it annoys all of us. If he's shooting badly then he might as well not be there".

Competition within the team was highlighted as both positive and negative towards team performance. Competition was stated by Coach Four as a potential source of

negativity and a possible root to creating individual approaches to practice: “I can see how one versus one drills can affect the loser. I guess it’s the clearest indication that they failed”. Losing out to a teammate in selection for matches was said to produce negativity within those not selected and that effected performance in the practice environment. An intra-team ranking was said to be present within the practice environment by Coach Five: “Everyone knows their place, knows who’s the best and worst in each position”. The problem with intra-team competition was further highlighted by Coach Five who stated: “It comes down to who gets the better of who, they aren’t putting the team first, and they just want to keep their pride. Its good they go at each other but sometimes it boils over”. The perceived short-term negative influences of intra-team competition were clear but there was also a benefit to intra-team competition, as stated by Coach Three: “The players go at each other, it gets them sharp and ready”, and by Coach Six: “They [players] enjoy competing against each other the most [during practice] and it’s the best way to motivate a response from them”.

Long-term intra-team competition in practice has been proposed by Passos, Araújo, and Davids (2016) as critical for enhanced individual performance in practice through players adapting to their environment and developing their abilities via a competitiveness that enhances innovation and creativity to provide individuals with different performance solutions for achieving the same goal. Coaches may not have been directly aware of the positive long-term mechanisms for intra-team competition enhancing performance (e.g., resilience and motivation building) but it was an activity that they all engaged in. They were aware of the short-term negative performance influences, which suggests there is an innate understanding of the long-term benefits and the need to ignore, or expect and deal with, the short-term negative effects. The positives of intra-team competition within the practice environment, such as cooperation and coordination between teammates, discovering new ways to achieve success, and acquisition of new skills, seem to comfortably out-weigh the short-term negatives (Passos et al., 2016).

To achieve a team first orientation it was evident that the communication between members of the practice environment was paramount. Positive feedback, encouragement, and support after errors was seen as positive towards performance. On the whole, displays of negative emotions were reported as negative towards performance by Coach Six: “Most of our players will get into a negative spiral if we have a go at them. There’s this one lad who goes well within himself if anyone says anything [negative] to him. Most of the boys respond better to support”. It seemed that communication amongst teammates could be

emotionally charged, as stated by Coach One: “Communication that comes from a place of [negative] emotion”. Emotional communication led to problems that could have been avoided if those within the practice environment understood that negative comments towards another can hurt their own personal achievement, as highlighted by Coach Two:

I see that once a player gets down on themselves, their performance drops. It doesn't help the team one little bit. I've had several meetings already this season with one of our new players trying to get him to understand the [negative] reactions he gives on the court effects his teammates. He gets annoyed and they get annoyed. We are trying to make him get it but it's just the way he is.

The influence of communication within performance environments is heavily represented amongst the current literature (e.g., see Pain et al., 2012). A general lack of communication between coaches and players (e.g., Fletcher & Hanton, 2003; Pain & Harwood, 2007; Woodman & Hardy, 2001), negative comments following failure (e.g., Holt & Hogg, 2002), a lack of appropriate avenues and structures for communication (e.g., Pain et al., 2012), and poor team coordination (e.g., Eccles & Tenenbaum, 2004) have all been cited as communication factors that negatively influence performance and were all visible within the current study.

Similarly to the performance environment literature, the current study presented with critical and negative communication as leading to negative performance influences. However, Coach Two spoke of one player who improved following critical communication: “If he wasn't playing well you could really get in his ear. The more negative you were towards him the more he picked up his game”. Coach Two was probed further about this player and revealed: “He was a real team player, he didn't care about his own performance, it was all about the team”. This may have been a coincidence but it may indicate a further strength of team orientated players who are less effected by personal criticism as they see themselves not as an individual but part of the collective.

Within the Team First Orientation superordinate theme, Coach Five indicated that players required an independence, which contradicts much of the previously stated data above:

Training is about development whereas playing [competitive matches], the team needs to come first. I would say it's difficult, certainly it's difficult to get someone to focus on improving them self but on the other hand turn around and say that they must focus on playing in a team with others.

The above extract indicates that individuals within the practice environment are there for self-development and improvement purposes (Macnamara, Moreau, & Hambrick, 2016), which is different to competition environments where a team first orientation is required to achieve a high performance and winning outcome (Pensgaard & Duda, 2002). However, it seems that greater benefits could be gained through an approach that puts the team first. Individuals within a practice and learning environment will hold strong desires for personal improvement that have been proposed to be effective tools for development (Ames, 1992). Therefore, a balance between the self and the team is required where the self does not dominate and negate the beneficial effects of a team first orientation.

7.3.3. Current Performance

The current study suggested that if current player performance was good then positive performance tended to follow, and the same was said to be true for poor current performance leading to further negative performance. How the players get into perceived good or poor current performance states was suggested to be transient by Coach Two:

Its hit and miss. If they played well in the last match then that's good. If they have had a good run in practice and are feeling good it usually carries on. Obviously it will break down at some point. They might be tired or have a poor shooting session or make errors in games. In my experience it doesn't take more than a bad practice to set someone back".

Coach Six alluded to players being most influenced in the practice environment by tangible performance outcomes: "The ball going in the hoop, making successful passes, turnovers, rebounds, winning in scrimmage, I'd say they make a big impact in practice". When Coach Six was asked why they provided such an impact, they replied: "Its outcomes the players can see and more importantly they are the things that can have an effect on the scoreboard".

Although stated as positively influential on performance, basing success, achievement, and current performance level on tangible outcomes is personally uncontrollable and could be dangerous to athlete confidence (Douglas & Carless, 2006). Applied effort was stated as being controllable and could provide a measure of current performance, which was cited by Pensgaard and Duda (2002) to be an effective coping strategy within the performance environment. However, evidence of players using effort as a measure of current form was lacking in the current study. This would indicate that players and coaches may be too overly focused upon tangible outcomes, such as shooting accuracy, that will provide a means to perceive current form as either acceptable or not.

The use of uncontrollable performance measures seems to be a high risk strategy for player and team performance in practice if the inevitable mistakes and errors occur.

The impact of a technical mistake made by a player was stated as negatively influencing performance by Coach One:

Mistakes and errors are never going to be taken as a positive but they can quickly make a player lose their head. It's like I said before, you need to be able to handle making errors and if you don't reset yourself and go again then things will get worse and worse. It would be great if players could ignore errors and just carry on.

Negative influences were said to occur following poor personal performance, despite successful team performances. The current study suggested that negative influence could still occur even if high effort and successful performance towards team objectives existed but the final outcome did not contain perceived personal tangible outcomes. Coach Five indicated that if players did not perceive themselves as achieving success in the practice environment then this could damage team performance as well as individual: "When players get down on themselves they start being negative towards their teammates, their communication can be aggressive. They start to lose discipline and it can effect what we do with the team".

On a long-term basis, Coach Three stated the powerful contagious effects of negative behaviour from one player on the team: "He sucked the life out of the group. He was just so depressed all the time. On court and off court. We'd meet him and he'd say that nothing was wrong and that he enjoyed what he did. It was a relief when he left. It wasn't a great season". The negative emotions and behaviours displayed by the individual mentioned above effected the performance of the group (see Tamminen & Bennett, 2017), which suggests the removal of this player from the team, despite any high individual skills they might bring to the team, was a necessary manoeuvre to obtain better team cohesion and performance (Pain & Harwood, 2007).

7.3.4. Coach Characteristics

As seen with the players in the practice environment, a set of coach characteristics were identified that influenced performance positively. These characteristics are not an exhaustive list but give an indication of successful traits in coaches, which are displayed in table 7.4 below with example extracts. As seen in previous performance environment research (e.g., Gould, Greenleaf, Chung, & Guinan, 2002), goal setting and coach expectations were cited as needing to be aligned for the ability of the team. If the goals and expectations were not, then this could affect performance in the practice environment

as shown in the following statement from Coach One: “You can’t put too much extra into the session, you stick to the plan because if you increase the difficulty by adding in more technical points then the players can’t handle it”.

Table 7.4. Characteristics of Coaches That Influence Practice Performance Positively

Coach characteristic	Participant extract example
Accurate goal setting against controllable outcomes	“Setting goals for point scoring opens up a lot of difficulties as you can play well and effect the game even though you don’t score that much”. (Coach Two)
The setting of common team goals	“Everyone works towards the same goals” (Coach One)
Clear directions allowing for two way communication	“I’ll make sure I’m clear with instructions and I’d rather stand there for another few minutes answering questions than them [players] getting it all wrong” (Coach Six)
Honest, truthful and trusted	“Trust is needed. If players trust you then they will respect the tough decisions” (Coach One)
Good knowledge of players	“We won’t know the new players, how they tick. Do they want an arm around the shoulder? Do they react to criticism” (Coach Three)
Regular feedback & support	“We try to meet at least once a week in between lessons one to one. Don’t need to see everyone but it’s important for a lot of the players” (Coach One)
Providing appropriate challenge	“We’ll try and do resilience building during practice, although if we make it too tough its counterproductive “(Coach Five)
Encourage players to support each other	“Challenging players with tasks where they need each other” (Coach Four)
Not singling out players for praise and criticism in front of group	“Picking out players for bad plays in the group will only result in them losing their head” (Coach Two)

Coach Two described the need for goals to be controllable for players. Scoring points in practice competition is a somewhat uncontrollable situation (Douglas & Carless, 2006), which was explained by Coach Two below:

Players are looking to score on each other in practice, like get one over on a teammate. The problems come when they try to score for the sake of scoring. There's possibly a better option in that move, but giving players a target of scoring [in scrimmage], or it could even be rebounds, and with those you can't guarantee where the ball is going to go. If they don't hit the target then they don't achieve and it's a negative.

Coaches are in positions of high responsibility within performance environments (Pain & Harwood, 2007) and the need for them to be honest, truthful, and approachable was key in gaining the respect and trust of those within the practice environments under investigation. Coach One was asked to expand upon why trust in coaches was a positive influence and stated: "If I've got to make a tough selection decision then I'll make sure the players know why. I like it when they get upset because it means they want it. But, they always accept my decision and I feel I have earned that with them over the years". Coach perception in the current study was unanimous in the belief that positive behaviour was replicated through the respect they received from their players. There was also a strong indication made by coaches of the delicate awareness the players had of behavioural changes within the practice environment (Woodman & Hardy, 2001).

The knowledge a coach has of their players' character and personality seemed critical to understanding how to communicate to them. Coaches who have an in-depth knowledge of their players, which is driven by the need to understand players both inside and outside of the sport, which can allow for tolerances, has been shown to be effective for performance (Bennie & O'Connor, 2010). Having an understanding and knowledge of an individual's specific communication needs was highlighted by Coach Three who offered an insight into an experience with a player:

He would need an arm around the shoulder, all the players knew to leave him alone after he went into one [negative state]. It was almost like you needed to take him out the session there and then. I'd give him some gentle feedback and a few minutes out the game to reset. It's just the person he was, very introverted".

The requirement of coach feedback to players appeared to be best when within a 'goldilocks zone' of not too much but not too little. Players who needed a lot of feedback and guidance were described by Coach Four: "They can't think for themselves and we have

to tell them exactly what to do". Whereas players requiring too little coach feedback was stated by Coach Six as causing negative influences on team performance: "Independence [in players] is great but not when you go off on your own and don't fit into team goals". Coach feedback, which is clear and specific, has been reported as positive in previous performance environment research (e.g., Douglas & Carless, 2006; Greenleaf, Gould, & Dieffenbach, 2001; Pain & Harwood, 2007; Pain & Harwood, 2008) but did not allude to its frequency and substance. Cushion, Ford, and Williams (2012) provide an extensive discussion regarding feedback during practice and training activities, which highlights the complexities of feedback delivery within unique environments.

Resilience in players, which can be gained from initial negative experience (see Douglas & Carless, 2006), was stated as a positive influence on performance. In the quotation below, Coach Three highlights the effectiveness of giving the team achievable challenges to overcome despite initial negative performance influences:

One session we spent 45 minutes trying to get a play down, it wasn't difficult but they hadn't done it before. We had a big game the next day and had to get it that session and they couldn't get it. They were tired from a monster physical gym session the day before which didn't help. They got at each other a lot but by the end they all got it and left happy. It's about perseverance. There was a point where I was going to call it off [the practice session] but I'm glad I didn't.

The above extract not only shows the need for coaches to have resilience in the practice environment but also suggests a need for them to be able to construct effective activities, optimise demands, and foster the development of psychological factors that will enhance a player's ability to be resilient to negative consequences (Fletcher & Sarkar, 2012). Coach Four offered a further insight into the development of player resilience through the building of team cohesion while setting challenges: "Challenging players with tasks where they need each other will build the group". Activities where players require the assistance of teammates to succeed, therefore, appears to also develop the cohesion of the team.

Finally, the singling out of players within the team seemed to be detrimental to performance. Identifying a player for poor performance served to only increase the negative influence. Conversely, it appeared that emphasising the qualities of a single player from within the team during a practice session decreased the cohesion of the team, as shown in the following quote from Coach Two:

Everyone on the team knew he was the best player, we went to him for everything. The other players could have put in more but everyone relied on him. I'd say we

didn't have a good team that year because you can't play with just one guy. I think they all got a bit sick of it in the end. It was all about him. It was a good lesson to learn.

This result would fit the approach needed to decrease individualistic orientations within the group. However, it was unclear whether the other members of the group would respond to this situation with increased motivation to improve in the hope of being singled out in the future with individual praise from the coach.

7.3.5. Coaching Structure

The structure of the practice environment through its culture, drills, routines, and flexibility were frequently cited by coaches. Performance was said to be positively affected by the existence of a successful culture in the practice environment, as seen through the following quote from Coach Four: "There's no better place when practice is buzzing; everyone working for each other. There's nothing negative, it's all positive". Noblet and Gifford (2002) indicated how culture is at the heart of the team in a performance environment and if players were unaware of the culture then they could influence performance negatively. This was particularly important for teams introducing new players to their ranks who are unaware of the team's culture, which is a constant occurrence within the practice environments under investigation, as highlighted by Coach Five: "They can struggle [new players], especially with guys from out of area where their last team [culture] was really different".

An aspect of team culture is the celebration of success (e.g., Fletcher & Streeter, 2016) and its application within a successful practice environment was explained by Coach Six: "The team is at the heart of what successes we have. A player may have had a great game but they didn't win the game, the team won. So yes, when we come to practice we try to do everything together". The culture in practice was also said to lead to positive performance outcomes if all players were treated as important parts of the team regardless of their status. The ability of the group to form strong social bonds was important in successful team performance, which has been reported previously in winning teams as providing positive influences (e.g., Pain et al., 2012). In fact, no coach participant in the current study referred to socialising activities between teammates to influence performance negatively.

The practice environments in the current study that allowed players to make mistakes without feeling judged were said to create a positive performance influence.

When the safety of failing was taken away, Coach Four alluded to a potentially negative situation occurring within practice:

They [players] are very competitive. I had thought about this recently that if all the players are always going hard and looking to win there's not really any chance for players to try stuff out. No one wants to fail, there's no room for errors. I don't know if I make them compete too much? A lot of what we do is scrimmaging. It raises the standards but I do think they don't get to try new things out. I'll have a think about this for the future.

This insightful observation may be the result of players feeling they have to prove themselves during practice activities, which leads them to feel insecure about experimenting and failing as described by Coach Two: "It's good to keep your standards [in the practice environment] but sometimes the players get so annoyed if they make errors, I tell them this is the place to make errors". Coach Four suggested that "practice is the time players display their ability", which indicates the careful balance required to ensure dysfunctional social elements don't inhibit performance in practice. Social environments where young athletes are constantly trying to avoid social embarrassment through failing may result in them being unable to experiment and take risks, which can lead to decreased performance (Gustafsson, Sagar, & Stenling, 2017).

Practice sessions may not always progress as expected and Coach One suggested the need for coaches to be adaptable: "Drills go wrong and need changing. If it isn't working you go off plan and set it right or the session will be wasted". Practice sessions that failed to deliver successful outcomes with players were seen as causing negative performance influences. Poor practice session performance has been previously reported as providing powerful negative affects upon player mood, which impacts the belief a player has in their ability going forward (Pensgaard & Duda, 2002). However, leaving the plan of the session and giving the team additional information was said to be counterproductive and cause negativity by Coach Three:

I'd say doing too much in the session doesn't help the players. It's like firefighting constantly. You try and fix everything that's going wrong and can be far away from where you should be. Realise you can't fix everything at once. It's tough but it's best just to stick to where you planned to be.

As stated previously, players who took responsibility for their own development created positive influences upon performance and this was aided by coaches centring the session on the players. Coach Three stated: "My training sessions have them [players] at

the heart of it. It's an athlete centred approach. They buy into things, it's for them to develop after all". This approach certainly seemed to favour a player taking responsibility for their own development. Therefore, the coach can have a significant influence upon the approach players take towards practice sessions, which could impact on their ability to take more responsibility for themselves (Claringbould, Knoppers, & Jacobs, 2015).

Two competition specific areas within the structure of practice received frequent attention from coaches. These were the increased practice performance of the team when an upcoming competitive match was imminent and intra-team competition. Firstly, a near future opponent is significantly tangible to players, due perhaps to competitive matches being the reason why teams exist and perform practice activities. The extract below from Coach Five illustrates the focus of players before an imminent competitive situation:

There's more of a lock in [increased focus] from the players if we got a game coming up. I'd say performance definitely increases on the whole in those sessions. Everyone is locked in and ready to go. Effort levels are really high. It's what the players are there to do so it's the most important training sessions.

The above extract indicates acknowledgement from the coach that the practice session is important so it may be that their behaviour influences the players (Sy, Côté, & Saavedra, 2005). There could also be a raft of factors that improve team focus and performance in the practice environment that come from imminent competitive matches with previous performance research identifying future opponents as a cause of stress for athletes (e.g., Hanton, Fletcher, & Coughlan, 2005; Holt & Hogg, 2002; Mellalieu, Neil, Hanton, & Fletcher, 2009; Nicholls et al., 2005; Pensgaard & Duda, 2002; Thelwell et al., 2007). Stress has been reported by Knight and Eisenkraft (2015) to narrow functional attention for short-term benefit and this may be the reason why imminent competition raises motivation. The current study suggests that positive performance influences through increased focus and motivation will occur if the challenge of competition is imminent.

Secondly, intra-team competition offered both positive and negative performance influences. Coaches provided evidence of short-term positive influences for players who won competitive intra-team outcomes but negative influences for those who lost. Coach Six explained why losing in practice created negative influences upon players: "Yes, there's an issue if players lose out to someone or a group they think they should have beaten. The less mature and [less] better players [lesser coping ability players] take it harder. It can absolutely kill confidence". However, coaches were unanimous in their use of intra-team competition within the practice environment with Coach Two and Coach Six respectively

offering a reason why in the following extracts: “It’s great for match simulation, the team can get at each other and drive up the standards on the floor. It sharpens them up” and “They are [intra-team competitive drills] good for building resilience. If you got someone going at you, what you going to do? How do you deal with it? It’s especially good for the weaker guys going up against the stronger players”.

Although losing out in intra-team competition provided a short-term negative effect, there was an indication that long-term positive influences would occur when Coach One was asked to give their opinion: “I’d say it’s good for players. It’s a motivator. There’s nowhere to hide and it’s up to you as to whether you are big enough to respond”. Therefore, if managed correctly intra-team competition can be an effective performance enhancer despite the initial short-term negative influences (Passos et al., 2016). However, awareness of these initial negative performance influences is crucial for coaches, especially if coaches require the effected players to have high confidence in an upcoming match.

Coach Five provided one exception to how a losing outcome in intra-team competition may not have short-term negative performance influences, which was down to the chemistry of the team:

We can go really hard at each other during practice and I do think it’s because of the team chemistry this year. There’s no superstar or individual that stands out, everyone is working for the team. They all get on well off the court, which is good. After training the lads joke and have a laugh, and it’s a great atmosphere. It’s been a joy to take them this year. There’s barely any negativity.

This suggests that a group with strong team cohesion would be able to buffer loses within the team due to a team first approach being taken and perhaps players being able to identify group performance above that of their own (Knight & Eisenkraft, 2015).

7.4. General Discussion and the Practice Environment Model

Data analysis identified five superordinate themes that included: player characteristics, team first orientation, current performance, coach characteristics, and coaching structure. The aim of the current study was to undertake an exploration of coach perceptions in the practice environment. The researcher’s interpretation of the data and subsequent organisation of superordinate themes differed from the previous frameworks offered in the current programme of research, which suggested that coach perception of the practice environment may hold unique elements. However, the majority of central organising concepts within the superordinate themes were identifiable in the previous studies.

The current study identified an array of characteristics and attributes that players and coaches had in the practice environment. Previous research analysing coach perceptions of sport developmental environments reported several attributes that successful players required, which included: resilience, confidence, determination, desire, and intelligence (Mills et al., 2012). The similarity of results suggests that coaches may have a greater awareness of the impact that individuals can have within an environment, which could be due to a coach's focus on the adaptation of player behaviour to develop performance (Nicholls, Morley, & Perry, 2016). The alternative perception from the coach's view offers a dynamic to the identification of environmental psychological influencing factors that appears to not be available from player perception.

The current study's findings showed a confirmation of many of the previously identified performance influencing factors. Therefore, many of the identified performance influences were already represented within the framework of factors previously reported in the current programme of research. However, several additions and modifications to the practice environment model (PEM) (see chapter six) were required in light of the findings from the current study. The modifications to the PEM can be seen in figure 7.1 below. Modifications to the PEM included a representation of the need for player autonomy within the practice environment. Coaches were involved in the creation of players who took responsibility for their own development and it was a prominent recurring factor within the current study. Competition in the form of intra-team competition was originally present in the PEM but it became apparent that a focus on upcoming opponents influenced player and team performance positively, and was added.



Figure 7.1. Amended Practice Environment Model

As expected, there were several coach specific factors that emerged from data analysis. The effectiveness of the coach to devise, deliver, and adapt practice sessions to aid increased performance was a factor that enhanced the representation of the practice structure, which was also added. The most significant addition to the PEM was the approach to practice. The previous studies within the current programme of research along with recent research (e.g., Hill, Cheesbrough, Gorczyński, & Matthews, 2019) indicate that negative experience may lead to future success, which was very much evidenced throughout the current study. Negativity may lead to an initial decrease in player performance but challenging situations were necessary in the practice environment to produce resilience in players that would lead to improved ability and success in the future (Fletcher, Hanton, Mellalieu, & Neil, 2012). This highlights a major difference between competition and practice environments as current perception may dominate success within competitive situations (e.g., current negative perceptions leading to negative performance outcomes) whereas success in the practice environment may be delayed (e.g., current negative perceptions leading to future positive performance outcomes).

7.5. Limitations and Future Research

An IPA approach to qualitative research has been questioned for its inability to provide an accurate capture of the meanings of experiences rather than opinions of it, and its difficulty in explaining why lived experiences occur (Tuffour, 2017). It may be that alternative qualitative approaches are needed to triangulate results. The subjective interpretation of the data is also very much dependent on the researcher and the requirement to study a broader range of participants is needed to support the findings of the current study. The participants in the current study were located locally to the researcher but the EABL practice environments were located across the UK. Therefore, it would be difficult for the current qualitative study to offer itself as a naturalistic generalisation of the EABL practice environment (Smith, 2018).

In the previous studies of the current programme of research, the ability to deal with negative situations and create positive future outcomes was apparent, although the specific mechanism by which the influence changed is unknown. The current study did not provide an explanation of influences changing their valence but did identify a range of coping strategies present in the practice environment, which could be an indicator of how players dealt with negative influences. The application of coping strategy and self-regulation has been previously evaluated in sporting environments but have either been too overly focused on specific sport situations to be used in other environments (e.g., Massey, Meyer, & Naylor, 2013) or focused on competition that does not relate to the practice environment (e.g., Giacobbi et al., 2004; Holt & Hogg, 2002; Nicholls et al., 2005; Thelwell et al., 2007). The current study did not aim to specifically evaluate coping strategies in the practice environment and future research may wish to apply attention to them.

7.6. Conclusion

The aim of the current study was to investigate the positive and negative psychological factors that coaches perceive to influence the performance of players within the practice environment. As well as providing an exploration of factors, this study also provided confirmation of the existence of previously identified factors. Therefore, triangulation has enhanced the current programme of research through additional confirmation. The richness and depth of themes that emerged from data analysis highlight the unique contribution this study has made to the current programme of research and the need to evaluate coach perception was warranted.

This study was able to provide further enhancements to the PEM and the revised model can be seen in figure 7.1 above. The current programme of research has explored and confirmed the psychological influencing factors present within the practice environment. Study five applies the PEM to a single UK academy basketball practice environment throughout an entire season. The aim of this educational programme study is to promote the positive influences and decrease negative influences in an attempt to enhance performance within the practice environment. Study five uses an action research approach to evaluate the success of the educational programme.

Chapter Eight: Study Five – Improving the Practice Environment of a Basketball Team

8.1. Introduction

The current programme of research has suggested that the practice environment can influence athlete performance through a broad range of factors. Previous performance environment research with soccer players has attempted to identify factors of influence within the performance environment (e.g., Pain & Harwood 2007; Pain & Harwood, 2008). These performance environment research studies then informed intervention studies that were based on open player discussions on team functioning (Pain & Harwood, 2009) and assessments on preparation, functioning, and performance (Pain, Harwood, & Mullen, 2012). The interventions were founded on previous scientific exploration of the performance environment and provided a practical application of the theory (Beckmann & Elbe, 2015). Therefore, it is the intention of the current study to replicate this process and conduct an education programme study as a form of intervention based on the previous findings of the current programme of research.

The aim of the current study was to implement and evaluate a season-long education strategy for a UK basketball academy practice environment through an action research approach. The education strategy was based on the conceptual model developed in the previous chapters of this thesis. Specifically it focused on five psychological factors that were: effort, performance expectations, communication, team goals, and preparation. An action research approach has been successfully employed in previous sport organisation research where emotional abilities and strategies were improved (e.g., Wagstaff, Hanton, & Fletcher, 2013). Also, regular consultations with injured players was used in an action research study by Evans, Hardy, and Fleming (2000) to deliver a psychological intervention, which found a multi-modal approach for rehabilitation to be most successful. The action research approach taken in the current study allowed the researcher to actively change and adapt the intervention or education programme for the best practical application (Bodner, Maclsaac, & White, 1999). The current study aimed to evaluate the influences of the psychological factors on performance in the practice environment by enhancing the factors that had previously been suggested to increase performance and decreasing those factors that influenced performance negatively.

8.2. Method

8.2.1. Methodology

An action research approach was employed in the current study to allow the researcher to implement and adapt the education strategy from within the practice environment and evaluate the success of practical application (Huang, 2010; Pain et al., 2012). Action research is now commonplace within sport and exercise research with it having been applied to the study of psychological interventions (e.g., Wagstaff et al., 2013), sport education programmes (e.g., Farias, Mesquita, Hastie, & O'Donovan, 2018), and youth sport participation (e.g., Chalip & Hutchinson, 2017). Action research requires the researcher to work with practitioners to effect desired change in real world environments, which creates a researcher role for all participants involved as a project develops (Huang, 2010). Action research does not solely rely on one method of data collection as this may not be able to measure the phenomenon in which we are interested in (Bodner et al., 1999). Sport performance environments are socially complex and there is a requirement to evaluate intended change with a diversity of measurement tools that offers triangulation and the involvement of stakeholders that act within the environment (Pain et al., 2012).

The approach undertaken within the current study follows the action research spiral (Kemmis, McTaggart, & Nixon, 2013), which states the need for repeated iterations throughout the stages of plan, act and observe, and reflect. The model presents action research as cyclical, reflective, and adaptive, which places the participants as researcher collaborators and decisive agents of change within the environment (Gilbourne & Richardson, 2005). The current study attempted to effect performance within a basketball practice environment through several educational interventions and used a variety of data collection and analysis techniques to evaluate change.

8.2.2. Participants

The study participants were the head coach, assistant coach, and players from a Diploma in Sporting Excellence (DiSE) (previously AASE) male basketball team who competing in the Elite Academy Basketball League (EABL). The EABL is cited as the "premier junior basketball competition in the UK, featuring England Development Programme (EDP) institutions – the top Under 19 programmes in the country" ("About - EABL", 2019). All participants were male. The basketball team were associated with a UK sixth form college and all players were undertaking full-time educational programmes. The head coach was

initially contacted and discussions took place during the off-season period for a potential study design and the recruitment of participants. All participants were recruited by the researcher and the head coach prior to the start of the season.

8.2.2.1. Head Coach

The head coach was a white British male aged 31 years at the commencement of the study. He was employed as a full-time coach and was in his eighth year as head coach in the practice environment under investigation. He was also the head coach of a senior UK national league basketball team and had an overall coaching experience of twelve years.

8.2.2.2. Assistant Coach

The assistant coach was a white British male aged 27 years at the commencement of the study. He was employed as a full-time coach to assist the head coach and was involved in various other basketball activities with the associated club, such as coaching junior teams. He was in his fourth year of employment in the practice environment under investigation and had nine years of coaching experience.

8.2.2.3. Players

The team consisted of eighteen players and all took part in the study. The age range of the players was 15-19 years ($M = 17.7$, $SD = 1.04$). The players were of four different nationalities with the predominant nationality being British. At the start of the study the experience within the practice environment ranged from players in their first year to third year ($M = 1.56$, $SD = 0.7$). This was the first year in the practice environment for ten players. Player demographic information can be found in table 8.1 below. The players undertook 12 hours of on-court practice activities per week, which was accompanied by two strength and conditioning (S&C) sessions per week, and weekly competitive matches.

Table 8.1. Player Demographic Information

Pseudonym	Age	Ethnicity	Nationality	Current year in practice environment
Adam	19	White British	British	3rd
Ben	17	White European	British	1st
Chris	17	White British	British	2nd
Dom	18	White American	US	1st
Evan	19	White British	British	1st
Finn	17	White British	British	2nd
Gary	15	Mixed Other	Polish	1 st
Harry	19	White British	British	1 st
Ian	17	Black British	British	1 st
Jim	17	White British	British	1 st
Kai	19	White British	British	3 rd
Liam	19	Black British	British	1 st
Matt	19	Black British	British	1 st
Neil	18	Black British	British	2 nd
Oli	17	White British	British	2 nd
Pete	17	Black British	British	2 nd
Rich	19	White European	Lithuanian	1 st
Simon	17	Black British	British	2 nd

8.2.3. Procedure

The head coach was contacted in the off-season and met with the researcher to discuss an approach that could support performance in the practice environment based on the previously conducted research. Following the initial meeting with the head coach, the assistant coach was approached and both agreed to take part in the study. Both coaches were aware of the previous research that had been conducted by the researcher and were keen to implement the research findings in the upcoming season. Players were invited to partake in the research study before the start of the season by the coaches and the researcher in a team meeting. Participants were given an information sheet and were informed of the study's purpose. The researcher and coaches met several times before the start of the season to discuss the previous research findings and finalise the key psychological influencing factors that could be implemented over the season to enhance performance within the practice environment. In line with the principles of action research, the coaches, as researchers themselves, were pivotal in the decision of what strategies they believed could work in the practice environment that they led (Bodner et al., 1999).

A total of five education strategies were chosen based on identified psychological influencing factors from the practice environment model (PEM) developed in the previous chapters of this thesis. The improvement strategies were: high effort being a player's primary goal in the practice environment, players undertaking pre-practice performance reflection, players developing supportive communication, the setting of common goals to enhance team performance, and an enhanced preparation period before practice. The five strategy factors were chosen following discussions between the coaches and the researcher as to which factors could provide the greatest improvement to performance in the practice environment. Players were given an information sheet at the start of the study (see Appendix E). Coaches had additional strategies that would support the implementation of the player education strategy, which were added to a coach specific information sheet (see Appendix E). These were: using different approaches with different players, the application of positive and negative communication, and success through team activities.

The initial education strategy was not static for the entire season and was open for adaptations and changes, which is a fundamental element of action research (Bodner et al., 1999). Before the study began, a meeting was held between the researcher, coaches, and players, to explain the purpose of the research. During this meeting the education strategy was introduced and information sheets were given. At the end of the meeting the player participants were explained their role within the study, assured of their confidentiality, given the chance to ask questions, and subsequently provided their signed informed consent. All players agreed to take part in the study. The study lasted for 20 weeks exclusive of academic holidays when the facility, which was operated by the associated college, closed and practice activities were disrupted.

8.2.4. Measures

Data were collected from three sources. The data collection techniques comprised of focus groups, observations within the practice environment and weekly meetings, and a web-based questionnaire (WBQ). The schedule of data collection can be found in Appendix E.

8.2.4.1. Focus groups

Focus groups were employed in the current study because they can generate data through social interaction and group synergy that are often deeper and richer than one to one interviews, illuminate differences between perspectives, and, due to the size of the

target group, generate large amounts of data in a relatively short time span (Rabiee, 2004). Focus groups were conducted with players and coaches throughout the study (see Appendix E for programme of data collection). The focus groups provided a deeper examination of player and coach perceptions compared to the weekly meetings (Krueger, & Casey, 2014). Focus groups also allowed an assessment of the reactions between participants, which was necessary when collecting data from the highly social context of the practice environment (Kitzinger, 1995).

Four focus groups were conducted with players during the study that lasted between 27 and 32 minutes ($M = 29$, $SD = 2.16$). Player focus groups were conducted in weeks 2 (two focus groups), 11, and 20. The player focus groups were made up of either six or seven randomly selected participants from the total player population. Focus group player participants were randomly generated using the random formula function in a Microsoft Excel Spreadsheet. Three focus groups were also conducted with the head and assistant coach at regular intervals during the study that lasted between 27 and 31 minutes ($M = 29$, $SD = 2.08$). Coach focus groups were conducted in weeks 3, 8, and 20.

The uniqueness of the psychological influencing factors of the practice environment required the researcher to provide their own knowledge and experience when developing the focus group questions (Woodman & Hardy, 2001). The focus group question schedule related to the positive and negative performance influences perceived within the practice environment. The focus group questions differed between each focus group due to the reactive nature of action research that allowed the current situation and the participants to lead discussion (Mulhall, 2003). For example, in the first focus groups for players and coaches, the questioning was more generic towards the strategy than it was in the last. For example, player participants in the first focus group in week two were asked a question regarding their understanding of a strategy in the practice environment: "Can you remember what the key idea was of putting effort in?" In week 20, the questions became more specific to the effects of applied strategies: "In regards to effort, do you feel you are applying an effort focus at the right times in practice now?" All focus groups were audio recorded and the transcriptions, which include all questioning, can be found in Appendix E.

8.2.4.2. Observations

Observations were made throughout the study to understand and interpret behaviour within the practice environment. A participant observation approach was

undertaken because the researcher was interacting with the individuals in the practice environment while collecting information, which provided an enormously rich and complex gathering of data (Jorgensen, 2015). The researcher's professional and personal world views guided interpretations (Mulhall, 2003). The observations were driven by the education strategy but were unstructured in the sense that an observation criteria or checklist was not used, which attempted to reduce any predetermined notions of the discrete behaviours that may be observed and allowed data to remain specific to the context from where it was gathered (Mulhall, 2003). Despite the potential for bias, the researcher was in a position to oversee, communicate, and act upon the elements within the practice environment (Simpson & Tuson, 2003). Therefore, the personal experience and understanding of the environment gained by the researcher provided meaningful interpretation (Atkinson, 1992).

Observations were recorded in field notes, which can be found in Appendix E. Field notes were written following the weekly meetings with players and coaches, and the observations of the practice environment itself (e.g., on court practice sessions). The field notes provided a running background commentary as well as offering triangulation with other data sources (Montgomery & Bailey, 2007).

8.2.4.3. Weekly meetings

The researcher held weekly player and coach meetings over the 20-week study period. The purpose of the player meetings was to educate the players in the strategy, discuss the effect of strategy success, and observe interactions within the group. The weekly player meetings were held at the end of the academic day and before evening team practice sessions. At the end of each weekly meeting the players were instructed to open the WBQ on their personal mobile device and complete the pre-practice session activity. Table 8.2 below states attendees and agenda for each player meeting. Weekly coach meetings were undertaken to discuss the progress of the education strategy and discuss the implementation of any strategic changes or adaptations. Coach meetings were not held at a regular time during the week, rather they were undertaken when it was convenient for the coaches and researcher due to scheduling issues and were always held after weekly player meetings. Both coaches were present at all meetings and the agendas were driven by the weekly player meeting outcomes and strategy progress.

Table 8.2. Weekly Player Meeting Information

Week	Attendees	Agenda
1	18 players, Head Coach, Assistant Coach	General discussion of 5 education strategies.
2	17 players, Assistant Coach	Discussion of 5 strategies. Specific focus given to performance expectations and experienced fatigue before practice.
3	17 players	Discussion of 5 strategies. Specific focus given to player support.
4	16 players, Assistant Coach	Discussion of 5 strategies. Specific focus given to effort as a primary focus and practice preparation.
5	18 players, Head Coach, Assistant Coach	Discussion of 5 strategies. Specific focus given to reflective skills and use of effort.
6	18 players, Head Coach	Discussion of 5 strategies. Specific focus given to the response of mistakes made by self and teammates.
7	16 players	Discussion of 5 strategies. Specific focus given to performance expectations.
8	18 players, Assistant Coach	Discussion of 5 strategies. Specific focus given to practice preparation and teammate support.
9	18 players, Assistant Coach	Discussion of 5 strategies. Specific focus given to the players' social position in the group.
10	17 players, Head Coach	Discussion of 5 strategies. Specific focus given to fatigue and competition within the team.
11	7 players	Focus group undertaken.
12	15 players, Head Coach, Assistant Coach	Discussion of 5 strategies. Specific focus given to control and effort application.
13		No player meeting undertaken this week.
14	16 players, Head Coach	Discussion of 5 strategies. Specific focus given to ability ranking position in team and intra-team competition.
15	17 players	Discussion of 5 strategies. Specific focus given to control and player support.
16	18 players, Head Coach, Assistant Coach	Discussion of 5 strategies. Specific focus given to negative communication within the team.
17	18 players	Discussion of 5 strategies. Specific focus given to controllable practice elements.
18	17 players, Assistant Coach	Discussion of 5 strategies. Specific focus given to effort as a coping strategy.
19	17 players	Discussion of 5 strategies.
20	6 players	Focus group undertaken.

8.2.4.4. Web-based questionnaire

The WBQ was used to collect data from players before and after practice. The WBQ acted as a tool before practice for players to reflect on their current psychological and

physiological state, and after practice to reflect on practice performance. The WBQ was disseminated weekly to the players by the researcher following the weekly meetings. The WBQ was held on a Google Form, which could be distributed easily among multiple participants at various time points and was secured with a password. The WBQ was developed to collect data that was specific to the education strategy and could aid in its implementation. For example, the WBQ stated that players should prepare for practice by reflecting on their current physical and mental state. Players were then asked to consider whether they felt they could perform to their perceived normal standard of ability by taking into account their current state.

A 7-point Likert scale was developed to collect the perceptions of players based on the education strategy. All questions were anchored at one end of the scale with Poor/Low (1) and Excellent/High (7) at the other. Before practice activities commenced, the players were asked the following four questions: “My preparation (e.g., sleep, rest, nutrition, and lifestyle) for training has been...”, “My current fatigue (e.g., muscle soreness) levels are...”, “My current stress levels are...”, and “My performance at training today will be...”. Players were then asked to state why they put the predicted performance score they did in an open-ended text box. The WBQ then instructed players to complete the remaining questions immediately after practice activities had finished. The three post-practice activity questions were: “My performance during training today was...”, “My effort level during training today was...”, and “The positive support from teammates and coaches I've received has been...”. Players then submitted the WBQ.

8.2.5. Data Analysis

The qualitative data gathered from the focus groups and observations were analysed through a thematic narrative analysis (TNA) approach, which has been used in previous action research to analyse qualitative data in a performance environment (e.g., Pain et al., 2012). The TNA approach provided a context and depth to evaluation, which statistical analysis could not perform. Narrative analysis is the telling of stories within the social contexts they occur (Griffin & Phoenix, 2016). The stories that are told are of the experiences and memories that individuals have, which are a version of reality whose acceptability is governed by convention rather than by empirical verification and logic (Bruner, 1991). The TNA was structured around the researcher’s observations of the practice environment based on the focus groups and field notes from the weekly player and coach meetings. This allowed the story of the participants and researcher’s

interpretation of the world to be told with the emotions they experienced it with (Reissman, 2008).

The current study adopted guidelines set out by Smith (2016) for using TNA in sport and exercise, which is the most commonly used method when the researcher is operating as a storyanalyst (Reissman, 2008) with various data sources (Ronkainen, Watkins, & Ryba, 2016). TNA was conducted upon focus group transcripts and field notes. Each data collection period informed and contributed to the action research process so analysis of data was completed within seven days of its initial collection. For example, the field notes written after the first weekly meetings were transcribed and analysed before the second weekly meetings began. This ensured that the action research spiral (Kemmis et al., 2013) was present and that the past data could inform future practice and changes within the study (Gilbourne & Richardson, 2005).

The first phase of analysis involved narrative indwelling or familiarisation with the data where transcripts and field notes were read and reread to gain an understanding of the stories (Frank, 2013). Narrative themes and thematic relationships were then searched for in an attempt to keep the stories within the text intact. Key passages of text and any patterns that occurred were highlighted and, ensuring the story remained intact, were moved to a computerised spreadsheet that allowed for an easy manipulation and movement of theme text. The text that represented the central concept of the story was then grouped with other similar clusters of themes ensuring that the stories were intact. The theme creation phase relied on the researcher's interpretation of the thematic content to provide rich insights into the story of the participants.

As the season progressed, TNA identified a continually evolving group of themes that provided an ongoing commentary of the education strategy and, as a requirement of the action research process (Gilbourne & Richardson, 2005), contributed to future strategy. The TNA results were written as a realist tale that attempted to communicate the story of the 20-week period and the implementation of the education strategy in an engaging and insightful manner (King, 2016). Finally, the 20-week practice period was split into six practice phases, which were in line with academic holidays and allowed an analysis of distinct time periods.

Quantitative data from the WBQ were analysed using the Friedman test in IBM SPSS Statistics. Graphs were also produced for the mean differences between categories. The average score for each participant was calculated for the six-time phases. The

difference in each individual category Likert score was analysed over the 20-week practice period to assess changes over time. The categories analysed were; current fatigue; current stress; predicted performance; actual performance; effort; preparation; and support. Statistical significance was set at a P-level of less than or equal to 0.05. The WBQ also attempted to collect open-ended responses but due to large amounts of missing data they were not included in study results. The lack of open-ended questions being completed was highlighted by Reja, Manfreda, Hlebec, and Vehovar (2003) as an issue when using a self-administered WBQ.

8.2.6. Ethical Considerations

Several ethical considerations were made in the current study. The addressing of confidentiality issues were undertaken through a dominant approach, which does not comprise the identities of participants within the collection and reporting of data, as well as alternative approaches (Kaiser, 2009). The alternative approach (Kaiser, 2009) taken to ensure the confidentiality of participants included supplying the participants with information of potential dissemination outlets for results. A benefit of giving research participants information about potential dissemination outlets is that they are driven by a desire to help others and undertaking a dialogue with them about the use of their data can help them to grasp the outcomes of their participation (Carter, Jordens, McGrath, & Little, 2008).

Participants were also made aware of the action research spiral (Kemmis et al., 2013) before they gave their consent to participate in the current study. The participants were made aware that changes to the education strategy could be made throughout the study and that they were free to withdraw their participation at any point (Nolen & Putten, 2007). All player participants were advised that they would experience no prejudice if they did not agree to partake in the research study, which was an important ethical consideration because all players would be operating within the practice environment regardless of their participation in the research study (Nolen & Putten, 2007). Following final data analysis conducted by the researcher, all participants were offered a copy of the study findings to approve the accuracy of results and to check they were happy for their contributions to be disseminated to wider audiences (Smith & McGannon, 2018). All data was kept in digital format securely in accordance with General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) (2018). Ethical approval was gained from the University of Winchester ethics committee.

8.3. Results

The impact of the education strategy on performance in the practice environment was evaluated using the perceived changes within the environment through the action research process. The study was divided into six-time phases across the 20-week practice period. The programme phases and data collection times are displayed in Appendix E of this thesis. Qualitative data were analysed through a narrative approach. Results are presented in a chronologically ordered story that informs the reader of the social contexts of the findings (Griffin & Phoenix, 2016) and the impact of the education strategy through the action research process (Huang, 2010). The story is that of the researcher and their interpretation of the experiences of those involved in the practice environment (Kim, 2015). Pseudonyms were used in the results section to protect participant identity.

Data analysis of the quantitative WBQ responses using the Friedman test indicated no statistical significance, which was set at a p-value of 0.05 or lower, for current fatigue ($X^2(2) = 9.662, p = 0.085$) and predicted performance ($X^2(2) = 7.554, p = 0.183$). Statistical significance was found in the categories of current stress ($X^2(2) = 14.480, p = 0.013$), actual performance ($X^2(2) = 42.227, p = 0.000$), effort ($X^2(2) = 20.142, p = 0.001$), preparation ($X^2(2) = 36.658, p = 0.000$) and support ($X^2(2) = 23.480, p = 0.000$). This suggests that the education strategy was able to lower participant perceptions of stress and enhance effort, preparation, and support. Also, by the end of the study predicted performance was lower than actual performance, which indicates a lowering of performance expectations may have increased actual performance. A visual representation of the difference between predicted performance and actual performance mean scores is displayed in graph 8.1 below. Table 8.3 displays the mean, mode, and range for all categories across all time phases.

Graph 8.1. Predicted and Actual Performance Scores

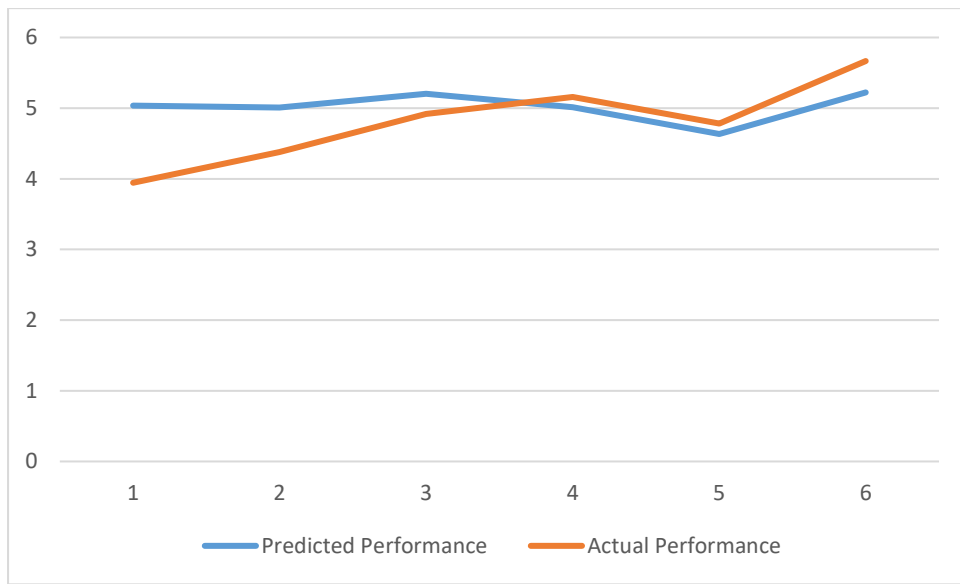


Table 8.3. Mean, Mode, and Range for all Categories across all Time Phases.

Time Phase	Category	Average (Standard Deviation)	Mode	Range
Phase 1	Current Fatigue	4.54 (0.65)	5	2.33
Phase 1	Current Stress	3.76 (.89)	4	3
Phase 1	Predicted Performance	5.04 (0.76)	5	2.5
Phase 1	Actual Performance	3.94 (0.91)	5	3
Phase 1	Effort	4.51 (1)	5.33	3.17
Phase 1	Preparation	4.19 (1)	5	3.5
Phase 1	Support	4.76 (0.88)	4	3
Phase 2	Current Fatigue	4.31 (0.91)	5	3.5
Phase 2	Current Stress	3.71 (1.12)	4	4
Phase 2	Predicted Performance	5.01 (0.74)	5.5	2.5
Phase 2	Actual Performance	4.38 (0.82)	4.67	2.5
Phase 2	Effort	5.4 (0.81)	6	2.83
Phase 2	Preparation	4.26 (0.84)	4	3
Phase 2	Support	5.46 (0.85)	6	3
Phase 3	Current Fatigue	3.84 (1.13)	4	4.17
Phase 3	Current Stress	3.44 (1.06)	4	4.5
Phase 3	Predicted Performance	5.2 (0.75)	6	2.67
Phase 3	Actual Performance	4.92 (0.71)	5	3
Phase 3	Effort	5.36 (0.67)	6	2.33
Phase 3	Preparation	5.25 (0.7)	5	3.33
Phase 3	Support	5.56 (0.68)	5	2.5
Phase 4	Current Fatigue	3.98 (0.96)	5	3.33
Phase 4	Current Stress	3.63 (0.94)	3.67	4.25
Phase 4	Predicted Performance	5.01 (0.61)	5	2.58
Phase 4	Actual Performance	5.16 (0.49)	5	1.83
Phase 4	Effort	5.65 (0.69)	5.67	2.67
Phase 4	Preparation	5.16 (0.74)	5.25	3
Phase 4	Support	5.51 (0.72)	5	2.67
Phase 5	Current Fatigue	4.32 (1.08)	4.67	4.5
Phase 5	Current Stress	3.08 (0.8)	3	3.33
Phase 5	Predicted Performance	4.63 (0.72)	4	3
Phase 5	Actual Performance	4.78 (0.64)	5	2.67
Phase 5	Effort	5.72 (0.62)	6	2.5
Phase 5	Preparation	5.15 (0.68)	5.5	3
Phase 5	Support	6.06 (0.67)	6	2.33
Phase 6	Current Fatigue	3.78 (0.72)	4	2.5
Phase 6	Current Stress	3.06 (0.66)	3	2.5
Phase 6	Predicted Performance	5.22 (0.64)	5	2.5
Phase 6	Actual Performance	5.67 (0.63)	6	2.17
Phase 6	Effort	5.85 (0.72)	6	2.5
Phase 6	Preparation	5.64 (0.92)	6	4
Phase 6	Support	6.13 (0.53)	6	2

8.3.1. Phase One (Weeks 1-3)

Two player focus groups (n = 11) were conducted in week two and one coach focus group (n = 2) in week three. Player and coach perceptions were gathered using focus groups to evaluate the practice environment at the start of the education programme and

to collect evidence of initial improvements. The analysis of both phase one focus group results were combined as they provided a general overview of the team's initial position at study start. The themes and the central concepts that contributed to the formation of the themes developed from the narrative analysis approach can be found in Table 8.4 below.

Table 8.4. Phase One Central Concepts and Themes

Central Concept	Theme
High effort should be unconscious High effort takes away from technical and tactical thought processes High effort increased performance Coaches can drive effort rather than coming from players High effort is a pre-requisite and should not need to be thought about High effort inherent so best as an intervention High effort as intervention and not a primary cognitive process Effort is controllable so could be an effective coping strategy to stop further performance decreases Players don't always show high effort	Effort
Negative spiral Lack of coping ability Players are up and down with emotions Players effected by mistakes and have little coping strategies Negative emotions rife within the team when things go wrong Negative spiral will occur in practice There is a need for players to deal with negative situations better Players try to control far too much, especially trying to control elements of performance they cannot control	Coping
Not reaching performance expectations will cause decreased performance Player focus on future and not the present No performance expectation leading to clearer thoughts Performance expectations needed more as coping strategy	Performance Expectations
Evidence of positive communication Teammates making errors causing negative communication General negative communication is far more common than singling out individuals but is still harmful General negative communication spreads to the whole team Some players far worse than others with negative communication Contagious negative effects Negativity towards another player is harmful Communication has improved but there is still a long way to go Contagious negative effects	Communication
Intra-team competition causing team cohesion issues Players not acting in a manner for the benefit of the team Players having an individual goal focus Team first mentality is lacking and needs improvement Players playing for self and not for the team Effort towards the team can be disguised by a social faking of effort towards the team Individual outlook from best player who is looking for social recognition Players needing to know each other Practice sessions deliver better quality when players achieve together	Team Drive
Lack of preparation through adjusting to new practice regime Preparation activities that have benefitted practice performance Lack of player preparation for early morning practice due to tiredness and fatigue Not enough reflection is done by players currently across many areas Preparation seems unchanged in some areas Lack of reflection to prepare better	Preparation

High effort levels in players were perceived to be vital in attaining increased performance. Finn stated that effort was not created solely by the players: “The effort levels eventually just rose because, obviously, coach said you need to put in more effort”. Players cited high effort as being an attribute that should be innate within all players during practice activities and should not be a focal point of attention as stated by Liam: “When we did the defensive drill we focused on getting the stop and I didn’t really think about effort as I was more worried about what I had to do technically”. Coaches were also aware of the problem a primary focus on high effort could cause for player performance, as shown in this extract from the Head Coach:

I would say that high effort should be inherent, inherent in the best players certainly. If we can get them not even thinking about it then that’s the best way forward. I think the players have so much to think about technically and tactically that to focus on something else could hurt development.

Players and coaches had identified the worth of high effort in the practice environment but it became apparent that it was needed as an intervention to a performance crisis rather than a primary focus, as stated by Ben: “The other day I was so tired but I was kind of chilled because when you [researcher] said last week [in the weekly meeting] focus on effort, before those practices [when feeling fatigued] I was thinking like about everything but like you said after that I was just focusing on effort and I’m pretty happy with the way it went”. There was also recognition from the coaches that effort should be used as an intervention if performance was poor due to it being controllable.

Poor performance (e.g., technical mistakes in practice) caused further negative performance producing a spiral of increasing negative performance, as stated by Rich:

Yesterday I was trash and couldn’t shoot. I had like four air balls. I kind of didn’t get over it and it frustrated me, things just got worse. In terms of technical stuff I rated myself like a 3 [out of 10], very low. It had a definite negative impact on me. Because someone like me, I think I’m a shooter so if I’m shooting badly that kind of reflects badly on me.

There was a clear lack in coping strategies highlighted by both players and coaches when performance was poor. When questioned by the researcher, the Assistant Coach indicated issues with players and control: “The control thing is massive and something we have been talking about on-court as well. It’s something they all do, they will focus on it and then

when it doesn't come off get really annoyed despite the fact they can't directly effect it". A need to develop players' ability to cope with negative situations was stated as a priority by coaches.

There were a lack of performance expectations being set throughout most practice sessions so a decision was made by the researcher and coaches to reduce WBQ completion to once per week. Of what expectations were performed, they seemed to be focused on the future and not the present: "Trying to think about how you are going to mentally act and how you are not going to get annoyed in the session" (Rich). Despite the potential for not seeing the value of setting performance expectations following a reflection of current state, there was perceived damage to performance when expected performance was not realised, as cited by Simon: "I think that [player name removed] doesn't like to fail too much and then when he does failure it does get in his head quite a lot and then it just bothers him and sometimes he puts out that anger in the wrong way".

Although performance expectations were instructed by the researcher and coaches to be performed regularly by the players and not as an intervention for poor current state before practice, this was questioned by Ben:

I didn't really think about it, like when I come in [to the practice environment] I know what I'm here to do and feel good so it's like I don't really think about how I'm feeling physically or mentally, it's just like I come in to do what I need to do so I come in and get on with it.

The benefit of setting realistic expectations was shown by Adam: "Sometimes I'm just proper dead so I don't really expect anything of myself at training so it ended up me just having clear thoughts rather than having these expectations and I was alright". At these early stages of the study most players appeared to be unable to fully understand the worth of conducting performance expectations before practice, which was highlighted by the coaches and researcher as a reflective behaviour that players required support with.

Players appeared to still hold individual goal focuses that removed their teammates from positions of personal importance:

So I guess it's on my part a little bit but me personally, I'm not going to back down because you are coming at me, that's not how it works, so I'm going to step up as well. Personally how I saw it, if you are going to go at me in a certain way and you don't like it, and your cool about going at me in a certain way, but then I come

back at you on that same level and you don't like it, then to me I don't particularly care. (Ben)

The above extract made up a significant amount of discussion around two teammates who had an altercation that turned physical, which suggests that practice behaviour that does not value teammates may not be suitable or beneficial towards team performance. Other players had indicated that they could see the incident intensifying but made no attempt to intervene. The two players involved were individually competing against each other and this was recognised by the coaches as an issue with intra-team competition.

Frustration with teammates after an error provided a basis for negative communication, which the Head Coach highlighted as an area to improve on: "I think we have a long way to go for players not thinking about teammate mistakes as a negative and then communicating that too them. We keep saying that a mistake is not meant but it'll take time for players to understand that". Negative communication during practice seemed to have shifted from specific individual comments to general comments, which had a negative effect on the group: "It was really general low level things throughout [negative comments]. It was difficult to pinpoint and say that was bad and don't do it. But I could see it was having an effect on the practice, it was bringing the level down" (Assistant Coach). Also, it was highlighted by the coaches that certain players offered more negative communication than others.

The early morning practice sessions had caused difficulties in some players' preparation, which led to increased levels of player fatigue. The Assistant Coach recognised some progression but not enough:

I look at what we are working on and I see them maybe getting better in some areas. But it's not enough to say yes they think about everything they do and that is great now and we have a better team who performs to their maximum in each training session".

However, there were some initial improvements in preparation, which was noted by Pete: "We definitely made more of a conscious effort to be ready for training after that first meeting".

8.3.2. Phase Two (Weeks 4-6)

Data analysis in phase two was conducted on the researcher's observation field notes only. The themes and the central concepts that contributed to the formation of the themes can be found in table 8.5 below. High effort as a primary focus was introduced as a coping strategy to the players, which could be used during a performance crisis in the practice environment where players would attempt to ignore tangible practice outcomes. The field note below described the player position:

They [players] all agreed that this would be something to use as a coping mechanism but they would also need to ensure that they maintained a high level of effort through all the activities they did. They [players] reiterated that when in a normal state there is too much skill and tactical information to think about, and that just applying effort would not be an appropriate focus as high effort should be shown anyway.

Table 8.5. Phase Two Central Concepts and Themes

Central Concept	Theme
<p>Effort not as a primary goal but used as a coping strategy to stop negative spiral.</p> <p>Effort agreed to become a coping strategy in practice due to reasons stated.</p> <p>Effort intervention</p> <p>Control</p> <p>Less negative situations experienced</p> <p>Players still trying to control uncontrollable elements of performance and this is causing negativity</p>	Coping Strategies
<p>Failure to complete skill based activities causes a significant source of negativity</p> <p>It is a highly technical environment and mistakes by players cause large amount of negativity</p>	Failure
<p>Thoughts towards the future rather than being mindful of the present</p> <p>Most of the group seem to be aware now of why it is important to reflect upon current state</p> <p>There certainly seems like players are using the form more to set performance expectations if they feel fatigued or tired</p>	Performance Expectations
<p>The preparation period before practice was said to help players focus on the session</p> <p>Decisions made away from practice that improve preparation towards practice</p> <p>Form completion used as a tool to improve preparation of the players</p> <p>Morning training sessions were tough and a lack of preparation beforehand would not help them get through it</p>	Preparation
<p>Team first mentality would benefit yourself as an individual because without your teammates you cannot achieve your own goals and objectives.</p> <p>Players are here for personal development over team success so a team first mentality may never be achieved.</p> <p>Players not yet fully understanding the reason for putting the team first</p> <p>As stated previously, this environment is one of personal development and a stepping stone and perhaps lacks in a team first drive</p> <p>A purely individual approach would be damaging to individual performance within a team sport</p> <p>Although intra-team competition can affect the team, it is vital for player development for various reasons</p> <p>Intra-team competition is a vital component that may cause initial negative experience but advantageous to future performance and development</p> <p>Players need to recognise problems and issues within the team when they occur</p>	Team First Mentality
<p>General negative comments are still being made. Although there has been a vast improvement, specifically within the last week.</p> <p>General negative behaviours can impact the group</p> <p>Players that give negative comments after a teammate mistake experience negative performance influences</p> <p>Improved communication and support within team with a general decrease in poor performance</p> <p>Poor communication due to frustration</p>	Communication

By the sixth week, players were able to offer examples of when they used effort as a sole primary focus to stop poor performance entering into a negative spiral of worsening

performance. During this period of the study, the coaches were cited by the researcher as saying they could: “understand and had seen a player who may still have a crisis but the peaks and troughs have been closer together now”. Field notes suggested that players were negatively affected most by mistakes and that continued mistakes were an indication of poor coping skills, which could be due to players trying to control performance and outcomes within the practice environment. Perceived control in the practice environment was still highlighted as a concern by the coaches and researcher.

In week six players displayed an understanding of reflection and were able to provide examples of when they performed it. However, the following field note extract identified an issue: “The players think towards the future and what is to come rather than being mindful of the present and what led up to current state. This again is an example of the need to focus upon why we use performance expectations before practice to focus on the now”. During the week five coach meeting, the coaches stated that they believed the WBQ, as a reflective tool, was improving player preparation. The coaches intimated that they had seen far less negative performance spiral situations in the last week and that the group seemed far calmer during practice sessions.

Players reported still having individual goals set apart from the team and the researcher conducted further discussion around the benefits to the self of having a team first mentality. The researcher recognised that: “this environment is one of personal development and a stepping stone, and perhaps a lack of team first drive exists”. This acknowledgement placed the team drive strategy as an intervention that would require significant effort from both researcher and coaches to implement. The following field note extract was taken from the week five player meeting:

We discussed at length what the advantages were in putting the team performance first and how that will advance individual performance. We also discussed why a purely individual approach would be damaging to individual performance within a team sport. One player indicated how being overly competitive in teammate versus teammate drills had caused negativity and a problem between the two players.

By week six the coaches were reported as noting an improvement in communication. However, general negative comments and emotions were still present but were less common. Intra-team competition, despite its potential for causing problems and negative experiences between teammates, was seen by coaches as a vital component in the practice environment and would be advantageous to future performance and

development. During the live practice session observation in week six one player was observed giving a negative comment to a teammate following a mistake. The recipient of the comment appeared unaffected by it but the player who had made the comment made a string of mistakes shortly after and was visibly annoyed, which the researcher believed was evidence of a negative emotional state effecting performance.

8.3.3. Phase Three (Weeks 7-9)

Data analysis in phase three was conducted on a coach focus group (n = 2) and the researcher's observation field notes. The themes and the central concepts that contributed to the formation of the themes can be found in table 8.6 below. An academic holiday period of one week separated weeks six and seven where limited team practice activities were undertaken. Following this week-long break, the players were asked to recall the education strategy and there was considerable variance in the depth of player understanding. Evidence existed of applied performance expectations benefiting a player's practice performance, which is displayed in the following field note extract:

There was a very tough physical challenge in the morning and then training in the afternoon. They [the player] felt tired but stated they lowered expectations for the afternoon session and they actually played far better than they predicted they would.

Table 8.6. Phase Three Central Concepts and Themes

Central Concept	Theme
<p>Use of reflection on current state before a training session following a tough physical challenge where the player lower their expectations and performance was good</p> <p>Performance expectation reflections act as an early coping mechanism if player fatigued</p> <p>Ranking ability overrides adapted performance expectations</p> <p>Players need to hold a social position within the team even if they couldn't achieve the performance</p> <p>Some players believe they will not need to reflect on expectations if they feel good</p> <p>Individual players appear to struggle managing expectations</p>	Performance Expectations
<p>Effort seen as more of a coping strategy because when focusing solely on it, it can become disruptive</p> <p>High effort was stated as being almost subconscious and a behaviour that is ingrained</p>	Effort as Intervention
<p>The halfway house: Players are not focused on the team achieving but only themselves</p> <p>Playing for the team and putting the team first causes greater success for the self</p> <p>Team drive behaviours have improved</p> <p>Enhanced team cohesion within group leading to less perceived negativity</p> <p>Selfishness and individual outlook still exists in the team</p> <p>If players are individually focused they will have less resilience to adverse situations</p> <p>Coaches highlighted more work needs to be done in changes mind-sets from individual to team</p> <p>If things don't go well for the individual then they sulk, that's become a good indicator for coaches of an individual focused player</p> <p>Difficult building a team when players change all the time (links to success of intervention so far)</p>	Team drive
<p>Communication between the players has improved and is cited as being very strong.</p> <p>There is an understanding that players don't make mistakes on purpose and that support will be better for them than criticism</p> <p>Communication has improved</p> <p>Communication through high emotion and can become negative in moments of adversity</p> <p>Increased support given to players from teammates if they make a mistake</p> <p>Relationships need to be strong if you give negative communication but not there yet.</p>	Communication
<p>Players are not at a level where they put their basketball first due to other areas of life holding high importance</p> <p>Players are more focused and switched on before practice</p> <p>Players arriving to practice before time and undertaking reflection</p> <p>Players more engaged for practice</p>	Preparation
<p>Players attempting to control factors of performance that are uncontrollable can cause poor performance</p> <p>Inability to control factors out of control is a significant leader towards negative spiral</p> <p>Control should be added as an intervention</p>	Control
<p>Social pressures can be challenging in the practice environment and this can cause negative spirals in performance if not recognised</p>	Intra-team Competition
<p>WBQ reflective tool may be too coach led and not player led</p> <p>Coaches believe players are reflecting more on the whole</p>	Reflective Activity
<p>Less negative spirals</p> <p>Far less lows due to players recognising potential negative situation and can cope with them better</p> <p>Improvements in performance declines</p>	Coping Strategy

Despite observable performance benefits from players reflecting on their expected performance before practice sessions, players suggested it was more important to undertake reflection when they felt fatigued rather than in an unfatigued state. Players also indicated that the need to maintain their ability ranking within the team might override an acceptance of decreased performance, which could lead to negative performance influences. The week nine player meeting was used to discuss the potential damaging performance effects of players trying to maintain ability ranking positions when they perceived to be in a state of fatigue, as failure would cause a significant and continued drop in performance.

Players and coaches were both cited in suggesting that motivation towards team success had improved, especially with a rise in positive communication that was matched by a decrease in negative communication. Despite the increase in team drive behaviours, the researcher and coaches highlighted the need for further improvements to be made. However, a concern for reaching higher performance through increased team drive was reflected upon by the researcher in this field note extract:

[The] DiSE [programme] is a halfway house to the next step. Therefore, they [players] aren't focused on the team doing well, only themselves. They [highly individual players] don't seem capable of breaking this cycle. However, if they were to break their individualistic approach to practice and put the team first, then they should find performance will be better for themselves.

There was strong discussion in the weekly player meetings around what could be controlled in practice. The coaches and researcher were aware of players continually referring to negative performance experiences following a failed attempt to control an uncontrollable element within the practice environment. During the week nine player meeting, players were asked to name what they believed they could control in practice. Players identified several performance outcomes that they did not have complete control over and the researcher took time to explain why players may not be able to control those outcomes and that failure could create negativity. Effort was the only element within the practice environment that was agreed on by the players as being controllable. The researcher commented in the field notes that: "effort is the only controllable factor they [the players] have so it was interesting to see the players recognise and understand this and take it forward. They were instructed on how this may impact upon several of the strategies we are working on".

The coaches stated that they believed there were signs of the improvement strategy enhancing performance in the practice environment. One key reason stated for this was an improved reflective capability of players both in and out of the practice environment. Players were said to be far better prepared for practice sessions, as outlined in this quote from the Head Coach:

From what I've seen, from pre-practice preparation, they are all there well before the time. They are doing their prehabilitation [injury prevention activities], they are shooting, and they are getting themselves mentally ready. I don't see much laughing and joking. They are doing things that are game related that will help them.

However, in regards to the players' use of the WBQ as a reflective tool, coaches felt they took the lead far too much and that the players should be given more responsibility to complete the WBQ without prompting. Coaches also acknowledged that there was a group of players who they deemed to hold a more individual approach within the practice environment that caused them to struggle to manage their expectations.

The players that appeared to have an individualistic approach were described as having a lack of coping ability and resilience by the Head Coach: "I think that they buy into it if they are playing and playing well, but as soon as there is any adversity they struggle. If they are not performing well then it's all about them, all the weight is on them, they become very insular. So ultimately its selfishness". The Assistant Coach indicated there was far more work needed to be done with these players to understand the damage an individualistic approach to practice could have on player performance and that a balance between the self and the team was needed.

Coaches perceived a decrease in the frequency and magnitude of poor performance that would continually worsen during a practice session, which the Head Coach indicated in this extract:

They still happen [poor performances] but it doesn't boil over to the levels it did earlier in the year. There's still emotion and selfishness, there's still a lot of frustrations, but it seems to not go into the lows that it did before. They [players] kind of recognise it a bit quicker and come out of it quicker.

Another notable improvement came with the cohesion of the group at this stage of the season. The Head Coach indicated how the current group of players, despite being a group

that had the most externally recruited players at the start of the season compared to previous seasons, were the most cohesive team he had ever coached at this level. Both coaches suggested this could have been due to the positive communication used between teammates and this was evidence that the education strategy was proving to be successful. The Assistance Coach suggested that players now had an improved understanding that teammates do not make mistakes on purpose and they should not be met with negative comments: “The body language, like with the tutting, has stopped. The communication where it’s out of the person’s control, like if someone misses a shot or drops a ball, has stopped”.

Although players appeared to have accepted that teammate error is out of their control, an inability to control one’s own performance was a source of continued and significant negativity. The coaches and researcher discussed the difficulties that players still had with control and decided it needed to be addressed further in the weekly player meetings. Finally, the coaches suggested several players who may benefit from extra support from both the coaches and the researcher as they had not made as much improvement as their teammates. When the coaches were asked how they identified these players the Head Coach responded:

The team might be going well but if things aren’t going well for them [the individual] they are sulking. That is noticeable and takes away from the on court performance of the team. [Player name removed] is very insular when things don’t go his way. Again, if he is unable to score then he becomes very insular and has body language is poor”.

8.3.4. Phase Four (Weeks 10-13)

Phase four data analysis was conducted on a player focus group (n = 7) and the researcher’s observational field notes. The themes and the central concepts that contributed to the formation of the themes can be found in table 8.7 below. There was evidence that players were starting to understand the value of setting performance expectations before practice, which is shown in the following field note extract:

Players discussed feeling tired due to a hard S&C session yesterday. We discussed the need to reflect on this so that expectations shouldn’t be too high. However, as discussed before, we spoke about using it more as an intervention if they felt like they might be fatigued. For example, one player said if they felt tired, but thought they would still perform well, then reflection may not be needed. But if they did

feel like they were struggling before practice then they should decrease their expectations to protect against a negative spiral and performance catastrophe.

Despite an overall positive acceptance among the group regarding the setting of performance expectations, one player did state that they still did not want to lower their expectations for practice.

Table 8.7. Phase Four Central Concepts and Themes

Central Concept	Theme
<p>Performance expectations to be used more as an intervention if players feel fatigued</p> <p>Not wanting to drop the expectations for practice</p> <p>Players accepting their position within the team</p> <p>Players pushing themselves to compete against players with superior skills can cause failure</p> <p>Not allowing a social or ranking position to take control of what players attempt to achieve</p> <p>Conducting performance expectations make players think about how to maximise their preparation</p>	Performance Expectations
<p>Having a balance between intra-team competition and team activities</p> <p>There is a competition within the team to be better than the players around you</p> <p>Good response from players to reflect upon own performance after being outplayed by teammate</p> <p>Having to fight for your place this year</p> <p>If overly competitive then difficult to get good team cohesion</p>	Intra-team Competition
<p>High support for teammates during high intensity individual physical drills</p>	Communication
<p>Evidence of recovery from an error and momentary negative reaction</p> <p>Player didn't practice well but there was no downward spiral of performance</p> <p>He was unable to recover back to normal level but allowed sufficient practice to be undertaken following a negative situation</p> <p>Not worrying about mistakes and just getting on with it</p>	Coping
<p>Lack of support to weaker players in the team</p> <p>Being a player for the team if personal performance is poor</p> <p>There are common goals amongst players.</p> <p>Still a strong need for the self exists and a balance needed between self and team</p> <p>Teammates getting better forces you to get better</p> <p>An understanding that you can't achieve without the team</p> <p>An understanding of why teammates are important to the self</p> <p>If the team does well then that means you succeed</p> <p>Difficult for players to see a team first approach is best for self</p> <p>Players who don't get to compete in the team may not want team to succeed as they have no effect over the team and are not a part of it.</p> <p>If you put the team first you put yourself first</p>	Team Drive
<p>Focusing on effort rather than performance outcomes when performance is poor</p> <p>High effort is important because it's the only controllable factor</p> <p>Player applied effort when tired and didn't think about outcome</p>	Effort Intervention
<p>High effort levels have increased performance</p> <p>Players thinking about applying a lot of effort to everything they do</p> <p>Thinking only about effort can take away from thinking about other elements of practice</p>	Effort
<p>A player believing they are in control of the outcome of skill activities</p> <p>Not being able to complete certain skills caused negativity</p> <p>Player focusing on just playing basketball and not thinking about skill or performance outcomes</p> <p>Effort was a highly controllable factor when players were in a negative performance crisis</p>	Control
<p>Fringe team players or second team players seem to be taking a subordinate role in the group.</p> <p>Lowered motivation levels in practice and performance when not fulfilling targets against others</p> <p>Difficult to ignore position, rank, or reputation against others</p> <p>Overly focused on what other people think of you</p>	Ability Ranking

Teammates should not judge others after bad performance Players should not be thinking about what others think of them as it's out of control	
Being positive to teammates if situation is negative Communication has improved Players have learnt to communicate better by understanding why positive communication is effective and negative is not Players thinking about how to speak to people Acceptance that negative communication can be contagious and not help team performance Need time and openness to understand how to talk to each other	Positive Communication
Teammates have your back Teammate support is better Takes time to form bonds in the team Strong group cohesion this year	Team Cohesion
Not having time to reflect in preparation period before practice affected performance poorly	Preparation
Need negative situations to push on	Negative Motivation
Lifestyle choices have improved Pressure to do everything Stress from other areas of life	Off-Court

The researcher had made an observation regarding several players who had taken up more subordinate roles within the team since the first few weeks and discussed them during a coach meeting. The coaches identified those players as struggling significantly for performance at the start of the season and duly slipped down the 'pecking order' of the squad and were not regular match players, which was a surprise to the coaches. The coaches believed their expectations of their ability were far higher than their actual ability, which caused them to suffer from substantial negative performance influences during practice activities. However, coaches did indicate that their performance in the practice environment had improved recently, perhaps due to an acknowledgement of the situation and they now had a motivation to succeed in the second team that competes in lower level competitions.

During a practice session observation, the researcher noted a lack of support from teammates for a player who made a mistake. The player continually made errors and seemed to portray very negative body language. His teammates did not react negatively to his mistakes, instead they appeared to accept and expect them, which could have been due to the player being one of the weaker ability players in the group. This was highlighted further when a senior high ability player was knocked to the floor following contact and two teammates rushed over to help him up.

The perceived ability ranking position of players within the team was still highlighted by players as a factor that could heavily influence performance. Players agreed,

as a group, that they would attempt to avoid potential issues by not judging other players following a poor performance and this would mean players would feel less stress if their performance was poor, as highlighted in the following field note extract: “One player at the end of the session [player meeting] stated how much better they felt now that the group had talked about one poor moment or one poor practice session not defining you as a player, and because we were all on the same page he felt more relaxed going forward”. However, the researcher did emphasise to the group that intra-team competition should still occur to ensure players were challenging each other to develop.

Coaches and researcher had again begun to identify individual players who may need more support than the weekly player group meetings alone were offering. For example, the researcher spoke to one player who was continually being negatively influenced by the failure to achieve tangible performance outcomes. In line with the education strategy, the researcher set out a way for the player to use high effort as a primary focus when poor performance persisted and discussed further how a focus on the uncontrollable elements of practice can negatively affect performance. The player seemed far more engaged in this one to one discussion than they had been in any group sessions.

Having discussed the above player with the coaches, the field note extract below indicates the need for players to understand the controllable and uncontrollable elements within the practice environment:

At the end of the coach discussion there was a strong feeling that we needed players to understand that controllable factors are most important when looking at negative performance spirals. For example, looking at high effort is important because it's the only controllable factor.

Following the individual meeting between player and researcher, the coaches observed improved practice performance in the player. In particular, the coaches spoke to the player after a practice session and the player indicated the use of a cognitive strategy where he ignored tangible performance outcomes (e.g., success of shots, passing, and rebounds). It appeared that a focus on solely ‘playing basketball’ without the pressure of tangible success was an appropriate strategy to stop the player from entering into a negative spiral of performance.

Communication was cited as being more positive within the group, which led to stronger group cohesion through enhanced support. Players stated multiple reasons why

communication had improved. These improvements included an understanding of why giving positive communication to a teammate after a specific error is more beneficial to future performance and how even general negative communication can be contagious and influence overall team performance negatively. This communication improvement was cited by Simon as having occurred through the implementation of the education strategy:

It's obvious that frustration can get to you with mistakes that may cause you to act differently. So like turnovers, errors, missing shots, or not making the right moves, it can affect everyone. Some people know how to deal with it in the right way but I feel a lot of us have kind of learnt how to communicate and communication has got a lot better, like not shouting at people and just talking in a mellow calm way.

Common goals shared by all the players, playing for the team rather than oneself if personal performance was poor, and an understanding that one cannot achieve without the team, were approaches that players cited as aiding a team first approach that enhanced performance in the practice environment. However, Neil recognised a need to provide balance to practice:

As an individual you set yourself goals and what you want to achieve by the end of the year but if the team is winning, then by the end of the year if you win a Championship and you underperform then you'd rather take the championship win than your statistics.

Despite positive improvements towards players recognising the need to put the team first, Gary intimated there was still room for improvement: "You don't actually experience the end results until after you have made that decision in your head. You can't say that if I do completely accept the team then this will definitely happen".

Understanding the balance between the self and the team was also beneficial towards a player's approach to competition within the team, as highlighted below by Jim:

I think it's good for both [player and teammate] because if he is stepping up then that means I have to step up and it makes it more competitive and we both have to step up. It's got a positive and a negative, everyone wants to get the most minutes, the most points, everything. But it's still a team effort so it's cool we are getting wins but that just means I got to sort myself out and do a lot better. Its bitter sweet.

However, despite players now having a better understanding that personal success can come from teammate success, it was cited as still difficult to ignore the perceived ability position within the team: "It's difficult because you are competing with other people around you and you don't want to show them that you are not as good as them. At the end of the day you always want to be better than the people around you" (Simon). Therefore, there was consistent conflict between other players in the team being perceived as competition targets as well as a teammate, with both perceptions offering positive performance outcomes.

A potential positive performance influence gained from a practice competition defeat against a teammate was offered by Liam: "I've really done poorly and it's more like reflecting on yourself rather than what other people say". This extract indicates Liam disregarding the uncontrollable element, which was the perception of others, and shifting his focus onto what he could control; himself. In regards to control, Chris gave an explanation as to how he used a strategy to overcome a negative situation by keeping himself in the present: "By stopping reminiscing about mistakes. Thinking about what's next rather than what's been. But it doesn't actually make my performance improve, it just stops the continuous decline".

The application of effort that Jim employed when he was fatigued led to the cessation of negative performance: "I will sometimes certainly focus on just working hard. The other day I was so tired and I knew it [performance] would be poor so I just got on with it. Like you said, ignore the outcome of what I was doing and just get on with it". Although, Jim stated that he was unable to improve his performance and that he: "didn't practice that well still", this indicated that applied high effort stopped a further performance decline. This suggests that physical fatigue may be too difficult to overcome but the intervention was able to allow the player to get through a practice session without overly adverse negative influences. Also, Gary suggested that: "Sometimes when you are giving 100% effort it's difficult to have those thoughts consciously about what do I expect of myself because you are just thinking effort, effort, effort". The general application of effort towards practice and off-court activities was also said to have increased, which had been beneficial for improved performance.

Practice activity preparation improvements were highlighted by Liam: "It's got me thinking about why I'm tired and stuff like that, and I start thinking about why I need to sleep more, turn my phone off at night, and eat better, so I feel it's worked". Performance

expectation reflections not undertaken before practice were cited by Harry as causing poor performance:

I didn't think about it on Tuesday because I was well late after lesson and didn't think about anything and it really affected me because I wasn't prepared. I just got straight into training and to be honest, I wasn't 100%, I probably knew it. The session was terrible in terms of my performance.

Finally, players were still complaining of stress and anxiety caused by factors outside of the basketball practice environment that they perceived to influence their performance. Gary suggested that these stressors were unavoidable: "In an ideal world I wouldn't have to think about them, it's unavoidable in certain circumstances".

8.3.5. Phase Five (Weeks 14-17)

Phase five data analysis was conducted on the researcher's observational field notes as no focus groups were conducted during this period of the study. The themes and the central concepts that contributed to the formation of the themes can be found in table 8.8 below. Following a two-week seasonal holiday, regular practice activity recommenced and two returning players indicated they had undertaken extra training runs because they felt it would benefit their preparation when they returned to basketball practice. They had not undertaken extra training of this sort in holiday periods before but felt urged to do so due to a realisation that they had been particularly inactive for several days. Both players and coaches stated they believed the interventions were improving player behaviour and performance, and evidence of this was seen over the extended break. Individual meetings were conducted with several key players who the coaches suggested required further guidance, as highlighted in the following field note extract:

There was a need to discuss communication with one player. This player was highlighted as someone who still made general negative comments in practice. The damage those negative comments could have on other players was discussed, as well as the atmosphere of the overall team. The player knew that they were getting frustrated but didn't know why. The researcher suggested they focus on the strategies that have been implemented with the team when they feel frustrated.

Table 8.8. Phase Five Central Concepts and Themes

Central Concept	Theme
<p>Players indicated that they thought about the lifestyle decisions they made over the time away from college</p> <p>The coaches were pleased with the state of the player on their return after break</p> <p>Activities undertaken away from practice that they had no partaken in before</p>	Preparation
<p>Damaging negative comments influence the atmosphere of the overall team</p> <p>Increased support, especially a lack of negative comments recently</p> <p>Less negative general or specific comments</p>	Communication
<p>The player knew that they were getting frustrated but didn't know why. The researcher suggested they focus on the strategies that have been implemented with the team when they feel frustrated</p> <p>Using coping strategy when feelings of losing control of performance.</p> <p>The players were able to state the use of effort, stopping the attempt to control the things they can't control, and seeking support from others</p>	Coping
<p>They said it made them sharper to know there was competition several players recognised the need for competition pressure and that actually they didn't really think about how others were playing against them unless their teammate wasn't trying hard enough</p> <p>Evidence of a shift away from looking to beat a teammate to cement an ability position in the team, but rather looking for a teammate to do well against them to it makes them play harder</p> <p>Ranking ability decisions were less frequent and players should they just get on with it and let the coach decide</p> <p>Competition now not viewed as a problem but as a challenge</p>	Competition
<p>One player said that it was a fear that drove them on but it was stressful</p> <p>A negative situation is a factor that motivates players to train at a high intensity</p> <p>Stress means you need to deal with it and if you overcome it then you will improve and develop</p> <p>If players are not trying then negative communication is appropriate</p>	Negative Motivation
<p>Coaches stated that team spirit was high and matched by positive communication</p> <p>Players not following team instructions</p> <p>Selfish players who only play for themselves</p> <p>The players acting as on team</p>	Team Drive
<p>Tired players who dealt with the practice session and had no negative performance</p> <p>Performance level of the session was below standard but no player was seen to drop their energy level and not enter a negative spiral, which didn't happen in the earlier weeks of the season</p>	Performance Expectations

Despite the accepted transgressions from the player above, overall the players seemed to be happy with the amount of support they were receiving, especially the lack of

negative comments within the practice environment between players. Positive encouragement was cited as being rife within the practice environment with one exception, which was if a player disregarded team instructions and portrayed selfish behaviours, and this resulted in negative reactions from teammates. A further improvement to the management of team performance was shown in the following field note extract: “A player spoke about how they viewed mistakes by other players differently. If a player is clearly not trying then they might say something, but if they are trying really hard and don’t succeed then they bring them up”. This highlights the progression of players as they seem more able to recognise damaging behaviour towards the team and act to stop it with a concerted social approach.

Previously, there was a strong negative performance influence from losing to teammates in practice drills, especially if it was harmful to a player’s perceived ability ranking within the team. However, there appeared to be a shift in the way players approached intra-team competition, as stated in the following field note extract:

Several players seemed to recognise the need for the pressure of competition but they didn’t really think about how others were playing against them unless their teammate wasn’t trying hard enough. This is an interesting shift away from looking to beat a teammate to cement an ability ranking position in the team. Rather, they are looking for a teammate to do well against them to make them play harder. When asked if they made ranking decisions anymore, one player said they just got on with it and let the coach decide.

The need for the stress of competition in the practice environment was accepted by players as a necessity for performance improvements to occur. Overall, it seemed that players were developing an enhanced capability to take intra-team competition as a challenge rather than a threat or problem, which meant that poor performance was not heightened by a perceived ability ranking crisis. This behaviour towards intra-team competition also suggests a positive impact towards team cohesion could occur.

Several players were cited as using various coping strategies during practice activities that were linked with the education strategy that included: high effort in a performance crisis, not attempting to control uncontrollable factors, and seeking support from other group members. The coaches believed that the reflective activities the players undertook on their expected performance prior to practice sessions were positive towards performance, as shown in the following field note extract: “Players were tired and the

performance level of the session on the whole was below standard but no player was seen to drop their energy level and did not enter a negative spiral. This didn't happen in the earlier weeks of the season".

Finally, during the week 17 player meeting the researcher undertook a poll using an online game-based learning platform to obtain player opinions of the education strategy (see field notes in Appendix E). Players perceived that all education strategies had improved their performance. However, when questioned about control, only two players said they did not try to control uncontrollable factors in the practice environment, with five players stating they still tried to control everything and eight players who tried to control some aspects of practice activities but not others. This result interested the coaches as trying to control the uncontrollable elements in the practice environment was added to the education strategy in phase two and is clearly still a prominent negative influencing factor amongst the players.

8.3.6. Phase Six (Weeks 18-20)

Phase six data analysis was conducted on player and coach focus groups as well as the researcher's observational field notes. The phase six themes and the central concepts that contributed to the formation of the themes can be found in table 8.9 below. Player control was a principle discussion point in the final weeks. The researcher led an activity with players that asked them to identify how controllable several practice factors were. Many of the factors, which were not able to be controlled by players, were still being cited as controllable. With the coaches deeming effort as the only truly controllable factor in practice, the coaches were now advising players what they could control in practice drills and what they could not. Successful performance was not always reached by the players but the coaches remarked on their ability to not slump into a negative performance spiral, as shown in this field note extract:

The coaches explained a drill they ran where players were put under pressure to shoot. The pressure was unpredictable and in some cases it was impossible to shot accurately and mistakes were made. The players were advised that they could not directly control the ball going in the hoop and when they [players] missed, the coaches felt they dealt with it better than they had done before.

The coaches suggested that this allowed players to better understand the link between high effort as an intervention and control in practice.

Table 8.9. Phase Six Central Concepts and Themes

Central Concept	Theme
<p>Control is an important element of the practice environment and linked with high effort component.</p> <p>Coach led indication before a practice drill on what the players should be concentrating on and what they had no control over</p> <p>Players focused on the controllable elements of practice suggests this may have stopped them from being overly negative</p> <p>To stop worrying about what can't be control</p> <p>Players more consistent and not being so controlling</p> <p>Still get annoyed when uncontrollables don't go well but there's less of a negative effect</p> <p>Not effected by past mistakes as much as it doesn't define me</p> <p>Next play mentality - can't control the past</p> <p>The acceptance of uncontrollable poor performance will lead to less negative influence</p> <p>Control aspect better</p> <p>Players have stopped chasing the uncontrollable</p>	Control
<p>Effort is an intervention that the players could use if they entered a negative performance period</p> <p>Effort good as an intervention to negative crisis because it can be controlled</p>	Effort Intervention
<p>Effort higher in group</p> <p>Player effort leads to positive coach responses</p>	Effort
<p>When not feeling 100%</p> <p>Using Performance expectations before practice help improve performance</p> <p>Performance expectation reflections do help performance</p> <p>Recognises a poor performance is coming and can deal with it</p> <p>Knowing and evaluating what doesn't work</p> <p>Performance expectation reflections have helped players</p> <p>Performance expectations have made an impact on performance</p> <p>Less of a negative drop off in practice performance with less frequency or magnitude as before so significant drops in performance don't happen</p> <p>Tuesday practice sessions have less negative performance and that is when they do the WBQ</p> <p>Social ranking can impact on performance expectation adjustments</p>	Performance Expectations
<p>Large improvement in communication</p> <p>Calmer communication</p> <p>Players thinking about the individual more now with their communication</p> <p>If negative communication is given then positive will follow, which has not been done before.</p> <p>Coaches communicate more positively to players</p> <p>Coaches giving clearer messages so even if it doesn't work the player knew it was the right decision</p> <p>Coaches not reacting negatively to mistakes</p> <p>Team support improved through better communication</p> <p>Players think about how they communicate to each other now</p> <p>Less negative emotion from players</p> <p>Less negative communication in group</p> <p>Negative communication used by coaches only when effort is the problem as its controllable</p>	Communication
<p>Acknowledgement that players aren't making mistakes on purpose and are more patient</p> <p>An error from a teammate is a problem for the team and not an individual problem so finding a solution as a team is required</p> <p>Trust from knowing teammates are with each other</p> <p>A lot of new players so the improvement in cohesion is greater</p> <p>More respect for each other</p> <p>Players don't hurt each other with negative comments as much as they know it will affect them</p> <p>Less individual approaches now from players and more approaches towards the team</p> <p>There's a balanced of goals between individual and team with the self-goals feeding the team goals</p> <p>Beneficial for coaches to have a focus upon team first mentality</p> <p>Effective to stop individual success and this has improved team ethos</p>	Team Drive
<p>Lifestyle improvements have been made</p> <p>Have more energy</p> <p>Nutrition is better but it's tough to find good foods</p> <p>Thinking about all decisions outside of basketball because they will impact my basketball</p>	Lifestyle
<p>Improved preparation activities in group</p> <p>Players more structured and organised in their preparation</p> <p>Players acting more professionally</p>	Preparation
<p>Coaches are still prompting players to complete the WBQ</p> <p>Players who reflect will perform better</p> <p>Players are more aware of what they are doing now</p>	Reflection Activities

Players were very positive in the progress they had made this season. The performance expectation reflections that players made prior to practice were said to help performance, as suggested by Pete:

I'll do it all the time now, think about how I feel about training. Sometimes I'm good and sometimes I'm not. I'd say I don't get any surprises or any shocks now. If I'm playing well in training then that's good but if I all of a sudden don't play very well in training then there's probably a reason and I would have thought about it already.

Adjusting performance expectations was said to be most useful when players were feeling fatigued. Additional effects of the players undertaking reflective activities was highlighted by Jim: "I think about everything I do now. No matter what it is I'm always analysing and that's helped me a lot this year to be ready to go".

A large improvement in communication within the practice environment was cited by players, which aided the development of strong team cohesion where players felt supported and trusted. Communication between players was said to be calmer and players were thinking more about the consequences and effect their communication had on others within the practice environment. Jim stated that: "If they [teammate] make a few mistakes in a row then you're just like, oh well, they aren't really trying to make a mistake because why would they? It's all about being patient, I'll be more patient with people now". Adam offered that players have had a change in perspective when it came to player mistakes: "We've said that they need to not stop doing something but maybe change the way they do it. So the team needs to change, not just the one player, so it's better for the team".

A positive change in the communication from the coaches to the players was cited by Pete:

They [coach] definitely did that for me when they said I needed to stop hesitating on my shot, [the coach said] if I'm open then shoot the ball, that's what we want you to do. So I know in my mind what I'm doing is what they want me to be doing, so regardless of whether it goes in or not I feel confident and not pressured, it's the right shot to take and not a bad shot.

The coaches were perceived to be less negative towards player mistakes, as stated by Ben: "I don't worry anymore about the coach having a go at me. If what I do is for the team and I'm doing what I'm supposed to, then I feel positive and confident".

A conflict existed with Rich in how he dealt with controlling practice factors:

If you are a shooter and you are missing your shots then obviously you are going to get annoyed at yourself. But obviously you can't control if the ball goes in or not, you can't control the shots you are going to be taking and the position of other players around you and maybe like how much time you have to shoot. But I do still get annoyed.

Despite some players still having an issue with control, there were several positive comments from players regarding increased consistent and being less controlling. Adam cited a 'next play mentality' aiding performance:

I think the team are much better at not thinking about what just happened with a mistake as it's the past and you can't control it, you can only control the present and then what happens next. I think the next play mentality has gotten so much better with the team. That's been a real positive this year.

The acceptance of poor performance was also said to be effective in reducing negative influence, as highlighted by Adam: "Well I know it's happened so can't really control it sort of thing. I know I'm having a bad session so I like just deal with it and look forward to the next one".

An increase in effort levels were regularly spoken of during the player focus group. High effort towards a holistic approach to practice activities was deemed as an important development throughout the season. Better performance in the practice environment was gained from lifestyle choices that put basketball first, such as more rest and sleep as described by Jim: "I feel like I'm more ready, regardless of whether that improves my performance in practice, but I think it does. I'd say I feel like, when I go to practice, I feel more ready, I feel more awake, I feel more rejuvenated". Some lifestyle decisions were said to be out of the players' control. For example, nutrition was cited as improved but access to nutritional plans and the appropriate foods was lacking.

The support and communication within the practice environment was said to have improved over the season. This could be due to players having more respect for each other, a conscious effort by players to think about how they communicate, and communication with less negative emotion. Players were also said to understand that if they decreased a teammate's performance with a negative comment then they were

hurting their own performance. The head coach offered the following statement for the group's achievement:

This year has become a strong year for cohesion and that's despite having a load of new players in, and that's the important thing for me. We had a group with predominantly first years, not first year age per say, but new to the team and they all are now really close. It's the closest group I've ever had.

This could suggest that the education strategy applied to enhance a team first mentality and promote stronger team cohesion had been successful, as highlighted by the Assistant Coach: "I'm getting players to work more with at least one other person to succeed. So, it's a bit like, why just get them on their own doing something? How can I get another one or two people to join that process, so it's more team based".

The Assistant Coach believed the players now had a far better balance between their goals: "

I think it's important for the player to have their own personal goals, but I also think they need to understand where they fit into the team. They need to balance them. If a player is only working for the team then there is no balance but if they are working for themselves to improve, which improves the team, then that's best.

The reflective ability of the players was stated by the coaches to be far greater now compared to before the 20-week study commenced, which included players being far more prepared for practice sessions. The players who reflected more appeared to be able to perform better in the practice environment according to the Head Coach: "I think the fact they are reflecting is really positive. Whether they have changed their behaviour and will now reflect all the time I don't know. To be honest I don't quite know if they reflect before the other sessions that aren't on the Tuesday". The players completed the performance expectation reflections via the WBQ before all Tuesday practice sessions and coaches perceived those sessions to have a lower frequency of poor performance compared to other practice sessions.

Coaches stated that they did still see the effects of perceived ability ranking disrupting performance expectations during practice: "Say if a player knows they can't hit top level they might still expect too much of themselves if they are competing with another player" (Assistant Coach). However, the Head Coach deemed the players to have a better grasp over control in the practice environment:

That's important to know because if you go chasing something you can't 100% control then you are going to fail most of the time. As an on-court, in the moment intervention, that works well. I speak to the players a lot about control and then about the emotions they have and how they communicate. So thinking again about reflection, do they think about whether they can control it or not? And then if they can't, then they shouldn't be focusing on that.

High effort as an intervention was cited by coaches as having positive performance influences on a player suffering from a performance crisis because it can be controlled. If player effort was low then coaches felt negative communication could be effective at increasing their performance in the practice environment. Comparatively, the Head Coach discussed positive communication when player effort was high:

I'd say 99% of what we say is positive and that's because the players will be putting in effort so we are all good. I can see when we need to be negative or why another player might be negative, but not when the player makes a mistake because you can't help errors and mistakes, it's about how you respond to them".

Finally, the coaches stated that they felt the education strategy was successful in increasing performance in the practice environment. It was the largest intake of new players that the coaching team had ever had and at the start of the season they had predicted experiencing issues with group cohesion and communication. However, at the end of the study the team were perceived by the coaches as achieving more in the practice environment than any season before. The Assistant Coach added: "I think the players are a closer group after the year. I know we have started from a low cohesion point at the start of the season [many new players] and that's what makes it a good achievement. The level of play over the last few weeks has been really strong".

8.4. Discussion

The current study followed an action research design where the researcher and coaches collaborated to implement an education strategy within a basketball practice environment (Huang, 2010). The aim of the study was to evaluate the success of the implemented strategy, which attempted to enhance the performance of UK academy basketball players in the practice environment over a 20-week period. The education strategy was implemented through weekly meetings, practice sessions, and one-to-one meetings. Both qualitative and quantitative results suggested that the education strategy

succeeded in enhancing the performance of players within the practice environment. Also, the individual education strategies were not independent of each other, which suggests they should be implemented collectively (Evans et al., 2000).

8.4.1. Effort and Control

The players' perceived effort levels, which were reported through the WBQ and statistically analysed using the Friedman test, indicated that player effort levels increased over the 20-week study period. The study began with players being introduced to high effort as a primary goal during practice activities. At the start of the study, effort was cited as an element of the practice environment that was given little attention by players. In fact, effort was seen as an innate attribute that should be present in all performance situations and might never be present in a players thinking during performance despite its high importance when trying to achieve high performance (Moran, 2012). With a high degree of environmental information being received and interpreted by players during practice sessions, it is certainly understandable why the application of effort may not be at the forefront of a player's thinking (Mann, Williams, Ward, & Janelle, 2007). Nonetheless, a primary focus upon high effort had been reported previously in the current programme of research as a factor that can enhance performance in the practice environment and was introduced to the players as part of the education strategy.

As the current study progressed, it became clear that high effort as a primary focus of a player's attention was difficult to achieve and appeared to be best served increasing performance when a player entered a period of performance crisis. Previous results from the current programme of research indicated that participants perceived high effort as enhancing performance (e.g., see chapter five). However, as with much of the previous performance environment research that takes a snap shot approach to collecting data (e.g., Thelwell, Weston, & Greenlees, 2007), the progression and adaptation of perceived factors over time is limited. The current study suggests that high effort is important to high performance in the practice environment but its success is subject to situational factors. For example, if a player holds high effort as a primary focus then it may only be beneficial to improving performance if performance is already low. At the start of phase two, once the appropriate use of high effort as a primary focus had been highlighted by players and coaches, the high effort primary focus strategy had been adjusted so that it was used only when players experienced sustained negative performance in practice.

The successful use of high effort as an intervention in response to poor performance could be representative of a player employing an active coping strategy within a high task mastery environment (Ntoumanis, Biddle, & Haddock, 1999). The use of high effort in the current study was aimed at replacing a player's focus on tangible outcomes, such as successful shots and passes. Task performance outcomes have been found to increase with learners who experience direct tangible interaction with a task (e.g., Do-Lenh, Jermann, Cuendet, Zufferey, & Dillenbourg, 2010). This could suggest that basketballers are preoccupied with tangible outcomes in practice and if those outcomes are not satisfactory then a negative performance crisis may occur. When a player enters a poor performance state, changing a player's focus towards high effort rather than towards tangible outcomes could give the player more control over their performance. In fact, both players and coaches in the current study were able to identify several situations where a high effort intervention was successful in halting further negative performance.

Effort has been stated as being more controllable than situational ability or talent within performance environments (e.g., Douglas & Carless, 2006). Players who failed to control factors that were not under their direct control in the current study, such as shooting accuracy, were found to be subject to negative influences, which is in line with previous performance environment research (e.g., Gould, Greenleaf, Chung, & Guinan, 2002). It appeared in the current study that the successful use of high effort as an intervention or coping strategy was directly linked to the ability of players to understand what could be controlled in the environment. Within phase two, it was evident that players were being negatively affected by continuous mistakes in the practice environment, which suggested a lack of coping ability was present in players when they were faced with a lack of control. By phase three, control was being openly discussed in weekly player meetings with players showing a lack of understanding as to what they perceived to be in control of during practice activities. Podlog and Dionigi (2010) were able to demonstrate the positive effects of athletes who only tried to control what they could control when attempting to return to sport following injury. This led to positive perceptions of competency and autonomy that appeared to be replicated in the current study.

Key focuses during the second half of the education strategy saw effort being perceived as the only truly controllable factor in the practice environment with players recognising and understanding that uncontrollable factors in the practice environment can cause significant negative performance influences if players attempt to control them. Coaches also took a leading role in discussing controllable and uncontrollable factors at the

start of practice sessions, which aimed to centre the players focus on controllable practice factors, such as engaging high effort levels and staying in the present moment by not letting past mistakes effect confidence. This seemed to aid players who were experiencing poor performance by ceasing any further performance decrement. For example, a player would not respond negatively to a teammate making an error because they had no control over it, and players appeared less likely to enter a continued spiral of negative performance if the cause of the poor performance was not controllable.

By the end of the 20-week education strategy it appeared that there was success with increased overall player effort in the practice environment, players engaging with high effort as a coping strategy if poor performance was experienced, and the players' ability in recognising damaging uncontrollable factors in practice. However, there was also evidence that some players were still struggling with control, which could indicate the high importance placed on tangible outcomes. Also, high effort as a primary player focus was found to be most effective if there was a performance crisis as high effort should be inherent in all players during practice (Moran, 2012).

8.4.2. Performance Expectations

Performance expectations were measured statistically by the player scores for predicted performance through the WBQ, which also recorded a perceived actual performance score after practice sessions. Actual performance scores were found to improve significantly over the length of the study. By the termination of the study, predicted performance scores were lower than actual performance scores, which suggested an improvement in the setting of performance expectations by players (see graph 8.1). Actual performance could have been affected by a raft of different factors in the study but predicted performance was dependent upon player perceptions of current state. Therefore, the statistical analysis applied to the data appears to indicate that lower performance expectations may have enhanced performance levels in the practice environment.

When the study began, players cited experiencing negative emotions when expected performance was not achieved. Players stated making expectations based on how they perceived they would perform in the practice session without being mindful of their current state, which has been found to be essential for accurate self-judgements that can positively influence future performance (Bernier, Thienot, Codron, & Fournier, 2009). Therefore, players appeared to be overly engaged in mental rehearsal activities where

their focus was on the practice session itself and not on how they felt in the current moments before the practice session began (Bertollo, Saltarelli, & Robazza, 2009).

As a tool to encourage players to reflect upon their current state, the WBQ was consistently highlighted as problematic by players and coaches. Unlike in previous performance environment research that used questionnaires under supervision (e.g., Pain et al., 2012), participants in the current study were encouraged to complete the WBQ when they felt appropriate. Despite what seemed an arduous task for the researcher and coaches to encourage players to complete the WBQ activity before and after practice sessions, evidence was gathered that suggested the reflective ability of players had increased by the end of the study. The use of a WBQ to aid players in undertaking an education strategy before and after practice requires far more research attention. However, both coaches believed that the WBQ had been successful in contributing to a decrease in poor practice performance and an increase in mindfulness, especially as performance was perceived to have improved most in the practice sessions where the WBQ was being utilised.

As the study progressed, players reported increased occurrences of the successful application of setting accurate performance expectations, as well as a higher likelihood of poor performance ensuing if reflective activity was not undertaken. Players also indicated the successful use of reflective activities positively impacting on many other areas of their sport, such as practice preparation. The most successful use of setting performance expectations before practice sessions was when players perceived to be physically fatigued. Accrued physical fatigue in tournament competition has been reported to influence performance negatively (e.g., Pain & Harwood, 2007; Pain & Harwood, 2008), which is similar to the fatigue experienced in repeated practice (Thorpe, Atkinson, Drust, & Gregson, 2017).

The successful act of players reflecting upon their performance expectations before practice sessions seems to mirror what is performed in competitive situations. However, the performance demands within basketball practice environments have been reported to be different from those in competition (Montgomery, Pyne, & Minahan, 2010) and the setting of lower expectations in competition may hinder high performance. Although, high expectations have been found to influence performance negatively through increased anxiety in competition environments (e.g., Gould, Guinan, Greenleaf, Medbery, & Peterson, 1999; Holt & Hogg, 2002; Noblet & Gifford, 2002). In the current study, there

were some cases where unrealistic goals were set by players that could not be achieved due to a lack of ability and skill (Weinberg, Yukelson, Burton, & Weigand, 2000). Therefore, the setting of unrealistically high expectations would always lead to fail.

Players who lowered personal performance expectations also lowered the pressure on themselves to achieve in the practice environment, which may be why performance would improve (Fletcher & Hanton, 2003; Fletcher, Hanton, Mellalieu, & Neil, 2012; Pain & Harwood, 2007). Players who struggled to accept diminished performance after lowering expectations were those who experienced in-practice competition against teammates. The strong influence of ability ranking amongst teammates has been previously reported in the current programme of research (see chapter five) and appears to still effect players despite an informed and concerted attempt to avoid undertaking such actions.

The displaying of ability to others has been reported in previous research to cause influential effects upon performance. For example, the expectations of others (e.g., Thelwell et al., 2007) and unrealistic coach expectations (e.g., Gould et al., 2002) have been found to influence performance negatively. This suggested that a social pressure to perform exists within sport and also seems to have an effect within the practice environment. There was a clear need for all players to impress the coaches within the practice environment as well as a social pressure present between teammates, which created a perceived ability rank within each player. During the current study it appeared that the conducting of performance expectations would be least successful when a player entered an individual mind-set or ego orientation (Lochbaum, Kazak Çetinkalp, Graham, Wright, & Zazo, 2016) and, therefore, a combined strategy to improve both performance expectations and team drive were required.

8.4.3. Team Drive

At the start of the study the players were able to identify the importance of putting the goals of the team first but were unable to state any specific behaviours or activities they partook in that put the team before themselves. The complexity of the self within a team was highlighted by Woodman and Hardy (2001) when they analysed organisational stressors in sport. The athlete participants were found to experience stress if coaches focused on the team over individuals, which was contrasted by team issues emanating from individuals focusing on themselves rather than the team. The current study identified several instances where players separated their individual achievement from that of the

team, which has been previously reported in competitive performance environment research (Pensgaard & Duda, 2002).

Players in the current study who were overly individualist in their approach to practice activities were cited as being selfish, insular, and damaging to the team. Pensgaard and Duda (2002) provided an Olympic gold medallist's perception of how it felt to be an individual within a team. They reported the player entering a negative emotional state following a poor personal performance despite the team winning. As the current study progressed, evidence of increased team-first behaviour was apparent but had not been eradicated completely. Rather, coaches indicated that the frequency and magnitude of individualistic behaviour had decreased by the end of the study. However, players still became frustrated if others damaged their own goals and objectives, but improvements had been made.

The most challenging issue surrounding the changing of individualistic behaviour in the practice environment was from intra-team competition. Mills, Butt, Maynard, and Harwood (2012) reported that in elite youth football development environments there was an emphasis on the individual to develop their ability and competitiveness, which moves the emphasis away from the team. Within the team sport practice environment, players experience competitiveness through interactions with teammates and in the current study intra-team competition seemed to damage the processes and behaviours that put the team first. Adapting and changing the mind-set of players in the current study towards a more team focused approach was suggested to be a difficult task by the coaches and researcher; but a task that was cited as one of the most important for performance in the practice environment (Hodge, Henry, & Smith, 2014). However, coaches stated the importance of maintaining intra-team competition within the practice environment to enhance the competitiveness of players (Mills et al., 2012), which meant any team drive strategy would have to be undertaken with intra-team competition still present.

The type of practice environment under investigation in the current study also proved problematic when attempting to create a team-first mentality. The practice environment was described as a 'stepping stone' by participants as players were only with the team for one to three years before moving on. Players were still of development ages (see Martindale, Collins, & Daubney, 2005) and their primary goal was stated as their own personal development and improvement. To combat this approach, players were encouraged to understand that individuals couldn't achieve on their own in a team sport

and that if teammates were performing poorly then it would impact every individual within the team (Pensgaard & Duda, 2002). A balanced approach to the self and others appeared to be the most appropriate with the players in the current environment under investigation.

The coaches cited the current team of players as being the least established group that they had ever worked with in an EABL environment. However, by the end of the study the coaches felt they were the most cohesive group they had ever worked with. Neutral or non-negative responses to teammate error through an acceptance of mistakes seemed to enhance individual performance. Successful and supportive relationships between teammates appeared to develop within the group of players, which have been previously reported to influence performance (e.g., Douglas & Carless, 2006; Greenleaf, Gould, & Dieffenbach, 2001; Holt & Hogg, 2002; Pain et al., 2012; Thelwell et al., 2007). Negative thoughts about teammates had been perceived to have diminished by the end of the study, such as changes in behaviour towards teammate error, which may have contributed to the perception of enhanced team drive (Pensgaard & Duda, 2002).

Youth athletes have been suggested to perform better as a team if they share common backgrounds (e.g., Pain & Harwood, 2007). Apart from the commonality of playing basketball and reaching a high standard of ability (Uphill & Jones, 2007), players in the current study were from various locations across the UK and the world. However, a commitment to common goals has been found to enhance team cohesion and performance (e.g., Mills et al., 2012; Shoenfelt, 2011; Woodman & Hardy, 2001), and in the current study a balanced approach to goal setting was suggested to be effective for increasing performance in the practice environment. Players were given individual goals that would ultimately improve team performance (Fletcher & Hanton, 2003). In addition, players were helped by the researcher and coaches to understand that they could not achieve personal goals without the help of their teammates. Therefore, teammates should support each other in the practice environment to attempt to decrease negative influences as they could affect others within the team. This mind-set appeared to especially aid players when they entered intra-team competitive situations in the practice environment.

Finally, participants identified the players as a stronger and more cohesive group by the end of the study. Throughout the study, team drive and positive communication were spoken about by participants and observed by the researcher as being inextricably linked. It was possible to distinguish between elements of team drive and positive

communication in the current study but there was considerable crossover. Therefore, a successful team drive approach appeared to be more successful if it was enhanced with positive communication.

8.4.4. Positive Communication

Communication was reported to contribute towards much of the influence cited in the practice environment under investigation. For example, positive communication was stated as aiding team cohesion, the effort of teammates, and the way individual players experienced intra-team competitive situations. Evidence existed in the current study that positive communication improved within the first few weeks of the study, possibly due to it being a controllable factor (Eccles & Tenenbaum, 2004). The type of communication between members of the environment was seen as vital for the performance of the group as a whole (Barsade, 2002). Negative communication was most common following errors in practice activities, especially when a teammate made a mistake that negatively affected another player's performance outcomes. Therefore, the current study aimed to change the mind-set of players when mistakes were made in the practice environment by removing negative communication and replacing it with positive and supportive communication to enhance team performance (Benson & Bruner, 2018).

Individual players within a team sport require their teammates to help them reach their own goals (Eccles & Tenenbaum, 2004). In the current study, teammate error led to other players not achieving, which resulted in negative communication due to frustration and anger. The researcher and coaches used weekly meetings, one-to-one sessions, and practice sessions to maintain a constant and consistent message to players that negative communication will only serve to decrease teammate performance further. Therefore, if a teammate is performing poorly then that could affect the performance and goals of every other individual within the group. During the study there was seen to be a distinctive switch from negative communication towards individuals to general negative comments or actions. However, these non-specific negative displays from players appeared to have a contagious effect upon the whole group (Barsade, 2002).

Critical comments in the current study were reported to not only negatively affect the recipient but also the individual who gave the comment; this may have been an indicator of a current negative mental state and the need to cope with a challenging situation (e.g., Giacobbi, Foore, & Weinberg, 2004). In the current study, players were encouraged to recognise negative behaviour towards them by teammates as a sign of

weakness on behalf of their teammate, which appeared to aid player understanding of the use of positive communication in the practice environment to improve teammate performance. There was, however, one situation where negative communication was accepted within the group, which was when players displayed a lack of effort or selfish behaviours. Negative communication was found to enhance teammate performance if effort was low, possibly by enhancing the motivation of a player who has the capabilities to improve (Neil, Fletcher, Hanton, & Mellalieu, 2007).

By the end of the study, communication within the practice environment was seen as being calmer, respectful, and more calculated, which aided the cohesion and performance of the team. The improvement in communication was even more impressive due to the amount of new players in the team at the start of the season. The perspective of players was reported to have shifted so that they viewed mistakes differently. Mistakes were not seen as being a determining or influential factor of the present and, therefore, an element of the practice environment that players could not control. Players communicated more positively with others because they knew that if their teammates were performing well then that would help them to perform better and reach personal goals.

8.4.5. Preparation

Preparation for practice sessions included those moments imminently prior to entering the practice environment as well as activities that were undertaken in holiday periods. The cyclical and short-term nature of the practice environment sees preparation and activity phases consistently interacting with each other and provides a very different environment to that found in competition. The temporal differences in the psychological influencing factors between the performance environment (competition based) and the practice environment sets the two research fields apart. Factors perceived over longer time periods have been suggested to have an influence over performance (e.g., Hodge et al., 2014). Initial improvements in practice preparation were apparent at the start of the study with the more controllable elements of lifestyle and behaviour. However, it was the reflective and reflexive ability of players that was lacking at the start of the study. As with the setting of accurate performance expectations before practice, players who were able to reflect and adapt their behaviours were those who improved their performance the most in the practice environment (Thelwell et al., 2007). Within the practice environment under investigation, the ability to reflect upon past performance was especially crucial within a learning environment for the developing player (Hauw, 2009).

In a similar vein to the current study, previous performance environment research embedded reflective practice within a coaching strategy where players continually asked questions of their performance (e.g., Pain & Harwood, 2007; Pain et al., 2012; Richards, Mascarenhas, & Collins, 2009). To improve the reflective ability of players in the current study, weekly player meetings were used to engage with players to enhance the benefits of reflective thinking. Coaches also employed continuous dialogue with players inside and outside of on-court practice sessions that focused on the players' reflective thinking (Richards et al., 2009). At the end of the current study, participants perceived practice preparation to have improved, which was suggested to be directly linked to the new behaviours undertaken through enhanced reflective thinking.

The current study accepted factors outside of the practice environment to have an influence on performance within the practice environment (Douglas & Carless, 2006; Noblet & Gifford, 2002; Pain et al., 2012). The activities that players spent engaged in after the last practice session contributed to the preparation towards the next practice session. Players cited suffering stress and anxiety from factors outside of the basketball environment (e.g., academic pressures) that were unavoidable within a non-professional environment (Fletcher et al., 2012). A committed approach where lifestyle decisions put basketball first appeared to be the most successful for practice preparation. Research with Olympic athletes placed commitment and focus towards training as a positive performance factor (e.g., Greenleaf et al., 2001; Orlick & Partington, 1988), which was replicated in the current study.

8.5. Conclusion

The 20-week education strategy was suggested to improve player performance in the practice environment as evidenced by both qualitative and quantitative measures. The results of this study suggest that the five key education strategies that were based on effort, performance expectations, communication, team goals, and preparation work in a collaborative way to improve performance in the practice environment. Using these education strategies in isolation would diminish the ability of the interventions to produce positive performance influence during practice sessions. Future research should look to apply the education strategy used in the current study to other practice environments to explore whether similar effects will be observed.

Chapter Nine: General Discussion

The main aim of the current programme of research was to conduct an exploration of the practice environment and offer a conceptual model of the psychological influencing factors acting within it. To meet the main thesis aim, four specific aims were set and five separate research studies were conducted to meet these aims. Studies one and two in the current programme of research were undertaken to provide a rich exploration of player and key stakeholder perceptions within the practice environment to identify the existence of perceived influencing factors. Study three was designed to confirm the existence of the previously identified psychological influencing factors present within the practice environment and develop a conceptual model. The fourth study identified and evaluated the perceptions of coaches within the practice environment to support the development of the conceptual model. Finally, study five evaluated the implementation of a 20-week long education strategy based on the practice environment conceptual model.

The research studies were conducted within UK basketball academy practice environments. The basketball academies were part of the Advanced Apprenticeship in Sporting Excellence programme, which changed its name during the undertaking of the current programme of research to Diploma in Sporting Excellence (DiSE). The basketball academies were required to operate in conjunction with a UK further education provider for 16-19 year olds that offered full-time educational programmes. Practice consisted of twelve hours of on-court practice per week, two strength and conditioning (S&C) sessions per week, and one scouting session on upcoming opponents. The teams competed in the Elite Academy Basketball League (EABL) and players would be classified as competing at a level between 'semi-elite' and 'competitive elite' (Swann, Moran, & Piggott, 2015).

9.1. Discussion of Findings

9.1.1. Study One

Study one adopted an interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA) approach to gather rich perceptions of participant experience, which provided a rich data-laden beginning to the current programme of research (Smith & Osborn, 2003). With a lack of previous research that has analysed the psychological influencing factors of the practice environment, an IPA approach offered an understanding of what the data mean rather than a simple description (Chamberlain, 2011). This qualitative approach allowed for a

large gathering of data to be undertaken in the exploration of the practice environment at the start of the current programme of research (Denzin, 2012). The aim of study one was to provide a rich exploration of player perceptions within the practice environment to identify the perceived influencing factors that act within it.

The results from study one suggested that the psychological influencing factors experienced by players during practice differed from those experienced in competitive environments. Nine superordinate themes emerged from data analysis, which included: coach, cohesion, emotional and behavioural perception, negative motivation, performance expectation, philosophy, physical state, practice structure, and responsibility. Of the nine superordinate themes, several had very little representation within previous performance environment research. Therefore, the initial exploration undertaken in study one appeared to be successful in identifying specific practice environment influencing factors.

Study one findings also identified the possible existence of several factors previously unreported in the performance environment literature. These findings suggest that an exploration of the psychological influencing factors present in the practice environment is needed to identify factors specific to practice activities, which has not been offered in competition environment research. Study one presented a complexity that existed between perceived influencing factors and performance outcomes in the practice environment, which requires a holistic investigation of perceptions from a larger participant group that includes non-playing members of the practice environment.

9.1.2. Study Two

The aim of study two was to build on the findings from study one by continuing the exploration of player perceptions of the practice environment as well as those of key stakeholders. The participants in study two were ten players, two coaches, the head of sport, an academic teacher, and the S&C coach, who were all from one academy basketball team. A case study approach was undertaken to evaluate the phenomenon of psychological influencing factors within a real-world practice context, which was also beneficial for trying to identify phenomenon with limited current evidence by providing a holistic environmental assessment (Yin, 2014). Study two gathered data from participants who held high contributing positions from within the practice environment, which provided naturalistic generalisability of the investigated environment (Smith, 2018). This approach allowed participant experience to drive data collection and analysis rather than a

distinctive set of method criteria (Sparkes & Smith, 2009), which was effective in meeting the aim of study two.

Data was analysed through an inductive thematic analysis approach that revealed six overarching themes, which were: effort; individuality; status; preparation; team drive; and practice vision. The findings of study two built on those reported in study one, which produced a set of overarching themes that the researcher felt best identified the psychological influencing factors of the practice environment. Similar to study one, the findings from study two indicated a raft of influencing factors that may be specific to the practice environment and underrepresented in previous performance environment research.

The study two findings suggested evidence of new psychological influencing factors previously unreported in study one. The findings also confirmed and offered greater understanding of previously identified factors in study one. A greater array of psychological influencing factors were presented in study two, which may have been due to a larger and more varied data collection approach that gathered data from participants with differing perceptual positions within the practice environment. Study two confirmed the findings in study one that suggested the practice environment has different influencing factors compared to competition environments. The reported framework of themes development in study two incorporated much of the findings from study one but were displayed in a more concise manner. As a greater knowledge of the influencing factors of the practice environment advanced, relationships and links between factors became apparent, which allowed for an encompassing of themes within overarching themes. To enhance framework development, further research was to be conducted on a greater population of participants across multiple basketball academy practice environments to gain confirmation of framework existence.

9.1.3. Study Three

Study three aimed to confirm the existence of the psychological influencing factor framework developed in study two and develop a conceptual model. Study three gathered data from 58 player participants who were representative of approximately a quarter (25.1%) of all registered EABL players. To access participants in real-time who were based across the UK, a web-based data collection approach was employed to gather a greater response rate from open-ended responses (Denscombe, 2009; Wang et al., 2005). Data collection was conducted over a 155-day period, which allowed for an understanding of

how influencing factors were perceived over a longer duration of practice environment experience.

A deductive content analysis was used in study three to analyse data as it allowed for a testing of the pre-existing practice environment framework (Elo & Kyngäs, 2008). Of the 409 data items retrieved from participants, the researcher interpreted all data items to be present in the practice environment framework under investigation. The higher order themes reported in study three were: status, current performance level, team drive, team cohesion, preparation, effort, and practice vision. This study appeared to have made a successful initial attempt at achieving confirmation of the previously identified factors of influence in the practice environment.

To enhance the development of the current programme of research, a conceptual model presenting the factors of influence in the practice environment was provided to offer a visual representation of the environment, including the interrelatedness of factors. The model's purpose was to aid in the practical application of study findings, which has been previously undertaken in high performance environment research (e.g., Jones, Gittins, & Hardy, 2009). The model also provided an indication of the relationships between the influencing factors that will aid practitioners in considering the interactive nature of the practice environment. Due to the importance of the coach as the creator and the leader of the practice environment of young and developing athletes (Vinson, Brady, Moreland, & Judge, 2016), the framework of psychological influencing factors and the subsequent practice environment model developed required further evaluation against coach perceptions.

9.1.4. Study Four

The aim of study four was to identify and evaluate the factors of influence in the practice environment from the perception of the coaches that operate within the environment against the framework previously developed in study three. An IPA approach (Smith, 2016) was used to gather practice environment perceptions from six academy basketball coaches. IPA was employed in study four to allow a richer gathering of participant experience (Pietkiewicz & Smith, 2014), which could be evaluated against the framework of themes presented in study three. A deeper investigation could also indicate psychological influencing factors that may not have been reported previously, especially from the perceptual lens of the coach (Callary, Rathwell, & Young, 2015). The researcher's prior knowledge of the practice environment under investigation and previous research

findings provided a subjectivity during data analysis. However, potential researcher subjectivity or bias is acknowledged and accepted when using IPA, which is an inevitable part of an interpretation process that uses phenomenological and hermeneutic framing (Eatough & Smith, 2017).

Study four data analysis revealed five superordinate themes, which were: player characteristics, team first orientation, current performance, coach characteristics, and coaching structure. The findings from study four satisfied its aim by contributing to a confirmation of previous findings as well as providing additional factors that have received limited attention in the current programme of research. Therefore, modifications were made to the practice environment model devised in study three, which can be seen in figure 7.1. Of the several factors of influence added to the practice environment model, the most significant addition appeared to be the fate of negative performance influences. Previous performance environment research maintains a relationship of simplicity between influence valence and effect on performance (e.g., Fletcher, Hanton, Mellalieu, & Neil, 2012). Whereas previous non-sport organisational psychological climate research has suggested a more complex relationship exists where negative influence does not always lead to detrimental performance and positive influence may not provide enhanced performance (Davar & Bala, 2012).

Study four findings suggested that initially perceived negative influences may actually lead to positive performance influences in the future. Because practice activities are ongoing and not a one off competitive event, it may be acceptable to see players fail more often in the practice environment as that could allow greater development and improvement to occur (e.g., Hill, Cheesbrough, Gorczynski, & Matthews, 2019; Lazarus, 2000). This finding provides further evidence for the need to separate the study of psychological influencing factors in the practice environment from those of other performance environments, such as competition. Future research in the current programme attempts to implement the practice environment model into a real-world practice environment and enhance performance in the practice environment.

9.1.5. Study Five

The aim of study five was to evaluate the implementation of a 20-week long education strategy. The education strategy was based on the previous findings from studies one through four in the current programme of research, which were articulated in the practice environment model offered in study four. During study five, the researcher

was employed full-time at the organisation where the basketball academy operated and had regular contact with the team and the coaches through academic delivery and mental skills training with players. Due to the close proximity the researcher had with the practice environment and the individuals involved within it, an action research approach was undertaken (Bodner, MacIsaac, & White, 1999). This approach allowed the researcher to evaluate the implementation of the education strategy from within the practice environment itself (Pain, Harwood, & Mullen, 2012). Within an action research approach, the researcher was also able to initiate changes to the education strategy as the study progressed, which enhanced the accuracy and evaluative properties of the study (Kemmis, McTaggart, & Nixon, 2013). This was the first opportunity to implement previous findings from the current programme of research. Therefore, the need for the researcher and participants to make decisive changes during the study was warranted (Gilbourne & Richardson, 2005).

Action research requires the researcher to work with practitioners to effect desired change in real world environments, which creates a researcher role for all participants involved as the project develops (Huang, 2010). The researcher, along with the coaches, identified five education strategies to implement within the practice environment that they felt, based on the previous research, could enhance performance in the practice environment. The strategies were: high effort as a primary goal in practice, the undertaking of pre-practice performance reflection, the development of supportive communication, the setting of common goals to enhance team performance, and an enhanced preparation period before practice.

The education strategy was implemented through weekly meetings, practice sessions, and one-to-one meetings. Multiple sources of data were collected and analysed throughout study five, which provides an enhanced measurement of the phenomenon of interest (Bodner et al., 1999). Obtaining and analysing multiple measures within the practice environment was critical in attempting to successfully meet the aim of study five by providing an accurate and thorough evaluation of the education strategy (Pain et al., 2012). Study five employed both qualitative and quantitative research methods. This mixed methods approach allowed for a greater depth of understanding towards the phenomenon (Denzin, 2012).

Study five findings suggested that the education strategy was successful at enhancing performance in the practice environment. The previously discovered

psychological influencing factors in the practice environment were interpreted by the researcher as being present. Also, some of the factors in the real-world context of the practice environment were found to be more complex than previously reported. The action research approach showed, for example, that a high effort primary focus could not be engaged during practice but was an effective coping strategy when players entered a performance crisis. The five education strategies began as independent psychological influencing factors in the practice environment, however, findings suggested they held interrelationships that produced positive and negative performance influences. Therefore, future research or practical implementation of the education strategy used in study five should attempt to engage the five strategies collaboratively rather than independently.

9.2. General Discussion

9.2.1. Effort and Control

High effort was reported to be a positive factor of influence in the practice environment throughout the current programme of research. Effort was suggested to be a unique psychological influencing factor in the practice environment as it was a factor interpreted by the researcher as being controllable (Douglas & Carless, 2006). Positive performance appeared to occur when effort was high due to its controllability and applying high effort as a primary goal in practice was reported to be an effective strategy when performance was poor. The application of high effort was also found to influence activities undertaken outside of the practice environment that had an influence on performance in the practice environment (Hodge, Henry, & Smith, 2014). However, during study five of the current programme of research a primary high effort focus was suggested to be problematic for players due to the need to process a high degree of technical and tactical information from the practice environment (Mann, Williams, Ward, & Janelle, 2007). General high effort was suggested to be important during practice activities but was seen as an innate trait that did not require specific cognitive attention (Moran, 2012). Therefore, a primary high effort focus within the practice environment appeared to be best suited as a coping strategy to be used to combat poor performance.

The use of high effort as a coping strategy appeared to be successful when a player entered a performance crisis when performance outcomes were below an acceptable standard. This finding suggests that using tangible performance outcomes that are uncontrollable, such as competitive outcomes against teammates, could negatively influence performance (Gould, Greenleaf, Chung, & Guinan, 2002). Shifting a player's focus

away from tangible performance outcomes appeared to be an effective strategy that recovered performance by allowing a player to focus on the more controllable elements of practice, such as effort (Douglas & Carless, 2006). Focusing on the controllable elements within the practice environment was deemed an important part of the mind-set that players approached practice activities with in study five (Podlog & Dionigi, 2010). The current programme of research reported control as a psychological influencing factor that held a close relationship with effort and tangible outcomes.

Due to its controllability, effort was suggested to be a more stable measure of achievement for players in the practice environment rather than outcome based measures (Mahoney, Gucciardi, Ntoumanis, & Mallet, 2014). Controllable elements within the practice environment, such as applied effort, were found to produce positive influences on performance (Douglas & Carless, 2006). However, effort directed towards the performance of oneself rather than the team appeared to have the potential to produce negative performance influences for the self and others within the practice environment. In contrast, effort towards the team appeared to lead to positive influences for both the self and others. An individualistic approach to practice activities in the current programme of research seemed to exclude players from identifying themselves as part of the team and did not allow them to benefit from team achievement that encompassed all players (Gundlach, Zivnuska, & Stoner, 2006). Individualism was suggested to be caused by an effort towards personal goals that were misaligned against those of the team, as well as players being isolated for praise or criticism from coaches, which broke the collectiveness of the group (Pain et al., 2012).

The current programme of research suggested that tangible outcomes (e.g., shooting accuracy) were highly influential for performance. However, as suggested by Douglas and Carless (2006), uncontrollable tangible factors in the practice environment can cause negative performance influences if those outcomes are not met. Focusing on controllable performance outcomes, such as effort, have been reported in the current programme of research as providing a positive factor of influence in the practice environment compared to relying on outcomes that are dependent upon a multitude of factors not under the control of players. The current programme of research suggests that tangible and uncontrollable elements in the practice environment produced higher magnitudes of performance influence (negative) compared to the positive effects of high effort on performance. It may be that the current programme of research was unable to report and evaluate the mechanisms by which players internalise success, but was able to

suggest that players could clearly identify the negative influences that caused poor performance.

The current programme of research indicated an increase in team performance during practice activities when a tangible competitive match was imminent. The increased stress response from players in the practice environment from the knowledge of imminent competition (e.g., Hanton, Fletcher, & Coughlan, 2005; Holt & Hogg, 2002; Mellalieu, Neil, Hanton, & Fletcher, 2009; Nicholls, Holt, Polman, & James, 2005; Pensgaard & Duda, 2002; Thelwell, Weston, & Greenlees, 2007) could have initiated an increased focus in players by narrowing attention and raising motivation (Knight & Eisenkraft, 2015). However, this does not indicate why tangible outcomes during general practice activities provided such a heavily reported influence on performance. It may be that short-term competition amongst teammates increases the stress response but the lack of meaningful competition (e.g., league match) and increased physical fatigue from repetitive practice bouts over long duration's means that motivation may be lower. Therefore, performance does not always improve. A constant state of competition within the practice environment may also cause higher expectations to be set.

9.2.2. Individual and Team orientations

The orientation of player goals was suggested to be a psychological influencing factor in the practice environment. The current programme of research reported players to hold approaches towards practice that varied between individualistic and team orientations. The differing orientations towards the practice environment produced different influences on performance. Enhanced team performance and cohesion has been previously reported by Pain and Harwood (2008) to increase if clear team goals are set and the same appeared true in the practice environment. The cohesion required within team sports appears to differ greatly from that of individual sports (Fletcher & Hanton, 2003) and this is shown in the current programme of research through the complexity of relationships that influenced performance. The practice environments under investigation in the current programme of research were populated with players whose primary aim appeared to be a want to learn and develop their own basketball ability over team success, which appeared to have a negative influence within the practice environment (Ericsson, 2008).

An individualistic approach to team practice activities, which could cause negativity, was suggested to be due to the practice environments under investigation

acting as a bridge between UK secondary school and higher education study that lasted a maximum of three years. Fletcher and Hanton (2003) suggested that if players in the performance environment had individual goals set apart from those of the team then those individual goals could have a detrimental effect on team performance, which was also reported in the current programme of research. Players with individual goals and a high personal drive to succeed in the practice environment were suggested to increase their individuality. However, it has been previously suggested that the negative effects from that focus could be countered by the alignment of player goals within the team (e.g., Fletcher & Hanton, 2003; Shoenfelt, 2011). The current programme of research indicated that common goals amongst players within the practice environment could enhance performance and decrease egocentric and individual behaviours within players.

Positive performance influences have been reported to occur through teammates engaging in supportive behaviours towards team goals and team success (e.g., McEwan & Beauchamp, 2014). Behaviour that put the team first was also seen as a positive performance influence in the current programme of research. Players who felt part of the group and applied their efforts towards team success in the practice environment were reported to be effective for enhanced performance, as suggested in previous performance environment research (e.g., Douglas & Carless, 2006; Pain et al., 2012; Noblet & Gifford, 2002). Also, Morgan, Fletcher, and Sarkar (2019) suggested that greater team resilience could be developed from a team culture based on selflessness where the support of others within the team was critical in periods of stress and pressure. However, it appeared a complex undertaking for coaches to develop a team first orientation with players who may be in an environment for primarily personal development and improvement purposes (Macnamara, Moreau, & Hambrick, 2016). Therefore, the practice environment appears to be different to competitive environments where a team first orientation is required to achieve a successful outcome (Pensgaard & Duda, 2002).

Player goal orientations within the practice environment in the current programme of research were suggested to be made more complex by players who were able to separate their individual achievement from that of the team (Pensgaard & Duda, 2002). The conflict between the self and the team appeared to be exacerbated by intra-team competition that focused on individual success and development over team success (Mills, Butt, Maynard, & Harwood, 2012). Attempts at ensuring intra-team competition within the practice environment did not cause negativity was hampered by the development age of

players (Martindale, Collins, & Daubney, 2005) who just wanted to develop and improve themselves more than they wanted the team to succeed (Pain & Harwood, 2007).

An individualistic approach to the practice environment appeared capable of causing negative influences to both the individual as well as teammates through an overly competitive environment (Lochbaum, Kazak Çetinkalp, Graham, Wright, & Zazo, 2016). Although intra-team competition was reported to create positive performance influences through providing a challenge that leads to enhanced creativity, innovation, and problem solving (Passos, Araújo, & Davids, 2016), negative performance influences were suggested to occur from an intra-team perceived ranking of ability that was able to override team-first orientations. An overly competitive practice environment appeared to be created by a social pressure to maintain an ability status within the practice environment (Smith, 2003). Social pressure was also created by players focusing on tangible outcomes in the practice environment, which were highly prominent during data analysis in the current programme of research, and offered an outlet for displaying ability over others (Harwood, Hardy, & Swain, 2000). If the practice environment allowed players to risk failure without judgement from others then an individualist focus could be avoided (Gustafsson, Sagar, & Stenling, 2017), which could also impact the performance expectations that players made prior to entering the practice environment.

Another hindrance to the creation of a team-first mentality was the potential lack of players sharing a common background because players hailed from different regions of the UK and from countries outside of the UK (Pain & Harwood, 2007). However, the teams under scrutiny in the current programme of research were compiled of players who held limited experience of the practice environments they were in due to the high turnover rate of players. Therefore, the situation the players found themselves in, which was a practice environment that was focused upon their own development, could have produced common ground for the players (Mills et al., 2012; Shoenfelt, 2011; Woodman & Hardy, 2001), despite that common ground being more focused upon individual development than team success. However, if players were given goals in the practice environment that aimed to meet team goals (e.g., Fletcher & Hanton, 2003), then it was suggested to aid performance through enhancements in supportive communication.

The structure of practice is predominantly designed by the coach who engineers the environment and their relationships with players (e.g., Mageau & Vallerand, 2003). The culture of practice, which is heavily influenced by the coach, was cited as a psychological

influencing factor of the practice environment. Players being unaware of team culture has been suggested to cause negative performance by Noblet and Gifford (2002), which appears to have had an influence within the practice environments under investigation where a high turn-over rate of players exists. The coaching structure also has a key role to play in the development of a team-first orientation where the coach can attribute achievement to team success rather than to individuals in an attempt to create stronger team bonds (Pain et al., 2012). The current programme of research suggested that coaches could hinder a team-first orientation by singling out players during practice activities for either successful or unsuccessful performance.

9.2.3. Communication and Negative Motivation

Communication was reported as a highly influential factor within the team practice environment under investigation in the current programme of research, especially within a team of players who may not have a high degree of environmental experience (Eccles & Tenenbaum, 2004). The detail of the communication appeared to hold less of an influence on performance than the emotion that was attached to it (Hatfield, Cacioppo, & Rapson, 1994). Emotion was found to be highly contagious within the practice environment with emotional displays supplying a strong form of communication. In line with previous performance environment research (e.g., Mellalieu et al., 2009), perceived positive influences seemed to initiate good performance and negative influences caused a decrease in performance, especially in the immediate moment. However, the current programme of research indicated that negative communication could cause positive performance influence, which was supported by high ability players who displayed low effort being motivated to increase performance by receiving criticism from teammates or coaches.

Negative emotions have been stated by Hill et al. (2019) and Lazarus (2000) as providing motivational effects for improved performance in the future. Negative communication was accepted and beneficial for team cohesion in the current programme of research when negative emotions were aligned within the group following team failure (De Boer & Badke-Schaub, 2008). Positive influences were also reported to not always lead to positive performance outcomes, which has been suggested in non-sport research (e.g., Gruber, Mauss, & Tamir, 2011). The reported perceived positive and negative influence outcomes in the practice environment, when compared to previous performance environment research (e.g., Mellalieu et al., 2009), suggests temporal differences may exist between the two environments. This could be due to the practice environment being a

repetitive and long-duration environment, whereas competition performance is immediate.

The influence of negative communication was cited often by participants throughout the current programme of research as causing stress, which has been a staple focus of previous performance environment and sport organisational research (e.g., Fletcher & Hanton, 2003; Fletcher et al., 2012; Hanton et al., 2005; McKay, Niven, Lavallee, & White, 2008; Mellalieu et al., 2009; Pensgaard & Duda, 2002; Woodman & Hardy, 2001). However, this may not indicate negative communication as holding a greater degree of influence within the practice environment because negativity has been found to enhance intense emotional arousal, which may have led to a greater reporting frequency (Harris & Pashler, 2005). The current programme of research also indicated that perceived negative communication could have led to positive effects. Due to the data collection methods undertaken in the current programme of research, the future fate of receiving negative communication was not clearly identified. Throughout the current programme of research there was a reporting of equivalence between positive and negative perceived influence, which supports the requirement for psychological influencing factor research to not just assess negative performance influences (e.g., Fletcher & Streeter, 2016; Pain & Harwood, 2008), such as organisational stress.

The current programme of research suggested that team cohesion was heavily influenced by communication in the practice environment. Findings indicated that most situations involving positive communication were perceived as influencing performance positively, whereas perceived negative communication influenced performance negatively (e.g., Holt & Hogg, 2002). As mentioned above, communication that contained a perceived negative emotion appeared to be particularly influential within the practice environment, despite the potentially unknown outcome on performance (Barsade, 2002). Results from the current programme of research were suggested to be similar to previous performance environment and stress research when it came to communication with negative influences being perceived from a general lack of communication between coaches and players (e.g., Fletcher & Hanton, 2003; Pain & Harwood, 2007; Woodman & Hardy, 2001), negative comments following failure (e.g., Holt & Hogg, 2002), a lack of appropriate avenues and structures for communication (e.g., Pain et al., 2012), and poor team coordination (e.g., Eccles & Tenenbaum, 2004). However, negative communication was also cited as having potentially positive performance influences in the future (e.g., building resilience).

Joseph, Murphy, and Regel (2012) presented the affective-cognitive processing model of post-traumatic growth. The model suggests that individuals who experience trauma can develop their resilience to trauma in the future. Hill et al. (2019) identified the positive consequences of athletes experiencing choking in sport. They reported that some participants were able to learn and develop from the negative choking experience and cited it as a factor that improved their future performance. These longitudinal research findings suggest that negative influences can impact future performance positively and are in line with the current programme of research.

Coach behaviours and emotional displays were found to be highly contagious within the current programme of research (Sy, Côté, & Saavedra, 2005). Positive performance influences were reported as emanating from coaches who understood their players and engaged in communication and behaviour that was individually specific (Bennie & O'Connor, 2010). The type of communication from coaches has been reported in previous performance environment research as having an influence on athlete performance (e.g., Douglas & Carless, 2006; Greenleaf, Gould, & Dieffenbach, 2001; Pain & Harwood, 2007; Pain & Harwood, 2008). In the current programme of research a relationship appeared to exist between the amount of feedback given and the autonomy of the player (e.g., too little feedback contributed to an overly autonomous player and too much feedback led to players taking less responsibility for themselves). Therefore, communication within the practice environment between players and coaches seems to provide a factor of influence that could be as important as the communication between players.

The communication between teammates when errors were made was reported as crucial in the influence it had on individuals and team performance in the current programme of research. Findings suggested that negative communication after an error decreased player performance while positive communication increased player relationships and avoided further negative influences (Benson & Bruner, 2018). The increase of positive communication and decrease of negative communication was a strategy employed in study five of the current programme of research to enhance performance in the practice environment. Positive communication was reported to influence many areas of the practice environment, which included the enhancement of team cohesion, the effort of teammates, and the way individual players experienced intra-team competitive situations. Increased positive communication was cited by participants

as being the quickest and easiest strategy to implement, which could be due to it being highly controllable (Douglas & Carless, 2006; Eccles & Tenenbaum, 2004).

Communication enhancements in the current programme of research were reported when individual players became aware of the need to provide teammates with positive communication as it would enhance their chances of achieving their own goals (Eccles & Tenenbaum, 2004). However, findings from the current programme of research suggested that the removal of individual-specific negative communication was not enough to improve performance in the practice environment. This was due to specific communication being replaced by an un-directed generalised form of negative communication and behaviour (Barsade, 2002). The current programme of research suggests that any negative behavioural and emotional displays are contagious within the practice environment and could influence performance negatively (Hatfield et al., 1994).

9.2.4. Performance Expectations and Social Interactions

The performance expectations set by players before practice sessions were reported throughout the current programme of research to cause negative performance influences if the expected performance was not achieved. The repetitive nature of the practice environment can cause increased susceptibility to physical fatigue and performance decline, which could have an influence on an athlete's performance (Thorpe, Atkinson, Drust, & Gregson, 2017). Players in the current programme of research who were able to set realistic practice performance goals that were based on real-time information, such as fatigue levels, were reported to deal better with poor performance. Therefore, performance expectations within the repetitive practice environment appear to differ from the expectations set in other sport environments (e.g., during competition).

A failure to meet expected performance standards has been previously cited in performance environment research as causing negative performance influences, but the findings were unclear as to whether expectations influenced performance or performance outcomes caused perceived influence (e.g., Gould, Guinan, Greenleaf, Medbery, & Peterson, 1999). High expectations in competitive situations have been reported to create anxiety in athletes (e.g., Pain & Harwood, 2007) and stress in the organisation of sports teams (e.g., Fletcher & Hanton, 2003). Comparatively, low personal performance expectancies have been found to cause negative influences in elite athletes (e.g., Scanlon, Stein, & Ravizza, 1991).

The findings from study three of the current programme of research suggested that performance expectations were heavily influenced by a player's most recent performance. Also, high anxiety was experienced by trying to reach unrealistic goals, potentially due to a decreased physical state, and was seen as a potential cause for negative performance influences (Pain & Harwood, 2007). Despite basketball being a team sport, the current programme of research suggested individual performance in the practice environment appeared to be a stronger perceived indicator of performance outcome than team performance. If individual performance was low then negative performance influences would be experienced (Woodman & Hardy, 2001).

The current programme of research suggested that a relationship existed between an individual's performance expectations and their orientation towards the team. An individualistic orientation that lacked alignment towards team goals within the practice environment was suggested to contribute towards negative experiences through high performance expectations based on a need to maintain an ability position against others (Lochbaum et al., 2016). Participants in the current programme of research reported individualistic approaches to practice activities to cause inflated performance expectations, despite current state, that negatively affected not only the self but also others (Fletcher & Hanton, 2003). This individualism seemed to be due to a sole focus upon competing against teammates. A player's inability to make accurate performance expectations before practice sessions was further hampered by being preoccupied with the future, being too focused on individual performance statistics, and not feeling safe to fail or make mistakes within the practice environment.

The findings of the current programme of research suggest that performance expectations were strongly influenced by the social interactions that occurred within the practice environment. Performance influences were especially negative with those individuals that held an individual or ego orientation (Ingrell, Johnson, & Ivarsson, 2016). The current programme of research highlighted a perceived ability ranking to occur within individuals during practice sessions, which was particularly displayed when players engaged in intra-team competition. Study three results suggested that this could have been enhanced by the developmental state of the players in the practice environment (Harris, 1995). The overemphasis on competing against teammates for achievement within the practice environment was seen to contribute to players holding individual goals set apart from the team that could lead to negative performance influences. Therefore, current form and perceived ability ranking appeared to be inextricably connected to the

performance expectations that were created in the period of preparation before players entered the practice environment. These relationships indicate the unique complexity of influence that exists in the practice environment.

Within the practice environments under investigation, the perceived ability rankings that players held against teammates caused inflated performance expectations that could override a participant's perception of their current state (Smith, 2003). An individual within the practice environment who was focused on their ability ranking within the team caused a separation between their expectations and actual state (e.g., physiological and psychological) during practice activities. If high performance expectations were solely focused on the maintaining of a perceived ability ranking within the group, and they were not realised during intra-team competition against a teammate, then extreme negative performance influences occurred. However, the findings from the current programme of research proposed a temporal complexity existed with misaligned performance expectations. For example, failure to meet performance expectations were cited as causing both positive (e.g., positive and motivational influences on future performance) and negative (e.g., negative influences on immediate performance) performance influences.

Study five of the current programme of research used a pre-practice reflection activity to encourage players to be mindful of their current state and set accurate performance expectations accordingly. Following the 20-week education programme, predicted practice environment performance expectations had dropped and perceived actual performance had increased. Study five findings suggest that before practice sessions a player may be preoccupied with mentally rehearsing future activities (Bertollo, Saltarelli, & Robazza, 2009). This result supports the notion that high performance expectations that are unattainable may be subject to the influence of previous form and social pressure to display ability (Ingrell et al., 2016; Keller & Bless, 2008; Thelwell et al., 2007). The reflective and planning activities that players were encouraged to partake in during study five also seemed to have benefits in several other areas of the practice environment, such as preparation.

9.2.5. Preparation

The activities that players undertook away from the practice environment in the current programme of research, which were perceived as a preparation period for the next practice session, appeared to influence the performance of players within the practice

environment (Douglas & Carless, 2006; Hodge et al., 2014; Noblet & Gifford, 2002; Pain et al., 2012; Pattison & McInerney, 2016). Effective preparation for practice sessions was suggested to come from the undertaking of a holistic approach to the practice environment that included lifestyle decisions and behaviours focused towards enhancing performance, and appeared to be highly controllable (Hodge et al., 2014).

Levels of fatigue due to inadequate preparation were highlighted as causing a negative influence on performance in the practice environment (Pain & Harwood, 2007; Pain & Harwood, 2008). However, fatigue during practice was also perceived as a potential source of positive influence through match simulation experiences, which further suggests that the psychological influencing factors in the practice environment differ from those in competition environments. Players who had a committed approach to practice activities were suggested to produce higher performance outcomes (Greenleaf et al., 2001; Orlick & Partington, 1998). Findings from study five reported that better preparation had improved and positively influenced performance in the practice environment. Enhanced preparation was suggested to occur in the study five findings by an increase in a player's reflective ability to create realistic performance expectations. The ability for players to reflect on past performance and make improvements was crucial for player development in the practice environment (Hauw, 2009).

9.2.6. Player and Coach Characteristics

During the current programme of research a specific set of player characteristics were reported as having an influence on performance within the practice environment. For example, players who took responsibility for their development and performance in and out of the practice environment, which could be guided by coaches, experienced positive performance influences (Gould & Carson, 2008). Autonomous players have been reported to improve their practice performance and development (e.g., Martindale et al., 2005). Players in the practice environments under investigation received little support away from scheduled practice sessions and the players that took greater responsibility for their development were found to perform better than those who did not. However, the current programme of research also suggested that players who are overly autonomous and set goals independently from that of the team risk being too independent and may withdraw from the team, which can disrupt successful team performance (Maltarich, Kukuemberger, Reilly, & Mathieu, 2018). A strong personal drive to succeed has been indicated to increase competitiveness and motivation to engage in deliberate practice activities (e.g., De Bruin,

Rikers, & Schmidt, 2007). However, as mentioned previously, this could cause a player to hold an individualistic orientation towards practice activities that can effect performance expectations.

Players within the practice environments under investigation who perceived negative performance influences were reported to not always experience negative performance outcomes. Rather, this was an opportunity to engage coping strategies, which caused future positive performance influences. Coping strategies have been identified in previous research with athletes in competition (e.g., Thelwell, 2007) but the study of their existence in the practice environment is limited. Study four reported coping strategies to be an important characteristic in successful players. The coach participants, who seemed far better at understanding the realisation of positive outcome from negative situations, identified the use of coping strategies as enhancing players through the experience of negative situations. This suggested the need for negative experiences during practice activities as they may lead to positive future outcomes (e.g., Lazarus, 2000).

In regards to the differences in participant perceptions, previous research has indicated the enhanced reflective ability of retired athletes who were able to recall positive performance influences from initially perceived negative situations (e.g., Douglas & Carless, 2006). Perceptual differences between individuals within the practice environment had been evident within study one and two in the current programme of research. These perceptual differences are supported by the previous research undertaken within competitive sporting environments where it has been reported that athletes experience influence valence differences when confronted with similar situations (e.g., Gould et al., 1999). The uniqueness of the human experience that can lead to individuals appraising the same situation differently (Uphill & Jones, 2007) is highlighted in the current programme of research by the differences reported by participants.

Coaches have been found to have significant influences on athletes within performance environments (e.g., Gould et al., 2002; Gould et al., 1999; Greenleaf et al., 2001; Holt & Hogg, 2002; Mills et al., 2012; Pain & Harwood, 2007; Pain & Harwood, 2008; Pain et al., 2012; Woodman & Hardy, 2001). Coaches have been suggested to cause influence on performance because they hold a flexibility within an environment that can mould and adapt player experiences (Nash & Collins, 2006). Coaches in the current programme of research were reported to have an influence on performance during practice activities through the way they communicated to players and their ability to be

flexible in practice sessions. The Coach sets team goals and holds their own expectations of team performance (Gould et al., 2002), and if the expectations were not accurate to the ability of the players, then this caused issues with team performance. Positive influences from coaches were reported to occur if they were respected, honest, trusted, and approachable with players.

9.3. Limitations of the Current Programme of Research

The current programme of research undertook an interpretative methodological approach (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2017). The researcher's interpretations during data analysis produced results that may not have been produced by another researcher (Flick, 2009). Interpretation was essential within the ontological and epistemological stance taken by the researcher but can produce highly subjective findings. Therefore, a single researcher's interpretation of the practice environment may provide assessments and evaluations that are heavily influenced by previous knowledge (Smith & McGannon, 2017), and different from another researcher. Due to the interpretative approach taken in the current programme of research to explore a psychological environment that has received limited previous exploration, very little universal criteria was applied to data collection and analysis as it would impact upon the theoretical underpinnings (Smith & McGannon, 2017).

The current programme of research focused on a specific practice environment and findings may not be generalizable to other practice environments outside of UK academy basketball (Gray, 2014). Recent research by Fletcher and Streeter (2016) analysed the High Performance Environment (HPE) model (Jones et al., 2009), which was created from military, business, and sport research. The authors suggested that the factors of the HPE model were present in the environment but a disparity between the context the model was built upon and the real-world context it was applied to may indicate further evaluation was needed (Mermelstein & Revenson, 2013). Therefore, the current programme of research requires further investigation in a broader range of sporting practice environments.

Participants' experiences from other aspects of life (e.g., other sports played, family life, and socioeconomic background) were not collected during the current programme of research, despite them having been found to influence athletic performance (e.g., Douglas & Carless, 2006; Durand-Bush & Salmela, 2002). These experiences could have influenced participant perception and provided a greater depth to findings. For example, the differences in participant perceptions reported in study two, which led to the

researcher interpreting a strong sense of individualism within the practice environment, could have been due to past or current experiences from outside of the practice environment. Therefore, results could have been separated into participant categories (e.g., single parent family or dual sports player) to identify any differences.

Previous performance environment research has collected perceived influence frequency and magnitude (e.g., Anshel & Wells, 2000; Gould, Greenleaf, Chung, & Guinan, 2002; Pain & Harwood, 2008). Similar to Fletcher and Hanton (2003), Nicholls et al. (2005), and Noblet and Gifford (2002) study three in the current programme of research reported the frequency of perceived influencing factors but did not specifically measure magnitude. Within the current programme of research, the magnitude of the influencing factors was suggested to be gained from the emotive language used to describe the influence but this could have offered inaccurate results. Pain and Harwood (2008) highlighted perceived influence with high citation frequency to be less influential on performance than influences that have a high magnitude that are less frequent. Therefore, a measure of magnitude could have provided a greater insight into the practice environment factors that may have had more of an influence on performance.

The current programme of research suggested that an initially perceived influence holding a particular valence (e.g., positive or negative) may change over time. For example, critical communication between players was perceived as a negative performance influence initially, but could produce motivational effects within a player that enhances performance to a greater extent in the future. Study one alluded to this potential, which was seen throughout the subsequent studies of the current programme of research. However, despite the researcher's acknowledgement of this potential phenomenon and its importance on performance within the practice environment, the current programme of research was not specifically analysing influence change over time. A study analysing influence change longitudinally would have been able to provide stronger evidence of the phenomenon.

Member checking is a widely used technique in qualitative research to validate a researcher's interpretations that have been made on participant data (Tracy, 2010). Member checking was undertaken following interview transcription in the current programme of research. However, to enhance the credibility of participant experience, the participants could have been provided with study results to check the researcher's interpretation of participant experience was captured accurately (Smith & McGannon,

2017). Finally, despite attempts to measure participant perception in real-time (e.g., via the diary approach in study three), participants were still retrospectively perceiving the practice environment. However, it may be impossible to collect accurate data from participants during practice without disrupting the flow of the activities undertaken.

9.4. Future Research

Previous performance environment research indicates a somewhat static relationship between perceived influence and performance outcome, where positive influence causes positive performance and negative influence leads to negative performance (e.g., Fletcher et al., 2012). Performance environment research has consistently assessed influencing factors holistically and in snapshot moments in time (e.g., Thelwell et al., 2007). Previous research has also not assessed the potential for influence to change over time following an appraisal and re-appraisal process that could be further impacted by a variety of environmental factors (e.g., Neil, Fletcher, Hanton, & Mellalieu, 2007). The time spent in the practice environment is far longer than in competition (Baker, Cote, & Abernethy, 2003) and, therefore, future research could isolate factors (e.g., negative communication) and track the influence over time. Data collection methods that gather practice environment perceptions in real-time would aid with influence tracking.

Experiencing positive performance following perceived negative influence may be due to the engagement of coping strategies (Dugdale, Eklund, & Gordon, 2002). Recent performance environment research has attempted to measure coping strategies in various environments (e.g., Didymus, 2017; Holt, & Hogg, 2002; Nicholls, 2007; Nicholls et al., 2005). The coping strategies used by successful players during practice activities was alluded to in study four of the current programme of research, but a specific approach to identifying them was not taken. Future performance research could identify the coping strategies that are specific to the practice environment. An evaluation of the coping strategies may provide an understanding towards those influencing factors that may offer a performance outcome that differs to the influence valence originally perceived.

Throughout the current programme of research, the performance expectations set by players before practice sessions appeared to be highly influential within the practice environment. Contrary to previous performance research (e.g., Feltz, Short, & Sullivan, 2008), it appeared that high performance expectations in the practice environment could elicit negative influences on performance. The reason for this was not clear but seemed to be effected by a social factor (Smith, 2003) and a focus on future performance (Bertollo et

al., 2009). Study five of the current programme of research assessed the impact of an education strategy based on more accurate performance expectations being set before entering the practice environment. Findings suggested that performance expectations that were set against current state led to higher performance within the practice environment. Although, the performance expectation strategy was not the sole focus of study five and future research could specifically focus on the performance expectations set before entering the practice environment to gain a better understanding of the performance effects.

Social factors were suggested to have an influence during intra-team competitive situations within the practice environment. A perceived ability ranking was held by players and the meeting of an expected standard when competing against others was said to be an influencing factor during practice activities (Ingrell et al., 2016). Team sport practice is a unique environment where members are expected to form bonds yet compete against each other to improve (Macnamara et al., 2016). The practice environment where athletes develop has been subject to research that takes a holistic approach to understanding its components and structure (e.g., Henriksen, Stambulova, & Roessler, 2010a), but research into the specific influence of intra-team competition within the practice environment is lacking. The current programme of research suggested that player participants were in conflict between their own development, which improved by competing against teammates, and the need for strong cohesive bonds that were difficult to form if individualistic approaches to practice activities existed. This conflict within the team sport practice environment requires far more research attention through a specific environmental approach.

The current programme of research highlighted tangible outcomes in the practice environment to influence performance. The success of tangible outcomes, such as shooting and passing accuracy, seemed to hold a linear relationship with perceived performance influence. The sport of basketball is heavily driven by statistical performance data and new attempts at improving performance information is common (Losada, Theron, & Benito, 2016). It appears that player participants in the current programme of research were heavily influenced by their own personal tangible competition statistics, which overflowed into the practice environment. This may be a result of the need for players to focus on their own development and improvement (Macnamara et al., 2016), but may also be a lack of effective goal setting by both the players and coaches that allows players to feel safe in accepting mistakes in the practice environment.

Motivational climate research highlights the difference between individuals who are ego and task orientated, which may indicate why an ego orientated player would focus so highly on statistic information (Lochbaum et al., 2016). However, this may not provide an answer to the tangible outcome phenomenon that was evidenced in the current programme of research. This is because tangible outcomes appeared to be both ego and task orientated. Therefore, further research is required to address this situation to avoid significant poor performance when tangible outcomes are not met in the practice environment.

Performance was suggested to be influenced by effort levels in the current programme of research. An increase in effort levels, if they were lower than acceptable, seemed to be controlled by negative perceived influences, such as criticism from teammates or coaches. The current programme of research has referred to effort as being a controllable factor within the practice environment (e.g., Douglas & Carless, 2006). Therefore, the positive effects from an increase in effort that are influenced by initially perceived negative influences suggests that negativity could play a role in enhancing performance within the practice environment (Lazarus, 2000). Future research should address the future effects of applied effort as a performance enhancer within the practice environment and what the optimal conditions would be for it to be most effective.

The influence of fatigue within the practice environment offered both positive and negative performance outcomes. If performance expectations were not readjusted to compensate for fatigue during practice activities then negative influences were perceived. Whereas, competing when fatigued in the practice environment was deemed to be vital for match simulation activities and was positive towards performance. Physical tapering to decrease fatigue may be psychologically effective leading up to competitive events but the psychological impact of fatigued states within the practice environment has received limited research attention. However, the current programme of research suggests that fatigue is acceptable within the practice environment if it is taken into account when setting performance expectations, but future research is required.

Influence magnitude has been reported to be a more accurate measure of performance influence than the frequency of influence within the performance environment (e.g., Pain & Harwood, 2008). The current programme of research did not attempt to collect an objective measure of influence magnitude. Future research may wish to evaluate the psychological influencing factors of the practice environment with a

measure of perceived magnitude of influence. The findings from study five in the current programme of research suggested that the implementation of the education strategy was success in increasing the performance of players in the practice environment. Findings also suggested that the five elements of the education strategy were not independent of each other and future testing should employ the strategies collectively. To assess the accuracy of the practice environment model and education strategy, further evaluation is required across different basketball environments as well as other sports. Also, the current research evaluated athletes in a developmental stage (e.g., 15-19 years) and perceptions may differ within adult environments, as suggested recently by Henriksen, Storm, Stambulova, Pyrdol, and Larsen (2019). Therefore, the results from the current programme of research may not generalise to older age groups as teenage participants may not have fully developed emotional responses to their environment.

9.5. Implications for Applied Practice

The current programme of research attempted to investigate the psychological influencing factors of the practice environment. Performance environment and organisational stress in sport research has previously failed to specifically attend to the environment of sport practice. The repetitive nature of the practice environment differs from that of competitive environments, which can be seen in the psychological and physiological effects of accrued fatigue (e.g., Thorpe et al., 2017). Therefore, the current programme of research provides a much needed foray into the practice environment and its effect upon athletic performance. Athletes exist in a variety of different environments that can influence their performance and a need to investigate all of these environments is warranted (Fletcher & Wagstaff, 2009). The current programme of research has highlighted the difference between practice and other environments by identifying influencing factors that have not been reported in previous research. This suggests that the practice environment should be treated by researchers and practitioners as an environment with unique factors of influence that differ from that of any other environment that sports people experience.

The repetitive and long-duration nature of the practice environment appeared to provide different factors of influence than those in competition environments. The practice environment is also an environment where athletes engage in activities that aim to develop skills and ability (Macnamara et al., 2016), especially with youth athletes (Harris, 1995). Therefore, the practice environment appears able to foster performance influences

over longer durations, which presented in the current programme of research as factors that changed their influence valence over time. This suggests that initially perceived negative performance influences may cause a positive influence on overall performance in the future (Hill et al., 2019; Lazarus, 2000). As a result, perceived negative influences in the practice environment should be viewed differently to those experienced during competitive situations where an athlete requires far less negativity to succeed (Greenleaf et al., 2001). Negative influences have been found to enhance self-regulatory activity during training camps (e.g., Massey, Meyer, & Naylor, 2013), which further supports the need to consider perceived negative performance influences in practice as a requirement for enhanced future performance.

Thatcher and Day (2008) assessed athletes' stress appraisal in situations of a competitive nature. Their findings indicated that all participants described stressful events and underlying properties as inherently negative to performance. The authors investigated the eight underlying properties of athletes' stressful appraisals according to Lazarus and Folkman (1984). However, several of the properties (novelty, predictability, event uncertainty, temporal uncertainty, and ambiguity) are unlikely to be present in a practice environment that is well known to an athlete. Therefore, despite the author's conclusions that all properties were relevant to a sporting context, it is highly questionable that the same findings will be present in the practice environment. This further supports the requirement for negative or stressful influencing factors to be present in the practice environment.

The individuals within a sporting performance environment were reported by Pattison and McInerney (2016) to respond uniquely to different situations. Individuality was also reported in the current programme of research and indicates the need for researchers and practitioners to understand that variations will exist in influence perceptions between athletes. The knowledge and expertise one has of an environment will impact on the perceptions they make of situations (Coté, Saimela, Trudel, Baria, & Russell, 1995). Therefore, any guidance given towards factors of influence, such as the findings from the current programme of research, and their practical implementation, will be reliant upon the individual characteristics of those within the environment. For example, coaches wishing to practically implement changes to their practice environment will require a good knowledge of their players' character and personality differences or risk creating tension, conflict in subsequent relationships, and negative impacts on performance (Fletcher & Hanton, 2003; Woodman & Hardy, 2001).

The current programme of research indicated a conflict that players experienced during practice activities. Players experienced a need to put themselves first and develop their ability but also recognise the need to form strong relationships with teammates (Macnamara et al., 2016). The findings of the current programme of research suggest that a focus towards the team will serve to benefit the individual goals of a player, but also suggested that players found this approach difficult to accept. Practitioners may wish to use extensive team bonding activities and engage players in drills that encourage teamwork to achieve success to create a team-first mentality. This includes creating aligned goals and emotional states within the team (De Boer & Badke-Schaub, 2008; Fletcher & Hanton, 2003; Pain et al., 2012; Shoenfelt, 2011). However, they may well also experience players needing the opportunity to compete against one another to create challenge (De Bruin et al., 2007), which would create a complex environment where optimal practice conditions may need to contain an array of conflicting elements.

The impact of the practice environment on competition is difficult to measure because practice activities can be temporally distinct from competitive situations. However, on-going long-term emotional exposure has been suggested to be essential to competitive performance through the way an individual approaches competition (e.g., Baumeister, Vohs, DeWall, & Zhang, 2007). Also, the coach-athlete relationship was reported by Wachsmuth, Jowett, and Harwood (2018) to influence performance far more often within practice periods than in competition. Despite the current programme of research not assessing competition performance, the study five findings indicated that performance in the practice environment had improved following the education strategy. Therefore, rather than practitioners focusing solely on the effects of competition-specific psychological influencing factors (e.g., Pain et al., 2012), it appears that the practice environment should be considered as a viable environment where competition performance can be impacted. Researchers and practitioners in sports clubs may well seek to expand their valuations of performance influences and look towards the practice environment for performance gains.

The practice environment model (see figure 6.1) is a visual representation of the findings from the current programme of research. The model presents the factors of influence and the interrelationships they hold within the practice environment. Despite the model requiring further research attention before it can be offered as a model for general sports practice environments, practitioners are encouraged to assess its worth as a framework towards enhancing performance within their own practice environments. If the

education strategy offered in study five is used and evaluated within other practice environments then it is highly recommended that the entire education strategy is applied to the practice environment due to the interrelatedness between each of the individual strategies.

Chapter Ten: Conclusion

10.1. Restatement of Research Aims

The overarching aim of the current programme of research was to explore the practice environment of UK academy basketball teams and offer a conceptual model of the psychological influencing factors acting within it. To meet the overarching aim, four specific aims were set and five separate research studies undertaken. The current programme of research employed a variety of predominantly qualitative research methods to meet the aims.

Studies one and two were undertaken to provide a rich exploration of player and key stakeholder perceptions of the performance influences within the practice environment; with a view to identify the psychological factors perceived to influence development and performance. Study three was designed to confirm the existence of the previously identified psychological influencing factors. Study three also developed a conceptual practice environment model, which offered a visual representation of the psychological influences present in the practice environment. The fourth study explored the perceptions of coaches within the practice environment. Finally, study five evaluated the implementation of a 20-week long education programme based on previous findings and the practice environment model.

10.2. Summary of Key Findings

A number of key findings emerged from the studies in this programme of research. First, the psychological factors that influence development and performance in the practice environment should not be viewed as independent of each other. This is due to several interdependent relationships being identified within the practice environment. This outcome is supported by previous performance environment research that has suggested that strong factor relationships exist (e.g., Fletcher & Streeter, 2016). The relationships between factors, coupled with the varied positive and negative influences identified in the current programme of research, suggests that the practice environment is a complex psychological domain that appears to exert an influence on the performance of those individuals within it.

Several key themes that were generated from the exploratory studies in the current programme of research were highlighted as having an influence on development

and performance in the practice environment. One theme that appeared to have particular impact was the application of high effort. High effort was suggested to be a requirement for success within the practice environment during study two. High effort was later suggested in study five to be an innate player attribute that could create cognitive disruption if used as a primary focus (Moran, 2012). However, results from study five suggested that a high effort primary focus was an effective coping strategy if performance in the practice environment was in decline. Therefore, high effort in the practice environment was a complex factor that was situationally effected by the environment.

Player performance expectations were also highlighted throughout the current programme of research as having an influence on performance in the practice environment. Originally identified in study one, the successful setting of performance expectations by players during practice activities differed to those expectations reported in previous research when players entered competitive environments (e.g., Montgomery, Pyne, & Minahan, 2010). The current programme of research suggests that the setting of high and unrealistic expectations before practice sessions could damage practice performance and athlete development. The failure to set realistic performance expectations was reported to emerge from a lack of player reflection upon current physical and psychological states.

The short period of preparation before the next practice session that followed the previous session was suggested to influence player performance in the practice environment. This preparation period was also linked to the performance expectations set by players before practice. Due to the short duration between practice sessions, and in line with previous research findings (e.g., Hodge, Henry, & Smith, 2014), the lifestyle decisions made away from practice were reported to influence performance within the practice environment. Therefore, the psychological influencing factors within the practice environment were particularly holistic and did not solely emanate from activities undertaken within the practice environment.

Communication within the practice environment that was perceived as positive, supportive, and encouraging was found to enhance team cohesion and improve performance in the practice environment. Negative communication was mainly perceived as contributing towards decreased performance. However, during study one, motivation gained from negative experiences, such as negative communication, was suggested to enhance future performance and further evidence of this phenomenon continued

throughout the subsequent studies of the current programme of research. A specific gathering of data on the future path of originally perceived negative influences was out of the scope of the current programme of research. Although, during the gathering of rich data through the use of research methods such as interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA), findings suggested that influences perceived as negative may have a positive effect on future performance. Therefore, data from the current programme of research suggests that negative experiences within the repetitive nature of the practice environment, which differs from short duration competitive situations, could enhance performance in the practice environment. The path that negative influence took to create positive performance outcomes was visually represented within the amended PEM (see figure 7.1), which suggested short-term failure could create a challenge for players that can build resilience and lead to improvements and overall player development.

The psychological influencing factors of the practice environment identified in the current programme of research were suggested to be heavily influenced by social interactions. This finding was in line with previous performance environment research (e.g., see Pain & Harwood, 2007), but the social influences within the practice environment differed to those previously reported within competitive environments. For example, intra-team competition proved to create both positive and negative influences on performance within the practice environment. It appeared that intra-team competitive perceptions were influenced by internalised ability rankings that players created against teammates, which affected the performance expectations set before and within the practice environment. The characteristics of the individuals within the practice environment were also found to influence the social cohesion of the environment. However, findings suggested that the environment could also shape and adapt an individual's behaviour, which was evident through the emotional alignment of the team within the practice environment.

Overall, the current programme of research offers a rich and detailed evaluation of the factors perceived to influence performance in the practice environment. These exploratory findings were successfully applied to a real-world practice environment where evidence of enhanced performance was recorded. To the researcher's best knowledge, the current programme of research is the first foray that specifically addresses the psychological influencing factors in the practice environment.

10.3. Practical Application of the Findings

The PEM (see figure 7.1) highlights the key findings from the current programme of research. The PEM can be used by practitioners to enhance the psychological environment that players are subject to when in the practice environment. The psychological influencing factors of the practice environment are complex and dependent upon situational variations. The application of several key influencing factors of the PEM were applied to a UK academy basketball environment and results suggested that performance in the practice environment was enhanced. However, despite further practical testing of the conceptual model being required, several practical applications from the current programme of research can be offered to aid practitioners in developing an effective practice environment.

Practice is a cyclical process and an element of failure and negativity appears to be required to improve player performance and development over time. Therefore, an overly positive environment where players only succeed may harm development as they are unable to build the resilience and motivation required to improve (e.g., Lazarus, 2000). A practitioner's knowledge of an individual player's character and personality traits can aid in the understanding of how positive performance responses can result from negative situations. The cyclical nature of practice activities also suggests that the behaviours undertaken between practice sessions can influence performance during practice. Behaviours that focus on physical and psychological recovery appear to be the most effective for enhanced performance in the practice environment.

The current programme of research suggests that an individual's focus on their current physical and psychological state, rather than perceived ability ranking against teammates, would offer enhanced performance outcomes within the practice environment. The performance expectations that were set by players before and during practice sessions offered significant influence on performance in the practice environment. To defend against any negative performance influences from the setting of unrealistic performance expectations, players are recommended to enter a state of reflection before entering the practice environment and set performance expectations against their own current state rather than against the performance of teammates when partaking in intra-team competition. Intra-team competition is essential within the practice environment for player development and it appears that the setting of realistic performance expectations

based on current state can aid in alleviating potentially significant crippling negative influences when in direct competition against teammates.

One of the larger contradictions within the practice environment research undertaken was between individual and team focus. The practice environment is where individual players develop and improve personally, which can hamper the development of team performance and team cohesion. However, within team sports an individual player can only achieve with their teammates and a conflict between the self and team was evident in the current programme of research. This conflict appeared to be eased when players became aware that they had an influence on teammate performance and that a teammate who was performing well would have a positive influence on the rest of the players within the team. Practitioners are advised that creating an environment where players value teammate achievement in a youth academy practice environment is difficult and greater efforts may need to be made to enhance team cohesion. Educating players on the positive influence that others can have on their own goals is recommended.

10.4. Future Directions for Research

Currently there exists a large literature base evaluating the psychological influencing factors in performance environments. Within the current literature, however, there is a lack of specific attention paid to the psychological influencing factors within the practice environment. Previous performance environment research has reported findings on a variety of sporting levels, such as Olympic (e.g., Gould, Greenleaf, Chung, & Guinan, 2002) and non-elite athletes (e.g., Fletcher, Hanton, Mellalieu, & Neil, 2012). The career status of athletes (e.g., Douglas & Carless, 2006; Woodman & Hardy, 2001) and specific sports (e.g., McKay, Niven, Lavalley, & White, 2008; Fletcher & Streeter, 2016) have also received research attention. The current programme of research investigates the factors of student-athlete male basketball players and an obvious route for future research would be to assess the practice environment perceptions of individuals within different environments.

The psychological influencing factor research in sport has been able to identify specific performance influences at snapshot moments in time but there was evidence from the current programme of research that suggested the initially perceived valence of influences may change. Currently there appears to be no performance environment research that has attempted to specifically track the influence valence of a factor because the majority of focus has been on single competition events. The practice environment

offers a new research domain that differs from that of direct competition. Perceived negativity could also improve performance through, for example, an increase in resilience. Therefore, research that focused on a specific negative factor that is tracked longitudinally could reveal influence valence changes over time and the coping mechanisms that individuals employ during practice activities to deal with negative experiences.

The current programme of research suggested that the success of performance expectations may differ between individuals within the practice environment and in competition. Unsuccessful performance expectations within the practice environment were suggested to be made when current state was superseded by the expectations and outcomes of intra-team competition against teammates. It appeared that lower performance expectations may improve performance outcomes in the practice environment due to individuals suffering from accrued fatigue compared to when entering a competitive situation where physical and mental tapering would be in effect to maximise performance. If future research were to find evidence of increased performance in the practice environment after the setting of lower performance expectations that are in line with current psychological and physiological state rather than perceived ranking ability within the group, then this could affect goal setting activities within the practice environment when competing against teammates.

Finally, an individual player's perception of controllability in the practice environment caused an influence on performance. Players in the practice environment who accepted a lack of control over, for example, an opposing teammate's performance or tangible outcomes such as shooting accuracy, were not affected by high negative performance influences during practice activities. Study five in the current programme of research highlighted controllability as a significant factor of influence in the practice environment but this was only recognised during the action research process. Future research could isolate perceived control in the practice environment and assess the effect it has on performance.

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APPENDIX A: Study One Audit Trail

An Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis of Performance Influencing Factors within the Practice

This appendix details the audit trail for study one. The contents of the study one audit trail is listed below:

1. Ethical approval for studies one and three
2. Participant information sheet
3. Informed consent form
4. Recruitment email sent to coaches
5. Interview schedule
6. Study one raw data
7. Interview transcript with participant 'George'
8. Interview transcript with participant 'John'
9. Interview transcript with participant 'Paul'
10. Interview transcript with participant 'Peter'
11. Interview transcript with participant 'Richard'

Ethical Approval for Studies One and Three



RKE Ethics Committee

Mr Steve Smith
Faculty of Business, Law and Sport
University of Winchester

20 June 2016

Dear Steve,

RE: The relationship between practice environment positive and negative affect and match performance in elite male college basketball players (RKEEC15013).

The resubmission of your above proposal has been considered and I can now confirm that the research has been approved, subject to all the relevant amendments being implemented.

Please could you ensure that any further amendments to either the protocol or documents submitted are notified to us in advance and also that any adverse events which occur during your project are reported to the Committee quoting the above reference. Please could you also arrange to send us a report once your project is completed.

On behalf of the Committee, I would like to wish you good luck with your project.

Yours sincerely,

Maru

Maru Mormina (Chair)
For RKE Ethics Committee

Participant Information Sheet

This study has been approved by the University of Winchester ethics committee.

Researcher and contact details:

Researcher: Steve Smith

Email: s.smith7.15@unimail.winchester.ac.uk

Telephone: 07737 719551

If at any point during the study you have any questions, you may contact the researcher (Steve Smith), or if at any point during the study you feel something is wrong or have any concerns you can contact the project leader or chair of the University Research and knowledge exchange ethics committee, Dr Maru Mormina.

What is the purpose of the study?

This study aims to identify player reactions to emotional events that occur in the practice environment through detailed semi-structured interviews. These events will help coaches to shape the practice environment to improve positivity and impact upon player and team performance.

Who is doing this research and why?

The Department of Sport and Exercise at the University, and specifically Steve Smith is conducting this research. The study is being conducted as part of post graduate research.

Once I take part, can I change my mind?

Yes. You can withdraw at any time, for any reason and you will not be asked to explain your reasons for withdrawing.

Will I be required to attend any sessions?

You will be interviewed by the researcher for a maximum time of approximately one hour. Interviews will take place either face to face or via Skype. The interview will be transcribed word for word and you can view this and make amendments if necessary.

Will my taking part in this study be kept confidential?

Please be assured that all the information you give will be retained in the highest confidentiality and will only be used for the purpose of this research and any publications related to this research. You will not be identifiable from any publication or dissemination of results of the project. The information you provide will be stored carefully to ensure privacy and should any of your contributions be used in the write up of the research any personal details will be omitted to protect your anonymity.

Informed Consent Form

The purpose and details of this study have been explained to me. I understand that this study is designed to further scientific knowledge and that all procedures have been approved by the University of Winchester Ethical Advisory Committee.

I have read and understood the information sheet and this consent form.

I have had an opportunity to ask questions about my participation.

I understand that I am under no obligation to take part in the study.

I understand that I have the right to withdraw from this study at any stage for any reason, and that I will not be required to explain my reasons for withdrawing.

I understand that all the information I provide will be treated in strict confidence and will be kept anonymous and confidential to the researchers unless (under the statutory obligations of the agencies which the researchers are working with), it is judged that confidentiality will have to be breached for the safety of the participant or others.

I agree to participate in this study

Your name:

Your signature:

Signature of research:

Date:

Recruitment Email Sent to Coaches

Dear [name removed]

As part of a post graduate research project, I aim to study the experiences of academy basketball players during practice. There are many performance influences that occur in performance environments and I believe that an understanding of those emanating during practice will aid in developing overall team and individual player performance. In order to collect the appropriate data, I am looking to interview players who are in their third year of an AASE programme. The player's anonymity is assured in any published work and all interview data will be stored safely and confidentially. The interviews will take place in a secure and safe environment, and can be at a convenient location to the player.

Please could you ask players if any of your players wish to contribute their experiences of the practice environment by distributing this email to those who are keen to partake. If a player wishes to take part in this research study could you please send me their email address or telephone number, with their permission, and I will contact them.

Yours sincerely

Steve Smith

Post Graduate Research Student

University of Winchester

Interview Schedule

Begin with a pre-interview warm-up discussion with participant to build rapport

- How many years have you played at your college?
 - How is your season going?
 - How is it going personally? Are you happy with your game currently?
 - Are you happy with your development currently?
- How long have you been playing basketball in total?
 - Do you feel like you are developing at a good rate?
- What's your experience of elite practice environments such as your college academy (training above normal club level)?
 - Is college your first experience of this level of practice? If not where else?
 - (practicing everyday/almost every day to perform at a regional/national level)
- Are you aware that you practice better on some days than others?
 - Can you give any examples?
- How have you practiced this week?
 - Anything in particular you have been working on?
- Can you recall a time when you have practiced the best and how you felt?
 - (This season, over your whole career or recently)
 - What do you think the causes were to you practicing well?
 - What sort of positive emotions did you experience?
 - (Interested; excited; enthusiastic; proud; inspired; determined)
 - Can you control how you felt when practicing?
 - If so, how/what do you do?
- Can you recall a time when you have practiced badly and how you felt?

- (This season, over your whole career or recently)
- What do you think the causes were to you practicing badly?
- What sort of negative emotions did you experience?
 - (Distressed; upset; guilty; scared; hostile; irritated; nervous)
- Can you recall anything that has happened to you in AASE practice recently that made you feel positive/good?
 - (Recently refers to this week or as near to that as possible)
 - Can you give any examples?
 - Could be **social** (coaches, other players), **psychological** (goals, expectations), **physical** (energy or tiredness), **surroundings** (facility).
 - What do you think caused you feeling positive and good about yourself?
 - Do you think you can replicate it or is it out of your control?
 - Can you explain what influenced you to play well?
- Can you recall anything that has happened to you in AASE practice recently that made you feel negative/bad?
 - (Recently refers to this week or as near to that as possible)
 - Can you give any examples?
 - Could be **social** (coaches, other players), **psychological** (goals, expectations), **physical** (energy or tiredness), **surroundings** (facility).
 - What do you think caused you to feel negative and/or bad about yourself?
 - Do you think this is something you can stop from happening?
 - What do you think caused you to have a poor practice?
- What sort of influence do your teammates have on you?
- Does your training experience reflect how you play in matches?
 - If you train well/badly do you play well/badly?
 - Do you consider yourself a positive or negative person in general?
 - Are you different between normal life and when in basketball?

Study One Raw Data

Positive Performance Influences

Having a meaningful position within the team (role of responsibility in the team)

Having responsibility in the team

leadership responsibility gives energy

responsibility towards others

Meaningful responsibility

being a role model in team

responsibility takes mind off of own performance levels (think about match less)

Responsibility of being a leader

Leadership doesn't affect pressure of performance

responsibility given to player by coach

having responsibility (e.g. key player)

responsibility over whole team in some sense (having a focus other than themselves) (task focus)

having responsibility as player for self

being a role model

Negative Performance Influences

being held responsible for others actions (negative actions)

Guilt if others aren't doing well.

Can't lift team as well as self when feeling down (only focuses on self) - if its reciprocal then team uplift could help

Lack of response from teammates brings him down.

not feeling part of team (not having any responsibility, e.g. not being key player or important part of team)

Not feeling involved in the team

perception of your level within the group (seniors expect you to make mistakes)

Lost confidence if not playing

Not playing in the team

not knowing place in team

not getting any game time

having a responsibility of being an important player

responsibility given by coach

Feeling needed in team and therefore having responsibility as valued member

having responsibility

coach giving responsibility and feel freer

having a responsibility to gel the team together

feeling needed and appreciated

having responsibility

having responsibility of being independent and making own decisions/choices

Knowing you are part of the team increases confidence

need to be in team

confidence from being needed

Pride

Being involved in the team

faith shown in ability from other players

TMs needing you / feeling needed by TMs (responsibility)

coach having faith in player and communicating this to them

coach using me as an example (e.g. in a drill)

coach says player is important to team

coach makes player feel self-worth

if coach thinks they can achieve (faith in ability)

coach has confidence in player

playing with a handicap (known by all) will make you a better player in future

Having the same expectations regardless of physical/mental state (self and others)

trying to hit the same expectations when tired or recovering from injury

Goals/expectations need to be adjusted in sessions when fatigued

coaches not being aware of lower level (physical tiredness) or not showing understanding and awareness

1-10 scale on board which is added to by players when they walk in a start?

Anger produced by tiredness and injury recovery

Frustration from not being able to do what is expected. / Not reaching goals

Pressure of playing to best player expectations

same goals/expectations as better players: felt down as not at same level as others

Confidence lost when playing better players (or could this be a motivator???)

coaches who don't understand players (tell them) can't be 100% when tired

Pressure from being watched

expectations from others

Not adjusting expectations

afraid to make mistakes (from having high expectations)

pressure to improve quickly

not training to expectation levels

expect to have same impact every session even if fatigued (not hitting expectations)

not able to adapt to current levels (e.g. expectations always the same regardless of physical or mental state)

Trying to force/play at a level higher than expectation that session

doing too much

expectation to still perform at same level

being in poor physical condition (unfit) and trying to play at expected level

Teammates not playing and training to their expected level

Lack of goals given e.g. goals should be decreased if out of shape.

not reaching expected level of play regardless of situation

not reaching standard/acceptable level of play - shown ability; regardless of situation e.g. linked to tiredness and expected level stays the same

lack of effort due to prioritising (future planning) effort in sessions (e.g. saving self-causes negativity due to not hitting expectations)

prioritising effort in sessions because of high volume of training

Prioritising but still having same expectation levels in session (trying to hit others expectations as well?)

not performing to expected levels (mainly against others)

making errors

fear of mistakes

Making mistakes (current form), within expected skill set e.g. controllable.

not reaching expected level

not playing well

not hitting expectations

Not meeting the standards set by the coach

afraid to let down teammates and coaches

Philosophy towards team first and improvement

Players playing for themselves (selfish) and trying to prevent and not promote

Everyone being on the same page. A need to understand things/decisions

teammates who don't listen (no focus)

common team goal / philosophy

players not focusing on improving and working hard

players with team focus	Other players having different goals to the team
teammates want to learn and improve	players having individual rather than team goals (only working on themselves)
Players wanting to improve	not working towards team goals
focus on improvement and supporting TMs	TMs who focus on self over team
coach sets focus and goals/standards of behaviour	player goals and practice goals not matching
team first outlook	selfishness not good
team focus	not playing for the team
coach treats errors as one offs	player playing only for themselves
coach accepts errors will happen	Teammates not helping out others when others have a drop in form
Player mind-set/focus on improving	individuals playing their own way
focused on promotion	others being arrogant
coach asking you to try hard as sometimes things don't work out anyway	players behaving better than they are / not being able to back up with performance
Practice focused on improvement	Teammates with selfish/individual goals - not team goals
interest in sessions that work towards goals important to self & team	not being a team player
Mistakes are accepted (interpretation of mistake?)	Selfishness. TM decisions not for the team but for self.
self-improvement	Focus on prevention. Shouldn't focus on protecting self/status but try to improve
gaining skills	effort towards prevention

seeing learnt skills work in matches	Teammates focusing on themselves rather than the team (being individuals not team players)
seeing outcome improvements/achievements	coach and players having different goals (maybe unknown)
seeing improvements	no clear goals / lack of understanding
Focusing on now and future rather than errors in the past	Team performance is main goal (constant communication between teammates with this)
	trying to get one up on teammate just for sake of it - not team player
	teammates not working hard enough
	Player letting team down and causing whole team to be punished because of actions. (non-team player attitude?)
	Not understanding all players are part of cog in team
Safe environment	Unsafe environment
not scared to give opinion - safety	Teammates afraid / not comfortable to ask questions (goes here?)
feel safe in asking questions	scared to give opinion
Feeling physically fresh	Feeling physically tired and fatigued
Feel more positive when not tired	Physical tiredness effects development
able to help others more when fresh	When tired spend more time on self
Can tiredness be an effective distractor???	When tired feel more negative
rest enjoyable	fatigue makes training hard
Feeling physically fresh	negative when physically tired

Feeling physically good having had good sleep and eaten well.	Being fatigued (not 100%) or carrying injury
having enough sleep	Poor diet
better/refreshed after weekend break, even when had a game	More negative when tired (less cognitive resources???)
Feeling fresh after weekend or a break e.g. H/T	Tiredness (feeling tired) - lack of cognitive resources
Having energy when not tired.	high volume of training
having energy is positive	lack of sleep
feel better after rest	tiredness from too much training (lack of motivation)
getting enough sleep	tiredness
feeling physically rested	too much practical work
good night's sleep	poor planning with physical sessions - lack of adaptation if match then training early morning
having an effective wake up programme	tiredness drains motivation
	lack of quality sleep or enough sleep
	poor sleep
	aching muscles
	Not feeling physically good.
	not being able to do anything through injury
Coaches displaying positive emotions	Coaches displaying negative emotions
Energy in session	Coaches getting angry

energy in coaching staff	Coach in bad mood leads to players being down (more critical of errors even though effort may be high)
Coach in good mood leads to players being positive (coach mood dictates players mood and the overall session)	Coach in bad mood will punish player/teams more after errors
rather have good mood coach	Negative responses from coaches (body language as well as verbal)
Coaches help with motivation	always aware of coach mood when negative/bad
Coach has big impact on me	coaches getting angry
the coaches mood will dictate/shape the session	coach in bad mood
Small encouragement has big effect	coach in bad mood
loud coach	being punished because of coaches bad mood
coach having energy	coaches getting angry although players are working hard and putting in effort
coaches and players can affect mood / attitude	negative comments from coaches
coach being positive	
coach in good mood	
coach responding to players working hard (body language and communication) - reaction because of players	
Structure: Coach goal setting (motivational) and feedback (interpretation of session structure)	

coach feedback	positive comments (off the cuff e.g. good shot etc...) that are not linked to overall goal
reminding of goals helps increase positivity	Not having a focus on overall goal (long-term)
Feedback from coaches on what to do/work on	no feedback from coaches - just pointing finger
Having a focus to be working on	Unfair negative treatment from coaches without explanation
help from coaches if things going badly	Coach putting you down
feedback (purposeful) more important than positive comments which have no real reference to main goal	being singled out by coach in front of team
Feedback that is linked to main focus/goal	Coach giving team punishment because of tiredness rather than lack of effort
constructive ways to talk about mistakes/errors	coach punishing team for task failure (relatively uncontrollable) rather than controllable things like effort
Always having a focus/goal to be working towards	being told off by coach
constructive and clear feedback from coach (especially after errors / poor performances)	being put down by coach with unacceptable/unexpected reason (not understood)
being challenged by the coach (e.g. to find a solution)	unfair treatment by coach
Getting coach feedback for improvement	coaches singling out players
been given specific feedback with goal not just "that's wrong"	lack of explanation of a decision from the coach when unexpected things happen with players

targets that can be seen (set against TMs for example)	not understanding coach
constructive feedback	Flat sessions
coach giving praise and positive feedback	Not hitting or reaching goals (unrealistic goals? Set by individual rather than coach?)
coach praise	no support in goal setting
gaining constructive feedback that my current level is not good enough (threat to achievement)	lack of training goals
Coach reinforces what I need to do. Just need straight facts	not being driven enough in practice with important goals
coach feedback	lack of importance towards training - goals insufficient
constant referring to goals/targets	not having incentives, goals, rewards to train hard in practice
flexible coach	
Goal focus e.g. focus towards upcoming match	
Having a good warmup that focuses me	
High intensity training causes long-term positive attitude	
relaxed and fun in breaks during practice	
having humour and a release from focus all the time in practice	
Coaching showing faith in players ability	
coaches showing respect	lack of confidence shown from coach towards player

coach faith in player	not having recognition of ability (coach / public)
coach praises player / recognition of being a good player	
freedom from coach to play (not just going by the coaches plays all the time)	
coach running plays for me	
coach having faith/trust in me	
Player perception of coach (Faith)	No faith
coach is friendly (approachable) off court but professional level on court	no faith in coach
coach putting in time and effort for team	coaches not being held accountable, coaches always blaming others
coach working hard for players off court	unfair calls from the coach (e.g. practice matches)
Coach makes player feel relaxed, have fun. No pressure.	
respect and faith in coach	
not being too close to coach (friendship)	
Understanding from coach comes with experience within the environment (coach has experience)	
Coach makes player feel relaxed, have fun. No pressure.	
coach knowing players	
coach knowing what the team can do and what they need to do	

coach knowing what makes me respond e.g.
level of threat behaviour

coach knowing how to get the best out of
me

Coach held in high regard (impressing coach)
- motivation to play well?

coach respected e.g. x-player who has done
it all before (real-life tangible example)

having faith in coach to make a better player

coach holds respect of players

Players displaying positive emotions

others can bring me up (not down)

coaches and players can affect mood /
attitude

players who want to get better and aren't
lazy

positive comments will uplift

players in a good mood

Players who want to compete and work hard

confidence

extravert - being loud

Extraversion from feeling confident

contagious motivation

Players displaying negative emotions

others can have effect on whole team

others not wanting to learn and aren't
enjoying themselves

players giving no effort

introverted players (displaying negative
emotions)

Negative comments from teammates,
especially higher status ones

negative comments from anyone

negative comments towards ability -
doubting ability

Lack of commitment from players

Low confidence then quiet and more
introverted.

get depressed not angry

players putting in maximum effort	lack of effort
players up for it and have energy	Lack of effort from players
players working hard and playing well	TMs showing negativity after consecutive errors (skill deficiency rather than luck)
players focused during practice	following consecutive errors the situation is not managed by COACHES OR OTHER PLAYERS
commitment from players; a want to be there	negative comments from TMs
trying hard and putting in effort regardless of opposition	TM having a go at them / get on back
Others doing well increases positivity	Negative TM comment increases pressure (not understanding cog principle?)
peer support after error	negative and aggressive comments
positive TM comments	TM negativity after decision
TM support after error	lack of faith from teammates
understanding in communication: no arguments	criticising teammates
players supporting each other	the way people communicate
helping teammates to work hard	negative communication
respect from teammates	other players being annoying
positive encouragement from teammates after an error (TM reassurance)	Remorse (negative emotion) after treating TM badly (no understanding of cog!)
when feeling good can lift team	getting angry at TMs doesn't help self
Feeling of being carefree produces best performance	
Having belief in own ability	

positive communication (verbal and non-verbal)

constant communication (positive)

positive communication

no negative emotions on show from teammates

mimics others positive emotions/moods (in and out of court)

feeds off of others & the situation

others play well I will play well

TMs playing well

players not being frustrated

best when calm and relaxed

Having a belief in the team

mimics others negative emotions/moods (in and out of court)

feeds off of others and situation

other play badly I'll play badly

Lack of control over emotions (and performance)

feeling out of control

Not having control of being able to improve practice performance

Lack of control

not knowing what causes bad training days

Can't control being positive

If in a bad mood before the session then this will continue into the session

things get worse if bad already

not feeling like having control

Feeling in control

	lack of control over practice performance
	Players blaming others.
	people not taking responsibility and blaming others
	blaming others for your mistake
	Players blaming others
Teammate understanding (group cohesion)	No teammate understanding (group cohesion)
good team bond	teammates not close (no understanding)
team cohesion and understanding	no team cohesion
know how TMs play	No teamwork or cohesion
good chemistry / cohesion in team	no team bond (early)
Understanding of communication between players/coaches etc...	lack of team cohesion (start of season)
	team not having understanding (not having focus/team goal that everyone understands and works towards)
Communication understanding between players (banter etc...)	lack of communication during practice
understanding of player feedback	lack of understanding around social dynamic of group
understanding of what's expected (by all)	having bad/negative start to session
powerful actions (body language / leading from the front)	
Socialising / friendships off court	
friends off court but compete (when necessary) on court to push each other	TMs not socialising is negative
socialising outside training but talking about BB with teammates	players not getting on

being liked socially	players not liking each other (mainly off court)
getting on well with everyone	off court bond with players
being liked on/off court	Immature behaviour (not in line with group standards?)
	players being offensive towards members of group
	poor off court behaviour of players
	players not respecting others views
Having active role models & leaders in the team	
Having role models for advice	too many leaders
having role models to set standards and targets	
more time off court with role models	
following role models	
confidence from role models / leaders	
senior members in the team lead and motivate	
Positive feedback from role models / senior players	
having right amount of leaders	
having role models and senior players	
Working in practice with respected players	Training with inferior players (teammates mistakes & not hitting expected level)
working with similar level (respected) players	working in practice with inferior (perceived as) teammates

ok to lose in practice to respected (better) player as long effort put in	beating lesser players as a target: winning/beating them should not be goal; give other goal
succeeding against / beating teammates in training	players in senior positions who aren't respected or seen by players are respected (put there by friends or coach)
respecting teammates	training with lesser players (doesn't help improve self)
Respect for other players	having to adapt to weaker players
Training with better players	
respected by teammates and listened to	
has respect from team players	
Teammates with good ability who competes well	
players who can lift performance for game or have the ability to (has shown their high ability before)	
Intra-team competition / Social status & goal setting	
Within team competition with players targeting (goal setting against) other players and players trying to stay ahead of others	losing to others in practice
Motivating to see real life target (player) rather than something written down.	losing to inferior teammates
Using other players for goal setting and bench marks of performance	having to play well to maintain status (favourite)
Progress tracking against others	fear of not performing / losing status / an others opinion

Positive emotions when beating teammates
in practice (high group status)

A want to compete. Motivated to compete
using other players for goal setting and
targets

peer target setting (physically
seeing/comparing (visualising) may be
stronger goal)

peer to peer challenges and goals

intra-team competition

goals that can be physically seen e.g.
another player

increased focus for competitive activities
competition in training (social evaluation)

players competing against each other

understanding held across team about
benefits of competing against each

competitive environment / intra-
competition

having goals set against opinion / social
status e.g. they don't think I can do that
(personal threat)

challenge against another player (realistic)

play better when people are watching
(people of significance)

plays better with people watching - social
position clearly effective motivator

proving people wrong - influence from others opinions

motivated to beat people you don't like

having nothing to lose e.g. being the underdog

Pressure created from competitive matches (Outcome focus)

train better when no match coming up (off season)

Pressure felt when match coming up

thinking about game can affect mental state if negative (pressure to perform)

worry of taking bad practice form into game

Losing matches will affect practice mood - too much focus on outcome?

Presence of head coach

Presence of head coach or significant coach (coach that matters?) increases effort

people in power position being present

Factors outside of basketball

good mood from outside

bad mood from outside

general good mood from outside BB

general bad mood from outside BB

Off court support helps and aids progression

outside BB negative mood will transfer across

off court problems e.g. family problems

outside BB things affect mood

	things going badly in home life can affect me
	poor weather
	Teammates making errors (technical and decisions)
Teammates accepting they are making errors and bring in others for support	failure to meet task requirements (linked to expectations)
	Teammates repeatedly making errors / poor decision making (repeatedly)
	teammates making mistakes
	Teammates poor decision making more frustrating than lack of ability
	Teammates not playing to their ability - or the ability of how you see it to be
	Team mates making mistakes (not achieving expected levels of performance)
	TMs not playing well
	TMs making consecutive errors e.g. poor judgement or decisions which continually lead to mistake
	annoyed at TMs who don't train at expected levels
	being let down by teammates
Good current form	Poor current form
Previous (recognised) success. Performance or goal reached?	poor form (not playing well)
playing/training well	Angry when not going your way

meeting goals / expectations	Likely to give up responsibility to others if feeling negative!
playing well in priority (goal aligned) session	
Recent success in practice - e.g. playing/performing well	
Current form	
	Sub-standard court
playing on good court (e.g. not slippery surface)	slippery floor
	annoyed at sub-standard facility
	Very poor playing conditions (e.g. lights out)
	cold sports hall
Having an intervention after negative situation / coping strategies	Not having an intervention after negative situation e.g. negative increases negative. Lack of coping resources/strategies
when negatives are turned into positives (e.g. using good intervention)	not adjusting after errors causes negative
adjusting after mistakes stops negative	not having intervention will increase negative
having coping strategies	Making consecutive errors (no intervention being used!)
having situations that make you adapt to cope	not having support system in place when things start to go bad
being able to accept certain things upset you and then dealing with them	lack of coping strategies - being able to deal with decline/spiral of negatives

having ability to raise self for match,
therefore not dependent on practice form so
does has resources

lack of reflection upon negative causes

lack of control over emotions - lack of
coping strategies

lack of coping resources

unable to control negative feelings and
things getting worse

Motivating (negative) comments- Mild
threat with ability to cope

Motivated by negative comments (e.g. mild
threat to self). - see above note

motivation from social pressure / threat

motivated to prove people wrong

having a threat to self

social pressures can cause adaptations

people puts you down and it motivates
(social)

Music

Listening to music makes me more positive
(is this a distractor?)

Music is good - (distractor???)

listening to good music

Music (distractor?)

New and exciting events

Excitement of new season

Interview with Participant 'George'

Age: 19 years old

Interview date: 16/11/2017

Duration: 69 minutes (excluding warm-up discussion)

Researcher – How is your season going?

Participant – At the moment the way we are playing right now I think that we should finish second behind [team name removed]. We shouldn't lose a game until the end of the season. We have a good run of form at the moment. Everyone is excited and playing well together, bonding as a team. So going better now. At the start of the season everyone disliked each other. Now it's a little bit better.

Researcher – Why was that?

Participant – Lots of different reasons. The way people behaved off the court and that transcended to how we played on the court. So if you didn't like someone off the court you wouldn't pass to them, or block them off, and we would get annoyed with each other and bicker between each other.

Researcher – Was there someone you didn't like at the start?

Participant – Yes, [player name removed]. He just really irritated me, everything about him. On the court or off the court it didn't really matter he just annoyed me. He was childish off the court and on the court he thought he was god's gift to basketball, he thought he was better than everyone else and he wasn't.

Researcher – What things did he do in particular?

Participant – He would always talk to everyone as if he knew best and he doesn't. 90% of the time he averages five or six turnovers a game and he's a point guard and you're only meant to average one or two a game if you're a guard and he still carried on and tries to put the blame on other people when it was his own problem and his own fault that he messed up. He would try and pin it on someone else.

Researcher – If he was a recognised high level player and acted like he was, would that be any different?

Participant – No. It doesn't make a difference who you are as a player. As a guard especially you should try and bring your team together rather than try and point the blame, have a word rather than pointing fingers.

Researcher – What about off court?

Participant – He was very childish. His comments on and off the court, off the court especially. He made a comment about the girls basketball team, he took a picture of them and put on snap chat and put "I didn't know [name removed] basketball had Paralympian's" as a joke but it was really childish. It was things like that that sort of annoyed everyone.

Researcher – With your season and your development, how do you see that going at the moment?

Participant – My touch around the rim is getting better, my timing for blocking shots is much better and I've sort of developed my shooting and I can actually shoot now so that's alright. Lately I can actually shoot threes and at the start of the season I couldn't make a single one. Now, in the last game I was six from eight.

Researcher – On a scale of 1-10 where would you say your confidence is?

Participant – Seven to eight I'd say.

Researcher – Where is it usually?

Participant – Roughly the same to be honest. There was a period at the start of the season where I was down and I wasn't playing very well. I had the summer off and the coach wasn't giving me many minutes because I was out of shape until about end of October. I was really down and not confident at all with anything I was doing but at November/December time it started picking up again. I had a 17 point game, a 20 point game, my numbers kept going up and up and I started getting more minutes.

Researcher – So what was the reason for that bad start to the season?

Participant – It was probably that I was out of shape because I had the entire summer off but also because the team wasn't gelling very well and it was a bit difficult knowing your stand in the team. A lot of the time the guards will just try and do what they want to do.

For example, I might be at the post and they will send me off to set a screen for them so they can do their things instead of trying to feed me the ball and get my confidence back up.

Researcher – How long have you been playing basketball for?

Participant – Since I was 13, six years now. I only joined the [academy team name removed] programme at under-15.

Researcher – Has your progression been steadily improving?

Participant – My development was really quick. I was bad at under 15 season but coming into under 16 season, at under 15 I'd get a few minutes a game but under 16s I'd play 38, 39, 40 minutes a game and I'd be putting up like 20 (points) and 8 blocks. My development kept on going up and up and up. Then it sort of, come first season of under 18s, it's sort of plateaued because I was basically injured for the whole season. I dislodged my pelvis three times and shattered my finger and I was out for three months. I found it really difficult because I couldn't run, I couldn't do anything. I was just sitting on the side line for like six months. Then second year of under 18s it exploded again and I started developing more and more.

Researcher – More so since you have been here?

Participant – I haven't really developed that much here. I've sort of refined my game and polishing off the rough edges so my finishing around the rim has gotten better, my moves are quicker, my footwork's better. It more the technical side rather than the basketball. It's like my footwork has developed and things like that, the actually moves haven't really changed. The little bits make a huge difference.

Researcher – How often do you practice?

Participant – Practice two days, matches two days and three strength and conditioning. It's sometimes too much. Especially as some weeks we have two games like back to back, like Wednesday and Thursday. Especially Thursday mornings getting up at 6.30am after a difficult game on the Wednesday to go to strength and conditioning for 7am is really difficult. I think everyone struggles with that. And we then have a game on Thursday and everyone is dying.

Researcher – So when you are physically low what happens to you mentally?

Participant – I just want to go to sleep, I don't want to be there and my motivation starts to drop.

Researcher – Do you get enough sleep?

Participant – No. I struggle sleeping, I've always struggled. I get about four to five hours a night, my body clock is all over the place.

Researcher – Are you aware you practice on some days better than others?

Participant – Yes. So, Monday I was really motivated. I was running the floor and everything I was doing was really good. Everything was sharp and precise and I made sure everything was going in. Come Tuesday I didn't really have much motivation, I was tired and groggy and the weather wasn't nice and I was struggling on a whole. I couldn't put the ball in, I couldn't really do anything. I don't know why I just woke up feeling groggy, not feeling good and my muscles were aching and then it came to training and nothing was going in and I was getting really frustrated with myself.

Researcher – So you came to the session not feeling great and then things don't go well, then what happens to you?

Participant – I try to sort myself out because I don't play well when I'm frustrated or angry. Some players do but I play best when I'm just calm and relaxed and I'm level headed. I'm not up and I'm not down I'm just at a nice level to concentrate but once I get frustrated with myself, I know there's a downward spiral if I get more and more angry, but I struggle to lift myself above that sometimes and I was trying but I just couldn't, I just really didn't want to be there, I was just getting frustrated with myself and my teammates.

Researcher – Was that an early morning practice on Tuesday?

Participant – No, it was evening 6-8pm one.

Researcher – Anything happen in the day?

Participant – No not really, the whole day was just awful for me to be honest I just felt groggy. I couldn't do anything on the court, like nothing went in.

Researcher – Was it what you did on Monday or was it just a random day?

Participant – I think it was just a random day. I was fine and then I just wasn't and I just woke up in the morning feeling awful. No idea why, it just happens.

Researcher – Did you expect to play less than 100%?

Participant – I always try to play at my best. That's why I'm there so any session should be the same. I want to try my best all the time.

Researcher – What about a good time when you practiced?

Participant – A few weeks back I had a sick practice where everything I was taking was going in. All of my footwork was perfect and precise and I was running the floor, catching the ball. I had woken up and felt refreshed. I had a good night's sleep, I didn't have a long nights sleep but I work up still feeling refreshed for some reason. I woke up and had my breakfast, took my vitamins, just felt really good about the day and I came in to practice feeling good and happy. Everyone as a team was playing well, feeding the ball, turning the ball over very little so everything was just clicking.

Researcher – So was it a good feeling when you got there? What was happening etc...?

Participant – We just sort of bonded as a team, no one was shouting at each other, no one would get frustrated, someone would make a mistake and everyone was like that's fine just get back lets win this game. We bonded more as a team and especially when we were split into two teams we wanted to beat the other team and everyone was pushing it and pushing one another and when we had breaks everyone would still laugh and joke with each other and it was just a good environment to be in.

Researcher – So there's humour?

Participant – In a way. I can't be really serious all the time, even though in games I'll want to win and I'll be focused on winning I can't just focus on that. I have to enjoy it as well. I'm not saying everyone has to laugh and joke but if everyone wants to be there and isn't frustrated with one another it sets a better environment and its better for playing.

Researcher – Would you say you feed off of other people?

Participant – I'm quite solid in the way I am. If everyone's down I can still be there trying to lift people up or if everyone is down and I come in and I'm down there's nothing really that changes. I done get more down and if I come in happy I don't get down I sort of stay.

Researcher – Are you a follower? A leader? Feel like you have responsibility?

Participant – I wouldn't say I'm the leader of the team but I think I gel everyone together. I am one of the few people that everyone listens to. Because with like the guards, [player

name removed] and [player name removed], if they start having a shouting match they won't listen to what the other person is saying and when people argue, I'm the only person on the team that will step in and say shut and play and people will listen to me. Whilst if [player name removed] and [player name removed] are arguing and then [player name removed] came in and said be quiet and just concentrate on playing they would turn around and have a go at [player name removed] but with me they will look at me and then say that I'm probably right and just leave it.

Researcher – Why do you think you have that respect from those players?

Participant – I feel that I'm one of the few players off the court as well as on the court that everyone likes. So no one really has a problem with me and I get on really well with everyone and I feel that everyone on the team sort of respects me in a way. I've never really taken basketball that seriously but at the same time I'm still a really good player and I'll turn up and everyone knows come a big game that I won't shy away. Come a big game I'll lift my performance up to try and win. I feel everyone has a level of respect because they like me and they like me off the court as well as on and everyone enjoys playing with me. I'm liked by the guards, I'm a big that can catch and I'll rebound for them and I'll do the stuff a lot of players won't.

Researcher – Do you like having responsibility?

Participant – I don't mind having responsibility. I don't think I'll ever be a captain on a team, I'm awful in the way I talk to people. If someone repeatedly makes the same mistake over and over I'll keep my mouth shut the first time, say something the second time and the third time I'll just flip and I'll start shouting at them and I know as a leader you shouldn't be like that and I'd be the worst captain known to man.

Researcher – When coach or players talk to you, what are the positive things people say to you?

Participant – Not really no, I find that if I'm playing badly or not playing so well, negative reinforcement is better for me as a person. Like, our assistant coach, he knows me, he will just start shouting and listing all the things I've done wrong at me and that sort of fires me up. I'll get on the court and I'll know not to make those mistakes again. I react better, like, so, some games I can come in feeling, not timid, but do I really want to be here? And then within a minute I'll make a few mistakes and get taken off and the assistant coach will start shouting and having a go at me and after that moment I'll play like I normally do again.

Researcher – Would you say he’s having a go at you or reinforcing the things you need to remember?

Participant – I’d say he is reinforcing the things I need to do but just making sure it comes across to me, because with me if you say it nicely I’ll switch off, that’s the way I switch on better.

Researcher – But if a coach was saying your rubbish, what’s wrong with you etc... that’s obviously different from gaining instructional feedback?

Participant – I would probably lift my game up and prove them wrong, I know some people will like close down and become negative thoughts and have a negative spiral but with me I’m not rubbish so if someone tells me I’m rubbish, I mean I might be playing badly, but if someone came up to me and said you’re playing crap I would go out to prove them wrong.

Researcher – In training, if you are playing badly, it’s difficult to pick yourself up but will those comments make things worse?

Participant – In training, I personally struggle to lift myself up but if at training I repeatedly make the same mistakes the coach will say what you doing, switch on and will have a go at me I will snap back to it. Whilst quite a lot of the time in training, even if we are playing badly we might let it slide because it’s only training.

Researcher – When you are playing well in training what positive emotions might you feel?

Participant – I don’t really know how to describe it. I’ve always been brushed to the side in basketball and not been given the recognition I probably should have had in England squads especially. I’m motivated in a way to prove them wrong by outing up big numbers and train harder to sort of prove everyone wrong that they overlooked me that they are not in the right for doing that.

Researcher – So how do you cope with that?

Participant – To be honest I’ve always been a relaxed guy and there’s very few things that bother me, it might annoy me that I’m getting over looked but it doesn’t come into my head that often. It’s a motivating factor, its subconscious, I don’t really think about it but I know that’s what makes me want to play better and better. I don’t know why that is, I’ve always had it. Especially when I was younger even with my mum when she said not to do something I’d be like why can’t I do that and then I’ll go and do it and get told off.

Researcher – It seems that negative aspects play a key role in your development?

Participant – When I was 13/14 I didn't have many friends but now I'm more popular and people like me but before people never used to like me. I didn't get bullied but I didn't really have any friends and people to hang out with and I got to learn how to ignore negative comments towards me. Like at school people would say your stupid and id prove them wrong but getting top marks and then that's developed, I'd try and prove everyone wrong.

Researcher – Any bad sessions that stand out?

Participant – Again it was last Tuesday. I thought I was going to hit someone. I was flipping so bad, everyone was annoying me, at one point we were doing three on threes and [player name removed] came in and pushed me in the back when I was going for a rebound and I turned around and said I dare you do that one more time and [player name removed] just turned around and walked off. I was getting angry at everyone, I was getting angry at the coach because he was giving other people calls for fouls then I would get fouled badly and wouldn't give me the call and I was getting frustrated and I was playing awful. I couldn't even put the ball in the ring, whatever I was trying just wasn't happening.

Researcher – When you get like that is there no way out?

Participant – Yes, when I get like that its difficult.

Researcher – What sort of negatives emotions do you feel?

Participant – Irritated. I get irritated because I can't put the ball in, I can't score, I'll get irritated because everyone is messing up and I'll think what's the point, especially when the guards keep turning the ball over loads and loads. I know that I and [player name removed] will be running up and down the court but the guards will just be turning the ball over. It will be like why are we doing this we might as well be sat on the side lines and let the guards play because aren't even touching the ball. When it gets to that stage I get really irritated with anything. I'll shout at guards, say what's the point in me running, I'll stop sprinting up and down the floor. It's because they keep making mistakes. It's the decision making, it's not their ability, just their decision making. Rather than trying to keep things simple they will try and be fancy or try and do too much when you should just swing the ball, or hold onto the ball for too long and stagnate the defence. They are playing for themselves rather than the team. It's just what they want to do.

Researcher – Looking at positives, anything that anyone says has made you feel good?

Participant – We had a game against [team name removed] in November and the entire game I was against another seven footer and I hate him, just because he has always been awful, he can hardly catch the ball but he was in the England squad and it's like why is he in there when he can hardly catch the ball and I came in and I wanted to play him one on one and [coach name removed] played a specific play where I could catch the ball and go one on one against him and I scored after that and [coach name removed] just said you got this. It's not a lot it's the fact that he ran the play for me and he trusted me enough to put me in that situation. When I scored it was just like I expected that and it made me feel better.

Researcher – Any times where he has trusted you and it hasn't come off?

Participant – The fact that he trusts me when I get the ball to, almost that I make the right decision most of the time, the few times I make the wrong decision the coach sort of says oh it's just a one off like it rarely happens so he doesn't get that angry at me or say anything.

Researcher – What about your goals and expectations of yourself?

Participant – If I'm playing better than I expected to, so sometimes I will come in to training feeling like why am I here, I don't really want to be here and then for some reason I'll come out and be making every single shot in training and all the moves are going fine even though I might mentally feel I'm not really there and that would sort of mentally lift me up afterwards after a set number of times. It's just like I don't understand it, I don't lift myself up, I don't get myself out of it, it's just for some reason everything is going well. I would say I'm heavily influenced by my ability that day.

Researcher – What about how you physically feel?

Participant – It does affect me. If I'm tired or I'm aching or haven't had a great sleep then I'm really agitated and irritated the whole day on and off the court.

Researcher – Do surroundings make a difference?

Participant – When I'm training no. To me it makes no difference. When it comes to game time I love playing away from home with a big crowd. So if we play [team name removed] or [team name removed] and like everyone on the side line is shouting and screaming and trying to take the mickey out of you. Like your shows, like trying to catch you out and I play really well and play my best.

Researcher – Does that take you back into defensive mode?

Participant – It's like I just want to shut the crowd up and I don't want them to speak anymore. I remember one time when we went to [team name removed] and I was wearing my classic boots and everyone was taking the piss out of me really bad from the side of the court. Then I came out onto the court in the game and everyone kept on roasting me and five minutes in I thought I've had enough of this and dunked back to back possessions over their players and just stared at the crowd and after that they didn't say a single word to me. They were like yeah it's not worth it.

Researcher – So if you had a crowd cheering you on, you'd rather have one that was giving you stick?

Participant – Yeah, I've had games where the crowd have cheered me on and said well-done but I find it more difficult then because I'm doing well and in my head I'm like I better not screw up now whereas if there's a negative crowd I'll pick what I want to do and try and prove them wrong.

Researcher – Is feeling good is training in your control?

Participant – I personally feel I have no control over it. Its either going to be good or bad. Like, I have zero say in the matter and I've always felt like that. I find with training it's like that but in a game I feel like no matter what it is I will always turn up to a game, no matter how I feel during the day, whether I've tripped up and I'm annoyed, I can be annoyed the whole day, but when the game comes around it focuses me. But I find training, no matter what, I can't do anything about it.

Researcher – So you almost need a focus/goal to aim at?

Participant – Yes.

Researcher – Important for you or team?

Participant – Important as a team. For example, the big games when we need to win I love playing those games. It's more of the team rather than me. Like, when we played [team name removed], although it is an important game for the team I find it, I hate playing against them, I hate playing against their team. So every single time I set out with like a vendetta against them so I have to try and beat them by as much as possible so I have to have the best game against them.

Researcher – Do players coaches have an impact on you to make you feel negative?

Participant – Nothing. Nothing people will say really. It motivates me if anything.

Researcher – What about if you aren't hitting your expected level?

Participant – That annoys me so much. I feel like I keep myself to the same standards whenever but if I have a session where I don't make anything and I'm getting frustrated with myself I will look, instead of trying to shoot my way out of a bad slump I would try and bring my teammates into it more because I know I'm struggling, so why should me missing all the time have to affect them so I will give them the ball more and try and set them up more.

Researcher – Is it a lack of confidence on your behave or you thinking about the team?

Participant – It's more that it's bad for the team.

Researcher – Does not hitting your level affect you?

Participant – I always have the same level. If I don't hit it I get really annoyed. I've had times like that after training I'll go home and not speak to anyone, just go home make some food and lay in my bed and watch TV, I don't want to talk to anyone.

Researcher – If you train bad do you play bad?

Participant – No. I might wake up the next day and feel terrible but I'll have to turn up because the team needs me.

Researcher – Are you a positive or negative person in general?

Participant – I'd like to think I'm quite positive. I reckon I'm about 6 or 7 out of 10 usually. Around other people I don't fluctuate, I try and stay happy as I feel my negativity shouldn't bring other people down. If I'm feeling annoyed or frustrated or something I shouldn't take it out on them as it's not their fault. I fluctuate just in general with everything going on. If something's going on outside of basketball it will affect my mood. Like when my grandma got ill I felt really bad because I hadn't seen her in five years now because she lives in [country name removed] and I haven't been able to go visit her and I really want to see her and I was down for a couple of weeks. That affected me. I'm pretty much the same person inside and outside of basketball.

Researcher – Perfect training environment?

Participant – It would have a crowd that's sort of negative. In training, heating. I hate the [academy name removed] gym because there is no heating in the winter and you are

always cold. I've got really bad circulation to my hands and I struggle to catch the ball.
Nothing mentally.

Researcher – Negative training environment?

Participant – Teammates not trying to get the team better because the end goal is the team to improve and might be that you end up improving along the way but as a team it needs to improve because it's a team sport and you can't win on your own. People shouting at one another being negative. I don't like people having arguments, if you are going to say it just say it and there's no need for someone else to back chat just say ok and carry on.

Interview with participant 'John'

Age: 17 years old

Interview date: 10/11/2016

Duration: 73 minutes (excluding warm-up discussion)

Researcher – How is your current development going?

Participant – In the last year I have developed as a player, becoming more physical in the AASE programme. I'm playing with higher levels of players and helps me develop and get more tough.

Researcher – Do you feel like you are constantly developing?

Participant – Not constantly, sometimes sessions are flat at the moment and everyone isn't putting in 100% because we have men's training as well as everyone is tired from that but some sessions people are quite up for it and everyone's energetic and pushes to their full ability and perform quite well to get better.

Researcher – Why are things flat?

Participant – I think the amount of training we do because everyone's tired and it's tough to get through everything, the amount of sleep we get as well. I travel into college and therefore have less sleep and we come in quite tired and not ready for training and they think they can take it easy for training but it's not the way it goes and we end up getting punished for it. We get suicides [as punishment] constantly until everyone gets energetic and ready to train properly.

Researcher – You said sometimes people do feel energetic?

Participant – The times we do feel energetic is when we haven't had a game at the weekend or we come back from half-term and we are fresh and haven't played for a while then everyone is ready to go at each other.

Researcher – So you feel people compete harder?

Participant – Yes, on a Monday and Tuesday we have EABL sessions before training in the evening so everyone tries to save themselves for training in the evening rather than going at it in the EABL sessions.

Researcher – Do you find your training sessions get adapted because of this?

Participant – No I think we just stick to our plan and are forced to work hard as the coach knows we have the ability to work hard and we should be working hard and knows how much training we can do. We just need to trust him and work as hard as we can.

Researcher – When you are tired do you feel more positive or negative?

Participant – I feel quite negative. I don't know if that's just the amount of training we do or I can't be bothered but I think it's more the training. I always want to play basketball but sometimes I want to get out of there quite quick when things aren't going well!

Researcher – What's your experience of elite training environments?

Participant – I only started basketball about five years ago, I was playing football before that. I started off at [name of club removed], but I started off at school basketball and my coach told me to go to the club, played national league for a year and then got my first England call up so it's been quite high intensity training for a long time, which is why I have developed so much in the last few years.

Researcher – Are you aware you practice better on some days than other days?

Participant – Yes. I think we train better on a Tuesday because we have a game the next day and we are preparing for it so everyone's taking it more seriously and everyone's more locked in than they are on a Monday. We are still locked in at some points on a Monday but it's not as strict as a Tuesday really.

Researcher – Anything else that might make you play better?

Participant – Not really. To be honest I haven't put that much thought into it, so I don't know really. Not anything I can think of now.

Researcher – How have you practiced this week?

Participant – I think I played well. I brought energy to the session. The coach wasn't happy with both sessions this week. Monday was really flat and on Tuesday, because coach wasn't there, we thought it was a time to relax a bit because we only had the assistant coach and then the head coach came in and we picked up the energy again because he's the head coach but he still wasn't happy with it because we should be treating every training session as if it was our last. The trouble with me is that when everyone around me is relaxed, I sort of relax a little bit as well and I don't think I performed to my full ability. I think I could have given more to the session.

Researcher – So you feed off of other people?

Participant – Yes, I'd say so.

Researcher – Would you call yourself a senior leader on the team?

Participant – I see myself as a leader. Me and [player name removed] have played at the international level as well so I think I have something to give, even to the third years that they haven't experienced yet so I try to teach them a little something as well. I'm not big headed in training, like I'm top dog, but I contribute when I can and I'm not scared to contribute either.

Researcher – What do you think the team ethos and focus or goal is?

Participant – At the start of the season we had a meeting and our goal was to win everything, the league, the cup. But at the moment I think everyone is focused on getting to America, personal goals are up there for me right now. I don't think we are currently trying to get those goals and everyone is trying to do too much in games and worry about their own stats instead of playing as a team. Last year we played as a team and won the cup.

Researcher – Are you mainly working towards team goals or your own goals?

Participant – In games it's more team goals as I want to win and I know you have to work together to win matches but in training I'm not focused on others. Like I said, when people relax I relax a little bit more but I still want to improve my abilities.

Researcher – Can you recall anytime when you practiced really well?

Participant – My best session has been the week just after half-term just gone. Before half-term I had a meeting with the coach and he said I have a lot of potential and at the moment I'm not using it to my full ability so it was a kick up the arse. I came back to training, after doing a lot of fitness work over half-term, then I was just killing it in training really. Just trying to prove to coach I am still interested in basketball and still want to pursue it, since then I've been training really well. The coach definitely helped with this.

Researcher – What sort of emotions might you feel when playing well?

Participant – I'm interested. Also, I know the coach has been to America so I'm interested to learn how to get better and he knows how to do that. Determined as well because I want to get better. During a good training session, I feel quite powerful and strong, like no one is going to stop me. That motivation came from the coach having a chat with me and saying I'm a senior player on the team so I got to step up.

Researcher – Do you have any positive experiences from other players?

Participant – Little things in training sessions, like if I miss a shot that should have gone in then they will come up to me and say keep shooting that shot, that's your shot and that gives me a bit more encouragement to keep shooting and keep doing what I do best instead of passing the ball off and giving it to someone else.

Researcher – What don't you want to hear from teammates?

Participant – Other players, if you miss and consecutively do things wrong, then they are always on your back like swearing and moaning and it just makes you feel like you want to punch them. It's like shut up, we are trying to get better as a team and you're on my back all the time. You are not going to help me improve. Obviously if I was being a bit of an arse hole then I would understand but I'm just training so don't come at me if I'm just trying to get better. It's like if I didn't catch the ball then someone would take out their mouth guard and strop, it's not like I purposely didn't catch the ball. It annoys me.

Researcher – Do you feel there's not an understanding between the players?

Participant – I don't think there is a full understanding. The coach always says that we are a team and we are trying to get better and we have to be positive and speak to each other as you want to be treated. But I think they do it to a certain extent but if you muck up a couple of times they start to get really annoyed. For example, a teammate messed up a week ago, took out his mouth guard and launched it at the wall and because of that we all ran suicides. That proper annoyed me and actually everyone else as well.

Researcher – How did everyone react after that?

Participant – Really annoyed. Some of the reaction was towards him but players around him weren't helping by getting on his back by saying do this do that and then he just exploded and lost control after that.

Researcher – Did you feel afterwards that it was all down to him or did others take some responsibility?

Participant – We just got on with the session after that and [player named removed] locked in a bit more and we didn't muck up again. No body held it against him after the running, we just went up to him and high fived him saying come on you know you are better than that and then he stepped it up.

Researcher – Can you control how you feel when you practice?

Participant – I explode quite quickly. I think if I'm having a good session I'm fine but if I start to miss a few shots or I don't play well and turn the ball over quite a lot, I get annoyed with myself and then I strop quite bad. It's something I need to work on. I've got better over the years but I lose control, I don't try anymore, it just gets in my head too much. Listening to music before the session helps me prepare well as it relaxes me and I don't think about training too much. Then I just see what happens on the court but when I'm on the court and I mess up and people come at me and start having a go then I just lose it. Moods will carry on into training, like a bad mood outside will turn into bad mood in training.

Researcher – That's anything that can put you in a bad mood?

Participant – Yes, just waking up in a bad mood, like waking up too early and being tired. I have had training already today and feel tired.

Researcher – So how often are you in a good or bad mood?

Participant – I'd say seven out of ten. I'm not in a bad mood all the time, it's every now and then. Most of the time I'm in a good mood for sessions because I enjoy basketball. But every now and then something annoys me in the day or I wake up in a bad mood.

Researcher – So what are the triggers to put you in a bad mood?

Participant – Tiredness can put me in a bad mood, on a Monday I have training in the day and the evening and go to bed at midnight and I'm up at 6am so that's six hours sleep and I need my eight hours or I'm not in a good mood. That just brings it into college all day and into lessons and I'm not really motivated to do work. If teammates, when socialising in college but not in practice, are in a bad mood then I feed off of other people to I'll be in a bad mood, and if they are not being sociable then that annoys me or they think about themselves too much instead of the team.

Researcher – How have you felt when practicing badly? And what do you think the cause was?

Participant – I've had a lot of bad practices but I don't know what causes them. When I train badly I stop and try to do too much and get worse again. Some of the causes are when players get on my back but other reasons I don't know why I'm in a bad mood.

Researcher – What type of emotions might you feel when you train badly?

Participant – Irritated at myself and teammates. I get irritated if I'm not playing well or just sometimes I treat my teammates quite badly if they muck up. If someone mucks up consecutively then I get annoyed at them and then after I realise I shouldn't have done that and get annoyed with myself and then it makes the sessions bad and I'm in a bad mood and not training very well.

Researcher – Do you need to hit your expectations every session?

Participant – I try to hit my expectations because that's what I know I can do in training sessions but if I don't hit it I get annoyed, but as the day goes on I get over it and think towards doing better in the next session. My training moods don't last all day, it's probably like an hour and then I think that the session is done with now and I can't do anything about it so I'll prove myself in the next session.

Researcher – What if things are going badly at start?

Participant – I get irritated in myself and then, last year, I had to have five minutes off from the session and get some fresh air because I would get angry at teammates and I know if I

keep getting angry at teammates it would be bad so I'd just say to the coach can I just have five minutes to say splash my face with water and I'm normally alright. But if I don't do that then things will get worse. It's even worse if I'm getting beat by someone I really shouldn't be. Although, it does get me pumped and motivated.

Researcher – Even when you are tired, do you have the same expectations?

Participant – I try to adapt sometimes if I'm tired or not having a good session and hitting my shots. I will just break it down into individual plays instead of thinking I've got to do this, this and this by the end of the session. So it's like a check list for me to say I've done that, now do this. I find it annoying, if I'm in a bad mood, that I didn't, for example, stop the player from scoring and I'll try to do too much in the session and it becomes a viscous circle as I get wound up.

Researcher – Do you have a recent memory of you playing badly?

Participant – I don't think I had a bad session but I didn't feel motivated. On a Tuesday I have two training sessions after each other, which is four hours of straight training. In the EABL sessions first, I give it my all and go for it but the under 18s training after, I just think I don't want to be here and I just want to be at home and resting up before the Wednesday game, and that normally means I'm not putting in as much effort and its quite annoying because I know I can put in the effort. I did it last year as well. I believe in myself 100%, its just I'm not motivated for that second session. Obviously this year I'm having more minutes in matches than last year. I keep thinking to myself I've got a game tomorrow and I've got to rest up rather than training for 4 hours with risk of injury and stuff like that.

Researcher – If you have a bad last session because of motivation and things don't go well does that effect your game?

Participant – No, I just think I've had a bad session again, don't worry about it, and bring what you can to the game tomorrow and see what happens.

Researcher – How many times does a bad session translate to a bad match?

Participant – I'm more interested in training well in EABL sessions and not too bothered about the other sessions. So as long as I'm putting in effort then and playing well there then it's all good. Playing with a different group of people in under-18s, I don't need to try as hard as their level is lower, so I go from really good ability to poor ability and I just relax

a little and don't put in as much effort. I don't play at a similar level. I'd also say, because this has happened, that if the team is working hard it makes me want to put it in.

Researcher – Do coaches make you feel good or bad?

Participant – The meeting I had with the coach made me feel like I need to put in more effort and I did in a session and that made me feel good. The coach said I had all the potential in the world and this year I need you to be an England starting four man and I think you have the ability to do that and that makes me think I do have that ability and then that turns into motivation in training and then I work as hard as I can. He gave me confidence and the responsibility, and I feel I'm more free in games and able to do what I do best. Last year, being with a group of older players I felt I didn't have a say in the team and I was just a role player and I had to give them the ball at times instead of me scoring and me getting the rebounds and me being a key player. I'd rather be a top boy as I play better with having some responsibility in the team.

Researcher – What don't you want to hear from coaches?

Participant – They say stuff like you're, not being physical enough down at the post, and that makes me feel motivated to be more physical. I like being given a challenge to try and meet. It doesn't really annoy me or get me down.

Researcher – What about players if they make you feel good?

Participant – If you make a bad shot they will come up to you afterwards and just say that's your shot, give you a high five and keep shooting it and it gives you a bit more confidence to shoot it. But obviously if you keep missing it and keep taking that shot then they start to get wound up if they have a better shot and then they start to change their moods quite quickly. So when they say those things to you, it's more pressure to shoot a bit better or to play defence a bit better.

Researcher – Do you have high expectations of yourself?

Participant – I get upset if I don't hit my goals. I make my own goals, last year it was to make the England u-18 team a year young and you get all the way to the final 14 and I didn't quite make it so I get angry and upset with myself and start thinking in my head what could I have done that I didn't do. Then I will come into college training and start trying to do the stuff I thought I didn't do right and then muck up my training session and it takes me a while to get out of that circle because I'm too concentrated on the England

stuff and thinking that playing for England is more important than playing for college. So now I'm trying to play the way they want me to play but at college it's a different way of playing, international games are a lot different.

Researcher – What about the surroundings, they have an effect on you?

Participant – Not really, no. I prefer to train on a good court. Our court at the moment is constantly slippery and you are always wiping your shoes and if you slip on defence you get quite annoyed and when you play on a grippier, nicer court you obviously don't do that. But I think playing on a slippery court it will make you better when you play on a good court as you should be quicker and sharper so in the long run you should think it's helping you get better. It doesn't really affect me.

Researcher – Are your coaches more positive or negative?

Participant – They are always positive. We know they are putting in the time and effort for us and we know they are going home, scouting teams and planning sessions to make us better. So in training it's usually quite positive from them because they know what we need to do to get better and they know what they need to do. At times, the coach will say something negative but then turn it into motivation and he knows we can do it and it just gets us fired up for the next play. The coach tells us we are playing badly but then gives us feedback which is constructive to help us get better.

Researcher – If coaches are in bad moods in training does that affect you?

Participant – I've only picked it up once or twice with the coach but it gets me pissed off but it might motivate others maybe as they will think I need to work harder to keep the coach happy. With me, last year we had too many turn overs in the game and the coach came into the session and you could tell he was in a bad mood straight away. And he made us run and it's like why are you taking your bad mood out on us but other people might be thinking it will only get me more fit so I might as well do it.

Researcher – Are you afraid to make errors?

Participant – In games yeah, in training not so much as training is a place to make mistakes and get better but in games it's different. In training it doesn't really affect me as you can make mistakes there. But obviously if you make a mistake, the same mistake over and over, then it's quite frustrating and people get on your back about it but then you know

you made the mistake once or twice so you have to adjust it and don't do the same thing, that's what goes through my head anyway.

Researcher – Does coaches being friendly help?

Participant – Yes. He talks to us in a way we are mates, he knows when to talk to us as a friend and when to talk to us as a coach. So when we are not on court we can have a laugh and a joke but when we get on the court everyone knows it has to be serious.

Researcher – If you are training well do you play well in matches?

Participant – Not necessarily. I think last year I had parents arguing at home and I had a really good session but next day I thought about them arguing and I didn't really have a good practice, I was so angry in my head and when I get angry I don't play well. Home experiences will impact me. Normally if I train well I usually play well because I'm with the same group of people with good chemistry and we know how each other play. Playing well often depends on how well I've slept, if I do get sleep then I usually wake up and I'm alright and just go out there and try and perform the best I can but I don't think I ever play bad. Everyone makes their mistakes in games, it's impossible not to, but sometimes if I make the mistake in training, then I do get quite annoyed with myself and I need to take two minutes to get it out of my system. It's like in training when I need to walk out and get fresh air.

Researcher – Do you consider yourself to be a positive or negative person?

Participant – Probably more of a negative. I find it translates over to basketball. When I'm with mates I'm quite positive and I like to have a laugh and a joke but when I step on the floor and I know someone can do better than they are doing then I can get negative and get up in their face. I wouldn't say I'm a negative person overall, it's probably 50/50, it just depends on the scenario I'm in.

Researcher – What would be the ideal practice environment for you to be in?

Participant – I think it depends on how training goes as I feed off of other people so if other people are mucking up then that gets me annoyed and then I muck up, but if everyone is playing well then I'm playing well. As long as everyone is locked in in training then I'll be locked in.

Researcher - What about a negative environment?

Participant – When everyone is laughing and joking and not taking it seriously, because I've always been told when you step on the court you give it 100% because you want to improve. So if you aren't taking it seriously, I said I relax a bit in under-18s, but everyone still takes it seriously, then no one is going to get better and it's not an environment I want to be in because I know if we are laughing and joking in training then we may miss something we needed in the game.

Researcher – Does the facility need to be good?

Participant – Not really. But actually, I guess that the floor needs to be clean, the lights working, the heating on, and no grief about using the court early from the staff [wardens]". That's about it really.

Interview with Participant 'Paul'

Age: 18 years old

Interview date: 6/10/2016

Duration: 65 minutes (excluding warm-up discussion)

Researcher – How do you rate your current level of play?

Participant – I'm playing in the highest league for under 19 in England so I'm playing at a good standard. I've had a solid start to the season, training well and feeling good.

Researcher – What's your development been like from starting the AASE academy until now?

Participant – I've made good progress and development. Being one of the guys who comes off the bench to being one of the captains in the team. It's a big responsibility I have now. I've definitely grown into a good player since being here and I've really enjoyed it.

Researcher – Do you feel like you have constantly developed here or have there been times when you might have levelled out?

Participant – In the first year I was in more of a plateau because of things like confidence and motivation. Not being able to play much in my first year was sort of not very confidence building. I haven't really thought about how much I've improved and when I improved the most. But as the years went on I started to progress more and now in my 3rd year its constant development.

Researcher – How many years in total have you been playing basketball?

Participant – I starting playing when I was 4. Playing with my dad and then with friends at school. I've always played really, or that's what it feels like. I feel I have always been moving forward and getting better. There's not really been a time I remember where things have been bad and I haven't played.

Researcher – What's your experience of playing at elite levels, like in the national league?

Participant – I've been playing for [name of club removed] since about under 14. I've been playing in elite groups since about the age of 10 where we would compete in national level competitions.

Researcher – How often do you currently practice?

Participant – 5 to 6 times a week and with games it will be 6 to 7 times a week.

Researcher – Through the AASE academy, how much do you train?

Participant – It's about 4 to 5 times with morning training as well and the other is with [name of club removed] men's team which is twice a week. Most of the training is through the college, or at the college with the same coaches.

Researcher – When you train in the AASE academy do you have some days where you train really well and some days when you train badly?

Participant – we are physically tired towards the end of the week. We have our team practices on Mondays and Tuesdays. We all feel fine as we have just come off the weekend and we rested but by Thursday, after the Wednesday game, our bodies are broken. We have strength and conditioning and extra morning workout and the same with Friday. Trying to develop and at the same time try to rest your body is tough. Physical tiredness brings you down mentally, it starts from your body and then it brings you down. You can't think through your mind when your body is screaming at you.

Researcher – So it builds as the week goes on?

Participant – So on Monday and Tuesday getting ready for a game day on Wednesday we all feel physically fine as we have just come off the weekend and we have rest but by today [Thursday] our bodies are broken, shut. Trying to develop at the same time but also trying to give your body rest is impossible.

Researcher – Do you find you have days when you are playing really well in practice and some days when you are not?

Participant – Those sessions of playing well usually happen on a Monday or a Tuesday. Not at the end of the week. I have ups and downs.

Researcher – Do you have any examples of when you felt great or bad in training and what you were doing?

Participant – Last Monday we played well as a team and individually because I had the energy to be a leader on the team as I was also talking and encouraging other people and that lifted the whole the session up. The team was up and as a team and individually it was pushing me as they were all enthusiastic and that then comes back on me and I play well.

Researcher – Why do you think on that day you could lift your teammates?

Participant – Because on that day I lift them. There is nothing on me that I have to take extra care for, because my body is not hurting whereas on a Thursday, towards the end of the week, I'm thinking that my body is injured or I'm ill so I need to look after myself before I think about doing anything else. I need to look after myself first

Researcher – So on those days it's more about looking after yourself than others?

Participant – Yes, sort of. It's obviously all about putting teammates first but if you are that beaten up by the end of the week, everyone's energy is gone and that's what kills the training session. All I can do is just keep myself going.

Researcher – You say you feed off of other people?

Participant – Yeah, so if I'm motivating other people then they are going to get more motivated so when they are motivated their characteristics start coming out and springs back on me like an upward spiral. We feed off each other. If everyone is at it then it's great.

Researcher – What about bad training sessions? Maybe even on a Monday or a Tuesday, what was going through your head?

Participant – If it's a bad session it's normally the Monday because that might be a day after 7 days of basketball and we haven't had a rest day yet, and we are still all fatigued and we are trying to push as we might have another game on Wednesday.

Researcher – The Mondays session, because we have 2 sessions on a Monday with both the [name of college removed] and the [name of club removed] men's, so by Monday morning if the session isn't lifted up then the coach will have a word with us and then try and lift us up so we can get something out of that session.

Researcher – Have you personally, in the last few weeks, trained badly on that Monday session, and if so, why exactly?

Participant – It came down to physical tiredness and when it comes to physical tiredness it brings you down mentally as well, it starts from your body and then it brings you down. You can't think through your mind when your body is screaming at you. You might try your hardest to do something, but it isn't happening.

Researcher – Is there anything that could have helped you or picked you up?

Participant – One we could have had more time for rest and two I think from a coaching stand point we should have more talks, motivating talks like coaches saying to you they understand you are tired and the players aren't just making excuses because they are not training 100% because of their bodies.

Researcher – So do you feel the coaches don't understand what you are going through and that players need that reassurance that coaches know it's hard for you guys and its more pressure?

Participant – For some of us, for some of the first and second years its pressure but it's not pressure for me because I'm used to it. I know I got to get through it somehow.

Researcher – Anything this week you personally have been working on?

Participant – I've been trying to practice the mental side this week. I was ill on Tuesday day [2 days ago] and had Tuesday off and I came back for the game yesterday and I've been constantly trying to put my mind over what my body has been telling me. So, take tablets and try and play through it. I'm still alive now so I guess I'm alright. But it's the end of week now and we get a rest day tomorrow before the game on Saturday will help us. I've been pushing myself hard through the morning sessions.

Researcher – Any time in your career here, have you ever felt really good and what was going through your head and what made you practice so well?

Participant – I think it was both physical and mental. It was over the Easter holidays last year and we came into train and we all had rest and I came in as a first year and my mind was fresh. I had nothing to worry about I wasn't tired from any previous sessions and I came in and I was hitting all my shots, making all the right decisions.

Researcher – Did you have any comps or matches after that or was the season over and pressure off?

Participant – The season was over so there was no games to build to.

Researcher – Where do you think the pressure comes from?

Participant – It's the external stuff as every minute of the day you need to be doing stuff to be getting you better for the game on Wednesday or the weekend. If you are not doing the right thing now the pressure is building up on you and you sort of know if you don't do that stuff you are going to be fatigued or that your confidence level is going to drop or arousal levels for the game will drop.

Researcher – So when you are out of competition you feel more relaxed and are able to hit shots?

Participant – Yes

Researcher – What about a time when you maybe wanted to give up basketball [participant had previously spoke about a negative period] and can you tell me about that?

Participant – So again this happened in the first year and I was ready to quit basketball. Basically, I was on the bench for most of the year and the same with playing for [name of club removed] men's team. I was on the bench because it was a senior team with better players with more experience and I was younger. I was the only first year. You got players coming from other places that were a good level, which I could accept.

Researcher – Did you not think that it was because you were the only young player on the team?

Participant – It is but it's not good enough to keep you going. It's something that your mum would tell you, like good job you are on that team. Me personally, the way I stay confident is if you just keep me in the game. If you bench me for the whole game and then bring me

in with 4 minutes left of the game, that's the pressure as I'm supposed to perform with just 4 minutes left of the game and I'm trying to do too much. I feel under pressure.

Researcher – So tell me what made that terrible training session bad?

It was the fact that they were all much better than me, it put me down possession after possession. I wasn't getting what I would get in my age group at that time [younger age group]. The coach did try to talk to me and he told me to play with no worries and no pressure just train just keep your mind free.

Researcher – Why do you think it affected you so much?

Participant – He saw I was trying to do too much, like being a perfectionist, and that was coming into play too much. I think when I was training he could see that and he pulled me to the side and had interviews with me and told me I should play freely and whether I wanted to play seriously or just play recreationally and when I started playing with no pressure you are sort of finding your feet again and that's when the confidence came back. It did help.

Researcher – So when you talk about pressure, what is pressure to you?

Participant – Pressure is not so much internal it's external it's like going to play in big places for me personally that's always been. Big crowds, big halls. That particularly also links with coming off the bench with 4 minutes left with a big crowd watching, that's my head going crazy. The crowd are expecting me to perform. I'm thinking I don't want to mess up in front of everyone.

Researcher – Can you think of what emotions you feel when you practice well?

Participant – I've been very energetic recently. I've sort of had that responsible to be a captain on the team and be a leader and that has helped me train better. Having leadership responsibilities gives me energy. Mentally that pushes me to wake up early and be the first one here in the morning, just to keep the guys on track and make them look at me and want to be here and getting better and be that role model. It gives me energy and pride. When they have problems they come to me with like why are they training bad and what they can do, I've told them what I think they should do and how they should play and give them that confidence which then comes back to me and feeds me. I'm focused and enjoying what I'm doing.

Researcher – Do you feel like you can control how you feel when practicing and if you need to improve your level you can?

Participant – I feel like I can control it. To be energetic for me it's being loud because once you're loud, for example, if you are playing defence and you're being loud then other people will be loud. I never used to be loud and like that, but I saw players from last year doing it and how beneficial it was to the team and when he didn't do it how bad it was for the team.

Researcher – If things don't go well do you go quiet?

Participant – There are some time I don't feel energetic, like today, Thursday. But I tell myself to be energetic. And then I'm back to being good again. It's just getting over that barrier of your body telling you that you are tired. It's you telling yourself it is ok. It's like a knock on after everyone will be like it afterwards. I will walk in the sports hall and be the loudest and I feel confident.

Researcher – What do you think the causes are and what emotions do you feel when you play badly?

Participant – Distressed. I'd say that's the main one. If I'm having a bad session and my energy isn't there then that will happen to other people as well so I'm trying to think about not only myself but how they are playing as well. So, it's a downward spiral from there.

Researcher – What about in your first and second year when things were going badly?

Participant – Confidence was the biggest one for me. I had the skills to play but I wasn't unable to play physically with the older players. Sometimes it motivated me and sometimes it didn't. When it's not going well my confidence was down. If I was a substitute in training I would wait for someone to come to me and tell me do you want to sub in but I wouldn't feel I was able to go to them to get in the game. For me those small details, that I wasn't able to do, and they were recognised easily by other players and coaches and when I made a mistake everyone expected it from me. I don't get angry I get down instead. I don't get mad I curl up in a ball.

Researcher – Can you recall anything that happened to you that felt good recently in AASE training?

Participant – The psychology and nutrition [classroom lessons] for me they help me to take it seriously as it will help me progress. For me now I'm looking at any small thing that I can

do to get better. Like drinking a lot of water and eating right, doing stretching. I've been trying to take these things on board in the last four months. And recently it's all come on a lot to help me develop and get better.

Researcher – What about anything that's happened between you and players or coaches recently that made you feel good?

Participant – It's when everyone's energy is there. When people are down and when there are people not playing passionately and they don't really want to be there. They don't make me drop my level. I have to stay at a high level. I don't think my energy drops because of others.

Researcher – So before you said that when people are up they feed off of you?

Participant – Yes, and I don't think it goes the other way for me. Because when it gets to the point when their energy is not there either the coach or I will have a team huddle and we will talk about stuff and we have a great response to a team huddle. Once we have one of those people start to remember what we are here to do and what our goals are and what we talked about in the classroom before the season with the coaching staff, that's what uplifts them back up to the level again. But I don't think personally that another person has ever brought me down like that.

Researcher – So if others have brought you up when has that happened?

Participants – The leaders. When a third year has told me something to just give me confidence, just hit that shot or something like that and encouraging saying good job. The small stuff makes a big difference. And that small thing has a big impact on me when I was a first year.

Researcher – Does the facility and location make a difference on the way you play or train?

Participant – Doesn't make a difference as the court is the court. People make a difference.

Researcher – If players or coaches are negative towards you, how does that make you feel?

Participant – It brings me down. It happened with the coach with things like sighing. In the first year, saying like "come on" and that brought me down. Mainly in training. I wasn't being lazy but I made mistakes and although I wasn't getting it at the time I definitely wouldn't get it if you would do that as a reaction. The reaction I would want is if someone had taken me to the side and told me tactically and then encouraged with a couple of pointers.

Researcher – Would your teammates ever get angry with you or give you a negative comment?

Participant – I don't ever remember a team mate doing it because I was always in a senior team and people expected less from me so they expected me to make mistakes because I was younger and not in their age group. But because I was a bit younger they gave me more leeway.

Researcher – What happens now with coaches and players if you make a mistake?

Participant – I get different reactions from the coaches this year. For example, as a third year I haven't had sighing from the coach. Like being a third year you don't get that anymore and I'm neutral inside and because I don't have those external negatives from coaches. The only way I can go is up [positive]. That only makes it positive. It's not that they don't correct errors, they do it in a different way because I'm a third year.

Researcher – How do they correct you now?

Participant – It's just the way they react, it's hard to explain. Because as a first year I would make lots of mistakes it builds up on the coach's shoulders, maybe that's why it happened in the first year but now in the third year. I don't make as many errors as a first year as the coach has seen my development. The coaches will tell you that you are doing something wrong but in a more respectful way.

Researcher – You must feel down at some points in the past, are there any key things that cause that?

Participant – Fatigue or if there are problems at home. After a match loss I go back to neutral the next day, it doesn't affect me. We lost a game yesterday against a team with some big players but it didn't really bother me, I thought we could win. I said to myself we were going to go in there and win, not whatever happens, happens. There's always that doubt but my mind was telling me we were going to win. After losing, because you expect so much it sort of goes up... it felt bad yesterday.

Researcher – How did you play yesterday and could you have done anything differently?

Participant – I could have not been ill at the start of the week. I'd say, I played pretty well. Some players in the team yesterday were scared and whether they will tell you that or not, they were scared. I had that responsibility as captain and obviously nervousness comes in for everyone but that didn't have much of an affect, it was sort of a positive nervousness.

Researcher – Are your coaches positive or negative people and does that have an impact upon the team?

Participant – They are positive and this has a good effect on me and the team. The coaches mental state tends to conduct what happens in training, not just that but it's a reason. In my first and second year when things were going on with the coach externally I could see that in the sighing and tutting he would do to me. I would say that the players might have a huddle and say that the coach is angry today so we better do well. I think I'm 100% aware of what the coach is feeling on that day. By facial expressions you can always tell. I'm always aware of coach mood when negative.

Researcher – Are you afraid to make errors in training because of the coach?

Participant – As a first year, the coach would get angry after mistakes. It's just when they stop the session and single you out in front of the group. I don't like being singled out. You can sort of tell if it's you or something external.

Researcher – Do you think if you train well or badly, does that then effect your match play or is there no effect?

Participant – For me no matter what's happened in the week, I go into the game neutrally so I don't really think about a bad training session, say the day before, but if I have a bad session the night before a game, I don't go into the game thinking about that training session. I think in the first year back then it was different to now because I've got responsibility now and a different focus. It's a lot more to think about than just the training session.

Researcher – So you don't focus on yourself much anymore and think much about yourself anymore?

Participant – It always used to be about how I was playing but now it's sort of turned. I would say a few years ago if I was training well I'd be playing well and if I was training badly and my confidence was not there I would play badly in matches. I'd be thinking about that game every week and have negative thoughts. So when I was saying now, if I have a bad session then in a game I'm neutral going into the game. I was still neutral in the first year but it was more 60/40. Sometimes you feel great and still don't play well, which I don't know why. If you are doing everything you can do and things still aren't going your way that's uncontrollable.

Researcher – Do you consider yourself a positive or negative person in general?

Participant – Neutral, I sort of know what needs to happen. There's been a lot more people that have been more positive than me, not in the team this year but outside of basketball I'm neutral, I'm pretty similar between outside of training and training and if there's something that's different it's that responsibility I now have. On the court you obviously need to take care of yourself and the other guys making sure they are doing what they are doing off the court but when I'm off the court people just see me being me.

Researcher – If you could create a really positive training environment to make everyone train well, what would that look like?

Participant – Energetic coaching staff. Injury free players but you can't control that. Positive players that are willing to get better in the session, everyone neutral and they are only getting positive. People that come in that aren't lazy.

Researcher – What about a negative training environment?

Participant – Coaches angry. Players have no energy. If there was a lot of 1st years on a team it would be negative, depending on who the people are, if they were natural leaders that would bring it up but there needs to be a senior led team, not like last year where there was only me and [name removed] who weren't senior but more like this year were there is like four or five third years. Not having a full squad can effect training.

Interview with Participant 'Peter'

Age: 18 years old

Interview date: 23/11/2017

Duration: 62 minutes (excluding warm-up discussion)

Researcher – How has your progression been from first year to now?

Participant – I became more confident in my game and I sort of honed my skills because in the second year I had to do more scoring for the team and the rebounding so I was able to

focus more on that and being a bigger part of the team and be able to score more and I also got better at defence and ended up one of the steels leaders in the league. I become best player in the team. I didn't start as one of the best we had a lot of older players who have gone off to play in America or pro in Europe so they were the best in my first year. So it sort of progressed to me being one of the go to players for the team.

Researcher – Did you enjoy that responsibility?

Participant – I did and I didn't. A lot of the teams would then scout me and they would see that I did a lot of the scoring and play to stop me.

Researcher – What about being the best player in training?

Participant – In training it was quite intense as everyone would go after me so when we played competitive drills were someone could actually win and I started winning a few at the beginning of practice then everyone's focus was set on me to not win. But I do like being the best player because it helps me get better and them get better because if they are going at me their hardest that means I have to go even harder back at them and as a team we all get better.

Researcher – How did you find having older guys at practice in your first year?

Participant – It was a bit difficult because I like to score and they were more efficient scoring than me so I had to take a back seat on the scoring and focus on other things like my rebounding and my defence. In practice my goal was to go at them as I could see their level and the sort of level I need to get to. I looked up to the better older players. People say I am really similar to one of the older guys. It was good to have the better players there as it helps me focus on where I was and where I needed to be or get to in the next two to three years.

Researcher – Did they help you personally? Did they talk to you?

Participant – Sometimes, depended on the situation. A few of them left quite early to play at different places. They spoke to me when they could but I didn't see them outside of training.

Researcher – What was their main influence on you?

Participant – Just to work hard and to go after anyone who is above you but if people believe that person is better than you, in your head, if you believe them better than you then you should be going after them until you are better than them.

Researcher – How long have you been playing basketball in total?

Participant – Seven years and have felt I have been constantly developing

Researcher – What's your experience of playing in elite training environments?

Participant – I played national league before but the EABL is far more structured and organised with things like scouting.

Researcher – Are you aware during practice that some days you are really good and some really bad?

Participant – Yes, quite a few of those. One training session I was injured but recovering from injury and wasn't playing to my best and a few of the other players were getting after me and someone hit me with a really hard foul and because everything working already I sort of lost it and walked out of the training session. I wasn't hitting my shots, I couldn't run properly, couldn't jump properly, due to the injury and it just felt like a wasted training session. Someone, I don't think it was on purpose, they just hit me with a really hard foul and tipped me over the edge.

Researcher – So what put you in that mood?

Participant – I think it was just a long week, it was a Friday session and I wasn't feeling myself and with being injured I knew it would be more difficult to be myself so it put me in a bad mood to start with and then it went downhill from there. It has happened where [player name removed] who was probably our best player, he constantly had a go at me. But that was when I was younger and he was a third year.

Researcher – So do you set yourself high expectations?

Participant – Yes

Researcher – What about a good practice?

Participant – There was a practice session where we basically played like 5 on 5 competitive games and I pretty much, whichever team I was on or whatever game we played I won every single game in the practice session to a point where a few people got annoyed with me, they said I was cheating so of thing but I couldn't really cheat in the drills because the coach were standing there watching. It was just I didn't want to lose because I don't like losing and I won everything. That was a good day for me I had a good night's

sleep and I ate well that week and I felt really good and I just wanted to go out and compete

Researcher – For you, competition against others is quite motivating?

Participant – Yes.

Researcher – Anything recently you have been working on that has either gone well or badly this week?

Participant – I have been trying to work on my shooting. This morning there was a cold stretch of about 30-40 minutes where I couldn't hit any of my shots at all, not a single shot fell. It got really frustrating but I just had to carry on training and I ended up hitting a few shots at the end of the practice. But as shooting is something I'm working on it was disappointing I couldn't hit any of my shots and only hit a few them this morning. I'm looking forward to the next session as we have a game tomorrow and maybe that was just an off day as it was early in the morning and it was cold so hopefully once I get into our training session tonight I can hopefully get back into the rhythm and take it into tomorrow's game.

Researcher – Can you pin point why it didn't go very well yesterday?

Participant – I don't have a clue why

Researcher – So when you practiced really well in the past do you remember any causes that picked you up and made you feel good?

Participant – I sort of have mixed emotions during training sessions. I can have a really bad session on a Tuesday but go out on a Wednesday and play amazing. But then vice versa I can have an amazing session the day before a game and then on the Wednesday I go out and be terrible. I have no idea why. It is confusing for me, I love playing games, that's what I live for as training is training but when it comes to games I love playing games but there's just a few games out of 10 maybe one of those where things just don't work out for me and I have no idea why. I even watch the game tapes back and see if I have done things badly/wrong, obviously I didn't, but there's no reason why I played like I played it just happened I guess.

Researcher – When you are training well what sort of emotions and moods do you feel?

Participant – In a game I don't really like to lose I like to win but when I can play myself, like sort of carefree if I mess up I know, say it's on offence, I know I'll get the ball back on

defence if I just concentrate on what I know I can do then that is when I play my best but when I start to uplift the entire team as well as myself when I'm down then I'm throwing my focus at too many things at too many different times and then it doesn't always piece together. Sometimes it works out but sometimes it doesn't. When I'm playing well it's a confidence thing and a carefree thing as well.

Researcher – You mention trying to lift others, is that more difficult for you?

Participant – Not really, it's just one of those things where you try to be the best you can be but if certain people don't want to be uplifted there's not much you can do and if it's not working out then you can get frustrated with that as you might not think you are talking to the person in the right way or you think they are being arrogant and not listening to you and then it doesn't end too well either.

Researcher – Do you prefer to have the responsibility of being a leader?

Participant – I wouldn't turn down being a leader and I would shy away, I'd try and lead the team, I wouldn't want to sit at the back and let others tell me what to do. I wouldn't shy away from being a leader but if there is someone else who would be better than me I would back them up, but maybe if they aren't around or if they are slacking then I would step up.

Researcher – Do you find that responsibility helps you or doesn't help you?

Participant – I guess it just, it depends on the situation. Pressure remains the same for me regardless if I have to lead the team or not. I think it's just the games themselves but I don't know. Because the times when I haven't really been a leader of the team I have sort of thought if I mess up then this leader might have this to say about me.

Researcher – Can you control how you feel in practice by picking yourself up if you feel down?

Participant – I tried to this morning when I wasn't hitting any of my shots, I sort of was getting a bit hot headed and threw by balls away a few times but then I tried to calm it down a bit and take it a bit slower which helped but not significantly but I guess I can change my mood in practice I'm guessing.

Researcher – How do you do that?

Participant – Just try to block out anything that's happened before and sort of refresh.

Researcher – A time when you felt bad practicing and what the causes were?

Participant – One time when I had a long week I was quite fatigued and I was injured as well and I hadn't particularly had the right nutrition so all of those things put me in a down mood and it just spiralled out of control and ended badly.

Researcher – Types of negative emotions you might have felt?

Participant – Irritated. Dealing with things, not pressure situations but things I know I should be able to do because I've worked on them in my own time and when it doesn't come to fruition it's kind of irritating.

Researcher – Any examples of social aspects that have helped you in training, say from players?

Participant – It might sound a bit rude but I tend to ignore, so if it's a negative thing that someone has to say to me I tend to ignore it because it's negative and I don't want to hear negative things but if it's something positive and logical then yeah it can uplift me but if it's not positive it will have me at the same level.

Researcher – So, no player has ever really annoyed you or put you down in training?

Participant – The one thing that does get me going if someone tries to trash talk especially because I know what I can do myself, so if they say you're not going to score on me or get past me it's a thing where you are like testing me right now and I have to prove myself that I can do this, can stop you, can score on you and it gets me into a more competitive mood. That's a good thing.

Researcher – What about if coaches say good or bad things to you in practice?

Participant – I haven't really had much compliments from coaches, it's always been negative. But I think it's because a lot of my coaches in the past know I react better to their negative criticism because it's just the type of person I am. From a coach, negative criticism makes me know what I need to do like so one of my coaches in the past he used to say to me you are never going to get anywhere if you can't play any defence so that drilled into my head if coach is saying that and coach has been to America and played pro then it has to be important for me to play defence so now defence is one of my strongest areas. But it was a thing at the time that I couldn't play defence and he was saying to me I couldn't play any defence, you need to learn how to play defence or you're not going to be able to go

anywhere so in my eyes that's negative criticism, instead of if I make a good shot and them saying good shot it doesn't really uplift me but negative criticism gets to me in a good way.

Researcher – Coaches ever get angry at you if you are doing something they don't want you to do?

Participant – I was actually quite annoyed about it and I didn't go back to practice for about a week. We were doing a drill and there was one guy who kept making jokes about what I was doing and then I'm not sure why but my coach flipped out on me and said get your stuff and leave. He kicked me out half way through practice. I was annoyed because I was doing what I was supposed to be doing but the guy, I guess he was having fun about making jokes on what I was doing, and then he must have spotted something else he didn't like in what I was doing and then he sent me home.

Researcher – If coaches are positive and motivate you does it make a difference?

Participant – It does and it doesn't, not as much as negative criticism. Not putting me down but just saying what I need to work on and them giving me feedback makes me focus more on what I have to do.

Researcher – Are you the type of person who needs to have goals and expectations?

Participant – Sort of, I haven't ever really set many goals for myself, I'm not sure. It's a thing where I keep working on it keep working on it until I can see the improvements.

Researcher – When you are training does it matter if you are physically tired?

Participant – It effects are training for the first 10-15 minutes while I'm warming up and trying to mentally focus myself into things but once I'm mentally focused then I just get a surge of energy from somewhere, I don't know where but I do. I'd rather be fresh.

Researcher – Do you train better out of season when you are fresher and you don't have the pressure of matches?

Participant – I'm not sure. I haven't actually thought about that before. I don't know

Researcher – Do surroundings make a difference when you train?

Participant – Not really.

Researcher – Do your coaches tend to be more positive or negative and does their mood dictate training?

Participant – Yes definitely. If the coach is in a good mood it leads to players being positive. As basketball players, making mistakes is a measure of where you are and what you need to do so when our coaches were in a bad mood they would let less mistakes slide. Maybe one time you would make a bad pass, you misread where the person is going, maybe when they are in a good mood they let it slide 3 or 4 times. If everyone is working hard and trying to compete and you make a bad pass it's not that bad. But then if they are in a bad mood, then making one bad pass they will punish us for it. Moods definitely depended on how training went and if the coach was in a bad mood it would spread to some of the players as well.

Researcher – So would you rather have a good mood coach or a bad mood coach?

Participant – Good mood coach.

Researcher – If your coach is friendly towards you?

Participant – I don't know

Researcher – Does your training effect how you play matches?

Participant – Not really no. Sometimes I hope it does so like I can have a good training session play bad and vice versa but a lot of the times it's how I feel in the morning when I wake up or the day heading towards the game. But more times I feel good during the day/morning and during the warm up.

Researcher – If you could design the ideal coaching environment what would it be?

Participant – I think one thing would be music, not loud music so you can't hear what the coach is saying but just background music. There's just something about background music when I'm playing and training, not calms me but focuses me and it's also a bit of a release. I don't know how to explain it. If I have an individual workout, then I always have music on. Another thing would be everyone to be in a good mood and to compete.

Researcher – Now, what about a bad session?

Participant – It actually happened last year, I turned up to practice and a set of the gym lights were broken and it was cold and partly dark and only three people turned up from a team of 12 and that just set the mood that no one really wanted to practice as there wasn't much we could go through as a team because there was only three of us. The people who didn't come were just lazy and couldn't be bothered to turn up and had no valid excuse, like, I had to finish my work. It pretty much showed our session as we only

won three games all season and people just didn't want to be involved so it was annoying as everyone was looking at me and saying you are the leader and you need to be getting people to practice but it's a thing where I can only do so much, I couldn't go to people's house and physically drag them out and say you have to come to practice so it was annoying people didn't want to fully commit to a team they said they would commit to.

Interview with Participant 'Richard'

Age: 18 years old

Interview date: 12/10/2016

Duration: 75 minutes (excluding warm-up discussion)

Researcher – How long have you played Basketball?

Participant – Seven years in total but seriously for four years as stopped playing football at 14 [years of age] to focus on playing basketball. Played for school team and club outside of school.

Researcher – What's your experience of elite practice environments?

Participants – When the training sessions are good they are usually loud with everyone talking and communicating and everyone has each other's backs. You are going at each other rather than playing to your friend's tendencies or whatever it is and there's an element of competitiveness. In year 12 [of school] I had come in as one of the youngest guards, but the year before I basically scored 30 on one of the other guards who was on the England programme at the time so I came in and people new me but I still had to go at their third year who was the starting guard for [team name removed] at the time. I had to compete with him for minutes because that is who I wanted to play over. So when training sessions were good we would go at each other a lot and it would be competitive.

Researcher – How often do you train at the moment?

Participants – Seven times a week with shooting and Strength and conditioning at least.

Researcher – Are you aware you practice on some days better than other days?

Participant – Yes. Acutely aware. I'm the biggest self-critique I've ever met.

Researcher – Do you know when you are going to have a good or a bad day?

Participant – No. Sometimes. Not all the time. Sometimes I'll just feel good before practice like before training has started I'll be in a good mood, I'll be looking forward to training. I enjoy basketball. I don't know what puts me in that good mood, I just wake up feeling good, maybe I got the right amount of sleep or maybe the music that came on in the shower was just good. I'm not sure, just some days I feel better than other days. It can depend on previous days like a Monday I feel better because I've just had the weekend, even though I may have had a game, I feel more relaxed and fresh whereas Friday mornings, even though I might start positive I can spiral into negativity a lot easier, things trigger me a lot quicker than earlier in the week, probably due to being tired at the end of the week from training. My body literally tells me how well I can train a lot of the time. If I'm tired then I know my training level might not be great.

Researcher – Do you feel like you play differently in matches following either a good day or a bad day?

Participant – Not for the weekend, I don't know why. I differentiate the weekend games because I've always had the different games with school games in the week and team games at the weekend and I've always tried to separate them both so I can play well for both. But if I have two games within the week, unless I had a game on Tuesday after a great session on Monday, and then a game on Friday following a poor session on Thursday, I'm more likely to play better on the Tuesday game than the Friday one.

Researcher – Can you give me an example of a session when you played well and causes for this and what happened during the session?

Participant – It was early on in the season, last year at [team name removed]. It was early in the season and I probably had the best practice scoring wise. It was early in the season and everyone was competitive and everyone wanted to push each other. We lost the week before but everyone came to training with the mind-set to improve and get better and go at each other so we can beat the next team. I was playing against one of my friends because he was trying to get the point guard spot but he's a lot bigger than me physically and taller etc... but I'm more skilled and we literally went at each other for the whole session and it helped because when you are on the court being competitive it's like, it's hard to explain.

Researcher – Who won that battle between you both?

Participant – Me, I'm better than him. I think he was fine with it. I talk a lot of smack so I've been telling him for a good two years now I'm better than you. He wanted to beat me so in the competitive sense he said I'm coming for you in the next session but off the court it didn't affect us and our friendship because we know that the more we go at each other the better we are both going to get and there's been a time he's gone up on me anyway.

Researcher – Did you feel down when he got up on you?

Participant – I was Irritated with myself because I felt I can do better but I didn't feel negative in the sense of, like it was physical differences or I would make lapses because he is a skilful player so if he gets me it's not just a show of me messing up its also him having the ability to play the game quite well.

Researcher – What if you were going up against someone you were better than but don't beat them?

Participant – It frustrates the hell out of me. It irritates my soul and I'll either get really irritated by them or I force myself to play better than them and show them. I'll manage my anger in to a driving force so that I will play well against them and prove I am the better player, or I get frustrated and I'll play worse than I did before and play worse and worse. When this happens I sometimes give the decisions up to other players to run the point and help the team in other ways but most of the time I just get worse and act like a child.

Researcher – When that happens, when you lose to lesser teammate, what is happening in your head?

Participant – I'm usually cussing myself to be honest with you. I end up questioning what on earth I'm doing, why I'm playing like this and don't I understand I'm much better than this person, why can't you perform, what's wrong with you etc...

Researcher – Are you better when you are against people who are better, same level or worse than you, in practice?

Participant – When they are better than me. In the last two years I haven't ever thought one of my teammates was better than me but there are people around who are more accomplished than me with people who have won more games for example with their team. If someone is above, you, by like stats, what they might have won or their national standing, you have to raise your level to prove to yourself and to everyone that you can

compete with this person and even out do them. In practice I would always rather go up against the main point guard and players that are seen to be better rather than play against people at the same level or below. If I don't beat the better player, I wasn't good enough, I didn't perform and I'll have to get them next time. Or they just outplayed me because they were better. I'll get irritated with myself for losing because I have high expectations but you can't get put off, like you can't do it. Because it's just at the time it's a learning curve, you know they are good because you have seen them play many times before you came to this team.

Researcher – Do you feel more pressure playing against someone of a lesser ability because you should beat them?

Participant – Well, there could be but I don't really feel that kind of pressure because, sounds a bit arrogant or rude, but I don't respect them in that sense. I kind of look down on them because if you are not better than me then you are simply not better than me.

Researcher – But what if they beat you in practice?

Participant – Then I'll get down on myself but the majority of the time it doesn't happen. I don't focus on the fact he got me once because then it will more likely happen again as I'm giving him that power in the sense of the fact that he isn't that bad whereas its more effective for me to say you got a lucky one and it's not going to happen again and go from there.

Researcher – So thinking back to a time that would have happened to you, can you think of any causes as to why that would have happened?

Participant – I've been injured before and played against people who I still didn't think were better than me and it frustrates me because a lot of the time when I'm injured, when it comes to practice, sometimes I can say to coach that I need to sit out and rest, but during the more competitive practice, or the game before game day, I will not ignore it but play through it and I still expect myself to perform to the same level. I've done that before and still been beaten by the lesser player so that was frustrating to say the least.

Researcher – Thinking about a time when you practiced really well and felt good, were there any causes?

Participant – I still had the excitement from last week's game where I played really well, so it was kind of at the beginning of a new season and the team was still coming together and

we had that fresh excitement. I spent the majority of that day, and the seven days leading up to the session talking to one of my closest friends in the college who I went at pretty much every training session and we were just talking smack to each other; that's just how we communicate to each other in basketball. It gets my mind ready and I know he's saying this stuff, like he's better than me and he's going to do this stuff but in my head I'm going to outdo him so it helps me to get into an attacking mind-set to ensure I go at the player and work hard to outdo him to prove to myself and to everyone else I am the better player and he isn't.

Researcher – What sort of positive emotions do you feel in practice?

Participant – Determined and inspired and definitely excited. I get really happy when I'm playing well and really enjoy it. I feel proud or maybe even arrogant but in the sense of that I don't feel I can be stopped. It comes from playing well and helps me to continue playing well. I've never really thought about what the cause of that is.

Researcher – Are there things in sessions that make you feel good, like influences from players or coaches?

Participant – Before games yes. My coach last year said to me I'm top three on the team at the start of the season and I will probably have to play 35+ minutes and likely the whole game so make sure I keep myself out of foul trouble and just have fun and do what you do and that helped me a lot. I wouldn't say I was close to him but I had a lot of faith in him and trusted him as a coach and for him to have the same confidence in me helped me to feel comfortable playing. Even though there was pressure to win and play well it relieves it in the sense that because he has confidence that you will fulfil it, it backs up the confidence you have in yourself and makes it stronger and much easier to play better.

Researcher – So he gave you responsibility, and you prefer to have responsibility?

Participant – In that instances, yes.

Researcher – Is it good a responsibility to be one of the best in training?

Participant – Yes. I'm not the kind of leader that's always clapping and saying well done to everyone and always positive and the first to sprint etc... I don't really talk that much, like in the last two years especially in turns of every play. I like to actually do it and encourage people to keep up with me. I'll try to work as hard as possible in training and if you are not then I'll pull people up and say you got to keep up with me and push yourself and I'll help

them but I find it better to do it practically. I'm not the best at speaking to people to get them to react positively because how I'm used to talking with my friends. If I try this with people, I don't know they don't take it well. Especially in year 13 I would say something and I honestly didn't mean to be rude but because it was flippant and quickly said so we can move on and that often led to being perceived as rude by some people so I prefer to lead with actions and say look at me, I can do it so you can do it.

Researcher – So you like to be a role model, do you like having role models for you on the team?

Participant – I like it when I respect them. There have been senior players that I've played with and I didn't think they deserved the seniority they had and it was more to do with their age and how long they had been playing on the team or they were friends with some of the other senior players who deserved the respect. So sometimes when people said look at him, there was part of me that would question it because if I don't see that you are fulfilling the criteria for a leader, then I don't feel I should respect or follow.

Researcher – Can you control how you feel in practice?

Participant – Not as well as I'd like to. I let things trigger me a bit too much, I did it all of last year. I'll have practice and things start off well but with 45 minutes to go something will trigger me and I'd go downhill from there. It can be teammates being stupid or me making consecutive mistakes when I'm supposed to be the player that is in control or even just people not being on the same page as me. Last year we didn't have the most versatile bigs, we only had one, and if you try and make a read or threw a certain type of pass and you don't catch it, why? You play basketball and you are 16 plus years and you can't catch? That's a basic skill. Something like that, because it's so simple I focus on it too much and it just blows up my mood. If I'm feeling down, then that makes it worse.

Researcher – If you make an error, do you get annoyed at yourself or the feedback you get from others?

Participant – Bit of both. Most comes from me because I don't like to mess up but there's been times when I would make certain passes, say in the first year more, and I genuinely didn't think it was the wrong pass to make but my team mate didn't catch it or finish and my coach would have a go at me saying "don't you realise who you are passing to, they can't deal with that" and there's a part of me that's saying you can't tell me what's a right or wrong pass to make, it's the other player that needs to be better. I would get irritated at

the coach because why would you tell me when you could simply coach him to be better and teach him to catch a basketball. That frustrates me. In the second year I started to recognise this and started to say that I was responsible and I needed to recognise what the other players can and can't do so I could take more responsibility as I was taught that by the coach to be a point guard. Then more pressure would come on me because I recognise that even though they should be better if they are playing at this level you still have to adapt to what you have rather than what you want or what you wish you had.

Researcher – Do you focus a lot on your mistakes?

Participant – With me, I used to really focus on my own mistakes, maybe not so much now. I'd say I try to focus on the team more now rather than my mistakes I might make. I can't win just on my own.

Researcher – When you practice badly what are the causes?

Participant – Lack of sleep. Lack of interest. If something has happened the day before that's put me in a general bad mood. Sometimes I wake up in the morning and think yeah I got basketball today and it can take my mind off it but if in the first two minutes things don't seem to be going well then instead of it becoming the place where I go to get away from things it becomes the place where it all gets boxed in and now I can't play well in the one place I'm supposed to go to release stress. So I end up losing interest because if it isn't going well then what's the point of me doing it and I get frustrated and I lose focus on what's more important in terms of when I'm practicing or playing a game.

Researcher – What negative emotions do you feel in practice?

Participant – Scared. Afraid of making mistakes. I expect a lot of myself. For the [team name removed] men's team last year, if I'm not performing correctly I'm not going to play men's next year so you only have a small amount of time to adjust to the playing style pretty much now, which pressures me even more and I get stressed by that. It was because I was scared of messing up which led to me over thinking and making bad decisions.

Researcher – So what were you scared of?

Participant – Letting my teammates down, letting my coach down, just not playing very well when I'm supposed to be a good player. Not living up to my expectations, secondary would be to my coaches and friends, not sure which would be second. I want to be seen as a good player because I am a good player and I don't want to mess it up because I am a

good player and not supposed to make too many mistakes. Also, irritable and hostile are good emotions for me.

Researcher – What might cause you to feel negative emotions?

Participant – I'm not sure. Maybe stuff going on at home, that happened a lot last year. Or external stuff like academic work which I'm struggling with. I might just be in a bad mood. If I were to take a dislike to someone at practice, someone that irritates me, and they are stuck on my team at training and they do something stupid or they say something to me that I don't want to hear it sets me off very quickly. I just end up frustrated throughout training.

Researcher – Are you the same person outside the court to inside?

Participant – I have the same emotional range on and off the court. My moods cross over between basketball and outside. If I'm in a mood outside, then it will be the same at practice. But sometimes basketball will fix it because I love playing.

Researcher – Anything from a coach point of view that they have done to make you feel good or bad?

Participant – If the coach doesn't look to me for a play. If the coach doesn't pick me for a move, like gives me the responsibility, and it's someone else that has been picked, I'd be like really, them? And that will frustrate me but then I just get over myself and stop being arrogant and get on with it because there are times when it's just not going to be me. It might be because they are the better shooter or that they are better in that position.

Researcher – So is your real frustration not understanding the coach's decision at that time?

Participant – Yes, that irritates me a lot. I look at life logically and I like to be able to make sense of everything and if something doesn't make sense then I get frustrated quite a lot, it just doesn't compute and niggles at me and I don't understand what's going on. But then again on the flip side, that a coach has gone to me for a play or commended me on a skills training session and we are just focusing on certain moves on the rim and this would be like none of you can do this apart from me and I'm the only one who's done it in a game and then I feel good as I'm being used in an example and clearly I'm doing stuff right and I'm the example of what's good.

Researcher – What about from players, good or bad?

Participant – If I were to miss and one of my team mates were to say don't worry keep shooting that shot and that's the shoot to take that makes me feel good a lot of the time. I get irritated if I miss but then they reassure me. Even though you miss you are doing the right thing for the team so taking that shot is ok so I'm not scared to take the same shot again and keep having confidence to keep shooting. What I don't want to hear is why are you shooting that shot? Why did you make that pass? Give me the ball here. There were teammates I've had in the past who was a good shooter who injured his wrist and just didn't play the same ever since. And then he would be demanding the ball and I'd be like no don't tell me what to do because I'm shooting and I don't have faith in your shot, shut up, and that irritates me. If I get grief from someone, they might be right if I'm playing bad, but I won't let that lay. It's a motivator for me and I want to show them whose boss.

Researcher – What about with goals or expectations you have for yourself?

Participants – It's definitely good when I meet them. Sometimes bad when I don't meet them. Depending on the situation. Sometimes I feel like I'm meeting a different set of criteria and even though the coach is the coach, I feel they aren't always on the same page as me, I don't feel like I understood. But I feel confident in myself that I can disregard it because what I'm saying has worked and if it ends up working, for example, the coach has run a play and I've spotted something different on the court and it ends up working, because it hasn't worked the last two times and my play ended up working then, I feel good. Even though they are the coach and I have to have a certain level of respect for you but if I can see something on the court you can't, then I need to have the confidence in myself to make the adjustment.

Researcher – Do you go into every session with the same expectations for yourself?

Participant – In principle I don't like to drop, I like to adapt them so if I'm feeling kind of painful in my knees, I shift from a scoring focus that requires more physical work on legs, I'll try and change it to setting up my teammates or getting better assists or finding the right pass or play for the team to get us in a better position to score. I do expect to have the same impact but just not in the same way. If I don't hit the levels I should be hitting I get frustrated and try to fix it. I have been fatigued before and not done well and I've recognised the fact that I'm tired and not been as frustrated as I would be at 100% but I still expect myself to perform to a higher level. I still want to have an impact so I'll ensure as long as I'm doing something for the team at my expected level then that's good enough.

Researcher – Does tiredness, energy levels, fatigue impact you in training?

Participant – Yes. The majority of the time when I'm fatigued I will train worse.

Researcher – Do surroundings and facilities make a difference?

Participants – Not that much. There are courts and rims I prefer more than others. The rim might be softer. Older style rims I don't like as the ball would clang off it and it was more difficult to score. But I still expected myself to play as well and shoot as accurately and finish better but I played appallingly but I still had the expectation. The court affected me but it was just a bad game for me, it was a bad week. It doesn't really matter where I practice as I will adjust.

Researcher – Are your coaches positive or negative and does that have an effect on you or your team?

Participant – A mixture of both and yeah, but it depends. There's been times when coach was negative if things were going badly, not saying I suck or anything, it was more like things are going badly what are you going to do about it? He pins the responsibility on me because I was the main point guard and it is my responsibility to carry and lift up the team. It actually helped me a lot as I enjoy responsibility as it gives me a task and purpose. It's easier to have a goal I can envisage. There's been other times when coaches say you are messing up, you don't listen to me, you're doing this wrong and I don't respond well to that as I find it difficult. There are obviously times when I have made mistakes or not done the right thing in the coach's mind and I understand. He was very arrogant and he didn't think he ever did anything wrong and the players were perfect and everything would work out ok if the players did what he said and when it didn't work he would point to another reason for failure like me or someone else and I didn't respond well to that because if something isn't working why can't you adjust. Whereas my other coach said to me what you going to do about it, it was a lot more flexible and there were times he said to me even if the play doesn't work out we need to get good shots and if I had to force things a little more than usual then that's acceptable because you are able to create for yourself. The fact he gave me more options made it easier for me to respond to him in a more positive way regardless of the negative approach he had.

Researcher – Are you afraid to make errors if your coach is going to get angry?

Participant – Yes and no. I know I'm going to make mistakes but I'm afraid to over do that. There's always a margin for error but there's a cap, like in turnovers. There was a point last

year when I was averaging six or seven turnovers a game and my coach said to me that can't run, regardless of how bad an opposing team is, you cannot allow yourself any more than three or four on a bad day. That was ok. There were times I would turn it over and I would get down and really messed up but its ok, its similar to having a goal there and he was saying to me like you are an elite player and hold yourself to a set standard and that helped me to think about it in a way where I made sure that I tried to keep my turnovers as low as possible regardless of the situation or the pressure from the other team.

Researcher – Does your coach dictate the mood?

Participant – Good moods usually spreads. A bad mood, it does tend to start off like that because if he's in a bad mood then you're more likely to run but a lot of the time I try to pick it up in the sense of come on guys it's all fine, but making it clear that we still need to get a good practice out of it. A lot of the time if we are still working hard and still going at it despite of coaches mood his mood tends to change and adapts to it and he feels more positive towards us as we are still clearly motivated irrespective of what's caused him to be in a bad mood before. I'd say coach good moods are infectious.

Researcher – Does your training reflect in to your matches?

Participant – Yes. Eight times out of ten if I'm training well then I'm playing well.

Researcher – What would your perfect training environment look like?

Participant – I prefer a loud coach, not constantly shouting for no reason but one of my coaches for under 16s, he just spoke a lot and always positive, like this is what we need to do to get better and this is how we are going to improve and this is how you are going to hold yourself to this standard. That constant reinforcement makes it easier. Obviously it had to come from the leaders on the team, he couldn't be the only one talking but he always had that mind-set even if he had to stop the session and cuss someone out, it helped as there was a general atmosphere of competitiveness which is designed to improve us as players and push us to get better. He had the same goals as us and was energetic and positive. There needs to be chemistry. We are all going to mess up and obviously we can't just be blindly positive but there needs to be a kind of constructive chemistry to the point where people don't mind being held accountable. Last year my friend would be happy to tell me if I messing up or if I was doing something wrong. He didn't have to be rude to me he would just say you're messing up so fix it or if I said something to him and it didn't sit well he would say I needed to approach it differently and

this is what you should say. We were both willing to listen to each other and adapt for the sake of improving and as a team made it a lot easier for us to get along because we can settle issues within a few seconds and move on.

Researcher – How did you make that chemistry?

Participant – I don't know how we make that chemistry. I knew him for two years and we hung out a lot. We were on the same page. You don't have to be as good as me and I can be worse than you. We both have it in our heads the goal of improvement and getting somewhere with basketball and we are willing to listen to each to develop.

Researcher – Ok, anything else?

Participant – It also needs to be loud, when it's quiet I feel uncomfortable because people are supposed to be working. I have been told in the past that a quiet gym is a loser's gym and it has just stuck with me. I don't feel natural if it's quiet as you are supposed to be communicating constantly with each other during matches and training is supposed to be harder than a match so why would training be quiet? Everyone should be communicating, supporting each other, talking to each other, it doesn't have to be coherent you can even just shout things like 'ball ball ball, help help help'. It doesn't have to be great speech. Just something positively generated, positively motivated, a place where you are trying to communicate with teammates for improvement.

Researcher – What about a bad training environment?

Participant – When people are frustrated and not able to listen. I've played with a lot of players who refuse to be held accountable and it's irritating, they always have an excuse or an answer back and get in the last word and that is frustrating. I might say something to you, even though you are a better player, that I recognise to help you as things might not be as good as there were and that person just doesn't want to know and says I'm doing this because of this or that, I don't need to hear it, as I'm not doing it to put you down. I'm trying to help as I'm on your team. I don't like the excuse giving all the time, I hate it. People who are not going hard and working and there's no competitive spirit or edge and when people have no spirit. If we are playing three on three in training, I want to win, the whole point of any competitive game is to win so why is it that people are ok with losing and if you are ok losing in training then you are ok losing in a game because if we go at each other in training and it gets harder and harder you are forced to improve. If you have a need to win then you are naturally always going to compete but when the competitive

edge isn't there I don't like that in training. People who are scared to ask questions, which ties into being accountable and wanting to improve. In training, if something has gone wrong then it's ok to ask. Also always communicating, people who don't open their mouth I don't like it. Probably when coaches point the finger in a not so constructive way I don't like it. As a coach you are supposed to be a figure head, a kind of level headedness in a sense. Even if things aren't going to well you can talk to the person and say it in a way that will lead to improvement but coaches that don't have that just, it was like he was childish saying you don't do this and this is why the play didn't work, it's your fault. That's great but for him to get better he needs to know how to get better and how to improve rather than the coach saying his play was perfect but you didn't run it right, it's not going to get anything out of anyone. If you humiliate players, then the whole team is going to go against you and if the coach and the players aren't on the same page then god knows what is going to happen.

APPENDIX B: Study Two Audit Trail

A Case Study of Factors Influencing Performance in the Practice Environment

This appendix details the audit trail for study two. The contents of the study two audit trail is listed below:

1. Ethical approval
2. Participant information sheet
3. Informed consent form
4. Interview schedule
5. Focus group one transcription
6. Focus group two transcription
7. Head coach transcription
8. Assistant coach transcription
9. Teacher transcription
10. Head of sport transcription
11. Strength and conditioning coach transcription
12. Study two raw data
13. Reflexive journal

Thursday 7th November 2017

Steve Smith

Department of Sport and Exercise,
University of Winchester,
Sparkford Road, Winchester, SO22 4NR

Dear Steve Smith,

Re: Faculty of Business, Law and Sport RKE Ethics Application [BLS/17/29]

Title: Case study of an holistic practice environment in sport

Thank you for your submission to the University of Winchester, Faculty of Business Law and Sport (BLS) ethics panel.

On behalf of the Faculty of BLS RKE Ethics Committee I am pleased to advise you that the ethics of your application have been approved. Approval is for five years and is for the documentation submitted for review on 07/12/17. If the project has not been completed within five years from the date of this letter, re-approval must be requested.

If the nature, content, location, procedures or personnel of your approved application change, please advise the Head of the Faculty BLS ethics committee.

Yours sincerely



Dr James Faulkner
Head of Ethics in Faculty BLS
University of Winchester

Participant Information Sheet: A Case Study of Environmental Factors Influencing Performance in Student-Athlete Basketball Players

This study has been approved by the University of Winchester ethics committee.

Researcher and contact details:

Researcher: Steve Smith

Email: S.Smith7.15@unimail.winchester.ac.uk

Telephone: 07737 719551

If at any point during the study you have any questions, you may contact the researcher (Steve Smith), or if at any point during the study you feel something is wrong or have any concerns you can contact the project leader or chair of the University Research and knowledge exchange ethics committee, Dr Maru Mormina.

What is the purpose of the study?

This study aims to analyse the holistic psychological practice environment that student-athlete basketball players experience. This study gathers perceptions from individuals involved in the practice environment in any capacity with data being gathered through face to face interviews and focus groups. There is a significant gap in the understanding of the practice environment and how it can influence player performance in practice and competition.

Who is doing this research and why?

The Department of Sport and Exercise at the University is conducting this research as part of a post graduate research project.

Once I take part, can I change my mind?

Yes. You can withdraw at any time, for any reason and you will not be asked to explain your reasons for withdrawing.

Will I be required to attend any sessions?

You will be asked to attend either an interview or focus group that is at an acceptable time and within the college facilities. Interviews will take place in private but in a room with at least one glass wall panel.

How long will it take?

Each interview or focus group is expected to last between 60-90 minutes.

Will my taking part in this study be kept confidential?

Please be assured that all the information you give will be retained in the highest confidentiality and will only be used for the purpose of this research and any publications related to this research. You will not be identifiable from any publication or dissemination of results of the project with data being anonymised by the main researcher during the transcription of interview/focus group. All interviews and focus groups will be audibly recorded and deleted once transcription has taken place. The information you provide will be stored securely under the Data Protection Act (1998).

Informed Consent Form

(To be completed after Participant Information Sheet has been read)

The purpose and details of this study have been explained to me. I understand that this study is designed to further scientific knowledge and that all procedures have been approved by the University of Winchester Ethical Advisory Committee.

I have read and understood the information sheet and this consent form.

I have had an opportunity to ask questions about my participation.

I understand that I am under no obligation to take part in the study.

I understand that I have the right to withdraw from this study at any stage for any reason, and that I will not be required to explain my reasons for withdrawing.

I understand that all the information I provide will be treated in strict confidence and will be kept anonymous and confidential to the researchers unless (under the statutory obligations of the agencies which the researchers are working with), it is judged that confidentiality will have to be breached for the safety of the participant or others.

I agree to participate in this study

Your name

Your signature

Signature of researcher

Date

Semi-Structured Focus Group Guide (Players)

This is based upon player perceptions of what positively and negatively influences their performance in practice.

Questions are asked to all participants

How old are you?

How many years involved with this team?

How is current overall team performance?

Are you happy with competition performance?

How is practice performance?

Does practice performance reflect competition performance?

Any examples?

How do you measure practice session success?

Do you always expect to practice to the same standard?

Has anything happened recently in practice that you think led to a good performance (individual or team)?

What factors positively influenced team performance in practice?

Has anything happened recently in practice that you think led to a poor performance (individual or team)?

What factors negatively influenced team performance in practice?

What are the greatest positive impacts upon player performance during practice?

From all areas, exhaust all factors from all participants

What are the greatest negative impacts upon player performance during practice?

From all areas, exhaust all factors from all participants

Have you ever experienced reacting to negative situations positively?

Could be in the same session or over a week or so

And why do you think this happens?

Have you ever experienced reacting to positive situations negatively?

Could be in the same session or over a week or so

And why do you think this happens?

Do you have any final suggestions for creating a perfect practice environment to enhance performance?

Could be to enhance a positive or eradicate/decrease a negative

Semi-Structured Interview Guide (Coach)

This is based upon coach perceptions of what they do and what they see happening to player performance in practice.

How old are you?

How many years involved with this team?

How many years coaching?

How is current overall team performance?

Are you happy with competition performance?

How is practice performance?

Does practice performance reflect competition performance?

Any examples?

How do you measure practice session success?

Has anything happened recently in practice that you think led to a good performance (individual or team)?

What factors positively influenced team performance in practice?

Has anything happened recently in practice that you think led to a poor performance (individual or team)?

What factors negatively influenced team performance in practice?

What are the greatest positive impacts upon player performance during practice?

How do players act? What do they do?

What are the greatest negative impacts upon player performance during practice?

How do players act? What do they do?

What do you do to increase player performance in practice?

Are players different / do you treat people differently

Upon reflection, what have you done in the past that has caused the team to perform poorly?

How have you adapted anything recently that went poorly?

Is there anything else that you believe occurs to players in practice that is positive upon performance?

What do players do that results in positive performance?

Is there anything else that you believe occurs to players in practice that is negative upon performance?

What do players do that results in negative performance?

Have you noticed players reacting to negative situations positively?

Could be in the same session or over a week or so

And why do you think this happens?

Have you noticed players reacting to positive situations negatively?

Could be in the same session or over a week or so

And why do you think this happens?

Do you have any final suggestions for helping maximize player's chances for performing well in practice?

Semi-Structured Interview Guide (Support Staff)

This is based upon staff perceptions of what they do and what they see happening to player performance in their environment.

How old are you?

How many years involved with this team?

How are things going with the team's performance at the moment?

Are you happy with training performance?

Does practice performance or attitude or effort reflect competition performance?

Any examples?

How do you measure practice session success?

What are the greatest positive impacts upon player performance during practice?

How do players act? What do they do?

What are the greatest negative impacts upon player performance during practice?

How do players act? What do they do?

What do you do to increase player performance in training/practice?

Are players different / do you treat players differently / examples of when players are not performing well and what you do?

Upon reflection, what have you done that causes poor performance?

How have you adapted anything recently that went poorly?

Is there anything else that you believe occurs to players in or before practice that produces a positive performance?

Is there anything else that you believe occurs to players in or before practice that produces a negative performance?

Do you have any final suggestions for helping players maximize their chances for performing well in practice?

Focus Group One Transcription

Focus group date: 19/01/2018

Focus group length: 93 minutes (including warm-up discussion)

Participant details:

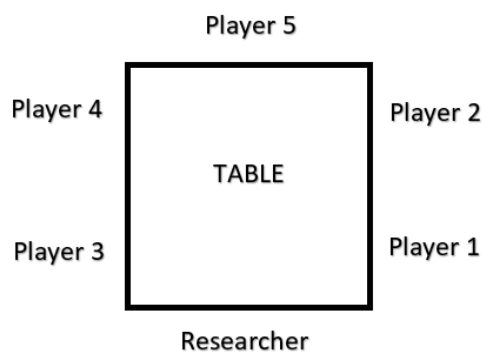
Player 1. Age: 16 years old. Experience in this environment: First year

Player 2. Age: 17 years old. Experience in this environment: Second year

Player 3. Age: 17 years old. Experience in this environment: Second year

Player 4. Age: 18 years old. Experience in this environment: Third year

Player 5. Age: 18 years old. Experience in this environment: Third year



Researcher – Does practice performance reflect your performance in competition?

Player 2 – The harder you work in practice will transfer into working harder in a game, work harder for your teammates to try and win the game, to give you the best chance of winning. If you try really hard in what you do every time you play basketball then when you come to a game it will be the same level. There will be effort.

Researcher – So it's what you do every day that will make you perform well?

Player 4 – It doesn't mean we are going to play well, it means we are putting in effort and other players on the team see that and it reflects on their effort and overall as a team we become better. So if you put 100% effort every time in practice, eventually the competition is going to be higher between the players in practice and then everyone will get better. As a team everybody improves if the effort is there.

Player 1 – If no one cares or puts in the effort then no one is going to get better, like, it's simple really. If you get used to pushing hard and playing hard all the time then we do well in the game.

Researcher – How do you respond to people putting in effort in practice?

Player 3 – It's motivating, it kind of makes you work harder as well if they are working hard as well. We will bounce off of other people. If he is putting in effort then I will probably work harder because it's what everyone is doing.

Player 5 – I don't think I'll also put in effort if only a few players are working. The other day [player name removed] was really working hard because he didn't have a match the day before as he didn't get selected. The rest of us [players who did play in the match] took it easy and he was running round like a lunatic, he isn't that good, we just carried on. So it depends on who's working hard.

Researcher – If there's a player on your team in the same position as you and they are playing well, what do you think about that?

Player 1 – They are motivating you to try and play at their level or even better than them so it motivates you to play better. But also to try and uphold the standard they are playing at, you know they are playing on your team and that's where you want to be.

Player 3 – It ain't great but I hate losing out to a teammate in my position, depends if they are good or not. If they are much better then that's fair enough but I don't think there's anyone to take my place. Like last year, the coach put this other guy ahead of me for the first game and it was stupid.

Player 2 – I think that if a teammate is working hard that's good. But I can see how it can get to you. Like, I think it's really good if they bring high energy. If I'm up against a teammate I'm competing with to get a starting spot and they are working really hard it makes me put in more effort. I'll work a lot more if I'm worried about my place. But saying it's good when you can relax but I guess you can get a bit complacent.

Researcher – What comes first team or individual?

Three participants responded with team

Player 5 – I reckon individual if you can make your teammates better. So if you keep working hard yourself then others will follow, if I keep helping and supporting everyone then that will help others to pick up.

Researcher – Do team players sacrifice their own development for the team?

Player 2 – It depends on what area you are trying to develop. If you are trying to develop individually then you are going to transfer it into the game and then you can help your team.

Player 4 – I feel it depends upon what you are working on and watching and analysing a game, the mistakes we made as a team, and if you are training by yourself with one on one moves or shooting I feel that's more individual. You do benefit your team but it also makes you more of an individual player other than a team player. If you get isolated then that's bad. The team focus does need to be first so it's important to get that as well.

Player 1 – When I play in a team I enjoy it more. I'd rather practice with lesser ability high effort players than with higher ability low effort players. I can't take it when people don't try. Like, I wouldn't want to play with low level players who are try-hards but I'd much rather play with high effort players over arrogant players who don't think they need to try and have their own agenda.

Player 3 – It's ok to be confidence but don't think you are the best or that you don't need to try. There's not one stand out player who is so good they don't need to try. I think that even the best players in the country need to try when they play, if they don't they ain't going to be able to play to the level they're at.

Researcher – Would you sacrifice your own development for that of team?

Player 1 – Say a teammate is struggling to shoot and you want to rebound for them and you aren't doing anything, then I guess you can help them out. If you don't have a specific thing, obviously they have a specific thing to be working on, to develop, if they have something to work on then and if you haven't you might as well help them because you're not clear of what you need to develop and improve on at the moment.

Player 2 – You can always work on something though. Like if you helped rebound then you can switch and get some practice of that skill in as well. I don't really want to just help someone out when I want to do something else. There's players that just play for themselves, like in games when they play for themselves that happens in training as well.

Player 5 – It can depend on how selfish someone is. He [teammate] would only look for himself to score, he only cared about himself. On the other hand, [name removed] would always have your back and they would go for the team over themselves. I don't know if it

helps you to develop or not but I guess it helps the team. I don't think I'm selfish for the team but I do want to always do well.

Player 4 – I would [help a teammate] but deep down I'd be thinking why am I doing this? I'm more of an individual person, I care more about myself than anybody else deep down. If someone asked me to help them then I know I'll just get bored and think why? I reckon most players are like that.

Player 1 – But if you do it for not only them but do it for yourself and maybe get something out of it. So like enough if you are rebounding maybe you could work on your rebounding position because if you are helping you might as well practice for yourself. Then maybe you get something out of it so it's not just benefiting them but also you. Also as a first year you are more like a role player than a team player so it's more for development anyway so as a first year I feel like I'm just developing at the moment so you wouldn't expect to get as many minutes as you would expect to get.

Researcher – Are you happy about that?

Player 1 – I accept it but I'm not necessarily happy about it but it's something that I have to put up with because I know my time will come and it's a development year but then I feel like if I'm not playing then how do I get that development and the feel to play at a higher level?

Player 3 – I don't get a huge amount of time, which sucks. I guess you need to have that to make sure you compete but I'm not that motivated at the moment. I'll need to keep trying to work for myself and make sure I train on the things that I need to do.

Researcher – In situations when you practice well, what are the positive influences you experience?

Player 3 – You just feel more confident in yourself. Say that you are scoring, you feel like no one can stop you scoring, so you keep scoring. You get to that by practicing by myself and working on bits of my game that I was struggling on. I think it can have a positive effect on the team as well because if they see you working hard then they are going to work harder to try and take your place so then the standard will increase over the course of the training session. Because if they see you having a good session then they are going to try and get up to you.

Player 4 – I feel that's more individual basis because some people say oh he's having a great session and I'm having a bad one so why should I even try. I've been in that situation, I've been having a really bad session and someone else has been doing really good and I felt like I wasn't motivated, he's doing better than me so I just give up. Sometimes it just gets in your head, you miss once or twice and then you miss a lay-up, they foul you and it doesn't get called, you get a turnover, it just grows up in your head. That's just me, if I make a mistake over and over again it just gets in my head so I feel like even if say, [player name removed] doing really well all I care about in that moment is me and what am I doing. I don't care about some else out working me, I just care about what's next. I just care about my mistakes and not my teams, until the coach stops us and discusses it, that's different. If the coach says stop doing this and that, that's different and I only care about myself. Sometimes I can't control the errors I'm making and I get really angry with myself. I feel that was last year more than this, and I'm more composed this year but still. It still gets me though.

Player 5 – I used to not be able to control my errors, although I feel that was more last year. I'm more confident and composed now if I start badly. I just put in more effort. I try and work as hard as I can all the time. Like effort, effort, effort. I think there are a few of us who have got better from last year in that sense. Like, we have developed in a way that we are better.

Researcher – Why is that?

Player 5 – experience of playing at that level

Player 2 – We have done a lot of work on errors, the mental side of recovering from negative things, like the negative spiral.

Researcher – What influences have affected you positively recently, within practice?

Player 3 – I think it's having a good warm-up and if you do a good move and finish it then you just feel you can do it again. Just keep going from there. If I do well in first few minutes then I will probably play well.

Player 2 – I feel like the coach will have an effect on it as well. Because if the coach is motivating you from the side-lines, giving you motivation to do something in a drill, then you will try and do your best and that will lead you to having a good session.

Player 4 – I agree and disagree because sometimes certain people are motivated differently. If the coach tells you off, you're doing this bad and that, they just go off, and you don't want to keep going. But there's people... me personally I get upset and get deep in my thoughts, I over think things, just keep thinking about the errors and the negative, like why do I bother to do this and this, it just gets in my head. But I know people who get motivated by that and it depends on the person and how they are motivated. Also, I don't really see all the guys socially as friends outside of basketball but I think by now I know how they all tick inside. If you know what someone's going to do, like, what they are going to react like, then that helps everyone know.

Player 2 – I'd say that's a big one, to know what people need, how they need to be talked to, there's some people that blow up if you give them any negativity.

Player 1 – I was training one time in defensive work and it was just get in the lane, and I thought that I don't need to get in the lane because I know my person is not a shooter but I'm still getting yelled at to get to the lane to stop the person and then I got shouted out constantly until I actually made a steal and that's when you get motivation, so it depends on how you take criticism really from a coach. If they are shouting at you, some players might find that... like I don't really want to do that or someone might take that as I need to do this now and maybe then I'll get rewarded for it so that's how I felt, like let me do something quick and hopefully I'll get that lucky tip pass and it will continue from there and start rolling on from there.

Researcher – So when you were receiving negative criticism, did you think you can't do it?

Player 1 – I felt more angry at myself because I can do it but based on the person I was marking I shouldn't, but then I was just doing it for the sake of he's telling me what to do so I should just do it in the first place so let me do it, try it and see what happens from there. Because I felt angry that I wasn't doing it but then I felt even angrier that I know they could be a better outcome and that's why he is shouting at me for not doing it because he has experience and he's trying to tell me what to do to make me better.

Researcher – Difference between a player who can handle negative and those who can't?

Player 4 – They are mentally stronger than the other person. For example, I know I am mentally weak, when someone says something it gets straight to me because I'm just an angry person. But I know people that can just take it. I know people, like Aaron, you can tell him anything and it won't affect his game, but he could say one little thing to me and my

head could go off so I feel like he is more mentally strong. The stronger you are mentally the better you perform, but then you also got times when coaches criticise you and you are already doing bad and it just doesn't work so I don't know. It's not always positive for them but as they are more mentally strong they are just better and perform under pressure better. Not maybe under pressure but better under criticism. I feel a mentally strong person can have negatives which there turn into positives.

Player 3 – I just try and react to negative feedback, not like in a negative way but take it as feedback and try and just do what I've been told.

Player 2 – It depends on how you think and feel about it. Because if someone is telling you stuff you know you should be doing then you are just going to get mad at that person because you know what you done wrong and you can't help it and you are trying to correct the mistake but they are just getting on at you for making it and you are like yeah but just let me try and deal with it. You aren't doing it on purpose.

Player 4 – It happened to me yesterday, I rebounded the ball and the ball went out of bounds and one of the players was like come on mate and coach stopped me straight away and pointed out that that wasn't correct. I mean I wasn't deliberately trying to get it outside. You'd have to be stupid to do something like that on purpose. But then there are certain people who tell you off for stuff they do wrong as well so sometimes I don't take criticism from certain players because if I see them doing the wrong thing and they are telling me off for doing the same thing in my opinion that's hypocritical and I don't take it, I just let them say it and try and block it out but sometimes you just can't, sometimes you just have bad days and burst out because you know how emotions just build up and then you have the anger reaction at the end of it.

Player 1 – But then sometimes you just have to think about it in the heat of the movement and they are saying it in the moment of the game with the emotions flying around but at the end of the day people don't really mean it in that sense. So maybe a coach will give you some criticism that may seem negative and harsh but he's saying it to benefit you and he's not saying that you are bad or terrible but he's saying that it is a mistake but you can fix it if you do this (that's feedback not criticism and what was being discussed before!) but obviously if he is even shouting at you it may come across negative but it's just whether or not you can change it into a positive message.

Researcher – Are you negative on the court to others?

Player 5 – I feel like I try to be positive most of the time but in my head I feel sometimes I'm angry and like why did you do that [teammate error]. But then I just got to remember to shut my mouth and that I make mistakes too and yeah they are trying their best so I try and be positive.

Player 1 – I hate it when they [players] are mucking around and not putting it in. (importance of effort being put in) and encourage everyone.

Player 4 – I get someone who makes the exact mistake that I have made and deep down I'm just thinking oh god why are you making the same mistake, why are you doing this and that, but no one's perfect and no one will never ever not make a mistake, in basketball and in life. So you can't really tell someone off for making a mistake that you made before or just in general. I feel like it depends on how you point out the mistake as well. If its beneficial to them, like if someone goes for a layup and misses and they say why did you miss then that's not beneficial but if you tell them what the correct technique is or give them drills to do then this will benefit them in the future and how to get better. There's different ways you can come to that negativity I guess.

Researcher – Ever give someone negativity?

Player 3 – No not really.

Player 2 – I do sometimes. Because I expect better from them, they've made a mistake and I'm thinking that you are on this team for a reason and you are better than that one silly mistake but like everyone has been saying no one is perfect and you are bound to make mistakes whatever you do.

Researcher – Is it because you have an expectation of them and if they don't hit it, it annoys you?

Player 2 – A little bit.

Player 4 – I wouldn't say it annoys you really badly, it's sometimes just the moment really.

Player 2 – Sometimes it's just the heat of the moment where you are just trying to get the best out of your team, you just some stuff you don't really mean.

Player 4 – Or sometimes you are just really tired. I feel like you say stuff when you are tired that you don't want to or that you wouldn't say when you are fresh. I feel like when I'm tired everything gets to me more, more emotional, just like everything is more deep, stronger.

Researcher – What gets you tired?

Player 1 – I mean it's more like when you are up against it, and the other team keeps on scoring it feels like that's fatiguing you more but once you get in a rhythm and you start scoring then it gives you a boost and it's like ok we can do this now. It picks it up. But when you are constantly missed a layup, you've fouled someone, it feels like everything goes down, it's not the sense in running up and down that makes you tired, it's the fact that you keep missing or a team keeps scoring and you don't know how to stop that.

Researcher – So it's more of a mental tiredness?

Player 1 – It's a bit of both, it's the physical and mental fatigue from trying to work out how to stop and person or a team from scoring because you know how to stop them but it's the fact of getting there physically and also knowing mentally how to get there quickly and stop them. One of the best things we have done is practice tired. It's good to compete at the end of a session as it's just like it would be in a game, very physical and tough. It's good to see if you can still do what you need to do.

Player 4 – I just think it's a thinking process really. So sometimes you can be totally physically fit but if you aren't thinking well you are still going to make the same mistake and you are going to get upset so if you have both... (Inaudible)

Researcher – do you train better on some days than others?

Player 4 – No, sometimes just train really well and others on sometimes I don't. It's not like on a Tuesday I'm really good or on Friday I'm really good at this and this it's literally some days you feel it and some you don't, that's how I am, I don't know if that's what you guys are like. I couldn't tell you what influences that.

Player 2 – When you are tired I feel you won't train as well as if you are fresh. This weekend the under 18s had 2 games and on the Monday I was so tired and my legs just ache and I can't really play as well as I would say if I had a day's rest then Monday I would be fresher because I have had a rest day and its given my body time to recover and just play.

Player 1 – I think it also depends on your nights rest and the food you get on board because some days I might get to bed at 9pm and ill wake up at 5am and I feel awake, I haven't had anything to eat but I feel awake, then have some cereal and go to college. I do the morning session and I'm still feeling fresh after having a shower and I feel like I'm

having a good day. I go to bed at the same time every night because I like to wake up early and have time before practice. Although, on other days, rarely, I'll wake up and hit the snooze button and keep hitting it because I just can't be bothered to get out of bed and its maybe not because of the nights rest before, maybe I might to go bed at the same time, but its maybe I struggled to go to bed but it's also food and water and hydration. Just some days you wake up feeling good and other days you feel it's just not going to be good that day.

Player 4 – Rest does have some kind of impact, I did say no but now I've been thinking about it and rest does have impact. There's some night I only get 3 or 4 hours in and the next day you are feeling really tired so yeah I'd say that, and you don't practice as well. Sleeping has a factor, I don't know about eating but sleep does for me. But I think that's individually based as well.

Researcher – Most positive influences?

Player 4 – I would say that if you are having a good day in basketball it will be a good week for you, it makes you happy really. If I play or training well then it makes you feel really happy throughout the week and if anything happens to me after then, like if I have a great session Monday and on Friday someone bumps into me in the corridor id be alright because I have a great week. I'd be happy because of that one specific session. I've done everything right, I feel like basketball will make you happy so I feel if you have one good session it makes me feel better.

Player 1 – Early night rest because you will be getting up early in the morning for training, so if you wake up feeling fresh as well as getting to college and listening to some good music just before the practice to get you in the mood. It gets you ready to practice, it puts you in that state where you want to play and is game like but it's not... it's kind of like a hype type music, to put you ready to play. I don't know how to describe it but it just does. It doesn't have to be something loud and excitable it can be something relaxing and chilled.

Player 4 – I think you can do it (music) on the way you feel. Some days you can wake up and just feel like listening to something in particular, or sometimes it can just be like I'm having a relaxing day so I'll listen to something relaxing, Music does put you in the zone if you listen to it before practice. It puts you in a good mood and gets you ready.

Player 2 – I listen to music but I don't think music can have that big of an effect. I think the warm-up has more of an effect because if you have an effective warm-up you are going to feel like in the game (practice) you will be ready, let's go do this now.

Researcher – What is an effective warm-up?

Player 2 – Doing everything game sharp, getting your teammates motivated and getting yourself motivated, whether that be you just going to the rim and finishing, whether it be you clapping and shouting at everyone, giving loads of team touches, and then doing game shots and seeing the ball going in as well, I think that has a big impact on you as well. If you see the ball going in then you are going to have a lot of confidence and in the game you are going to be confident to shoot it and you are going to make the shot.

Researcher – What's a stronger indicator of performance, general or the ball going in?

Player 2 – I think it's how you feel as you may only have 4 points but with other stats you might have like 10 rebounds or 5 assists and those maybe a key factor to you winning the game.

Player 1 – Or even when you are playing (a game), you might not have any points or assists (this seems different from game to practice – in practice there's been more talk about seeing the outcome) but you know you played good defence, you've stopped your player from doing what he wants to do, just forcing other ways and watching the opponents miss and you are just running the floor. Also it's like, in the warm-up, is being loud and cheering everyone on, if you do that then they will all follow and do that as well and you create an atmosphere that puts the whole team on a level, or the same page.

Player 4 – I agree but I disagree as well. Some people are just not loud. Me personally, I'm loud, but then you got people on the team that won't say a word in the warm-up but that doesn't mean they won't get motivated in the warm-up. For instance, Aaron never says a word in the warm-up but it doesn't mean he will have a bad game so you don't have to be loud to have a good warm-up but some people do get motivated when it's loud. For example I do, I get motivated when it's nice and loud in the warm-up.

Researcher – What about areas you would cut out to make it better?

Player 2 – Negative comments from other players.

Player 4 – If you could block that out, if there's one thing you could do to block out certain players comments it would be perfect, my head wouldn't go off and even if I made a

thousand misses id be alright (interesting reference to the impact of others – but without negative comments would the player be too relaxed and happy to keep missing?). Certain comments people make is the real impact really.

Player 1 – If you could bloke out negative comments that would be nice. Some players they take the negative comments and might get angry about it and take it to heart but at the end of the day you got to know that it's not actually directed towards your ability as a basketball player (interesting comment?) but more like at that moment in time. But if you bloke that out entirely then training would be so breezy, because people would be motivating saying come on you got this. They believe in you rather than teammates who criticise you all the time because it will pile up and make you angry because you never get praise about doing good things. Because sometimes people put in the work but other players don't see that, like it might not show on the court but you know you are putting in the work and all you get is criticism for it.

Player 4 – I've never met anyone who's been upset about someone motivating them (positively?) but I know people who get upset about people demotivating them (do people know what demotivates someone?). So if you are motivating everyone and everyone is motivating each other then it's just going to have a good impact on everyone.

Researcher – Do you think it's worth a whole team understanding that this player responds to this and so on?

Player 4 – Yes, that would be perfect. There people like me who get angry and then there people like Aaron who can take all the criticism you can give him, so if everyone knew those barriers then that would be perfect.

Player 2 – I think the way you speak to people as well and the way they react to it, everyone's being saying that you react to someone shouting at them and other people might curl up and go into their shell if you shout at them. They might just need a quiet word, like come on just get this now.

Player 4 – Speak to people the way you want to be spoken to. If you treat everyone respectfully then that's what you should be expecting, that's in life as well. In college if I speak to a teacher respectfully and they don't treat me with respect then I'll be thinking what's the point. So I think everyone should give what they want back.

Player 2 – There's one thing that happened the other day that proper annoyed me after the game. We lost a game we should have won. Next practice only a few of us were angry

and annoyed. Most of the younger players didn't even seem bothered. If they don't care then what's the point of them even playing.

Researcher – Is negativity taken on board over long term got you to where you are now?

Player 1 – I think I have, when I was a little bit younger I was a bit taller than everyone else but everyone was like yeah you are a centre, you are a big man. But now that I've come to college they are saying that I'm a guard and I've had negativity because I'm not a guard. I can't dribble or can't shoot and that motivates me to want to get better at those things and being a guard and take on that position and for me when I feel like I want to just take more control of the ball I need to have that experience to play in that role and not be like put down for it for trying to play in that position.

Player 4 – I agree in your way but I kind of disagree because everyone is individual right, as I said everyone gets motivated differently. You might be motivated by someone dissing you but I ain't, I'm not taking that. So it's all individual based. I feel like you can react or not react to certain stuff.

Player 1 – See I'm taking it as a you can't don't this or that, but you show them, like you take that and remember that you said I couldn't do that and then when I can do it I'll show you that I can do it, to just prove you wrong. As the end of the day, it's about how you improve and how you benefit and doesn't matter what people say you can or can't do, it's just what you can control and what you can do from that.

Player 4 – There was a moment this year that I will definitely reflect upon, there was a player on our team, he said I was a scrub, I'm this, I'm that and just started laughing and it really got me. The next week we were at a training session and I did this normal move (on him?) and everyone reacted because everyone knew that he hasn't been treating everybody well and then everyone reacted to him. It made me feel good but I don't think that really motivated me. It motivated the fact that he said that and I paid him back with basketball (so it was motivating!) not verbally or physically (again, seems like the level of basketball is the social measure within the group).

Focus Group Two Transcription

Focus group date: 26/01/2018

Focus group length: 107 minutes (including warm-up discussion)

Participant details:

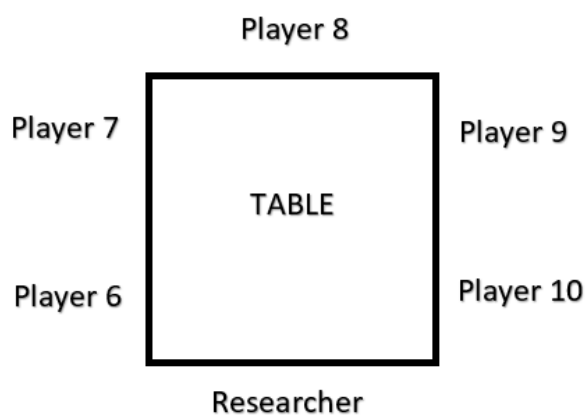
Player 6. Age: 16 years old. Experience in this environment: First year

Player 7. Age: 18 years old. Experience in this environment: Third year

Player 8. Age: 18 years old. Experience in this environment: Third year

Player 9. Age: 18 years old. Experience in this environment: Third year

Player 10. Age: 19 years old. Experience in this environment: Third year



Researcher – How is the team performing currently?

Player 9 – It's ok, it's ok. It's a fairly new team, lots of new players coming in so we needed to work well.

Player 6 – It's been a new team for me and it was tough at the start. It's tough because there's a lot of third year players and it's hard to get into the team, to get a game.

Player 7 – I don't know about others but there's quality in the group this year. Whether we can produce it as a team, continue it into playoffs, I don't know. I think we can do it. We just need to keep it together as sometimes, there's some people, they don't control themselves. The team on the whole right now is decent though, if we play. We beat some good teams.

Researcher – Is practice going well at the moment?

Player 8 – Yes, I think so, it's been good. Like [player name removed] said, we have got a lot of potential in the team.

Researcher – Do you think that practice performance reflects competitive performance?

Player 9 – Yeah, because naturally in training, once you get tired you're training to do certain things that when you get tired in a game you will do naturally. Like bending your knees on defence, if you focus on that in training you won't have to think about doing it in a game. We should be working on those things, it helps us put it towards matches.

Player 10 – When you compete, players tend to keep the same level of competitiveness in and out of training sessions so they won't go in one day, work really hard, and then the next day they are not too bothered about how hard they train. I'll try and keep working to a high level. I don't want to drop my level. I'll keep it high, I'll keep it hard.

Researcher – So it's about keeping to a high level all the time in practice?

Player 10 – Yeah, I think so.

Player 9 – I agree but sometimes you just can't keep it there as you are broken. Like at the end of the week. No matter how hard you try you just can't keep working at that level.

Researcher – Does that frustrate you?

Player 9 – Pretty much, yeah.

Researcher – Has anything happened to you in practice recently that made you play well?

Player 10 – Probably say down to how college goes.

Player 9 – Yeah outside. I know it's not exactly in, during practice, but how well your day outside of practice is going... it's your mind-set going into training and then if that's positive, or sometimes even if it's aggressive, it can benefit you during your training. If I'm on time to all my lessons on a Tuesday two weeks ago and then I went into training and I was feeling pretty good and I played well. If I'm late to lessons then I get in trouble and it annoys me because I know that if I'm late they will tell my coach.

Researcher – Do the coaches and teachers have strong links and communicate to each other?

Player 8 – Yes, all the time. They always talk.

Player 9 – Well, they sit in one room together so they going to talk about things a lot. Some teachers say stuff more than others.

Player 6 – I enjoy the social side of things. The teams good this year as I got a lot of people I like in the team, which hasn't happened too much in the past. It's great when you got good mates in the team. We all support each other far more. If I have a bad session it doesn't bother me as much. I don't feel this pressure to have to perform all the time, like there's no aggressive pressure from others. I prefer playing without a load of pressure. In regards to study, I feel if I stay on top of my studies I feel more relaxed with my basketball. You just got to be on it all the time.

Researcher – Does it get you or the team in trouble if you don't perform outside of practice and basketball?

Player 9 – It gets me in trouble, but it's me going into training, not everyone, it's just me personally going into training. I'm not on the same like... feeling cool headed or anything. I know I'll get in trouble from the coach because he knows what's happened in class might affect how others see the basketball team.

Player 7 – At the start of practice, when we get there 10, 15 minutes early, I start getting my shots up. If I make my shots and make a good percentage, then I feel like I'm going to have a good practice but if I'm not hitting them I let it get to me too much and it plays on my mind throughout the whole practice and I don't want to take the shots I was taking in the warm-up, like hold myself back kind of thing. It pisses me off if the ball doesn't go in the hoop.

Researcher – But aren't you cold not focused at the start of practice and therefore you might not perform to your best?

Player 7 – Yeah maybe, not really thought about it, it's just shooting, you can do that anytime, anywhere.

Player 8 – That's the same with me, my shots going in and I feel better but if I'm missing then I probably won't take the shot. As long as the intensity is up I think we will train well because obviously as a team we want to play together, even if I wasn't playing well but my team was, it would be alright. If the whole team is up for it, it would make me want to play at that level as well.

Player 9 – I think it helps as well if you are hitting your shot because it's not... its more psychological than actually the skill or the technique of the shot because when I'm shooting well before, in drills, especially in drills where they are competitive and you are

shooting, if you see the ball going in, when it comes to playing live I am more confident to, even driving to the basket, it wouldn't just be to shoot.

Player 7 – At the start of practice if you are trying to get your shots up and you are trying to focus on having a good practice and some of you, say the first years dunking on the side hoops and they aren't taking it seriously, it plays on my mind as well. Why am I trying to have a good session when you are there mucking around, it's just going to ruin our session.

Player 6 – The other day, [player name removed] missed about four three-pointers in a row in scrimmage. That's his shot, in practice he's usually solid. After that you could see he was getting annoyed but [player name removed] started shouting at him as they were [the team] down. I just said to him like you got this, you got this, the next one's going in. He had a really bad day that day but I like to think I helped him out.

Player 9 – But I don't think it did help him out. You talking [player name removed] right? He does it all the time, you can't talk to him. Once his head goes it goes, he should just go, get out, go home. Kid needs some serious help. He doesn't ever look at you either, real quite kid. That gets to me a lot as well because you know it's a team sport and its difficult because sometimes, especially in basketball as well, four people can do everything they can to win, and it only takes the one person to drop their level, or a bit of intensity, which kind of messes up the whole team. And knowing that from a game, that can play on your mind in practice or at the beginning of practices.

Researcher – If you see a teammate not taking it seriously what do you do, do you give them negativity and expect a reaction?

Player 10 – Not really, but it would probably come down to encouraging them to like focus or say if you are playing against them kind of teach them that they need to work hard more than you and that may increase minutes in a game, or a coach might see you more and be like oh this guy is working hard and the coach might end up rewarding him for it.

Player 9 – Kind of like motivating them I guess. I don't do it but it depends, certain people I would do it with, not necessarily based upon their skill but based upon my relationship with them, that's important.

Researcher – So the relationships between teammates is important to performance?

Player 9 – Yes. Like I'm more likely to say to [player name removed] if I see him dunking on the side because I know he has a lot of potential that he hasn't really used, where as if I

saw [player name removed], he is playing and scoring a lot in games and is getting more minutes in games than [player name removed], so with him I'm not going to worry much about him. But if I see [player name removed] or someone like [player name removed], I'd say this is why you are not playing.

Researcher – So there may be an understanding of what is acceptable, but maybe not from everyone?

Player 9 – Yeah. And then this is what you could do to play or to get more minutes and to play better and then that might get a change. I've said that sometimes but it's not consistent.

Researcher – If you say someone not putting in the effort, do you say anything?

Player 7 – We had that at the start of the year. We had a meeting to say how we should talk to certain players.

Researcher - What did this meeting involve?

Player 7 – Just like how we should act and communicate and that we are all in this together and it's about the team performing well, not about individuals. So, for me if I'm getting pissed off and not playing well, then you just need to tell me straight but with [player name removed] if you tell him and get on him he doesn't give you a reaction so you need to think about who you are talking to. It's kind of hard with [player name removed] because he just doesn't look at you when you talk to him, he just looks down and does his own thing.

Player 8 – Its real hard, especially because we are not, me particularly [first year player], we don't really know someone on a personal level, and sometimes you can play with someone for 2,3 years and still not really know them.

Researcher – Do you need to have team bonding then to have good practice performance?

Player 8 – It helps with knowing reactions, communication... keeps you in a focus better with the team, and the way we operate together. But because I don't really know people inside out or they don't know me, they might not know it's coming from a positive place and not negative towards them. I'm not like a coach in terms of I haven't studied how to get the best out of everyone so for me, I know [player name removed] and I know I have to just get at him, and I can speak to [player name removed] but [player name removed] doesn't do it all the time, so it's kind of... if it happens and he's messing about I can be real with him but there's some people you can't really be real with, you have to tip toe around

it and coming from a person I know, [player name removed] is like that as well, you have to make an effort to tiptoe around some people and to be nice, but naturally you just want to be able to say, what you doing? But then they might blow up. We are here to get better. I want to put in effort, I respond to teammates working hard.

Researcher – Do you realise you are blowing up?

Player 7 – I know I do. I watch games back and I can see when I blow up. But at the moment I don't know what it is, I know I am blowing up and I just keep doing it. I just get angry and let the red mist set in.

Player 9 – I don't think that's a bad thing. It's good to get angry if you channel it right. Say you are getting beat on, you need to play up, you get angry and it helps me play better. Maybe everyone isn't like me.

Researcher – Have you ever thought about what you can do to channel the anger?

Player 7 – No.

Player 9 – I want to say for me, as well, there's like I've seen... especially because [player name removed] used to blow up as well, not blow up so much but he used to have the same reaction sometimes, like if he didn't get a call or something and I've done it as well. But it's like, I like to see when someone does that, like when [player name removed] blows up, it sounds bad but one time [player name removed] got injured but he was like really pissed about it and it kind of gave me more motivation to win the game and to lock in as a team because I'm thinking as a team aspect, we have lost a man, or if someone is feeling a certain way, shows they are passionate about it which would then want to make you play better. And it's not just you playing better, you want everyone to play better, as [player name removed] said, that gets contagious.

Researcher – What about people in practice who are individual versus team players, which affect your performance?

Player 8 – I think it would be more like a team rather than individuals. I've played with a few individuals before, maybe [player name removed].

Player 7 – Yes, [player name removed] a big one because you can see when you are in transition, a two on one or three on one, he just has tunnel vision and goes for the basket because he wants the points and the stats for himself. Not really team help, doesn't work for the team and everyone.

Player 9 – I don't like talking about it, because is [player name removed] had [player name removed] mentality it would be different because I would feel more comfortable saying that he does that because I'd be able to say it to his face, but it's like saying it in this room now I can't say it in the exact same way to his face because he would just shut down and he would take it personally. But I don't want him to be less selfish for my sake, I want it for the team's sake. In the same way there's a difference because one of my old coaches used to say like... we had a really good player on our team and it was like, some people used to call him selfish but it's like no, the coach told him to take that many shots because that's what required the team to play well and to win. Or to play like that so that everyone else could get shots.

Researcher – Did you guys know that he was the one that the coach would make all the plays for?

Player 9 – Yeah I did. Most of us knew because we were a close...it's what I was saying, it's all about the team as well, everyone being on the same page, like if you have a LeBron on your team, someone that is very good at kind of everything, it's an advantage to use that. You wouldn't say... you wouldn't treat them like a normal player because then they are regressing their... like however many points they are going to score. That's why we like to... he's a shooter so we like to get a shooter shots because that's what they are good at, so you wouldn't necessarily take away from that but I feel that [player name removed] sometimes does it purely because of himself and not because he is good at the thing or at the skill.

Researcher – If there's another player playing better than you in practice, what happens to you?

Player 8 – Probably try and compete, it will make me play harder because if I see someone in front of me it will make me want to get back on the same level or try and beat them. It's more of a motivator for me rather than being a negative.

Player 6 – It depends on who they are, not someone who is worse. I respect most of the guys and if they play hard it makes me play hard. Like, with the older guys... there was a guy I used to play with. He was older and a good player and I liked playing with him and he played well then I played well.

Researcher – What if there was a player who was scoring in games?

Player 8 – I'd be happy for them, I wouldn't be pissed off that they are scoring more than me because as long as we are winning games then I'll be alright.

Researcher – Is that the perfect attitude, if a player is doing well for the team?

Player 10 – It depends, like if they are in your position then like it ain't good, but if it's a big match then yeah. I'd rather be playing so I don't want them to do well.

Player 7 – It's the same for me as well. We have like [player name removed] coming from [college name removed] to train with us tonight and I train with him at under-18s as well last year and whenever he used to score on me or block a shot, it would really like get under my skin. I'm not being big headed but I know I'm bigger and better, you know. I felt I was better than him, hands down, and I shouldn't be letting it happen so I'll run down the floor and I'll hit him with contact. I didn't get selected for one match and it annoyed me. I just had to focus and show the coach I'm better, which I did. I wanted my starting spot. So when it comes to game day I'll get my starting spot and if he comes on for me then yeah I want you to do well because I want the team to do well but I want to start, I want my position.

Player 6 – A while ago I was playing with [teammate name removed]. He was playing well in training and started [the game], I didn't want him to do well but it was a big cup game and we went through. I actually played the next game and did really well. It's not just me though, everyone is the same aren't they? That's just the way it is.

Researcher – So if you are higher in the pecking order you need to stay there?

Player 7 – Yes. And if you aren't then you need to fight to get there. It's good as I want to go to England camps and I want to go up against [player name removed], who's younger than me but he's 112 kg and he's stronger than me, he's probably got a bit more skill than me but I have to really battle.

Researcher – Would your effort not be enough to bet his superior skill?

Player 7 – Not really, I think he has the edge but if I work really hard I can get there, match him... you don't know what could happen, I'll try to be better.

Researcher – In regards to [player name removed] from [college name removed], what if the coach picks him over you?

Player 7 – I'd be pissed off a bit in the moment but when you come off into a game you got to prove your point.

Player 9 – For me, if I see someone, not necessarily... because everyone is different isn't it, so I don't rate players in my head but I will pick things that players are better than me at in training and sometimes this can happen a lot. This can be like a disadvantage, not a disadvantage but in a game you wouldn't really see this because you don't know the opposition, but when I'm playing against [player name removed] or with [same player name removed] and see that he is shooting well, because that's his thing, so I want to be shooting, just the skill itself, as well as [player name removed] or better; it's usually better. But to shoot better than someone who is shooting better than you it's kind of giving me the drive to do so. Then I look at [player name removed] and be like here's a guy, who the guy he's defending hasn't scored all game, so I want to be like, well my guy scored on me, so I want to defend as well as that, and it's kind of picking different things but you can't do it all in one training session but one or two things during a training session or a game situation that you are doing and that's what I think about in training.

Player 10 – I think that if you... someone who is near the same level as you, you can use that as motivation to try and do another thing or hustle harder than them because they might not do it because they might think their at a certain level already, but nowadays most of us players need to not use negative things. Like when coaches get on at us we can't get down on it we need to be like, right I need to work harder for not just myself but for the team. So if you know you are working hard it can channel off into other players and they might go oh, this guy is working hard, and maybe I should be like that as well so it can help everyone and if you put all that in training, come game time one player can start off playing real well and other players think that I need to be like that as well. Then that's how from training that channels into games.

Researcher – If you go up against a weaker player how does that go down?

Player 9 – That gets to me (overall agreement from entire group). The thing is its hard... again I always feel I'm speaking just for myself when I feel like there are certain situations like when there's a certain five guys on the floor at one time I feel like everyone is feeling the same way. But it's when someone is weaker than you, you need to take advantage of it and when they are scoring it just has to stop, it's more of a need than has to type thing. Whereas if they are on the same level you are more accepting of the fact that he got that and you can tell yourself its lucky but deep down you kind of know where their level is at. But it just brings out for me more in terms of wanting to play, whereas some people can shut down from that. I've seen it in training if someone, especially if someone gets at you

for it, oh he shouldn't be scoring on you, and then they just complete block off and the rest of the training session they kind of not there, so you can't be the same.

Researcher – If people are looking at you?

Player 9 – if you are a starter and someone who doesn't really play much, especially with our team because our starters play a lot of minutes, someone who doesn't really play much is like killing you in training, it's like everyone will see it and everyone will say something about it. [Player name removed] is a perfectly good example. In training [player name removed] is real attacking so you want to try and make a point about it.

Player 7 – For me, when people score on me who are weaker than me I think it's because I have that mentality in my head already, it's like yesterday in training we were doing one on ones and I think [player name removed] was going against me and I was playing him for the block and he was getting me with the head fake every time and he was scoring on me and I had that three times in a row and I had that mentality in my head that if you go up you ain't going to beat me at the rim because I'm taller and longer and slightly more athletic and I'll get there but I think I had it in my head that that was what I was going to do already and I thought it was going to be a lot easier than it was and he started scoring on me. But then once I get that mentality out of my head I stay down and lock in, then its fine and I'll play properly.

Player 9 – The other day going up against [teammate name removed], he beat me to the rim so many times, I wasn't at it. I was so bad it fired me up. I wouldn't let it happen again and it didn't. There's no way he takes me on and wins. You can't get someone weaker than you playing you in training and it's bad for you not just on court but also and it's something that can get to you and effect you into the next days.

Researcher – You have a standard in your head at practice and if you don't hit it does it annoy you?

Player 10 – It comes back to if you were shooting well last training sessions, that's what you want to keep at and you don't want to go below, you just want to stay there or do better so any time say you play one on one and you are not scoring the easy ones that you were scoring last training session you might be like oh what's going on today? And then that's when your level can drop and then that's what you might get used to and when you might start losing it.

Player 9 – For me, going into a training session I kind of put quite a lot of pressure on myself to play to that standard you are talking about but it's like sometimes I can set the standard a bit higher than what I actually am. So for this training session I have to play at this standard but the standard is actually better than what I am now, which most of the time makes you a better player but if it doesn't work out at training it can kind of lead to you being a little negative on yourself. Because everyone, especially if you are trying to set a goal and don't reach it, I know it's small and just for one training session, which lasts like an hour and a half, but if you set a goal and don't reach it and think about it too much it will eat away at your day or make you negative for the next training session. So it depends on how you take it. But I also think it differs depending on the training session itself, because some sessions we play a lot of competitive basketball which means you have more chances to... like we play one on one drills then three on three drills, you have more chances to redeem yourself, which helps. But if you just play one competitive drill and do drills after you are always thinking about that one drill that you have messed up on.

Researcher – Is that an outcome drill or competitive drill against someone else rather than an effort drill?

Player 9 – I play very differently mind-set when I'm playing competitively compared to not, which I don't really like because I want to be at that high level the whole time

Researcher – So competition increases effort and motivation?

Player 9 – Yeah, but when we are doing drills when you aren't against someone else, like first to make ten, yeah you are against someone but I just struggle to get in that mind-set. But if I like take [player name removed] on defence or if I'm on defence and [same player name removed] is in front of me all I'm thinking about is stopping him right now, beating their team, whatever has to be done. But in a drill, catching and shooting, if it's not competitive then it's not enough.

Researcher – So, is competition important in training?

Player 8 – Yes for sure, I think that if no one is competing in training then it's not going to translate into game... like I think we need to be more competitive in training, especially with... like we have to push the 1st and 2nd years and try and get them to our standards. Because if we are all competitive as a team that would just bring our chemistry together, more of a bond rather than just four or five players wanting to go at each other than half of the team doesn't... like we all need to be on the same page like we said. If only a few

players are like wanting to win and the other lot don't really care... like last week, or the week before, when we lost against [team name removed] at home, when I scored like 30, 40 points, like everyone was praising me but I was pissed off. I didn't really care that I scored that many until I realised like when I was getting changed in the changing room not many people were pissed off as I was. Like [three player's names removed], we weren't even talking whereas everyone else was...

Player 7 – Yeah, that was proper annoying. Oh my god when [player name removed] started going on about [event name removed] at the weekend. I was like shut up man, we just played trash and all you can think of is that. Forget that.

Researcher – Did anyone say anything?

Player 7 – No, I don't think it would have ended well, like the coach didn't come in either, it was all a bit bad. Bad day.

Player 9 – That can really eat away at us as well, because I know as well for [player name removed], I talked about it with [player name removed] in the changing room but I was thinking like you give your all to a team, like you are giving to a collective, and to be a part of a team where certain people... and I'll say it that [three player's names removed], like people, basically everyone in the changing room apart from [three player's names removed] were actually, and it's hard for [two player's names removed] because they didn't play that much in that game, as much as they would want, Lewis didn't play as much as he usually does, but it's like they don't really have... they couldn't do much about it because they weren't on the court. But I'm looking at these players that played minutes and they were just busting jokes about things that have nothing to do with basketball and this is fresh, we are sweating still and we have just lost a game that we should have won.

Researcher – Would you rather have everyone angry and annoyed?

Player 9 – Yeah I would, it was like, oh [player name removed] you scored 38 points, did you see this on the TV?, and I'm there like, obviously I've being competitive and I know that everyone else might not be as competitive as each other but there was no need and it was like really hard to do it again, to give your all to a team that you know aren't giving it their all. You only got one, two, three. I feel comfortable, more comfortable playing with [player name removed] because I know that whatever he does, even though he isn't the best player, whatever he does he is doing it for the team. Whereas there are players who don't do that.

Player 7 – I feel like after that [team name removed] game there was a couple of first years who just got up and dunked on the side hoop or just took stupid shots and mucking around [in the first practice after the game]. I remember in my first year when I was averaging like a minute, two minutes a game because I was like the only first year in the team, I was the only player who was not a third year, apart from [player name removed]. We went up to Manchester and I got on for like 30 seconds, we lost the game but the whole way home I was pissed off, part of it was the fact I travelled all the way up there for very little minutes but you know... we lost.

Player 9 – But it shows that he cares though and it's like... it annoys me talking about it, it kind of annoys me because I know that nothing has changed, because usually, I'm not saying it's a coaching thing, but I've been on teams where the coach would come and straight after a win or lose, come to the locker room straight away and either grill you if you lost, especially like the [team name removed] game because we should have won.

Researcher – Do you think that the coaches having a go at you actually acted as a mechanism to show the players that the coach cares and they have the same goals?

Player 9 – Maybe, maybe could be, or he'll not praise you but he'll talk about what you could have done better in a win so they always give you things to think about but I think because... but I don't think it's their fault, a result of the fact no coach came in the locker room after the loss or said anything, I can blame myself because I didn't say anything to them either, like I just got pissed off, got changed and left but no one said anything, they were free to think about what they were thinking about and that was what got me annoyed because I knew they weren't thinking about the game. Whereas I know that other people were. The coaches getting annoyed?, they should be the same as us.

Player 6 – I'd say that the way they act, the coaches' act, it is important to what we do. They are important for the team and how they act is massive.

Researcher – Do you think that the way the coaches are should be the same as the players?

Player 9 – Yes, like we've been saying it's important that if we get pissed off then they should to.

Player 10 – I think that if the coaches don't care then like why should we care? I want to try to win but if coach doesn't care, like he doesn't care if we win or lose then no one will try.

Player 7 – After that game, I didn't even get changed, I just went home.

Player 10 – I'd just say that I maybe just went along with things, it's not my job to tell the others what to do. It's not like with [player name removed], because when I played with him I could give him serious crap. He wouldn't have his head in the game but that would pick him right up. I could always give it to him straight. Like, he might be doing this or that but I could tell him what I thought.

Researcher – Why was that?

Player 10 – I knew him for ages and we got on. Like, I knew for like 8 years.

Researcher – Are there things that you would say are negative towards performance in practice?

Player 9 – I know my weaknesses in terms of when I'm going to play bad and I try to set up preventing it but usually it's nothing to do with physically it's always mental where as I know that thinking about things like the [team name removed] game [lost match] and negative stuff like that reminded myself that people aren't as competitive or aren't as driven.

Researcher – Does the past, past events affect you?

Player 9 – Yes. It affects me negatively. Like when people say, and this doesn't happen often, especially because we go to a basketball academy, even when we are messing about and if someone says it's just a game and I will either play amazing because I'm angry or I'll play crap because... what's the point of competing if it's just a game?

Researcher – Does it happen often, players not trying?

Player 9 – I'm not quoting anybody because no one has actually said that but it's just things of that nature just to gain... it's all kind of flimsy and natural that is not kind of focused and driven... I know I'll play bad like that. If people aren't, and it's obvious that people are going through the motions, and I do it sometimes as well but if you say something and they don't care... because I'll care... like [player name removed] has done it before as well, he got at me for something, I can't remember exactly what it was but he got at me and it changed because I care. But if someone doesn't change it will dishearten me and if I get disheartened I won't play so well.

Player 7 – My main thing is I think I worry about other people too much, like I said at the start, if I see first years dunking on the rim, people dunking on the rims...but it's like other stuff in the previous year's we've been told to get in the gym 20 minutes early, be getting

changed, get your shots up. If I'm sitting and getting changed and there's only one or two of us getting changed, I'm thinking where's everyone else?

Researcher – Do you think there needs to be set rules like that for practice?

Player 7 – Well yeah, absolutely, it's more professional. Everything could be enforced to make the players be accountable. A lot of the time, I know they have lessons at quarter to but... like I think [player name removed] went to Tesco one time and got back about five to and wasn't even changed yet. Its little things like that that get on my nerves.

Player 10 – I was late the other day but I had to stay in class for ages like because the teacher wanted to talk to us, but I was the last one. I told her like I had to go but she didn't care, she just said that this was more important than basketball. But the other day, remember when [player name removed] was late and coach didn't say anything, that was stupid. The coach never gets on his back because he's one of the favourites.

Player 6 – I used to get really annoyed with [player name removed] and the coach loved him, like really loved him. The coach would pick him out all the time, it was like we only won because of him. What's the point of anyone else playing, it's pointless.

Researcher – What sort of things make you perform badly when you practice?

Player 8 – Missing shots and getting beat by players easily will make me perform badly. Because people that I know that I can guard and lock down are beating me and I'm playing bad like missing my shots that I should be making that will just like bring me down in a spiral.

Researcher – Is the negative spiral something that happens a lot?

Player 8 – I can definitely play worse and worse, like when I get down I get worse and down even more. I played terrible the other day, about three days ago I think. I was really tired and things just got worse and worse.

Player 7 – I can get into playing bad, sometimes I know before practice even starts that it's going... just like the other day when I left lesson late, got a bollocking off [teacher name removed], I knew training was not right, I didn't want to be there and just wanted to go home.

Researcher – So, what might happen before practice that influences your performance in practice?

Player 10 – Turning up and not having enough time to set yourself for training. It's like coming from a lesson with two minutes left and everyone was there, you are rushing, you want to be able to walk into the training session and be like, right I need to get my stuff on, get focused, warm up and be like ready for training and not just coming in and throw on whatever and get on with it like it's something I don't want to do because I do want to train and I do want to get better so I got to like prepare myself for what's going to happen.

Player 6 – If everyone is there early, or there to prep together then that's good. We can all talk about things and get in the zone early and take it into training and hopefully all play well.

Researcher – Is that your fault or someone else's fault that you don't prepare yourself right?

Player 1 – Mainly mine, I don't set myself well for training sessions, I don't think like what are we probably going to do? That I might need to focus on more because I might not be that strong in that area. I don't give myself enough time to prepare. I think it's down to throughout the day, say you leave lesson late or your last lesson didn't go to well, like training will come to you last minute and you'll be like oh I got training now. Whereas if you had a good lesson or like there wasn't much moaning, it was calm in the lesson and fun, we'd be like hey we got training tonight, is everyone ready?

Researcher – Are the lessons tiring for you guys?

Player 9 – Its more tiring in terms of, for me, my organisation in life in general is the worst thing that I have. It's like a quality about me. I have terrible organisational skills, time keeping, have you got your books, even shoes sometimes.

Researcher – Shoes?

Player 9 – Yeah, like are my court shoes in my bag. And I know I need to give a lot of focus and it sounds like other people find it natural but for me it's like I need to give a lot of focus to remember everything and do it on time.

Researcher – Do you do anything to help you organise or not?

Player 9 – I have like 200 alarms on my phone and still, especially when that stuff goes wrong, if I'll have them alarms and the alarm doesn't go off or I forget something I should have remembered that will completely chuck me off before training. It will affect me because, again it's like bouncing back to what he said, but if that happens prior and or just

before a training session and I've forgotten something, I'll be thinking about that instead of getting focused into the training session. Or if it happened before a lesson earlier in the day, I can still be thinking about that throughout the whole day. Before practice I'm thinking about something I shouldn't be and it's like you know how people watch motivation videos, it like motivates because you watch it at the time and you are motivated, like as soon as you have finished watching it you are motivated then, that's kind of what it's like if you don't get time... if you have time before a training session, 5 or 20 minutes before the training session, if you can focus your mind, you don't have to watch a video, if you get motivated yourself then you can go into it full steam ahead. If you get there five minutes before and are chucking on your shoes, trying to warm-up and stretch, you are not actually doing it for yourself to get motivated you are doing it so the coach thinks you have been doing it for 15 minutes and that can happen a lot to me as well.

Researcher – Is that good to fake and lie about what you did for the coach?

Player 9 – To be honest it's better than us having to run suicides if he finds out we didn't prepare properly.

Researcher – So you have found a weakness, have you concentrated on working this through?

Player 9 – I... you wouldn't even believe me, honestly. I try, the thing is, it's going to sound like pity me but I have tried multiple things to try and get me ... because it's more like a life thing than a basketball thing. From being young, through school, outside of school, clubs, I have also had a really bad memory or timekeeping I'm always really late and it's like I got timetables, I've made spreadsheets, alarms, things like pictures on the board that remind me to take something. But it only takes one thing to forget and mentally I'm gone, like completely finished. Especially because of like the competitive thing, you'll always be thinking about that one thing you could have done better, or did wrong that you could have done right and for me that doesn't have to be related to basketball, I'll be thinking about I could have remembered my jumper or just little things, will get to me and that will just chuck me off.

Researcher – It seems the reflection upon problems... do you think that it might be better to not let the fact you forgot something get to you, focus upon the feelings afterwards and realise that the consequence may be very minor and not worth all the negative input?

Player 9 – Yeah it could be but you are in the moment and it's like that and it's one thing, then the next, then again, then another to keep you thinking about it.

Researcher – But you reflect, which is good.

Player 9 – Sometimes even reflecting upon it as well, but sometimes you'll think, oh it wasn't actually that deep, which is basically what you are saying, think about the reaction isn't equal to the problem that actually happened but by then it's like you have already done it. I just look at the negatives a lot and try... I just end up looking at the negatives a lot, I can't help it, and it doesn't help my performance because in basketball it kind of works, you look at the negatives, you didn't shoot good percentages, get in the gym and train, next game shoot better. So it works when you look at the negatives, but in certain things it doesn't... you can't practice not losing your stuff, it just happens like that.

Player 7 – It happens not just in practice but in games as well, if I have like a lay in or something, I know on a Monday I don't have training until 11 so I'll lay in bed until 9.30, sometimes even 10 and that's not too bad but when I have a game on a Saturday or something like that, if I lay in past that time I normally play really bad in the game. I'm just not right, I'm all drowsy, I get a bit tired, I just don't feel quite there. Was as if I get up early and I'll have a decent breakfast I'll feel like I can play a bit better, like I'll feel a lot more bouncy, energetic.

Researcher – What's your nutrition and sleep patterns like?

Bad (unanimous from whole group)

Player 10 – Like some nights I will go to sleep at a good time and wake up fine but then some nights I get to sleep late or like I might not have eaten something good that night so I won't have as much energy as I wake up.

Player 9 – For me it's like I eat... there's some things like organisation because I try to. It's kind of the same thing I have the problem with that it's kind of successful in that it's not if I plan what I'm going to eat... like I go to bed the same time every night and it's pretty early because I like to wake up early, which is what he said. I don't like basketball being a struggle, especially if there's a game, I struggle with basketball being the first thing I do. Like if it's the second or third it's much easier because you are already warmed into the day and you are kind of mentally awake and prepared. But for me it's like I will schedule that but every now and again I'll go to Tesco and buy them six pancakes with the chocolate on top and it's like ahhh... I'll tell myself, whether it's true or not I don't care, but I'll tell

myself because I know it will make me feel better, I will just tell myself that I have eaten well for a long enough amount of time to eat this or I've slept well and trained enough at the same time, or I'm going to train enough to run this off. You have to do the good to get the reward, but then when the bad comes it's much easier to deal with as long as you focus on the good. Because if I didn't make the timetables and I didn't think about the time I went to bed and just did it naturally, when something bad like that happens I will think back to nothing, because I won't realise it as being positive.

Player 7 – It's like on Sunday night I went to bed at stupid o'clock, it was like half one by the time I went to sleep and I was up again and I got out of my bed at 10 past 10 and I was out the house at 20 past and I had training at 11 and you can ask these guys and there wasn't a time I wasn't on my hands and knees. I didn't eat breakfast, it was just stupid timekeeping. I can get negative with teammates as well. I really can't be bothered with anything when I'm tired.

Researcher – What happens in practice when you are tired?

Player 7 – Like, I feel like you say stuff when you are tired that you don't want to or that you wouldn't say when you are fresh. I feel like when I'm tired everything gets to me more, more emotionally, everything is deeper.

Player 9 – It's much easier as well because its late night because you have already been... that's why people struggle to wake up early, in terms of actually going to bed early because you have already been awake so you can just carry on doing what you are doing, so rather than a massive effort from going from sleep to training, if you go from something else to training you're already in the flow of the day, whereas to wake up, you then have to change. It's much easier to go back to sleep once you have like woken up, it's much easier because you are already doing it, that's why I think you should, it would be beneficial if you timed when you go to bed because if I aim it... if it's a competition I'm going to try and beat the alter ego that wants to stay up until 1am playing COD [video game]. Because that happens, everyone's done it, everyone has that thing when you just want to... just don't want to stop because it's like I can stay up, I'll be fine. But really you need to go to bed so if I challenge myself to go to bed at 10, challenge myself to get 7, 8 hours sleep then it's much easier to wake up.

Head Coach Interview Transcription

Age: 30 years old

Interview date: 04/01/2018

Years within EABL programme: 6 years

Interview length: 76 minutes (including warm-up discussion)

Researcher – How is current overall team performance?

Participant – Talent wise is lower than previously but where their level of ability is and how engaged they are and how much they want to be coached and how much effort they put in is very good. I've seen a lot of improvements from the end of August until now, both individual and as a team. I have a lot of hope that's it going to go well for the rest of the season.

Researcher – Why do you think there has been good improvement?

Participant – I think it's because a lot of the players this year haven't played at a national level and haven't been at the top of their age group so they feel like they have a lot to prove and they are coming into practice motivated because there's that goal they want to get themselves recognised, they haven't settled because they got a bit of exposure or they have been told they are good, they are trying to get to that level. They are hungry to get that goal. They might not be at a great level, when they came in, but it's good to have a chance to work with players to improve them. Getting the team together and seeing it get better is good.

Researcher – Do you think practice performance reflects in competition?

Participant – It's a mixed bag. There are some players who coast in practices a little bit and they can switch it on and apply themselves to a game. There are some players who give it everything in practice but then psychologically in a game they are reserved or there are other factors that stop them from performing to the same level as their comfort zone in practice.

Researcher – In the longer term, do players who practice well improve more?

Participant – Yes, absolutely. It's very rare to find someone who coasts or takes it easy in practice and then is consistently a high performer. You usually find the hardest workers in practice have the best results on the court in games. It's a competitive nature I think they have. They have their standards whether it's a game or practice. They have their standards of this is how hard I play and this is how hard I compete, this is my energy output and this is what I want to get out of my basketball whenever I'm on the court. So I think it's that mental drive and standards. It's probably a skill, like shooting. Although, I think it can be learnt but I have had some players who just can't put the work in. They just don't want to. You need to have that ability to apply maximum effort on court.

Researcher – Players that have that but then don't achieve their standard, what happens to them?

Participant – When they don't hit those standards they put a lot of pressure on themselves, they get down on themselves. It's usually things they can't control so if it's shooting, they can't control if the ball goes in but because they have their standards, they get down on themselves and they put more pressure on themselves and it becomes a psychological downward spiral and it can ultimately, if these things don't get corrected, they end up going away from the game because they don't enjoy it and the pressure they put on themselves.

Researcher – Where do you think the pressure comes from?

Participant – I think it's engrained where they want to be but it's also the outwards perception as well. This is not always the case but, what do other people think of them? Other coaches? Notable people in the game think of them? There's always someone they think is judging them. That plays a factor. Also, they rate themselves against their peers, like players they come up against in their own age group, if their peers are perceived to be doing better than them, that's pressure, and because they are so competitive they have these standards and seeing someone do better than them when they are putting in the work plays a part in that downward spiral. Things get worse and they can't correct the problem.

Researcher – What positive practice influences are there that you have seen?

Participant – With today's player, often when it's a good practice, that means that the stars have aligned, they had a good meal, the weather was good, they got texts back from every girl they wanted to, everything went well for them that day and often that carries onto the

court that day. They are feeling fresh, feeling good and they were able to play well. Everything worked out. I would say that more often than not, that is the case. You also get times when there is a specific goal and you have challenged the player to reach their individual goals, or there's a team goal coming up like a big game where they know they have to be locked in and focused. I would say that there's always a focus reaction when a big game is coming up, definitely.

Researcher – Any examples of anything recently where you had a good practice?

Participant – I would go back to before half-term when we played [opposing team name removed]. We knew it would be a tough game and we set the expectations and the importance of winning at home and we had a good practice on the Monday and the preparation practice on Tuesday. They went in with a lot of energy and focus into the game on Wednesday and came out with a 20+ point win. I think this year, because players aren't playing men's at the weekend, they aren't tired so they come in really motivated and looking forward to playing again. That makes a difference. It's weird because they can't get into the better teams at the weekends so aren't getting as tired and that actually raises their game.

Researcher – What about influences towards a poor performance?

Participant – There's quite a few examples of that. With the players we have, all up and coming players, it's how they manage their time, how they manage their nutrition, how they manage their mental state. There's too many distractions for them now. Social media, there's always something then and there that can take your attention and distract them from what they need to do, what's important in that moment, what their goal is. It's so easy now to get distracted whereas 10 - 20 years ago it was difficult to be distracted, you had to get all your mates together, you had to go to the video shop to get a video, it's just accessible now, right in front of you to distract you. You won't see a kid without their phone out will you? They are constantly in access of social media.

Researcher – When do they get distracted, is there a specific time they do and one that doesn't help you out as coach?

Participant – During practice you can keep them engaged, but it's right before practice a lot of the time they are on their phone. Right up to practice they are checking their phone, during the day they get distracted and not eating right, in the evening they got entertainment accessible to them and they aren't sleeping as much as they should be and I

think all these factors come into play so they are not at their best to be a performance athlete and limits them. So funny the other day, well probably not funny from my point of view, but I came into training at the start. They weren't supposed to be putting shots up yet and getting warm, just getting their kit on. There were quite a few of the guys in the gym and every single one of them was on their phone, not talking at all to anyone. Not a great advertisement for team bonding.

Researcher – Any other negative factors that can affect players in practice?

Participant – I think communication is a big one. I find our players are very emotional and speak from a place of emotion and they don't get the desired response. So they may be frustrated about something that has happened, something that maybe another player has done and it comes out in emotion and its counter productive and makes the problem worse, rather than stepping back and thinking what kind of communication does this person respond to. It could be that you can shout at them and they are like oh ok but more often than not they need to be spoken to on a level, an arm round my shoulder and just say you could have done this this and this next time and it can be resolved. I think communication is a big one. You need to know how they tick, how they operate.

Researcher – From you to them, or player to player?

Participant – From player to player. I spend a lot of time meeting with players and working out what gets them going. I'm not going to shout at a player for the sake of shouting at them. It's got to be the respond they need to get them going. In individual meetings I ask them. It's better when it's one to one and not everyone around. Some don't know but I ask them to go away and think what input or command gets you going, what can we do and how can we communicate to you to get you to focus and switch on. They eventually come back with some good stuff for us to use. They need to think about this stuff as some of them never have before.

Researcher – Can you give some example?

Participant – So [player name removed], if you give him any kind of negative communication we will get him shutting down and completely switches off and loses focus. The more you try and get on him the more he shuts down. On the other end of the scale would be [player name removed] where you can give him a direct command, positive or negative, he will take it and go on. He isn't affected by anything, he just gets on with it. A really coachable guy in terms of how he responds to communication.

Researcher – Do you give negative communication?

Participant – No, I don't. because even though you can do it with some players, its better when you are direct with them so not really telling them off but telling them what you want them to do and he has high standards, he will run through a brick wall for you and all you need to do is tell him. All our players this year, there is no one you can really bark at. You got to package it in a way so that they see the importance of it, so it could be if they aren't bringing energy, not focused, you can bring them in, reassess the goals, ask what are we doing out here, get them to self-reflect a little bit, are you guys giving 100%? That is how I approach it. I think it works well.

Researcher – Is there anyone you have coached in the past or now where you have given a rollocking to, to improve your performance?

Participant – No. In a team environment the only time I can remember is with a younger group and I went in at half time and they were playing soft and I really got after them at half term. They came together after that and went at it and it was a positive outcome. I think you can do it as a group but singling a player out its tough. If you have a go at the group then they are likely to come together as a group and get closer, like they want to prove the coach wrong. If it's one on one and you are criticising someone I think it's always a negative outcome. It helps to have a strong philosophy. It should be all about the team. You shouldn't be out for yourself. It doesn't actually help you achieve. If they [players] all support each other, and play hard for each other, then they all win. That's why it's good to make sure the team is pushed a lot. Individuals can harm you, there are dangerous to the team. But, if the players come together, and I guess that team came together against me maybe, or maybe to be on board with me and my line of thinking, I don't know, but it's better for the team.

Researcher – What are the greatest positive impacts upon player performance at practice?

Participant – For me, a player having a great practice will nail everything that they can control so give it huge effort, dive on a 50/50 ball, playing good defence and rebounding, all the things they have direct control of, I would say that would relate to a great practice. I think back to when I played and the more effort we put in, the more effort I put in, the better it was. But I think that if you were to ask the players about having a great performance, they would talk about the non-controllables more. They'd be talking about making great passes or hitting all their shots and I think in their minds that relates to them

having a great practice. What they are doing with ball in hand, are they making shots, are they making good passes and that plays a part in inconsistent performance. They want to see the ball go in and if it doesn't it will play on their mind and then they don't defend and do the things they can control as well because they are focused on the things they can't control.

Researcher – What do you do to increase player performance in practice?

Participant – I would get the player to self-reflect, both on the court technically and tactically, mentally, physically to just get them to evaluate those areas, to be honest and open about what isn't going well for them. What's inhibiting them and limiting them. Once we list that we put the solutions and rather than dwelling on the problem, for example, if you don't feel like you are shooting the ball very well, what can we do? What are you currently doing? And what can we do? So trying to put together solutions to all their problems. To refocus them, to ground them, and from those meetings in training and games get them to focus on what's important and what are the solutions we came up with that they can control and we can improve on. So rather than them being overwhelmed with all these problems they get focused on a smaller goal like shooting or passing. If its energy then eat better with a better meal plan. So just giving them practical steps that they can see and they can follow and how to improve it. Following on from that, move regular meetings to just reassess how things are going and if we need to move goal posts.

Researcher – What if you are in a bad session, what can happen and how do you improve a player's performance?

Participant – If I see that the session is sluggish or that players are maybe unconfident or low in themselves, we may strip back what we are doing and do something short term that will change the mentality. If it's going badly something has to change. We will strip it back and do something fun that takes away the frustration. It could be a shooting competition, something completely different, something fun that is able to take their mind of the competition or how they were playing and put them into a different frame of mind. Or it could be we do a shooting competition and they get a win under their belt and that lifts them. If they don't get a win, then try and do something different if it is making things worse. If maybe a player wasn't shooting well, I wouldn't do a shooting competition, maybe another type of game or competition, maybe a one on one. If it's got to such a low point then we will strip it back completely and do something completely fun. Maybe competitive but not in a way that it relates to basketball and frustrate them.

Researcher – Can you plan for this?

Participant – No really. You'd need to plan for so many different outcomes. You need to be able to adapt the session. Make sure you can see it coming really, you need to know what to do and that probably gets better with experience. I'll have to see what's happening, what the plan was, where it's going wrong and why.

Researcher – So what do players want to do in practice?

Participant – I think players want to compete and play hard and that's where they get their enjoyment from, competing, winning, doing well. But if it's down to such a level that the frustration is boiling over and you have changed the drill or the game and you still aren't getting any positives from the session then it's either better to just call it a day and reflect upon it or go and do something completely different and then go back to it.

Researcher – So will players increase performance if there is competition?

Participant – Yes, all players want to. I find if we are not going to a score or an end goal, the level of the session is very flat and they are just going through it, they don't care if they make a mistake. There's no positive or negative to the session they just coast through. There has to be an outcome that they can see. It's got to be there, otherwise the level is completely dropped off. The whole point of basketball I guess is to put the ball in the hoop so if they are doing that, if things work out so that happens, then it goes well. The more match specific the training is, the better the players can respond to what we do, what we are trying to achieve. But it's all got to be worth something, they have to be working towards something. If we say, well you go up against this guy, then they know what they have to do. They should be competing though as that's what we want them to do all the time, to compete.

Researcher – Anything you have done that caused poor performance recently during a practice session? Anything that players have found difficult or that just caused failure?

Participant – There's lots of times. As a coach you want to get into the tactical of what we are going to do. It's like a chess match, we are going to do this and this to counteract what they do [referring to opposing team] and this to exploit what they do. But too much information will overload, will just let the air right out the balloon. They can have a little bit of tactical but it's very difficult if you aren't coaching players who love the tactical side of the game, you will lose them. It's got to be short and sharp and you have to put it into a game type situation. There's been a time when I've got them to stand around and walk

them through it and you can see them, they are looking away and you wonder how much are they actually taking in, what's their recall going to be like on that and it's going to be limited and you have wasted 30-40 minutes of a session. There's also time that I've not come into practice with the right mind-set and then I speak to a player from a place of emotion that's not constructive and then I can see them get down on them self because I've spoken from a place of emotion rather than being constructive.

Researcher – Why was that?

Participant – Maybe I was tired, maybe I didn't judge the situation right. It's like I was saying earlier about knowing the players and what they are all about. If you get the communication wrong then they aren't going to listen, they won't do what you need, they won't perform well and it hurts us and them.

Researcher – Any other things you have done to cause poor performance?

Participant – Well, I think, the final one is losing. In any team sport, when there is say a five versus five game you have your coaching goal of what you want to get from that small sided game or drill. But then all of a sudden, if it's an offensive drill and the defence players aren't doing what they need to do or something is not going well, rather than focusing on one thing, you try and fix everything. So you had a single goal, say offence, but defence is going wrong so you try and fix that and then you try and fix something else and you end up just trying to fix things and the players have no idea why what they have done that drill for. It's hard for them to see the bigger picture. So they are now thinking they messed up on defence when they supposed to be doing offence, so it's just sticking to what your goal is for that drill or game.

Researcher – Do you often deviate from the plan?

Participant – I try not to. I used to do it more I guess but I know now to keep it on a level, keep it so everyone can understand what is going on. This stage of the season we are looking so much more tactically, what the other team has, what their plays are, what's the danger players, what can we do to combat that. The scouting is important and for players to buy into that is good. If they don't then they can't operate at training. We need to be on the same page.

Researcher – Are there things that are positive for performance in practice?

Winning, doing competitive games, if they win that's... even if they are on a team and they don't play particular well, because they have won it's just a positive. The losers, depends on the mind-set, some players are all about the team and if their team loses they are distraught no matter how well they played. Then you will get a player who is individualistic and his team will lose but he will have scored six or ten points and thinks well it's not my fault, I feel good and I'm shooting the ball well. So it's not always a negative because some players are so individual that if they are playing well but losing, they will still feel good.

Researcher – So who's more problematic, the individual or the team player?

Participant – I find the player who puts the team first is always going to be solid for the most part as they are going to do what it takes for the team. An individual will have the potential to win you the game or lose you the game because of their mentality. They are selfish. If things are going well for them, shooting, making their shots, they are taking risks on defence that may affect the team, maybe make the defence vulnerable but if it comes off then you will probably win a game. Because of the risks they take and their selfishness on offence they can also be the other end and lose us the game. The best for team performance is a team minded player who puts team first consistently will give better performances on the whole. An individual will give you special games but also those games where you should have won it but it wasn't that person's day and it was detriment to the team.

Researcher – You had that a lot?

Participant – Yeah. Last year especially with [player named removed]. He would only be in for himself and he wanted to go to the states so he would also push for himself. He did win us matches but I think on the whole he lost us more than he won. He wouldn't do well against the big teams and he would try far too hard and it didn't work and he'd get down and lose his head and then we would lose the game.

Researcher – Why do you think he was like that?

Participant – Pressure. He's from a big basketball background so he feels he needs to move on and upwards, get to the states. He didn't really care about the team winning, he needed his stats to be high so he'd go for the outcome best for him. Really didn't help the team.

Researcher – Do you think players can react positively to negative situations?

Participant – Depends how you see it. There's negativity and there's adversity. If someone from the other team is talking trash, is that negativity or adversity? If the other team goes up early in a game is that negativity or adversity? I think its coping. I think overcoming adversity is one of the biggest attributes towards a performance athlete. If you can overcome that person you are coming up against who is in your ear talking. He's a good player and if you can get above that mentally and still put in a great performance then, if you can deal with a challenging situation or a coach that's really challenging you and you can overcome that, it's going to make you a more resilient player. I think you have to have negativity and adversity in your growth as a human being, you have to have that. You won't be able to cope, you are going to face it in sport and in life. How you replicate that, what type of environment you create in practice is very important. I think if you have a team full of assholes who just talk crap to each other, put each other down, that's not a performance environment, that's not overcoming adversity, that's a very negative environment. So I think it's a grey area. It's so important to be able to overcome negatives and adversities but it's got to be in the right way and it's got to be in a way the players can see the bigger goal so they think they have to overcome this to get there. If it's just negatives from teammates, coaches, other teams, then it's just going to give you a negative outcome. That's how I see it anyway, it's really important.

Researcher – Can you give someone too much positivity?

Participant – I think you can. I had a situation with a player who came back from an injury. He knew himself and I did he had high standards and he's playing badly in practice and he's not doing what he knows he is capable of and I'm trying to be really positive saying, no that was a really good shot, he knows it wasn't a good shot, he knows he missed. So him hearing positives is frustrating because he knows in his mind that it's not. He is realistic about it.

Researcher – So you can't fool someone?

Participant – No you can't. The other instances where something positive happens which is possibly a negative, for example, someone you are in competition with for a place on the team is playing really well and stopping you from playing, you aren't happy for him and the team because it's that person who is taking your place and taking your position. All of a sudden it's a negative. That can happen a lot as the guys are looking to move on and if they don't play then how are they supposed to get exposure? They can't get game time so it's not good for them.

Researcher – You say it's a negative but could it be motivational for them, maybe in the long run?

Participant – I think it is but I think it also can lead to a downward spiral. If you have a really good player that you are playing behind, is playing better, or you both play together and they are the top scorer and your coach is always drawing up plays to get him the ball, it can also consume you. Why is he always getting this? Why is it always going to him? I'm better than him. It should be positive for the team but can be negative due to competition and jealousy.

Researcher – are they realistic?

Participant – A lot of the time they are a bit deluded I'd guess. There's players who think they should be starting five but actually they are lucky to be in the squad at all. It's a difficult one, there aren't many like that.

Researcher – How do you know who can deal with those sort of situations of being dropped or being out played?

Participant – You do. A lot of it's from observations but there's a lot of pressure tests you can do with players so you put them in performance environments, put them in different situations and see how they respond, you track what you see. It might be because emotions come into play, they had a bad nights rest, they didn't eat very well, so they were a little snappier that day but you do that over time and see how particular players respond over time to pressure, negative and adverse environments and then you can have that conversation. You can self-reflect, peer review. So what happened in that situation? Why did you act like that way? And upon reflection they are thinking that maybe it wasn't positive, the way I dealt with that, maybe I need to relook at that. I think they can make some changes if you are able to reflect upon it.

Researcher – Do you have any final suggestions regarding the practice environment and its effects upon the performance of those within it?

Participant – If you have a team of individuals who are doing everything they need to off the floor, so they are putting in the hours to make sure their technical skills are the highest level, they are reviewing game film, they are self-reviewing to make sure they are tactical, their tactical and technical knowledge is as high as it can be. From that, they are coming into practice with confidence because their skills are sharp and their technical knowledge is sharp. They are coming in to practice with confidence. If you come into practice with a

team that is sharp and their knowledge is good and they are confident then you can work with that. That is a performance environment where players can compete against each other, they all have the confidence to make mistakes and learn from those mistakes. More often than not it's because things aren't being done off the court and athletes are not necessarily performance athletes by what they do off the floor. They just show up to training, having not done any work, no fitness, haven't eaten right and then it's a sloppy practice for them. If you get everyone there treating it professionally off the floor when they come onto the floor you are going to get a high level of practice with everyone raising their own level.

Researcher – How do you get them to be professional?

Participant – Some already have it, it's a state of mind, they want it. If they want to get better and are focused and want to achieve then it's easier. You can get them to be more professional with support, with the extra stuff they get through AASE. I know what to look for but I haven't really thought about how to increase that, I'd have to sit down and maybe look at what does it mean to be a professional, have a professional attitude, what can we do to help the situation. There's no doubt that the best at this will be the better player eventually, if they keep going.

Assistant Coach Interview Transcription

Age: 27 years old

Interview date: 12/01/2018

Years within EABL programme: 3 years

Interview length: 88 minutes (including warm-up discussion)

Researcher – How is the current performance of the team?

Participant – Middle of the road, we have had more positive competition performances than we have had negative. In terms of practice it's up and down so overall it's middle of the road. But competition is more towards good and it could be because it's early on in the

season and we have only played about four games. The fact the team is still fairly fresh, it means that the team are still forming together.

Researcher – How long does it take to get the team together and practising well?

Participant – It's a constant change, every season we get new players, it changes regularly. So, we don't ever really get a settled team for very long. I'd say that in about a month we might get to see a good performing group, but then the season is over, the older guys will be off and we need to rebuild again. It'll always happen like this.

Researcher – Do you find practice performance predicts competition performance?

Participant – Yes. For us as coaches we often try and simulate game environments but really the onus is on the players to bring the intensity to replicate that. We can put scenarios on the floor, simulate situations but I think its very player led. Are players intense? are they focused? are they bringing the right amount of energy? and I think that's the overriding factor as to whether it's a positive or a negative.

Researcher – But can coaches have an impact on that?

Participant – Yeah we can but it's down to the players. I guess we influence them. May be we have a strong effect on them. We give them rules and there's a discipline that we require from all the players. We set the rules and it says that they must put in maximum effort whenever they train.

Researcher – Would you say that someone will perform badly in competition if they have played badly in practice?

Participant – More often than not I would say so, yes. I think it damages confidence having poor sessions, focus again is another one and also if it's a poor session for us, we have a lot of prep sessions for specific games and match ups for who we play against. if we aren't switched on and keyed into what we are trying to do, maybe tweaks we want to put in place, if we aren't keyed in then we don't have a good performance as a team and from an individual stand point if players are left wanting in practice they often fall short in games and don't have a great performance in the following game. Although, it's not bad to lose all the time, especially in training. Players go hard at each other. Someone's got to lose. But we expect the loser to respond next practice and be better. If we get at them then we look for improvements. Our job is to keep the players wanting to improve and pushing

themselves to get better. If it's too relaxed and everyone is easy and not challenged, they won't improve.

Researcher – Anything in practice that occurred recently that led to a good performance?

Participant – I think before our last competitive game, the two practices leading up to that, were largely positive practices.

Researcher – How was it positive?

Participant – Our focus was on how we wanted to guard them, how defensively we can guard them in a specific way, we had identified they didn't have great three point shooters so we wanted to try and shrink the court, take away easy drives. The first session before the game, I think it was because the teams we played before are relatively decent three point shooters, and I think the team at first practice didn't buy into it, perceive, maybe not perceive, didn't believe what us coaches were saying that this will make us successful for that game and this is the game plan. We have watched the game tapes, we have made this plan and prepared ahead and this is what we want to execute. At first the guys were struggling to get it and I don't know what the light bulb moment was, we probably drilled it for about 45 minutes, exactly how we wanted it to go, put some situations on the floor of how they play.

Researcher – So the practice session went well?

Participant – We just did a really good job of guarding it in practice and I don't know what the light bulb moment was. I would say that them just seeing it over and over again, seeing things in practice. Often players will hear coaches saying things but if they can't see it in a drill, being successful time and time again, if they can see it successful in live play, more so in 5 vs 0 or 3 vs 0 with no defence I think they start to buy into it. And I think that might have happened there in some short breakdown drills we were doing. When they have a clear direction and focus of how we want to play from the first session, it seems far more focused than a general session or general team session. When it's a clear preparation practice for a game against a particular team, the focus is far higher.

Researcher – So a practice session before a game will be effective?

Participant – It'll be the most effective. Players are really switched on and focused and hit everything harder, with more intensity. The players have something to play for, there's a clear objective, a task that the team has to meet and win.

Researcher – What about any examples of when players in the practice had poor performance, and why?

Participant – The only game we lost this season, again we put a lot of time into scouting the other team, how we want to guard things and how we want to play, we had an hour practice the evening before the game, before that session, this may be an oversight by us, we left the guys for about 45 minutes to get some shots off for independent practice. When we arrived into the sports hall we had guys just sat on the side, not warm, only two guys putting shots up. And the session started really, really slow and what I mean by that a lot of mistakes, turnovers, we weren't sharp, you could see the level of focus was poor and we weren't ready to practice.

Researcher – So when the players are on their own in practice, what made them act that way?

Participant – I think it's probably immaturity, the coaches aren't here so they don't think they need to work hard as its not coach led, its player led and the coaches aren't going to know what we have or haven't done.

Researcher – Then it's a problem to let them take responsibility?

Participant – I think with our group its prominent, maybe they don't know how to work out by themselves but I think the overriding factors was that they were left by themselves to prep themselves for a practice and they didn't. That led us to have a horrific practice, we looked at the structure of the other team and how they play, what they do offensively and how we want to combat that, and they struggled to get their head round it.

Researcher – What did you do in practice?

Participant – We made it very black and white and what we thought was very basic at the time and it was the worse session I can recall to date. Then the day of the game we had a poor warm-up and subsequently we lost and didn't play well. It was only a lapse in the fourth quarter that cost us the game but ultimately the factor for us was a bad practice the night before. The Tuesday session for us is more important than the Monday, which is more of an intro session, so by the Tuesday we should be fresher with what we are doing as we have watched game tape and practiced scenarios. There are some trains of thought being that we should be ready to hit the ground running on the Tuesday and be clear and concise in prep but as that didn't happen on the Tuesday night we fell short in the Wednesday match against a team we should have beat.

Researcher – Do you expect the players to have leaders come through the group and dictate what is done?

Participant – I think... maybe it's that we don't have... we do have leaders in the team. It's a new team and we have some real personality clashes and maybe that is why we don't have player leadership currently. We have a few different groups in the squad, strong personalities and very individual players.

Researcher – Does it help having individuals in the practice group?

Participant – Not at all. They make it a lot worse and it's been difficult to set up a team this season. Lots of players with potential. Like, take [player name removed] for example, got a solid skill set but is not a team player. He would rather play well than the team win. I think that [player name removed] and [player name removed] will do well this season as they push each other, but we need to get them playing as a team, rather than a group of individuals playing as a team.

Researcher – What's one of the greatest positive impacts during practice?

Participant – I think individually it varies so much, I don't know if there is one set remedy for that in terms of if a player sees this happening then their performance will significantly increase, it's very individual. From the most part, the most positive impact I've seen upon performance is seeing the ball go in the hoop a lot of the time. Its successful practice, so whether that's in a break down or a dribbling drill or a shooting drill, kind of just successful completion of a skill. If the focus is on skill and a player has been working on a dribble move and they don't get it four or five times, and then six or seven reps down the line they are smooth with it and get it and can do it at speed and change direction comfortably, I think straight away that positively influence lifts them and adds to their motivation and confidence.

Researcher – What if they don't hit that?

Participant – You often see sulky behaviour. For our group we get poor communication, we are not solution based. Our verbal communication goes from semi positive, fairly general and solution based. Like, how can we do things better. It'll go to something like, I'm not playing very well, I can't do that, my man is scoring on me, I'm not rebounding very well, so I'm going to lose focus and I don't communicate and become despondent to teammates. That's a common theme I think. Ultimately the confidence of the player comes from seeing

the ball going in, having an influence on the outcome of the drill or the game of their team often lifts the moral of players. I would say current form is really important.

Researcher – Is that current form from practice and competition?

Participant – It's whatever was nearer. You might get a player have a great game and then come to training and be arrogant and play bad all week and then be rubbish in the match the week after. It depends on what happens and when. Mostly players will play well in the week, have a good game, get confidence, train well again and then do well in next matches. It's a build-up of success.

Researcher – How long does it last?

Participant – It'll break at some point. They might drop their head after a session or might take a bit longer. The better guys, older players, stay up longer, or the talented ones are pretty good at keeping high standards. Can you be consistent? Can you keep hitting those levels time after time, day after day, take it into the matches.

Researcher – What negative influences do the players experience during practice?

Participant – Sometimes burnout with the guys. Mentally drained you can see it if they haven't got enough sleep, stretching properly, not foam rolling or doing a lot of their rehab work, you can see it a mile off who hasn't been doing it. They come in tentative and it's not necessarily because they are not playing well but they are not working hard and that's usually a factor of not fuelling the body right. They are not preparing their bodies right. A lot of the off-court things are not good and often cause a negative decline. If they are tired or haven't eaten right for the day they can't go 100% and after 10 or 15 minutes there is a huge energy drop. They are lacklustre, they don't move very well, if they haven't been stretching, foam rolling or at S&C or working on their prep programme for deficiencies then they are very sluggish. They are not at what we deem to be at an acceptable level of performance.

Researcher – So physically they drop, but psychologically?

Participant – It's quite broad, a number of things have occurred depending on how mentally tough guys are. Some like those environments, but not so much now, but previously we have had guys who thrive when it's a little bit more tough and challenging. When backs are against the wall and they don't feel like they have any energy or they don't think things are going their way and aren't communicating affectively with teammates, but

actually how can we get a win? Or how can we be successful in practice. But more often than not it goes the other way, it can be a number of things, missing shots, they won't take another shot and their confidence will go, and a lot of that is in their head. It's not because they are incapable because they miss one shot it's because they feel a bit tight and think they probably won't shoot the next one and lose complete confidence in a skill they can do.

Researcher – Do the players feel safe to make mistakes?

Participant – A lot of the guys will say something if an error is made, especially the current group. We try to keep it out of practice though.

Researcher – The ones that can deal with it, what do they do?

Participant – I wouldn't say it's a team thing, I would say it's internal to that person. I couldn't put my finger on exactly how they work it out and often the ones that can cope with it don't necessarily need the attention of the coach all the time. Not that we wouldn't give them attention but a lot of them will find their own way of dealing with things, like verbal outburst, a swear word or something in frustration, usually to themselves and sometimes that enough to get it out of their system. Usually it's one or two and that's enough, I can turn the corner but other times you see the same reaction but the same reaction might cause an adverse reaction. For instances, someone might have an outburst to themselves and that's enough to flush it out the system but other times you see guys that will do that but it will then spiral. There will be three or four outbursts and then it will be again after a missed pass, then it will be a teammate, then it will be a situation where the coach will have to reprimand the group for what looks like decent.

Researcher – Are the copers able to find another gear or is it that they accept they aren't playing to their best on that day?

Participant – It's a bit of both, sometimes it kicks in as a motivator to find something from somewhere. I think more often than not it's about finding other ways to contribute. For example, if I'm not shooting well, how can I find another way to contribute for the team? and that's a big thing we try and teach from a team chemistry perspective. Am I being a good teammate? What does it mean to be a good teammate? From the start we try and drill that home to prevent these things from happening and yes there will be games where someone won't be shooting 100%, where we turn the ball over, but actually if I turnover the ball five times does that determine my performance? Maybe not because if I rebound

seven or eight times, or steal the ball or score the ball, despite the turnovers I've just contributed more to the team and had more positive stats. They should keep effort levels high regardless of performance. On the most part I think at early stages of team development guys struggle to get that but certainly the two groups I've had in the past have found a way to bring something to the table, what can I do to influence this game now?, even though I have not done this and this right so far?

Researcher – Do you think the players expect too much of themselves in practice?

Participant – We expect a lot from them. We expect them to push it hard at training. So if they don't keep intensity up then we will be on their backs.

Researcher – What if they are having a bad performance day, do you think they get worse trying to hit a level they won't be able to?

Participant – Maybe, I think sometime, like I said before, there is a spiral that these guys will enter, things get worse and worse, then they might burst out with something. They might argue or kick the wall.

Researcher – Do they practice well when they are tired?

Participant – No, not at all but we need them to perform tired in matches so we need to plan for that. We might take the session down, say they had a long week, we will make the session less physical, like maybe do shooting, tactical, something that means they won't be overly fatigued.

Researcher – What about individual players rather than team players?

Participant – They are the more difficult ones to fit into that. Often they haven't come through our junior programme and often they struggle and have never been held accountable for selfish behaviour. Obviously you have to hold yourself accountable but then from a selfless perspective, not to say to put your goals to the side, but put your agenda or your ego to one side to make sure you fit with the common goals of the team and I think people often lose sight of that based upon positive or negative performance, am I not playing very well in the short term? The ones that have the most positive influence are the ones that can keep the end goal, or the short and mid-term goal in mind, regardless of the fluctuation in their performance. They are the ones that are served better with that. Rather than those ones who let it go out the window and are like, I'm not playing very well so that's it, the line finishes there.

Researcher – How often do players have a poor performing session?

Participant – It's a bit hit and miss. I couldn't say... there's those that lose it a lot, they will react negatively faster than others. Some of the players... there was a guy last year who would always be on a level and never really played badly.

Researcher – Is it individuals within practice, or the group as a whole that have a bad practice.

Participant – That varies a lot. It can be anything. Like I said before there are always those sessions that go wrong and effects the whole group. I'd say it is more common, probably far more common that it's one player, two players that can have a bad training session.

Researcher – What do you adapt if there is a bad session happening?

Participant – A rhythm changer usually if its flat energy wise. A bad session can be a number of things, if the session is flat, lifeless, no energy, the guys aren't 100% committed to the session and locked in, a rhythm changer will be something that might be technical in the half court and blow that up so we might go up and down now. Sometimes it's so the guys have to run up and down the floor and sometimes the goal isn't even to get something positive or a set outcome, but can we rein these guys back in and get it where we need to be, and loosen the leash to hopefully get the session to where it needs to be. If it's from them not meeting our expectations, which often happens, there will be a plan in place when we think the guys aren't capable of doing something that brings their heads back up and then we have to weigh up our expectation against player capability. Sometimes you have to recalibrate and sometimes blowing everything up and say we are going to have to revisit this because we aren't at a place where we need to be. That's a poor session from a skill based perspective as opposed to a focus based or energy based session.

Researcher – So you have strong expectations for the practice session?

Participant – Yes, we will set them before the session.

Researcher – Do the players know what you want them to achieve?

Participant – Not all the time. As long as we get the standard... the meeting of the set of rules we have.

Researcher – So if your expectations are too high you can guarantee a bad session?

Participant – I wouldn't say guaranteed, but it's more that there are times when we do set the bar a little too high and coach's frustrations can come from players not getting it. Often there will be times when the energy is there and the guys are really getting after it but they just aren't capable. Maybe we don't have great decision makers, we don't have guys that can adapt on the fly without it being very coach led. If it happens then we need to strip back the skill.

Researcher – So going back to what we talked about earlier with player led sessions and them needing to take responsibility, are they capable of doing that without help?

Participant – It's difficult in the programme... you'll get our guys come through from what... been working with us for four, five years and they know what we expect from them. They get to this level and they are fine. The guys that we get from other places don't have the experience of what we want. We expect players to take responsibility, we aren't going to hold your hand, it won't help you.

Researcher – What's the reaction of players if they can't achieve the goals and expectations you set for them?

Participant – The player's reaction to that is often negative. Although it depends on the individual. Some players in that situation are like, how much time do we have in practice because I don't want to leave till I got it? You can see it frustrating the hell out of them. Others are quite happy to say I don't get this yet and I'm happy to revisit this. They are different. I'm giving it my all but I just can't get my head round it and often if this happens you need to strip it back, but I think more often than not it's a negative when players, or when coaches are demonstrating something... we will often get three players that can and two or three that can't but then it comes down to what team chemistry is like. You will get some players that will be quick to point the finger and get annoyed with others but there are others, like the leaders, that will be happy to put their arm round someone, and say ok you aren't in the right place, you need to be here let's get it in the rest of the session.

Researcher – What's the reaction when players will have a go at other players?

Participant – I'd say it's usually a negative. Not always but most of the time. Yeah, it's a low percentage. You'll see guys getting angry and then doing something they shouldn't.

Researcher – Doing something they shouldn't, what do you mean?

Participant – Like throw up bad passes, not engage with the plan. Taking it to heart, not realising that the emotional charge in the moment is there and that moving through and working to get the desired outcome.

Researcher – So players mainly respond better to positive encouragement from others?

Participant – Without a doubt. When its player led rather than coach led it's usually a way more positive environment. Players feel embarrassed when they don't get things right and there's a sense of pride with younger players. In individual player meetings, players have feed back to us and said that, I don't really like it when I'm called out in front of the coaches and all my teammates for making a mistake, I actually prefer it if one of my teammates on the baseline tells me I need to be here rather than here. On the other hand you have other players that want to be chewed up and told that if I'm messing up tell me, tell me what I'm doing wrong and where I need to be. It's managing expectations and knowing personnel. It's about knowing the players and getting the positive response, often you see yourself in a situation where you know some players better than others and some are harder to read and ultimately it's trying to get the most positive response you can.

Researcher – Do you see situations where players react positively to a negative situation?

Participant – I do think those two types of player exist, often it's ingrained in them from a lot of influences like upbringing, personality and characteristics. It's how they are generally day to day, are they an introvert or extrovert. Often extrovert guys are happy to have the open dialogue and the guys who are more introverted, if you raise your voice or have a negative tone in your voice and that will trigger them to have a downward spiral. There are some guys who find something negative at the start but if you strip it down they will eventually get it so I guess it's positive. But I still think the two types exists and they need to be treated differently to get a positive outcome from the same negative situation.

Researcher – Is it difficult to understand which player is which?

Participant – It's a matter of how much time you can see them. In pressure situations, do they do this? Do they do that? That's why we get players who look good but then we realise they actually can't compete in the way we want them to.

Researcher – What about people reacting negatively to a positive situation?

Participant – Yes, with team chemistry, if players play in the same position and one has a great practice and the other has a bad one, not that we should be celebrating every time

someone does their job, but if he has a great practice that's a positive outcome but not for the other guy. It has a head down effect upon confidence where they might think they won't get to play in the next game. Then if the coaches show praise to one or two players for working hard, shooting better etc... sometimes there can be a situation when you praise one person in the group, others feel nose out of joint, wait a minute I was working as hard as him, or what they perceive to be working as hard as them but actually sometimes they aren't able to accurately compare themselves to others.

Researcher – Is that common and does it cause difficulties?

Participant – I've seen a negative outcome in that respect. The best example I can give is between two players last year. If [player name removed] had a great practice than [player name removed] would be uptight and maybe doesn't want to talk to him and communicate positively to other people and then vice versa. [Player name removed] wasn't the same type of person, if [player name removed] was playing well then [player name removed] would say he isn't that good anyway and have a negative tone and make a negative comment or say he will never shoot like that again, maybe an undertone towards it or a reluctant high five. Again, that throws a spanner in the team chemistry. I guess its jealousy or envy and ego clashing, I think that's when you can get a negative reaction from a positive performance. Even in a game situation we win and lose as a team but if someone has a fantastic individual performance then we should celebrate that as his success is our success and I've often seen a player in a similar position score 35 points.

Researcher – We talked about individuals before, does anyone treat an individual performance as a team win?

Participant – I'd say not really. They do it for themselves. They don't really hit a position where they are all parts of a whole. Probably because they need to get on to next level and make sure they are doing what they need to do and if they don't hit what they want to do then they won't be at the level they need to be.

Researcher – Does competition in the team cause problems?

Participant – At times if your egos and chemistry aren't right, if your players don't get on well enough together, not rooting for each other enough and this player thinks he's better. In an ideal situation when there's that level of competition when guys think they are better than each other it often raises performance to have to play better which I guess is a positive outcome but can be a negative situation sometimes because its guys clashing

heads and getting after each other and sometimes it gets a bit chirpy and there are harder fouls than normal but that's the environment you are begging for from a coaches point of view because it's the closest to game like situation. So motivation in the long term, but I think it's got a double edge outcome, it can be fantastic because practice goes up and the energy is through the roof and for a game situation it best prepares us but if there aren't baseline things in place before have like egos not in check and team chemistry not there, it can often spiral out and go the other way if it's too competitive.

Researcher – So if a player is in a competitive environment, that's best for their development?

Participant – Absolutely the best way to have training. If they players aren't being pushed then they won't improve and get better. It's the same as a team, if a team isn't being challenged then they get complacent and it doesn't work.

Researcher – Can it be too much?

Participant – You don't want a team who loses every game as that'll cause them to have no confidence, they won't want to play, they might drop out, not want to play anymore because they don't achieve, that's big... achievement is a necessity in basketball... in sport as you play to win, whether that be a win on court or the win or gaining a new skill, a new move.

Researcher – Do you have any final suggestions on what may influence those within a practice environment?

Participant – I said it before, but an athlete centred environment and an athlete centred approach to practice. I like it when the sessions are led by players, especially in skill development. In skill development approach I'm always keen to hear from the players, I want the players to feel there is an open channel of communication with me, solely from a development point of view. I want it to be a drill or a practice where a breakdown is when they feel like the coach has given us the blueprint and we have to go off what he says. I don't really agree with that or find it comfortable, I want the players to be able to talk to me about it.

Researcher – So the balance is important between coach and player?

Participant – Yes. I guess being an approachable environment where players can communicate with one another, not necessarily share ideas as it's not a do what you want

practice, but within the practices we are taking part in I want players to feel like its led by them. That way I think you get maximum buy in, I think often when its coaches who are like, this is the plan, this is what you are good at and this is not what you are good at, lets crack on. Some guys are real happy with that as its laid out on a plate for them, it's easy, then can just get on with what they got to do but I guess, I don't know if it's a modern way of coaching, but that's one of the key things I would say often has a positive effect on practices that I run where players feel like I am in control of my own development here. Yes the coach is here and he's putting the practices and drills together but I'm constantly feeding back. In my first year here that was huge we got so much done and improved the most out of anyone that's ever been here, because it was like if there's something not going right, let's talk about it, let's review it, let's video it, let's look at it in games and be proactive. They bought into it and I've never had to say to them let me see you in the morning at 7am. Whereas this year and last year I'm sending messages, I'm asking where the guys are. I don't know why that is, maybe it's on me to review that, but yes I'd say an approachable, athlete centred environment goes a long, long way.

Researcher – Anything else?

Participant – Maybe the last thing, and everyone's important type environment. If you have players who are more advanced that play lots of minutes, you have other guys less developed who maybe lack confidence, feel like they are just existing out there at times and its finding a way as a coach to put in there that everyone isn't going to get the same amount of time but we are all important parts of the cog here, and that all-inclusive approach. I don't mean not tailoring practices...just everyone has a place.

Researcher – Does everyone get a fair chance, does everyone get the same amount of coach attention.

Participant – They don't, that's because we don't have the time, we need to get the best guys on the court for matches and get them up to speed. They don't get left out totally, they still get a lot, but I'll be thinking that I need to sort this out, with the squad who are playing Wednesday, so I'm not going to work with one of the lesser guys at the expense of losing out time with the others.

Teacher Interview Transcription

Age: 26 years old

Interview date: 18/02/2018

Years within EABL programme: 4 year

Interview length: 82 minutes (including warm-up discussion)

Researcher – So you are a teacher at the college and you teach a lot of the basketballers?

Participant – I tend to teach all of them, if they stay within the sport department. Some do other A levels and I won't teach them.

Researcher – And you also run one of the [sport name removed] teams at the college?

Participant – Yep, I run the [sport name removed]. I have the boys for two training sessions a week and a match.

Researcher – Is it similar to the basketball team?

Participant – Not really as they do far more. They are always training and they are a higher level and I think they will work at a very high level when they train a lot more and as a team.

Researcher – But you have an understanding of sport practice and performance?

Participant – Yes, I do a lot of [sport name removed] coaching. I coach after work about three times a week so I have a good knowledge of coaching.

Researcher – Do you know how the current performance of the team is?

Participant – I think they are doing ok. I hear that they win most of their games. The players in class seem to be in good spirits.

Researcher – What about at practice, do you see their performance then?

Participant – I don't see much of the practice sessions. I'll look in every now and then because I'm interested in the things they do as they are the highest level sport we have at the college and I want to see, want to learn what they do, if I can pick up any new ideas.

Researcher – Do you get any new ideas?

Participant – Yes I do, it's more observational stuff like the way they organise their drills and the intensity they employ. Do they make it match specific? Do they keep the skills close to what they would be like in a game? And I think they do, it's quite match related, it's specifically relating exactly to what the players would be doing in a match.

Researcher – In your opinion do you believe that practice performance dictates the performance of teams, the players, during competition?

Participant – I think it's really relevant as if you are training at a low intensity then you can take that into a game. If you train badly then it will stay with you into the match. It's the things you have been working on so you need to practice and make sure they are working well into competition and especially working on tactical plays that the whole team need to be aware of.

Researcher – Do you think it's important for players to be in a positive frame of mind when they are practising?

Participant – I think it's really important that they have positivity. If you don't believe you can do something then I don't think you will do it. If you don't think you can achieve something then you won't do it. I think confidence is really important in sport. If you aren't confident... you can't do what you want to do, it doesn't work.

Researcher – What puts player into a positive frame of mind, what do you see in class?

Participant – Turn up on time. They might approach the lesson more positively and get involved with other students, not just the basketball players. They might interact more, which could be a confidence thing opposed to some of those players who aren't as confident and segregate themselves away from other class mates. Generally they work harder if they are feeling more positive, the work they produce in the lesson is of a higher quality.

Researcher – Do you treat them differently?

Participant – Not necessarily. More lenient, but I'm always in contact with their coach to see what is going on outside of the classroom. In the past we have had players with very busy schedules and might need a bit more time with deadlines and a little extra support, that sort of thing. But try not to extend deadlines or treat them any differently.

Researcher – What sort of things do you do to help them?

Participant – Meeting one to one with them. If they are going to miss a lesson because they are going away to Manchester or Ipswich for a game and are going to miss a lesson, then catching up with them before they go... one to one or catching up with them after or the next day so they are not being left behind in class work.

Researcher – What can you say about players that are more negative?

Participant – Tend to keep themselves to themselves and segregate themselves and not much interaction with other classmates and don't get involved with group or paired work activities. They don't tend to interact with me, the teacher as much, they won't ask questions in lesson time or ask for extra support but tend to be just getting on with things by themselves but from past experience they tend to struggle when the schedule gets busy and they get deadlines. They tend to struggle when they don't communicate with me and ask for help and support.

Researcher – Players that play well, are there influences upon them you see that are positive?

Participant – I see them around college, they interact with their peers. Those boys that are playing really well in those games, you know they have played well because the coach feeds back, those players are the ones who around college that people respect, people go to them and are popular and confident around the college.

Researcher – So is there a link between playing ability, confident and social skills?

Participant – Yes, that interaction between the boys and sometimes you will see those boys who haven't played so well, perhaps with less game time, might be the quieter ones and not interacting, but not might also show themselves around the college much either.

Researcher – There was, last year [player name removed]. He was an introverted player who was a star player, does that go against what you said?

Participant – Yes he is an anomaly but I think the players would still go to him for support and ideas. He might not be the one around college that people would interact with but when you see them practising in the morning, you will see boys practicing with him and trying to get ideas and asking him questions like he is that role model to them but he doesn't have that extrovert or that figure you see around college making the noise and being that figure head.

Researcher – What do you think his drive was being here?

Participant – Primarily I think their drive is... the higher level boys, the ones who get the game time are here for the basketball first. Which can be negative for their education because their priority is training in the morning which means they are lethargic in lessons later in the day. They turn up to lessons late or their standards are a little sloppy because they have worked hard in the morning. They missed parts because they are travelling all around the country. But at the same time there are some boys that have worked really hard and have got the work done and know it's important to go alongside the basketball and sort of see it as demanding the same from them as basketball does with the time and effort.

Researcher – But are they affected negatively because of this?

Participant – Maybe, maybe not. They get amazing experiences. We get kids in sports classes that don't do sport. Don't learn the vital lessons and get the experience that you need to really learn it. They are more confident if they play sport, to a good standard, certainly.

Researcher – In class, is there an accumulative effect of performance?

Participant – You don't know if it adds more pressure. If they have gone to a lesson where they haven't been the most efficient or productive and then they have an evening session or scouting session, it would be interesting to see where their standards are if they have gone from training hard in a real hard session where they have been effective and productive in the morning to maybe a few sloppy lessons, to then have to turn it back on for a later session. You wonder if the standards can then go back up and whether they stay that little bit sloppy. My guess is that some of them can flick a switch but I can imagine for a lot them the effects of being sloppy and perhaps they aren't paying as much attention and detail to the little bits in the scouting session or a bit slower on the court when it comes back to practice at 6pm in the evening after a full day of lessons.

Researcher – Do you think that academic lessons gives them a break from basketball?

Participant – It's tough. I think the content of the studies they are on... and when I see them it can have a positive effect because when you are talking about nutrition, physiology, psychology, it actually benefits them and they are picking up little bits and pieces that go along with their AASE programme and they can work out their nutrition, are they having the most calories?, which is beneficial for them but on the other hand there will be content that they don't see as that important which then becomes a hindrance

because in their eyes they see it as why do I need to be doing this?, I could be spending my time resting and recovering opposed to having to do this work. I am a firm believer that their standards are higher in lessons in terms of attendance and productivity if they see it as worthwhile. Classroom success is success elsewhere, it's a cross-over. It's the skills needed to succeed in life in general that they can learn from doing education and sport together. It's tough, but it's rewarding.

Researcher – How would you summarise an educational setting that was positive for performance?

Participant – There could be specific units within... or topics and content that they would look at that would be beneficial for them, like injuries, nutrition, psychology. Those are fundamental and I'm guessing they do bits and pieces of that through the AASE programme but I don't know how much detail they go into. I can see that having a really positive impact if they are studying about things like pre-performance routines, dealing with anxiety and arousal. Because they are playing in those big games, playing in front of crowds of people, they are playing a high level. So there is some aspects of the education that is really important. But then again, there are a some aspects that are a bit of a waste of time, maybe not waste of time because they are still getting the education... will allow them to move on to the states or Uni, but if the content was differentiated for the basketball players then I can see them thinking it's worthwhile and them maintaining their standards when they go back into an evening session. Their standards might be a little higher going to lessons in terms of attendance, punctuality and productivity in the lesson if they saw it as a little more worthwhile.

Researcher – Is it more negative if they are in mainstream lessons then, and not a sport specific courses?

Participant – Possibly. There's going to be pros and cons to both of those environments. Because if they are just by themselves it can be positive because the content is going to be specific to them and you wonder how efficient they might be if they are just working in their peer group as they might get easily distracted, but there are positives that they become experts in some of the lessons if you are looking at tactical, nutrition or psychology, if they already have knowledge of that, they then become the experts in the classroom. And they have the respect from the other peers because they have played in front of a thousand people, or they play at the highest level, or they get their games streamed and the other guys in the class have that respect for them and want to work with

them. But the content might not be as specific to them and if they don't see it as worthwhile then standards might drop.

Researcher – Is it beneficial having other students in the class with basketball players that are not basketballers?

Participant – I've seen it this year, like I said, where we have some players in a BTEC sport group where they have different sports people and generally the basketball players are quite positive people and they get a lot of respect from the group, mainly because they are older so they get the respect, also because the group respect the level and standard at which they are competing at.

Researcher – Are there any more positive factors you can think of?

Participant – I think a key one is that the teachers are always in contact with the coach and for us the coach is based in the same office as us so if there are any issues or problems... as teachers we try and deal with it but the coach will back us up and help deal with it and can speak to the boys one to one and see what's going on. It's positive for the boys and for the coaches because if one is being late to lessons and standards are sloppy then that might translate to their performance so if we try and stop that. But at the same time there is that positive feedback we give to the coach if the players are doing well in lessons or have done really well on an assignment or they are working well in a group the coach likes to hear that and will give the boys praise. If the players get praise from teachers, which is reinforced by the coach, that might have a positive impact upon their motivation and confidence and self-esteem going into games and practice.

Researcher – Can you think of any negative performance influences that might occur?

Participant – Possibly if they go to different areas. Some will have maths and science and they are courses where the teachers aren't understanding of the level and commitment these players have to their basketball so if they are getting negative feedback from teachers that is going to the coach and it could be a downward spiral to that. In the past there has been messages relayed back that players haven't gone to maths lessons etc... and they want them to catch up with the work and you don't know if that's playing on their mind when they are at practice because they know they have an assignment and work to do as soon as they finish or its them going to the session and saying to the coach they can't do the practice session because they have this and this or start saying they have an injury so they can go and get the work done. I don't know if that plays on their mind that much or

how much they prioritise those other subjects but if it's not right up there in terms of importance then they might be getting some negative feedback from teachers, which then could have a negative impact upon the court.

Researcher – Do you think it's tough being a full-time student and trying to train at pretty much full-time?

Participant – I think it can really be tough going trying to play basketball to a high level. There's a lot of pressure on the players to perform at a top level. The league they're in is really competitive and you can see at times, if they've got a big match coming up, they do get quite stressed and that can affect what happens to them around the college. I remember when I was at college playing sport and that wasn't as a higher level as what these guys play at and it's tough. But I think if you really want it and you really want to succeed then you'll be happy to do both.

Researcher – Is there anything you would change about the environment these basketballers play in?

Participant – I think that they should have a separate timetable at the college so that they can have more time to train and recover and then it's more independent for what they need to be doing. I don't think it helps them, they got to be here there everywhere. They got to try and get to lessons then go to a meeting then training and they got a late night training or early morning training and they've somewhere in there got to do homework, get recovery in, get enough sleep in, see their friends. I think it would be better if they had a separate timetable for basketballers but then again that wouldn't work because it wouldn't fit with the college timetable.

Researcher – So, when the players are getting ready for practice are there other things you think they should be doing that they're not?

Participant – I know they practice straight after lessons most days. I know the coach has moved back the training time, which I think is helpful to give them a chance to prepare properly. I also wonder if they spend their time wisely, they just tend to sit around a lot together, messing around and I don't know if that it could be a bit more fruitful. But then again they do need to have some down time, they need to see their friends, they need to socialize. The social element is getting quite important.

Researcher – Do they socialise a lot together around the college?

Participant – I only ever see basketballers with other basketballers. There's a few hangers on that you will see, other students from sport courses or friends from elsewhere maybe from their old school, but most of the time all the basketballers will stay together or hang out together.

Researcher – Does it help them always being together?

Participant – I think from a cohesion point of view it's probably good they get team bonding time but maybe it might be too much sometimes, to always be with someone could be a bit of a pain. I think it could be good to have a bit of a break because they do seem to live in each other's pockets, but then again, doesn't really seem to affect them and they all seem quite close, it seems like a bit of a family really.

Researcher – Do you think the environment at the college is good for basketball players, for them to perform, for them to perform well at practice?

Participant – It's one of only a few around the whole country so it's definitely a good place for them to be. I know we do get a lot of players coming from places like London and they come for the quality of coaching we have here and the develop opportunities. They could stay at their current Academy, but we get a lot of third years that come to us.

Researcher. The new players coming into the environment, does it hinder the performance of the group in the practice environment?

Participant – I think it is not good at the start of the season because I think it takes a while for those players to bed in. Once they've done a few weeks together though they definitely seem to get on well and when I watch them play I think they do quite well. I have spoken to the coaches before and they are always looking to do some team bonding at the start of the season but there just isn't that much time. We are quite tight on money here and we don't really get the opportunity to spend money to do things like that. I do think that would be quite effective though to help performance at the start of the season. But I guess because they spend so much time together on court and off court and they get to know each other quite well quite quickly.

Researcher – Do all the players seem to put in a high level of effort?

Participant – Yes I do think they do. Many of them are putting in a lot of effort around the college both with the basketball or in lessons. Whenever I watch practice they're always putting in good effort.

Head of Sport Interview Transcription

Age: 43 years old

Interview date: 02/03/2018

Years within EABL programme: 6 years

Interview length: 61 minutes (including warm-up discussion)

Researcher - How long has the college been operating an AASE programme for basketball?

Participant – I did check before we met today as I wasn't totally sure. We are into our sixth season now, it's a lot longer than I thought it was before I checked.

Researcher – Do you believe the programme to be successful?

Participant – I think it's immensely successful. Considering we are still a fairly new operation, without the history and prestige of other places, I think we are doing well. From my point of view it's great to get top athletes in to the college, for one we need the revenue but it fits with our competitive goals as a department to be challenging on a national scale. For what we are, the facilities we have to work with, we are punching above our weight.

Researcher – What is it about the facilities at the college?

Participant – We are very limited on what we have here, it's not great really for a top performing sports college. We have to spend far more attention on our provision, staffing, quality of delivery, those sorts of things. I believe the team we have here who deliver our sport is excellent.

Researcher – Why is that particularly?

Participant – Well, they are really passionate about what we do here. They love their sport and really want to compete. It's a strong drive I think, which is that they want to be the best with their teams. They were all good sportsman and that helps them, they know what it's about and want to win.

Researcher – how do you see the performance of the players in practice and around the college?

Participant – I think we have a good bunch of players this year. They seem to be doing well on the court. I haven't heard or seen of any problems within the academic side of things. I know they won the other day with a good victory. The programme is running well and we have been able to bring in some good players.

Researcher – How do you feel they are practicing at the moment?

Participant – The players are working hard. I think the coaches are excellent and really push the players to be the best they can be. They always seem to be in control of all that happens around the place.

Researcher – So what is it that the coaches do in particular?

Participant – They organise the lads fully. They make sure that they look after them and sort out things like timetables and if they have any problems with college work. They have a good relationship with the players, in fact all the staff have a good relationship. It's something we pride ourselves on at the college, something i hope and think we get right a lot of the time. I don't know a great deal about the ins and outs, the technicalities of basketball but from the feedback i get from the players, the coaches are very good. It's the reason how we can recruit players from outside the local area. I wish we could operate like this for the other sports.

Researcher – Do you see a link between player performance practice levels and how they perform in competition?

Participant – I teach a few of the players and we talk in class about upcoming and past matches. I'm not too sure about whether there is a relationship between that. It does seem to work out though, if they are training well then they will play well. I think it would work that they would play well. The players have a structured programme where they have daily activities to do, is a positive. It sort of makes them a professional full-time sports person. It's not just once or twice a week it's a daily structured programme. The fact they have to be in early in the morning teaches them discipline, it teaches them they need to be here and if they don't then they might not play in the team so it gives them standards and discipline which can then have an effect on their training ethic and work rate and effort. That's why I feel it works here and that the on court match performance is always good and we are competing as one of the best colleges in the country.

Researcher – Is there anything specific or that really makes the programme positive for player and team performance?

Participant – The team is coached by two different people, which I think is a positive because sometimes you can get bored or have a funny relationship with just one person so I think the fact that there are two coaches will help them out as well. It's not just about basketball, they also do S&C, they got a physio, they do sports massage and again that's quite professional. They are not just focusing on one thing there, they are looking at all aspects to improve them as performers and get them bigger and stronger.

Researcher – So are there any other positive influences or aspects of the programme that can affect the performance of the team?

Participant – The fact that [team name removed] is renowned for being good at basketball feeds into the success and win at all costs mentality and about them having to train hard and work hard to get into the team. It's as if they walk in the door knowing how it's going to be, what's expected of them, the way they need to act and behaviour. We expect success, they expect success, we put in as much effort as possible to win. I also think the team spirit is excellent this year. A few years ago there was a team with... I guess it was a team full of individuals, it was a colder atmosphere and not what we have now. There were some toxic players in there, they don't help the cohesion of the group and can be damaging. I have felt this year that the group look good and, as I said earlier I teach a few of them and they are really good lads.

Researcher – How do the players act when they are together?

Participant – They are always laughing and joking around the college. We see them a lot around the office area and they seem close. Like I said, a few years ago there was a cold atmosphere, all the basketball players hangout in the same area, regardless of which year it is. They've been in that area of the college for years. So we see a lot of them over the years and they seem much better this year, they have a good laugh and are respectful. There's no attitude at all from any of them.

Researcher – Do you treat the basketball players differently from other students?

Participant – We look after our sports students, we ensure the best sports people are looked after, they are some of the best we have, certainly the best and highest performing team we have. So I guess we all have a bit of bias towards them. I think the coaches get on their back if they aren't performing in the classroom, and we'll back them up. But, the guys

are here for a reason, they are driven, it's very very rare that we have problems with a basketballer. We will make sure that players are given as much support as possible, but that goes for any of the top sports people we have. We make sure they are all looking after, with college and their sport.

Researcher – What about negatives, are there any influences from the programme that may cause negative impacts upon performance?

Participant – Maybe some negatives are that the training, it is daily could be argued that it's too much for them, it's too much basketball and it might become repetitive. They do play a lot, they play a couple of times a week on occasions so maybe they need more rest time potentially that might factor in on injuries and things like that.

Researcher – Is that a factor with college work as well?

Participant – Yes, because a lot of their focus needs to be on their college studies, they can't fully focus on the basketball, there are other things going on in their lives so that's going to make them mentally tired potentially by having to focus on studies and work and they can't totally commit to their sport and what they want to do. It's a hard programme, a tough life choice. I think these guys have the hardest deal, especially if they take some challenging courses.

Researcher – Does every player get effected by the challenges of balancing sport and education?

Participant – Not all. There's a guy this year, really smart guy. He's got a lot to offer. He's very intelligent. I don't know if he wants to take basketball seriously in the future. It's a tough choice. There's not a huge amount of money in it and I don't think he will make a good living from it. I think this is certainly the time in their life when they make the decision on where they go. They have the option of America, university, job, it's a big time in a young person's life. It's a tough decision but better to have several options available.

Researcher – Does the college have good facilities for the basketballers?

Participant – I think that facilities are an issue where sometimes they are fighting to use certain facilities and if they didn't have to do that and they had the perfect facilities at their disposal, I think that would clearly help and develop them and improve them further.

Researcher – What do you mean by fighting for facility?

Participant – We have multiple sports via for space in just the one sports hall. We also need to fit in teaching, which is tough when we need it almost every lesson. The players have to fit around the programme, practice when they can, a lunch times if it's free or in between lessons sometimes they go in there. The other problem we have is that it's difficult for us to monitor the hall, so you can get a load of random kids in there, you got to manage it. You usually find the players still practice with others in there, there friends, how much they get done I don't know but at least they are doing something towards a practice session.

Researcher – Are there any other negative influences you can think of that effects the players?

Participant – Travelling time could come into it as a negative in the fact that they are travelling around the country, they are not playing that locally so again that will take its toll and could tire them out. I think the programming around preparation and recovery from matches is really important. Maybe the players training on a Thursday morning isn't the best for them, but they need to fit the sessions in. The requirements of the programme are clear and we need to hit the required hours and sessions. We do punch above our weight significantly when you look at what we have facility wise, we do really well.

Researcher – So time is an issue?

Participant – They could do with more time in the sports hall. They get a lot, more than other sports in the academy, but it's still not enough and could do with more, so more facility will mean more quality training sessions really. Time is generally is important, it would be great if sports had their own venues and facilities but it just work like that. We have really limited funds. The only times that are free are the ones that might be unsocial, slots that are challenging, like morning, early morning times.

Researcher – So the lost time during the day is replaced by the morning training times?

Participant – Yes, but you could argue that the morning sessions are a negative impact because it's a funny time of the day to train, so it's not an ideal time of the day. So would they be more productive if they were training at better times?, after they have eaten their breakfast? and have a bit more energy? That's definitely an issue. Although, you don't have students complaining about it. It's accepted, they get on with it, they don't know any better, know any different. If you had a group that had the pick of training slots and then moved them to our programme, I think they wouldn't get on with it, wouldn't like it at all.

Researcher – About equipment and facility, do you have enough equipment if facility is not great?

Participant – Like I said we don't have great facility. Also equipment, there's a lot of basketball equipment out there that we don't have because we don't have the money for it. There's a shot returning device and that's quite expensive and we don't have that and that could have an impact and benefit the lads if we did. But that's the way it is, there's a lot of equipment that we can't afford, which could impact performance.

Researcher – Do you think not having the best facilities and equipment effects the players very much?

Participant – It's interesting how I don't think it does affect them. I know it's an issue, the coaches know it's an issue, but I guess because it's one of those things. You just get on with it, its familiar. Might say a lot about facility. You could have a great facility but if you had a bad coach and bad players, it wouldn't be an advantage at all.

Researcher – Is there a time that you have personally effected the programme either positive or negative.

Participant – I think I'm as proactive as I can be with the way things have worked out. I think this programme is crucial to what we offer at the college and I want to support it the best I can.

Researcher – Is there any support you give during the weeks, say around the players and their practice experience?

Participant – I'm not hands on in the week, I'll speak to the guys when i can, in lesson or if I see them around the college. I don't think my involvement will bring anything, sort of day to day I don't need to be involved.

Researcher – What do you think would make the best practice environment at the college for the basketball players, what would it need to entail?

Participant – I think we have got it spot on with the coaches, the support they give the players is great. There's a lot of things going on behind the scenes, with scouting and things like that. I can see one area being the improvement of the facilities, or more importantly, probably the use of it. I think the use of the sports hall whenever they want to practice would be ideal. It's not something that could ever happen but I believe that if they [players] had free periods and wanted to practice then they could. I think it might be good

to switch the training sessions to the day. I know that [local professional football club name removed] will train at the same time before a game, if the games at 8pm then they train at that time in the build-up. It makes sense for us to do that as games are not early morning but in the afternoon. We do some [practice sessions], I think maybe one, maybe two, are in the afternoon but the rest are early morning.

Researcher – Have you got anything else to add regarding the practice environment and the influences that might impact players?

Participant – The only other thing I can think of is all the players on the same academic programme.

Researcher – What do you mean by that?

Participant – If all the basketballers were doing the same course, then we could build practice in to that. I wouldn't happen as most of them do A levels, they are spread out over the college. We did it with a football group in BTEC and they got to train and do a practical in football a week and that worked well.

Researcher – So it's about getting them more time?

Participant – Yes, I think so. The more practice time the better.

Researcher – Is the support good enough, are you happy with the support players get outside of court practice?

Participant – We said earlier about physio and gym work. Maybe they could have nutritional guidance and I know they have been doing some work with you [mental skills development]. I want it to be as professional as possible and I think that we have got it as close to that as possible. We have to hit the framework set out to us by AASE and I know the club is good. In fact, the link with [club name removed] is vital for us. In fact we couldn't run the programme without [club name removed] as a lot of the training is done through them and not all during the college timetable. It's a big club and it works well for us.

Researcher – Is it important to get support from others outside of the college?

Participant – Yes, the more support is better as they are young athletes and need the help. It's a time when they start to leave home, some players live in the player house and they are young, so it can be difficult. The first time leaving home and being away from family and they need to look after themselves. They need support from each other and especially

from the staff. If the players get on well together and will help each other then that is good.

Researcher – Does that help performance?

Participant – I'd say it does. If the players have a strong bond then that's only going to be good for performance. If they have each other's backs at home, then they have each other's backs in sport.

Strength and Conditioning Coach Interview Transcription

Age: 26 years old

Interview date: 12/02/2018

Years within EABL programme: 1 year

Interview length: 69 minutes (including warm-up discussion)

Researcher – What do you think about the current performance of the team, both on the court and with you?

Participant – Yes, it's taken longer than I hoped for them to get to a stage where I'm happy where they work in the gym [in strength and conditioning sessions] and the level I expected from an AASE academy team should be working at, and I don't know that's whether my expectations of S&C is that it's as crucial as the work done on court. My background in athletics is different than what I get with the guys so I don't know if I expect too much. Athletes will do far more of this work, whereas team players may not be doing, or might not have done as much in the past. They have a really high respect for the coaches and I don't know if they took me a little for granted and saw it as a side thing, like that's just S&C. But now they are starting to take it a little more seriously. It's probably the fact that they have near on zero experience, especially the new guys. The older ones have but I think I have high expectations, maybe more than the last guy.

Researcher – Is it more of a disappointment about their physical ability or their effort?

Participant – It's more to do with effort. A lot of them, from my perspective need a lot of... I don't think they realise how far behind they are physically. I don't think they realised how poorly they moved, even with support from last year. I'm massive on that, it's so fundamental, so important. There is a hell of a lot to work to do and they think there is going to be an overnight success, which is strange coming from the same thought process because in basketball it would never come over night, so I don't know why they assume it will come physically. Probably because they have little experience and just don't get it. Because we have been doing things quite basically at the moment, trying to nail down the simple parts of S&C, whether that knocks them back a little bit because they might assume they should be doing a lot more advanced work, so their perceived effort and motivation... but now I'd say we are getting to a stage where it's been two and a half weeks and they are starting to get what's expected physically, how they should approach things psychologically and mentally. In terms of their perceived effort and their willingness to... it's not even to try things, its thinking about... there's almost an anxiety to certain things. Like, if I do that then I know I'm going to be ruined the next day or even just getting under a weight. There's been anxiety over getting under a squat bar but we are now getting to a stage where... like we did some max strength work, that's now sky rocketed in terms of back squat and people are starting to see things working out now. I guess it's just general adaptation stuff physically, but hopefully the psychological side of things is starting to come into play now. Them getting buy in to it. Straight away they can see it as everything is integrated, everything working together now so hopefully... a few of them are pointing out they are seeing things on the court that they didn't necessarily see last year or wasn't there before, like being more powerful or faster.

Researcher – Do you think that what is done in practice will be reflected in competition?

Participant – Yes, almost certainly, it has to be the case. The way I look at it is that every single thing that they do in the gym, every rep, is worth something, is worth something to their development and therefore worth something to their basketball. Especially when you are working with high loads and low repetitions, the quality of that moment in every single rep is paramount to how a programme... if we missed one or two reps that could be 50% of that volume of work gone, for a single set. If they do that three times in a row they lose huge amount of work so now they are starting to realise they need to switch on and how they have to step into any movement and be ready to focus and understand how their body is going to be needed to be set in place and we do a lot of that.

Researcher – Are they performing well in the gym now and do they put in the effort you require from them?

Participant – On the whole I guess... even if it's registering how their posture needs to be but their ready to work when I ask them to work in comparison to before. It's such a team environment, especially in basketball because it's such a tight team, but I only work with four or five at a time so they are now beginning to work. And they motivate each other to make sure they utilise everything they do in the gym so their perceived effort is becoming natural rather than... it's an expected thing to give what I ask them to give, whether that's a full effort of explosive power or concentrating on something specific to stability. They are coming back to me in better shape as well.

Researcher – Is their recovery better now or are they getting used to it?

Participant – I think they are getting used to it well now, physically and psychologically, it's the outside things they might be doing better at. They are even starting to buy into the recovery side of things, maybe not outside so much but definitely in our recovery session on Thursday morning. The amount of people that turn up to recovery is starting to step up a little bit more. Its early morning so their motivation towards it is now higher, whereas it used to be poor. The coaches push it a lot and that will help them... they [the coaches] have far more power over them than I do, although, I let the coaches know about everything, like attendance and performance.

Researcher – How do they motivate each other when they are in the gym?

Participant – Before they talked a lot about everything outside of basketball, about their general life, talking about girl friends or boyfriends, music, anything, having a laugh, joking around. It's now about the session more and what's in front of them, which is nice. I've started to give them a bit more responsibility in taking down the recording of their own load. I want them to concentrate on the moment in time where they are then and that thought process for them is a lot simpler, which is good for their mental state and how they might approach moving into a game situation so their mind doesn't sway. I don't think their mind would sway but obviously the gym is a very simpler concept of thought process than basketball play, I get how it would be hard to switch their brain from this to that but I think it's about keeping their thought process.

Researcher – is it easier for them in S&C then?

Participant – It's easier in the fact that here's the weight, you just got to lift it. But in the terms of effort, if they don't give it their full effort then it won't be good. Again, it's about mentality. If you are used to it and willing to put the work in then... I've had it before, before working with the basketballers, where they just didn't know what to do at all. Not that they didn't want to put the effort in, but it's like they didn't even know how to do it. How to actually work that hard.

Researcher – What was that down to?

Participant – I don't know. I guess it has to be down to their upbringing maybe, have they got the experience, have they had the right coaches, and all that.

Researcher – What would you are the greatest positive impacts upon the players and their subsequent performance?

Participant – Positive reengagement is a huge part of basketball culture as it is, almost everything they do is... they would stupidly clap to promote motivation. They always listen to their own music which is kind of a big thing.

Researcher – Who controls the music?

Participant – I allow them to put what they want on and they will joke and laugh about what to put on for this and that. I think that's positive and allows them to focus better but it's such an encouraging sport basketball in terms of everything they do, whether it's a poor lift or movement they are always reengaging a positive outcome. They take that into the gym which I like as an environment, there's not really any negativity. When there is it's turned on its head by the players, I don't really have to intervene that much. If someone says I can't do this, there are a lot of people around that think they can. Even when someone is really struggling there's reinforcement all the time, which I think is really paramount to how they get along as a group and they always win and lose as a team which is good.

Researcher – Do you think the constantly positive messages and communication lose their effect?

Participant – That's a fair point. There might be but it's engrained in what they do... the culture is that of which it's everywhere. There's always positivity, it's great to be around... I'm not even sure they think about what they are doing, it just happens. There are levels

though, of how much people shout. One of the guys is really full on and there's others that are more quiet, but everyone will support each other.

Researcher – Does an effective recovery for the players help with their performance?

Participant – Yes. I think that recovery and the stuff we do... there is actually a little more chance to relax when we focus on recovery. It's not as intense, the players can be far more relaxed with it. We recover on a Thursday morning, which is the morning after a game so I like them to reflect upon what happened in a game, try to get them to think about that, rather than talking about other stuff that's frankly not important and not important in a time when all the players are together. So I constantly promote conversation about the game or if they had no game then training sessions and what's been going on in the week.

Researcher – So you get them to think and reflect on what they have been doing?

Participant – Yes, recovery is a really good time for them to reflect as a team. It's a nice period of time, straight after a game especially if they have lost, maybe that's too soon, that 24 hours is giving them that time to self-reflect and they can then ask each other questions about it, which I think is really good. So in terms of how they strategize with that is really positive and hopefully they then take that on to the court.

Researcher – So is that something you incorporate into your sessions?

Participant – We haven't done a load of work towards that, but in the recovery sessions there is a lot of thinking time available and within the sessions is a lot of general chit chat and we might be doing a lot of stretching and mobility for long periods of time, or just on a bike and we are just rolling our legs out. It gives us that little bit of time. The recovery time is as important as the S&C work in the gym, purely on the basis that they are overworked athletes unfortunately, because they are on a court all the time. Getting them off the court and realising they need to be recovering their body... because they see it as a fast recovery game, play every day, more than once a day as well as lift so that Thursday morning is really important, especially after the day of a game. Sometimes it may be they have an easy win and we take that recovery session out and we might test them a little with high intensity stuff but Thursday morning is generally a good time for them to reflect.

Researcher – When do you decide on what to do?

Participant – Maybe the day before or the morning of the session. Depends on the game, on their physical condition, are they really tired from a hard game. I'll be pretty adaptable.

Sometimes it might be they just don't do it because they got back real late. Although, most of the players will come in anyway even if they are tired.

Researcher – What about the physical condition of players here?

Participant – It's always very individual. This morning when they trained they were all tired, I could see that because we had a big session Monday and that's them backed up with a Tuesday night training session and a game Wednesday. I knew they would be tired so the recovery I did do was nothing more than mobility and blood flow to flush everything through. But day to day it's very different, the time of year doesn't help because there is a lot of illness going round so some players sometimes come in really tired and it could be they have picked up a little illness.

Researcher – How do you organise them if they have different needs at different times?

Participant – It's a hard one to deal with but I kind of put that to them for them to communicate that to me, to take it upon themselves to realise that actually I'm too tired to be in this environment at the moment so maybe I need to step away from it. Or maybe do a recovery session which I think is a big part of the learning process for them and knowing themselves a lot more, being more self-aware of what their current state is and what they expect to hit when they are in the gym. If you are tired, demotivated even, you aren't going to hit a PB [personal best] or anything close to it. To understand when they are tired and when, if they had a really hard session, I can go again today and then on the flip side, knowing when they are really frazzled and need to take time for recovery. There's a fine line, we start to see a lot more injuries if they are struggling. They have a lot of responsibility because they have to be the one that says, yeah I'm ok today, or no I'm not. There's trust there that they are telling the truth and I think they know it's for the best, for them. Although, they always think they can do more than they can usually. They are ill but just carry on as normal.

Researcher – Do they always have the same expectations each session or do they change?

Participant – I'd say 90% of them. Coming from a culture of working hard, they assume they have to work hard. So actually they are quite good with that. They are still at a stage where maybe they are not necessarily knowing 100%, whether they know they have reached the quality of work that is expected when they are in a fatigued state. On a Monday they are generally quite fresh, they play Saturday and rest Sunday, so 90% of the time they are fresh and ready to go on Monday but Thursday is a different story.

Sometimes when we have done sessions and I've expected a certain intensity and I'm only getting certain people reach that level that may be because those guys don't realise the intensity I expect from them.

Researcher – Do they expect a certain standard?

Participant – I don't think they are at that stage yet. They are at the stage where they are expecting it to come from me and I will direct what I want from them but I will try to, as much as I can possible... I know how someone reacts to working at when I say you need to be 90% and above today when you are doing these movements or this needs to be done like this, it's different for everyone and I know how certain people deal with certain intensities and we've got some real good athletes in the team that I know that they are lifting heavy but they are still comfortable in themselves. But there are some kids that make a lift that even I think actually that's not the maximum you can lift but they are still making a meal out of it. It sets them back. Maybe that's a learning process in terms of, again going back to expectation, I can never say that there's 100% across the board they are all knowing and expecting to know already what's expected of them within the session. Maybe it's a learning process of them not knowing what I expect or they don't know how much effort they can actually put in. It's getting better with more exposure but there is still room for improvement. I'm not sure they have that much awareness.

Researcher – So they don't know what they can do and therefore never have an expected standard?

Participant – No, I'd say they know but maybe they don't really think about it at all. Like I said, they are young, they maybe haven't been around S&C that much.

Researcher – Do they get frustrated when they don't hit what's expected?

Participant – Some do. I'd say 75% do. There are still some immature levels of athlete in there... they think they are coming in and working hard and I could tell them there is still 10% there. I think it's because they are at a premature stage of actually being in a gym environment and having the direction that I might be giving them.

Researcher – So what do you do with the immature players?

Participant – It's not they are bad, they just don't get the professionalism we want from them. But, those 25% that are like that I think have probably improved by 50% of what they were at, at the beginning, when really they had no idea of what was expected of them

and actually what to expect when they do a certain movement, to go oh my god this is horrific and we want an adaptation. Experience and hours lifting is key. It's not going to be a walk in the park, if you going to improve then you have to expect that so it's hard for them to gauge how they can give the expectation that I want when they don't know what to expect from the movement. Once they get more experienced then things can change.

Researcher – So if they are completely drained and can't give you what you want, what happens?

Participant – I will reign that in. I would tell them that they are not ready to do that sort of work. They do have an attitude towards it and that just doing work is good enough and that is a basketball culture I think. Coming from my background of track and field, you are with a decent level coach, they will pull you off the track straight away and tell you you aren't moving in the way you should be moving and that's it, it's the end of the session. You go home and rest. The rest of the team might be out there training all night but unfortunately it's accepted in team sports because unfortunately if you are in the middle of the 3rd quarter and you have to be on that court then you got to suck it up and bare it. Sports differ and the principles they teach the players is different, it's like you have to change their mentality totally when they start S&C.

Researcher – So you stop them from lifting if they are too fatigued?

Participant – Maybe not stop them all together but to look at what they do, especially as they will have to still perform when they are fatigued. So yeah, in the S&C environment I want to reign that in a bit. I want them to know when they are at a high risk of injury and either way they are still going to be disappointed. If they are on a basketball court and they are starting to feel tired and can't grab that rebound that well, I'm not able to get to the basket that strongly, but if I don't show that I think that I'm tired then I won't get pulled out. But what they need to understand that a coach like [coach name removed] will tell them they are too tired and need to come off because you are producing rubbish for me. They need to accept that and get off the court, sit on the bench, recover and get ready to go the next 2-3 minutes. Unfortunately for S&C it's not a few minutes, it's a day or two for recovery. But I have to rein that in and explain to them that it's not because you are inferior to the other guys around you, it's because maybe you went to bed at midnight last night and he went to bed at 10, and he had a good meal before bed and you didn't. It's a holistic thing, your approach to basketball itself, it's not about him being stronger or him being able to handle more of a session.

Researcher – So it can get competitive and personal between the players?

Participant – Always, they always want to beat each other, unless they know they can't then they are fine with it. But the boys who are closer in ability push it other, it's a good thing, it gets them working hard and they don't seem that disappointed if they don't succeed.

Researcher – So is there is a potential for them not adjusting their expectations?

Participant – Yeah but I don't think its unexpected, some of these guys that have come into the programme this year haven't ever been in an S&C environment before, which I totally get and I would never say to them that what they are doing is unacceptable. But actually now I would because I have gone through the process of saying to them that actually what you are doing is not where we want to be at to gain strength or power. Sometimes I go to quick because I think they must have done something before. Take [player name removed], the first time he set foot in a gym was this year. How can that be? The guys been playing for ages and he's a decent player, surely you would have expected him to have some experience.

Researcher – Are there any negative influences upon player performance that you can see?

Participant – Playing too much basketball. For what I would see as fresh in an S&C environment they won't ever be like that without two weeks off basketball. Again, it's that they want to be on the court all the time, which is fair enough and I get it. It's such a highly skill based sport but I mean in terms of the environment, maybe I don't spend as much time with them because if I think about how much time I spend with one group of guys, like the more experienced guys in the group I have them for an hour and forty [minutes] a week. I can get a general idea over the three hours a week I spend with the whole team on a Monday and then the same on the Thursday and that's across the whole team and it might be different if the one group was mixed in with the other. I mean their schedules are so busy as it is. Being a full-time student whilst doing what they do is impressive and there's always going to be a bit of negativity brought into the environment. But hopefully it's lifted and it's changed a little bit by the mind-set of the rest of the team.

Researcher – Do you think they find it hard?

Participant – I think it's really hard. The coaches need time with them, the players just want to improve so they can move on with their basketball, I want them in the gym lifting to get them stronger and on top of that they got to do their studies. They have to be organised. I

don't find the majority of them ever struggling. Maybe it's because they love it, they want to be here. Some get a bit down and tired and lose motivation either for basketball or for college altogether.

Researcher – Have you done anything that has caused poor performance?

Participant – Maybe in the beginning with structuring the sessions. I won't say it was a detriment but just a learning curve for me and knowing the timings of what I got in place of how quickly these guys can know how quickly the guys need to move, maybe it was miscommunication from me. Maybe it was my communication and me expecting a level of athlete that maybe was having more experience than what they had. Even though now you might be working with national league players, they don't know anything of the S&C or gym based environment, there's been a couple of kids I've had to teach how to move properly in certain ways and had never done anything like that before. But as negatively affecting it... that's a tough one.

Researcher – How have you been maximising their chances of performing well?

Participant – I think a big part of building the environment is their preparation prior to coming into the environment. Some of them come from the court into the S&C room where they have been working on their shot or whatever and sometimes they come in a little bit laddish and they are laughing. For me if I was to have the best environment for S&C then I would want them preparing mentally in a better way. Tough to expect from a large group but then I guess if you expect it from individuals then they will make up the group. So that's a big thing, prior preparation to coming into the S&C room and it could be now getting on with their pre-habs that they are really ready and know what is to be expected. Like I shouldn't be stiff in this area, I'm mobilising this area, I've done my pre-hab stuff so I know my back won't hurt if I do this. I guess again it's about importance of what they take on themselves, your individual work outside built sessions, they need to come in ready to work and ready to learn, ready to do what is expected of them and just get in lift and leave. I don't really like people training for long periods of time, I like to utilise the time well, but for it to be really productive so that we have time afterwards for reflection. Because I have a relationship with some of them outside S&C in lessons and teaching where I see them around a lot in college and they reflect on that the next day a lot.

Researcher – What do they reflect on?

Participant – They are like I really enjoyed this, I hope we can do more of this, so it's the productivity which I guess comes from the mind-set they bring into the gym, to be like I'm ready to go and let's get it done. I don't think a lot of them actually enjoy the lifting compared to being on the court, which is totally understandable. I have to make it as enjoyable as I can for them, so giving them ownership is important, like their own music, ownership of preparing themselves as best they can. Also, post workouts they should be preparing themselves for the rest of the week as affectively. But the biggest impact is the positive attitude towards everything as a team, not necessarily as individuals, they will often talk themselves down like I'm feeling tired today, did that in the game yesterday, but it's always backed up by their teammates might turn around and say... they might boost each other up nicely. Yeah, it's an interesting thought process for me to think about, it's quite nice to reflect upon. Maybe I need to look at what I think I want to expect from them as well and to see if we can build a more of a positive performance environment.

Researcher – I get the impression that the players operate in the gym as a team rather than individuals who lift their own weight?

Participant – I wouldn't say they don't take on their own standards and goals, and they certainly want to be individual to try and beat the next guy, but there is definitely a team atmosphere and I think that helps a lot. You can't really get away or hide from anything because someone's always watching and pushing you to lift harder.

Study Two Raw Data

Positive performance influences

players wanting to develop and developing (know level) and increase status position

players making improvements

players wanting to learn and improve

a strong want to get to next level

a want to learn

players committed to train

players accepting/realistic of the level they are at and work hard to improve

All players want to improve (Ar8)

wanting to be a higher status than TMs (G6)

status in team is an affective motivator (G8)

practice to develop self

practice to develop self (N2)

practicing for self-development (R2)

Negative performance influences

lack of commitment

performing a task with no benefit to the self

having to help someone else when you have something else you need to develop (self-goals) R2

players not seeing the benefit of doing something (N2)

	not in position to develop self (R2)
players who put in high effort (focus effort over all else)	
High effort players	players thinking improvement comes over night and not due to effort
high effort most important	players unaware of their max effort level
focus upon effort not results/outcomes of performance	
high player intensity and effort and a want to work	
working hard on skill level	
high effort	
high effort despite performance	
High effort levels	
100% effort on lifts	
working hard / high effort	not putting in high/max effort
Working hard (M3)	
high effort best factor in practice for high performance (N1)	
high effort leads to increased intra-comp and performance (N1)	
high effort leads to performance improvements (N1)	
working hard and playing for the team and teammates (M1)	
Players competing as hard in practice as in matches (effort) (L1)	

consistently high effort levels (L1)

focus on what doing by talking
about it and not other things in
session

focus on task at hand

link between effort and
performance

taking S&C seriously

High practice standards

having high standards in practice

high effort by others (mimicking
effect)

high effort is mimicked by others
(N1)

seeing others working hard (V1)

mimicking of others working hard
(M3)

motivated by others working hard
(M3)

teammates looking up for it and
putting in high effort (N9)

team as a whole putting in effort
(G2)

TMs playing well at high intensity
(As2)

Team focus (G2)

loss of focus in sessions by players
discussing other things

similar status/position/level players not
putting in effort (As3)

low TM effort levels and let team down
(G2)

teammates not taking it seriously (G2)

teammates mucking around (lack of
effort and focus) G2

TMs showing effort and passion
(G4)

feed off of TMs playing well and
putting in high effort (G4)

Players playing for team (Therefore,
playing for you!) (Ar4)

Teammates not competitive or driven
(G10)

TMs play for team - help get
everyone's goals (G4)

TMs not being driven (As10)

high effort levels (L6)

all players competing and putting in
100% effort (Ar8)

TMs mucking around (As9)

mimic players/TMs who work hard
and put in high effort (L6)

rather play with high effort TM
rather than better individually
focused player (G9)

TMs not putting in 100% effort (G9)

All players wanting to win and
compete (Ar8)

players feed off of others

having something to prove
(negative influence that is turned
positive)

players with something to prove is
strong motivator

motivated by people thinking you
can't do something (negative
motivation) (R10)

not being good at something is
motivating (challenge) (R10)

long term motivation from
someone telling you you can't do it
(negative to positive) (R11)

motivated by getting back at a
teammate if they treat you badly
(N11)

players treating teammates badly (N11)

getting one over on a teammate
that shows no respect (N11)

having a point to prove is
motivating (As6)

A tangible goal (goals general?)

not completing a skill based (tangible)
goal / not having a goal

something they have visibly seen (a
level of play)

upcoming match gives strong focus
(clear competitive goal)

clear goals

tangible goals

outcomes they can see

smaller and manageable goals that
they can visualise

goal focus (must have goals)

players seeing something happen is
strong influence e.g. ball going in

live play success

seeing ball go in hoop
(tangible/real) - HAVE TO HAVE A
MEASURE TO ALL GOALS

regular reminder and focus upon goals

seeing tangible results

Having educational goals so not just BB but goals for all areas as they effect BB performance.

No goals

lack of commitment to goals

no focus/goals

players not given

direct/expectation/objective by coach

no focus/goal (G10)

Players with team / orientation / team goals

Players with individual goals / goals not aligned

goal direction: team player
(outcomes of competition will differ, e.g. play bad but team can win)

goal direction: individual player
(outcomes of competition will differ, e.g. play bad but team win)

players who put team first

Teammate goals not aligned (BB and other)

team players offer more to all round team performance

peers not having the same goals and attitudes in off court (lessons) and distracting

following team goals

players just playing for their stats and not for team (As4)

team first orientation (52)

lack of team goal alignment e.g. everyone putting in 100% effort for team (G10)

Individual developments should
benefit the team (M2)

Practice goals should be for team performance and success (N2) - but it seems
as long as the individual is developing and the team winning matches their
goals!

helping/supporting a teammate in
practice (R2) - as long as it is within
own goals it seems

contributing to team performance
(M9)

team want to play together (G2)

TMs being used for what's best for team (not what they personally
might want) (G5) selfish players (G5)

Accept when decisions are made
which are best for team (G5)

players goals are aligned with team
goals (G5)

players goal is team to win (G9)

team focus (G9)

motivated to play for TM who got
injured (Team orientation - strong
team bond playing for others) (G4)

effort and playing for the team (G4)

all players feel part of the team
(As9)

everyone part of team as a cog of
the machine (everyone needed to
succeed)

Players with a team focus	Players with an individual focus
players playing for team	players who are individuals
performance over own	
performance is positive	
(contributing in other ways)	
	players coming from other academies
	with different philosophies
	individuals and ego's in the group that
	don't get on
focus on team performance and	matches more team performance driven
outcome rather than self-	whereas practice can be more individual
performance in competitive play	achievement
(Ar9)	
Skills completion/making	Not completing a skill / goal
improvements - linked to tangible?	
Successful completion of a skill (not	negative if not completing a skill
effort but skill - players find effort	
hard to define in performance	
terms?)	
gaining confidence from	missing shots
achieving/doing a skill	
Having an influence on the outcome	not reaching a practice goal (effects
of drill/skill (again, no mention of	future session) (G8)
effort!)	
making improvements	outcome more influential than
	performance in practice (R9)
seeing improvements as measured	
by self (not told by coach or other)	

making improvements and
developing (511)

scoring (tangible) (M3)

Display to others of ability that is
acceptable to self

not reaching expected standard

showing others - if level at standard
or above then positive

Pressure on what they show others -
expectation to hit standard

rating self against peers; if you
better a peer - positive

rating self against peers; if a peer does
better - negative

concerned about opinion of other
players and coaches (large social
element here)

putting in effort and still losing to peer -
not reaching standard within social
group (this is not controllable)

Controllables

Controllables

focusing on what can be controlled
(e.g. effort)

trying to control uncontrollables

only focusing on what you can
control (R11)

players trying to control / get affected by
things they can't control - it's a mind-set

Too focused on ball going in
(uncontrollable outcomes) - linked to
goals???

Coping ability / skills / interventions

Lack of coping ability / poor coping
ability

Players being able to switch quickly
to a focused state (coping skill?)

downward spiral - no help/ability to
cope - over long-term will cause players
to quit

Players who understand negativity may happen: coping ability/strategy?	lack of interventions
being able to cope	not being able to cope
	Avoidance coping strategy
Being able to take criticism and not get affected (coping ability high?) R4	lack of coping ability to turn poor performance into good (R7)
being able to ignore negative communication and take information instead (R5)	negative spiral - no coping - negativity promotes negativity (N3)
being able to block out negative comments (N9)	not able to control negative emotions (As4)
performing and coping under stress and negative criticism (N4)	
turning a negative into a positive (coping ability) (N4)	
experience of negative situations has improved copying strategies (N3)	
ability to raise game if not playing to expected levels (As7)	
Coping / high level mental skills?	
players that problem solve (take responsibility)	lack of coping ability to stop further negatives (L11)
being able to lift self when fatigued or coming from other element of day (coping ability)	
solution based focus	

Good nutrition

good meal

good meal

putting in high effort will help deal with lapse days (e.g. bad food) (G14)

set goals and challenges for nutrition and sleep (G14)

nutrition (R7)

Weather

good weather (even though indoors!, wonder if this indicates poor prep - straight inside from outside and practicing

Fatigued / sleep / rest / over training

not being fatigued

not tired

more motivated to play if not playing all the time (burnout)

getting sleep

feeling fresh

over training and playing too much

Poor nutrition

not eating right

poor nutrition

inexperienced player not managing time or nutrition

fuel for body not right (nutrition)

poor hydration (R7)

poor nutrition night before (L13)

Fatigue

poor sleep

Not sleeping due to phones and access to media, socialising etc...

early morning starts

fatigues and tiredness (high volume and intensity)

illness

Players overworked and fatigued (need to deal with it?)

	fatigue can increase negative comments made (N6)
	physical and mental state linked - the more fatigued the less able to control emotion in comments (R6)
adequate sleep (R7)	tired and fatigued (M7)
having rest and enough sleep (N7)	lack of recovery (M7)
early night sleep (R8)	tired legs (M7)
	no rest plan e.g. sleep routine and nutrition (R7)
	difficult for players to rest due to full TT
	travelling around country for matches causes increased fatigue
physical and psychological fatigued link e.g. when physically tired this will weaken psychological ability	
Practicing when fatigued for match simulation	
practicing when fatigued will simulate match (G1)	
high effort and focus when tired (G2)	
Knowing you have to play hard when fatigued	
players valuing high effort when fatigued because it relates to game situation (will need to play tired in match)	not putting in high effort when fatigued - just doing enough

players who are able to
practice/train tired and mentally
push themselves

Communication (emotional
positive)

players respond to positive
communications between player to
player (no negatives from
teammates)

some players respond to all
communications, positive and
negative

giving no negative communications
as this doesn't help

giving players direct communication
not telling players off

Negative communication good with high effort players (in response to lack of
effort and therefore they can change?) - have the ability to cope and change?

negative communication can work
to a group

Extroverts better with negative
communication (better socially?);
turn neg into pos through
motivation (if ability to do it!)

no negativity at all in gym from
player to player

Communication (emotional negative)

negative communication that is a result
of emotions (instant responses) e.g.
frustration displayed

communicating with emotion

negative communication to a single a
person out in a group is not good

emotional feedback from coach
(negative reactive feedback)

players who put each other down

only negative communication from
players and coaches

players responding emotionally

negative comments from others (N4)

negative communication (N4)

	not giving supportive comments to teammates (R9)
	Introverts worse with negative communication (worse socially?)
	emotional responses (R5)
	negative comments from emotional communication (M6)
	not being able to communicate to TMs (G4)
	worried about TM reaction to communication (negative communication) (G4)
	Teammates criticising you (R9)
teammates motivating and encouraging with positive communication (N10)	negative comments from other players (M9)
	negative comments (59)
natural communication is easier (but may not be best for team) (G4)	having to think about communicating differently to nature reaction takes energy and is harder (G4)
	having to change the way you communicate for others (it's a skill) (G4)
	differences in personality and communication type (G4)
	Negative comments from teammates is a display of their weakness
	understanding negative comments from others maybe a show of their weakness (R9)

Outburst

outbursts can be effective in dealing with anger/frustration as long as directed towards self and effort level (controllable)

Negative comments producing positive performance increase

if player has ability but low effort a negative comment can increase performance (G10)

Coach feedback / coach communication

coach should give constructive feedback

coaches being truthful and realistic to players on feedback (can't fool players)

coach approachable and there is 2 way communication

regular coach feedback

2 way communication (coach-player)

direct coach feedback on errors (N3)

receiving feedback in positive way from coach (R5)

being given information in feedback (not negative communication) (V5)

Outburst

If outburst with no improvement (in effort or skill) then turns negative

player called out by coach in front of other players

feedback from coach negative and not constructive (N3)

coaches criticising (N4)

coach negatively shouting at player (R4)

being told off by coach (N3)

being told something you know you did wrong (M5)

overly positive coach

overly positive coach even when its obvious things are poor

getting feedback from coaches (G10) negative feedback from teacher to coach

coaches give feedback throughout
good and poor performance (G10)

coaches knowing the response of players - what communications they want
(gained through experience of player and asking them)

Feedback from TMs

Teammate feedback preferred 121 (from higher/respected player) -
perhaps so others (group) don't see negative feedback from players will
effect team negativity as player is part of
team and the display will effect team
(R5)

always positive feedback from other
players even if a failure *not the
same in matches as affects others unable to raise issues with TMs (lack of
communication opportunity to discuss
with them) G10)

outcomes

constructive feedback amongst
teammates (N6)

being given information in feedback
(not negative communication) (V5)

Support and encouragement

support from teammates (especially
from senior players) (L3) inconsistent team support (G3)

Teammate encouragement (L3)

Teammates encourage high effort
(L3)

TMs motivating (G3)

stronger team relationships lead to
higher support (G3)

senior players supporting younger players (G3)

Support from teammates

positive encouragement from other players; player led feedback and communication

players motivating other players

teammates encourage

motivation from teammates

support from teammates

teammate support

encouragement from teammates (R5)

support amongst teammates (N6)

coach motivating (M3)

being encouraged and motivated by others (510)

Knowing how TMs communicate

Not understanding how TMs communicate

knowing how to communicate to TMs (As3)

being unable to read TMs (As3)

players need to understand each other above liking each other (G)

TMs not communicating how they feel (As3)

understanding what teammates respond to (N10)

TMs not knowing each other outside of BB (lack of understanding) (G3)

lack of deeper understanding of TMs and how they communicate (G3)

all players different and
communicate /react in different
ways

poor knowledge of how teammates
respond to communication and what
communication is preferred

not knowing how to communicate to
others (e.g. positive or negative to
motivate)

Coaches knowing how players
respond to communication types /
coaches knowing players

coach knowing what
communication each player
responds to

coaches getting to know players

coaches knowing negative
communications won't work with
some players

Not getting praise for high performance

players rewarded for good
educational performance by teacher
and coach

not getting praise for success (R10)

praise reinforced from several areas
- all areas coming together in
support network

not getting credit/praise for high effort,
which should be most important (R10)

coaches who praise a select few players
for skill achievement (rather than praise
of effort that anyone can achieve)

Respect from others / having a
status (social status)

having respect from others (outside of BB)

popular with others (social) also outside of BB

confident in off court environment (e.g. around college)

Players being used as knowledgeable in class (social status)

respect from non BB people

Others being aware of ability (status)

having a high social position

Respect from Teammates

Teammates going to you for support (player in a high status position)

being a role model, again high status position

Mutual respect amongst players (N10)

gaining social status increase (N11)

Status/position of player in the team dictates how you communicate to them (G3)

players who you are competing with put above you by coach (As6)

Social

Social person within team as well as outside of basketball

players who segregate themselves

socialising and interacting with others

players who don't socialise and interact with others and tasks

There seems to be a link between performance, confidence and social skills - Smith paper?

Reflection and reviewing

self-reflection on and off the court

not reflecting

regular goal reviewing with coach

lack of reflection

constantly reviewing self

self-reflection after negative performance/situation

reviewing game footage for feedback and self-reflection

Constant evaluation on how things are going

tackle problems head on with reviews and looking at videos

reflecting as a team 24 hours after match (not too long after but long enough to allow thinking time and lose emotion)

players buying in to reflection: knowing it's good for performance

having time for facilitated reflection

seeing players in lesson time allows for more contact and more facilitated reflection

reflecting on what is good and bad for player

coaches reflecting on good and bad

121 meetings with players rather than as a whole team

coach facilitates reflection activities (G10)

no reflection on how to channel anger (As4)

Practice competition / intra-team competition and a want to compete / winning

Losing in practice competition

winning practice competitions

losing is negative

players want to compete and win

competition for places good in long-term

competition for places negative in short-term

internal competition can motivate you to play better (R1)

losing out on a team place to a teammate

competitive players

internal comp can cause jealousy and poor communication - effects team chemistry

intra-competition

getting beaten by other players in practice (Ar11)

winning in practice competition is very important to players

competition is good for focus

competition will increase focus & increase importance (mistakes need to count)

need internal competition to stimulate match situation (competition is a strong motivator)

being able to reflect upon current form and evaluate (R2)

winning in competitive situation (R6)

losing in competitive situation (R6)

winning in practice (59)

intra-team competition will keep standards high (L1)

Intra-team competition will increase effort (as status is in play?) (Ar5)

lack of competition in drill will decrease effort (G8)

Fighting for status through internal competition is good motivator and mimics match play (As6)

using TMs as a target (G6)

practicing/competing against similar level players promotes effort and motivation as status position is at stake (L6)

effort and motivation increased from intra-team competition (G8)

Competition in practice will mimic match environment (Ar8)

competition in practice helps senior players push junior players (Ar8)

high effort put into competitive practices (G7)

competitive shooting practice will increase effort (As2)

clear competition goal focus (e.g. next match)

Motivation from losing to lesser player or playing against higher player

Losing out to lesser level player (underestimation of lesser player) - maybe due to socially not wanting to look like trying?

Happy for teammate to do well (e.g. score) if it's a benefit to the team (hitting individuals team goals?) (Ar5)

losing out to lesser status teammate (G7)

if your status is secured in an intra-team comp then ok to lose out to TM (maybe a higher status player - is this a good thing???) (As5)

social display of you losing out to lesser teammate and drop in status (G7)

motivating to have a lesser status/position TM beating you (initially negative then positive for performance) (As5)

displaying a loss to lower status player (G7)

intra-comp can be initially negative but this motivates player to work harder and put in better performance (As5)

having to battle and put in high effort against superior players (nothing to lose) (As6)

however, acceptance of position may mean effort level to win is less (As6)

challenging self against better players (e.g. nothing to lose) (G6) - serious conflict with these items

judging competitors by status and previous performance, therefore not on effort and may not put in enough effort and accept defeat (As6)

losing out to weaker player is a motivator to put in more effort (as ability should be better therefore

perceived weaker player out-performing you in direct competition (G7)

effort may be only thing missing
(G7)

Acceptance of losing to a better player.
May be decreased effort and belief (G7)

putting in less effort against a weaker
TM as it will be easy (G7)

underestimating a competitor and drop
effort levels (As7)

superior/better players may
underestimate lower level players and
drop effort (L6)

players not able to accurately compare
to others - and the problems that entail

Having fun in practice / adapting
sessions to how players
respond/and to goals

breaking up a poor session with fun
activity

not having adaptable practice regime
(adapts to changes in programme
intensity/volume) (M7)

coaches who adapt and react to bad
practice sessions

coaches who adapt and change a
poor performance practice

coaches who have a plan B and are
adaptable

not a rigidly set practice

flexibility in sessions, adaptable
coach

sessions focused on goals there and then, not on general timetable e.g. no heavy work after a match on different day

Adaptable coach

Structure of practice - this can link to goals set by coach and expectations?

focused sessions rather than general sessions

too much tactical input

practices that relate to team goals

sessions not at appropriate level for players (e.g. coach expects too much)

coach facilitates rather than dictates

no direction from coach (overseeing of coach)

effort from coaches

not enough time in session to do everything

focus upon effort rather than technical performance

working on deficiencies to help increase performance (M3)

not working on too much in practice (only 1 or 2 things) (G6)

having enough opportunities to succeed in practice (G8)

too short a drill practice to succeed (G8)

having different people to work with decreases boredom and potential for bad relationships with 1 significant individual

Players always active

keep players active throughout practice

higher intensity and lower volume
(S&C)

Safe environment

players feeling confident to make
mistakes (safe environment)

players not feeling safe to make
mistakes

Players feel free to communicate
with each other (rules set earlier?)

Players having freedom

vindicated for making own decision
that was right (R4)

making correct decisions in practice
that produce good outcome (R4)

Giving players freedom to make
own decisions (player led?) (R4)

not allowing players to experiment (R4)

players have freedom to
experiment (510)

Players trusting coaches

Correct amount of information

minimising tactical information

giving player too much information

short/sharp information in game
situations is good

coaches not sticking to plan/goals of
session

coaches trying to do too much in the
session

players not understanding the session

players not understanding why they are
doing something

Player led sessions

players leading practice	high technical sessions without player input
giving players input into session	non player led sessions
player led	
player led session, they will buy in to it	players not buying in
athlete centred approach	
players buying in	
Negative experiences being long-term positive influences (in multiple areas)	the fear of potential negative experiences(N4)
resilience comes from negative experience in practice environment	
replicating negative situations in practice will give long term positive influence	
Having minutes in games	
playing more game time is motivational (L3)	Not getting into team
high effort rewarded by minutes in game (G3)	not getting a place in the team is negative
playing matches is a reward for good practice	not being in top team (status position) (R2)
Long term motivation from not being in top team (R2)	not being able to contribute to team performance (G9)
Teammate playing well can be motivating in long-term (generally a negative)	Teammate doing well (Jealousy)

rival teammate playing well can be motivating in long-term

competition from others will motivate you to keep your level high (R1)

teammate playing well and taking another players place in the team

jealousy of teammate doing well

Give up if seeing a peer playing well (N3)

if having a poor performance a TM playing well can demotivate (N3)

individual type player good for team if they are best player and increase team performance clearly (others benefit from ability) (G5)

TMs doing well in games is motivating as long as it effects team performance and therefore hits own goals (L6)

Off court (independent) attitude

high off court effort (important towards what happens on court)

professional attitude

off court work which is down to player (stretching, foam roller, sleep)

off court effort

Independent players taking responsibility for their training/development

independent players can cope

have own ways of coping/dealing (experience in being independent)

responsibility not taken by players when on own

players needing too much input from coach

players not taking responsibility

players having responsibility

players not knowing how to recover

responsibility to overcome own problems

too much reliance on coach to motivate and dictate what to do: player not taking responsibility for own performance and development

players taking responsibility for their own training

giving responsibility by allowing them to control music

having team tasks: responsibility to work together

giving players responsibility

enjoyable session: players having ownership e.g. own music

individuals taking responsibility for way they act

players who are organised for busy schedule

being independent more through increased knowledge

not knowing how to be better off court

players feeling in control of development

Support to be more independent

beneficial to study things in lessons that can help performance

Not valuing what they are learning or that they don't engage as this drops their standards

academic study they can use practically for their BB

learning psychological skills in lessons which can be applied to self

sport specific content for players to use practically

not practically applying to themselves what they have learnt

having independence to take responsibility for pre-practice routine (N8)

Everyone treated as an individual (511)

Practice preparation (done for matches but not so much for practice?)

having good preparation for practice

poor practice preparation

pre-practice preparation

focused attitude coming into environment - better mental prep

preparing self physically for session

Distractions

Preparation - general within character to be punctual

distractions pre and during practice e.g. social media on smart phones

getting to college and practice on time (pre-practice preparation (R8)

having time to prep (R8)

focused prep time before practice (58)

having time to prepare (58)

effective warm-up (M8)

preparation for warm-up so 1st movements are good (V3)

prep time in morning to include breakfast and good amount of time being awake (As13)

not letting BB practice be the 1st thing you do in the day (G13)

good prep before practice at home (G14)

getting out of bed too late (G13)

not eating breakfast (As14)

going from sleep straight to practice (As14)

Having already been doing something in the day before practice - waking up you have to change drastically from sleep to awake but if you are already awake its easier. (G14)

prep time has rules obeyed by all players in team (As11)

players not turning up on time (As11)

bring prep time into organised practice time (As11)

TMs late due to being disorganised (As11)

All players arrive at prep time together (As11)

Not having enough prep time before practice (rushing and got enough time to set self) (L11)

Good preparation shows other and shows self you are motivated and outing in effort (L11)

There seems a need to mentally prepare self before practice

prep important (L11)

having to rush prep (L11)

prep time: having time to reflect on what to work on and previous performance (L11)

not having time to focus before practice (L11)

Prep starts at home

not thinking prep time is important (L11)

should be motivated going into practice(G12)

other things getting in the way of prep (L11)

good prep time (As10)	Thoughts on things other than BB in Prep (G12)
	not being ready for practice (G12)
	not being honest with coach about state of readiness and therefore not able to get support (G12)
pre-practice performance/effort and outcome of skills e.g. before practice starts (As2)	Not scoring in pre-practice (mind-set not focused???) (As2)
shooting should be done under high focus conditions (Ar2)	
having time before practice to eat and prepare self (not straight out of bed in morning to practice) - links with facility time	Morning training is negative - links with facility time
listening to music (R8)	
having team rules for practice that's accepted by all and kept to (G3)	
Current form	Current form
current form very important	poor practice performance
poor performance can motivate to increase effort	poor previous match performance
current form (M3)	too much focus upon past performance over present
current form (V3)	poor practice form
good current form (N7)	current performance not good (N3)
feeling confident (M3)	poor current form (R6)
Current form e.g. shooting well (G2)	

previous shooting form (L7)

Previous performance dictates next
expected form/level (L7)

practice performance links to
competitive performance

practice form does dictate
competition form in the long-term

practice form not always linked to
competitive form in the short-term

practice predicts match
performance

practice effort reflects match
performance

can't predict how well you will
perform

practice linked to competitive
performance (current form)

Leaders in team

No leaders in team

leaders in the team who help others

no leaders in team

Coach and players aligned

Coach expectations not aligned with
groups level

not meeting coach expectation

coach expectation too high and coach
gets frustrated at player

coach gets annoyed although players
aren't capable of achieving - effort
should be the focus)

working to expected level of coach
(aligned expectations)

coach expectation not aligned with
player ability (expectations differ)

keeping things simple in gym -
keeping to player level

players not being where the coach says
they should be

player and coach expectations of
performance differ

coach knowing and understanding
the player

coach having too high expectations

coach knowing what player can do

coach not knowing player ability well
enough

coach increasing their expectations too
quickly

players not knowing what the coach
wants/expects

performance expectations between
coach and player not aligned (coach
expects more than players ability,
therefore player cant complete whats
necessary

coach and players goals align (G10)

coach not communicating to players
what they expect

session goals not aligned with player
ability

Players and coaches understanding not
aligned

lack of understanding between coach
and player (R4)

coach not seeing what player sees (54)

Players expectations - awareness of
what they can do may differ

Not hitting expected performance levels

Players awareness of physical ability (what they can/can't do) - links to expectation?	players not being at the level they think they should be at
players accepting performance will decrease when fatigued (performance expectation)	same performance expectation even though fatigued
accepting of current position and not getting stressed (R2)	players trying to work above their level (discrepancy in expectation)
	not accepting that fatigue may reduce performance (performance expectation)
exceeding or met expected performance in practice (N8)	not performing to the level you know you can achieve (performance expectation (R7)
performing at expected levels (59)	too much focus on performance rather than effort (L7)
not hitting expected performance e.g. not hitting shots (Ar11)	Thinking that previous performance dictates performance rather than effort (L7)
realistic evaluation of level against others if defeated or win	Pressure trying to play at previous high level (focus on performance and not effort?) (G8)
	high expectation (unrealistic) of performance causes stress (G8)
	not hitting expected performance levels (G8)
	not performing to same level as last practice (even though last practice could have been best ever) (L7)
Success being attributed to team	Success attributed to individual

success being attributed to team

Success being attributed to a single player (damage of having MVP?)

win and lose as team: no individual at all in success or failure

Challenges

Threats

challenging environment (not easy but not too hard - threat)

Challenge good - better players can cope - correct structure of practice?

players feed off of others who seek challenge

Others making errors/mistakes

being positive when teammates make mistakes and put in effort not to display/communicate negatively (R5)

players getting annoyed at others players who don't get it

others making mistakes (R5)

teammates making mistakes (N5)

teammates not performing to their expected performance level/standard (M6)

teammates letting you down (G2)

Holistic approach (non BB areas are given importance as having an effect)

anything that goes towards BB performance should hold same level of importance as on court things

off court work e.g. S&C, not seen as important as on court

players seeing what they do as
beneficial to overall performance

mind-set of everything done
towards increasing performance is
beneficial

players understanding off court
aspects and why they are important
to overall performance

holistic approach to basketball -
everything is important (not just
court work)

players working independently
outside of structured sessions -
what will make BB better

understanding that lifting or other
areas are beneficial to court
performance and therefore very
important

using recovery sessions for
reflection: maximising opportunities
to aid performance

putting effort in to doing recovery
(knowing its importance)

understanding of post workout
work is important for next session
(holistic approach)

Engaging in class activities (buy in)

education holds high importance
because of its affect upon
performance

educational issues can cause stress if
effort levels are low

importance given to off court elements as all effect performance (holistic approach)	not putting lessons in high priority
need to see lessons as beneficial to goals (e.g. get an education to get to next stage, not just a gap year for BB)	education not a priority may get players behind and cause stress
having a positive/good day is good for practice (G11)	problems in off court areas disorganised life will impact practice (holistic) (G11)
always a combination of factors	Everything effects BB (G11) difficult to organise everything (G12) forgetting something due to having too much to organise (G12) not realising that life outside BB will affect BB (G12) Not believing you can change how you are outside of BB (G12) not able to deal with issues outside of BB (possible lack of support) (G12)
all factors come together in combination	
little things can have big (As11)	
Experience	Lack of experience
having an experience of what the player is doing	lack of experience and fearful of doing it
players knowing what they are doing in the session	lack of experience leads to lack of belief

	inexperience of gym
	inexperienced players in S&C
	lack of S&C experience
Respect for coach	
players respect coaches	
Recovery importance / sleep and rest	Lack of rest and recovery from high volume
players understanding the importance of recovery	high volume of work mentally tiring (training - lessons - training)
the importance of recovery	standards slip when mentally fatigued and in need of rest
having recovery	lack of mental break during day
accepting need for recovery	Lack of down time/rest in the day - local players sleep in day?
	tough physically and mentally doing BB and full-time education
Adequate sleep (L13)	lack of sleep makes you more tired and fatigued (L13)
Early night to sleep will prep for next day (everything they do is PREP!) (G13)	lack of discipline when sleeping and going to bed (G14)
everything done is prep for the next practice (that needs to be the mind-set players have)	
getting enough sleep (As14)	
organise sleep and rest patterns and set yourself goals to hit, e.g. in bed by a time (G14)	

Focus on present	Not focusing on present
focusing on the present, not past or future	worried about future physical state
focus upon current situation (R2) - not past or future	
Support structures and systems	
teacher in contact with coaches e.g. support network/system working well	off court stress
getting extra support from teachers for work	not feeling comfortable communicating with teacher
support with busy schedule	not accepting or seeking support from others
communication between all key people - strong support structure	
teachers in contact with coaches - supplying a good support network for players	Lack of communication between coach, teacher etc...
regular support and quick feedback - always having support available	lack of support structures e.g. people helping off court
having off court support that allows for an individual to be independent	
applying support interventions early with problems outside of court	
having regulated off court activities (support with what they do when not on court)	non independent players will struggle off court without support and regulation

having a role model in team

Teachers who don't understand the demands upon the players - teacher education?

structured programme helps with organisation

players feeling professional through structured programme

rigid structure offers high standards in players

early morning training teaches discipline

support for many other areas than just BB e.g. S&C, physio etc... adds to professionalism

all round performance focus not just on BB court

Off-court success

Off-court stress

Doing well in lesson / success off court - confidence cross-over?

getting behind in work - off court success/failure

Mind-set on mistakes

Mistakes and errors

understanding that players aren't making mistakes on purpose (support needed not criticism) (55)

anger from others when you make a mistake within your skill level (M5)

understanding players don't make mistakes on purpose (N5)

being criticised for a mistake that you shouldn't be making (N5)

accepting mistakes happen and that negativity may only make it worse (N6)

Hypocritical teammates who make the same mistakes as you (N5)

Self-making errors

Younger players get overly annoyed
when they get something wrong (could
be social/position?)

making mistakes (N3)

focus on own performance in practice,
not team, so own mistakes have bigger
impact (N3)

missing shots (Ar11)

Warm-up (the prep period for
practice) (other areas in here as
well)

performance in warm-up (V3)

good warm-up (V3)

scoring in warm-up (M8)

performance in warm-up (M8)

see ball going in/successful skill
completion (M8)

positive encouragement in warm-up
(M8)

positive communication in warm-up
(R9)

Support and encouragement from
teammates in warm-up (N9)

warm-ups that focus on high effort
and goals (59)

warm-up that focuses concentration
(N9)

warm-up drills that get players
together as a team (M8)

Receiving punishment

Receiving punishment from coach (G1)

Teachers telling coaches of poor
performance in class (G1)

being told off or in trouble before
practice (G2)

timing of punishments crucial e.g. just
before practice will impact upon practice
(G2)

getting on coaches bad side (G2)

Coach and teacher close links can be
negative if academic performance poor
(G2)

Overly focused upon negative (linked to
mistakes in past)

giving an disproportionate negative
reaction to a situation (G13)

not reflecting on minor issues that
actually require less attention (G13)

overly negative reactions (G13)

focus and thinking upon negatives (G13)

dwelling on past loses and poor
performance (G10)

focusing on negative experiences in the
past (G12)

being a perfectionist and dwelling on past mistakes/failures (G12)

over focusing on poor performance (N4)

worrying about what other players are doing when they are not performing acceptably (As10)

Reaction/emotions alignment

all players in team angry together after a loss (neg short term, pos long term) As10)

all players care (G9)

TMs not disappointed after poor performance (goals not aligned within team) (G9)

coaches match emotions of players (coach aligned with players, e.g. if players angry after loss so is coach) (G10)

TMs not angry or disappointed after poor performance (G9)

Having to focus on things other than BB

daily training could be too hard with academic studies as well

Having to focus on college work and BB

not able to fully focus on BB

many factors having to come together for a good practice

other things effect BB from outside

education and lessons should be high importance because they have an effect upon players and can influence their performance - everything matters in holistic mind-set

outside of BB can effect practice performance (G1)

Academic/lesson performance affects practice performance (G1)

Team performing well (G2)

Team chemistry

coach spending time with players

strong team cohesion

team chemistry

knowing how to be a good teammate

a close team (G5)

Teammates having faith in you (59)

Overall team performance

lack of energy from team

energy levels differ from day to day

no player support from each other (no team ethos)

Facility and equipment

not enough time in facility (shared facility)

not getting best times in facility (e.g. early morning training not ideal)

not having best equipment due to lack of funding

players and coaches haven't mentioned the lack of facility and equipment as being negative (certain players haven't

Player individuality

coaches treating all players
individually

every player is different

players differ in responses/coping

all players different (personality
dependent and doesn't change)

Equality amongst players - linked to
player led

everyone important environment -
not just focused upon best players
(everyone a cog)

Positive and aggressive moods aid
performance (G1)

Anger can be good (G4)

Reflexive Log for Study Two: A Case Study of Environmental Factors Influencing
Performance in Student-Athlete Basketball Players

Log start date: 14/01/2018

Log end date: 06/03/2018

14/01/2018

There is a significant dialogue from coaches regarding the individual differences between players. Player reactions to situations will differ, with coaches needing to understand player preferences through meetings and experience. There seems a conscious effort by coaches to understand players.

Observation notes:

Players had difference in their approaches to the warm-up, this was not uniformed in anyway. There also existed a difference in the motivation, effort, communication and social interactions amongst players throughout the practice session.

It appeared that high effort levels were present. They were present in the players that performed the best within the session. It was also clear that the stronger players were applying more effort, or they appeared to be applying the most effort but that could be down to the higher level they are operating at.

The group did not seem to have any social/cohesion issues during the practice session.

The drills were run with intensity. The coaches would isolate players who needed extra guidance on the drill and they responded well to the coach. The coaches sat back at times and allowed the players to take control for themselves.

There was a moment where two players seemed to be overly physical in the drill but this was allowed to play out and seemed to finish. There was a lack of communication during most parts of the session, which included the work when players were working within a team together.

The older players were the most vocal throughout and seemed to have the best chemistry. However, the best young player was involved with the older players.

16/01/2018

When making notes on the assistant coach interview, I need to reflect upon whether I use the same coding system as previously used with positive and negative comments. The option would be to put all into one, however the need to split them is needed. Therefore, the positive and negative split is needed. During right hand column notes I am duplicating items, which I don't need to do as I'm not making a frequency count. Therefore, to save time I don't need to continually add right hand notes that are identical to items already added for that interview.

There have been a few items discovered that don't link to positive or negative but do have an effect. For example, coaches think factors are always operating in combination and that practice performance will dictate competition performance. These aren't particularly factors of influence but are important to the environment and, therefore, could be used to set the parameters of the environment. A search for any student-athlete environment literature search should be undertaken.

There seems to be similar factors appearing within the interviews as with the first study. This could be due to my prior knowledge but this may not be an issue as it is confirming the previous work. This needs to be addressed within the method section. There is a framework of factors that is starting to take shape. This paper should end with a framework of the themes, similar to the first study possibly, and this is the framework to be taken into the next study for deductive analysis.

19/01/2018

The younger players with the least experience in the focus group were far less able to articulate their position and had far less to say on most points. This could be due to the more experienced players in the focus group or their lack of ability to reflect upon their experiences. It seemed that the older players took over and possibly that the younger players were fearful of putting their opinion across. There seems to be a ranking of player position occurring within the focus group.

21/01/2018

During the first focus group transcription, I had to go back and ensure I wrote which player said what. This is needed for the write up section and to see if patterns emerge from different players. The distinction between player and comment is needed to understand the context far better.

26/01/2018

Focus group two was lead heavily by one player. My tactics to control this was to push questions to other players first and then allow the dominant player to finish off with comments. The equal distribution of questions across all participants seemed to work well but I had to manage and adapt to the situation as it would have been taken over by one player.

Looking back at the coach interviews, there is some contradiction from coaches but this may have been the specific differences between players and how they respond to situation. An interesting area to appear was the difference between introverts and extroverts. This seems to match the social profile. For example, an extrovert was able to take negative comments in front of group better than an introvert. This may show the importance of the social placing in the group as extroverts may have less importance placed on social ranking within the team.

27/01/2018

An interesting line of enquiry about the players who give a negative response to a teammate making a mistake, maybe the mistake is not as much of a weakness as the lack of control of emotions and behaviour during the negative comment. After all, this may affect the team performance more. Should we start to teach players that the response to a mistake is more important? This could be something taken forward in analysis and used within a factor and an intervention for the final study.

28/01/2018

There seems to be a difference between the performance perceptions from practice to games. In games it seems that the overall performance, not dependent on an outcome like points, assists etc..., is perceived as good performance. However, in practice it seems that the ball has to go in the hoop or there has to be an outcome that can be seen, e.g. a win. What are the differences in the goals to the self here? In a game the biggest goal would be to win and play well, whereas in practice it's important to maintain your social position within the team and that it kept through results seen by all. Reference made today about the impact of others with negative comments. For example, player indicates they could happily make a thousand mistakes if no one made a bad comment, but is that a good thing as they would keep missing perhaps?

Observation notes:

This practice session started with shooting. Within five minutes there appeared to be a difference in motivation within the team, with some being affected heavily by missing. Some that missed, that appeared to miss the same amount of shots, didn't have the same reaction. Effort levels were not clear across the whole group because this was a low intensity drill. However, all but two players seemed focused. One of the players, who had missed a lot of earlier shots, didn't seem to apply any effort to shooting and actually purposely missed out his rotation several times so he did not shoot again. This player was a younger player in the group. He had limited communication with other group members. I did not observe this previously with this player.

A tactical drill with five versus five led to one player displaying very negative emotions. The player, who was one of the best in the group, lost his player he was guarding several times and it led to points being scored. The coach stopped the session several times as this happened. He got even angrier as it went on. The coach changed the personnel for the next sequence. When the player came back in he was up against the same player as before but was far improved and won most contests. The other player was not a starting player. The other player showed negativity that what worked before, did not happen again. The assistant coach had talked to the group with the poor performing player when they came out of the rotation but it was unclear whether he was talking directly to that player or the five on a whole.

29/01/2018

There was an interesting line of inquiry with the team cohesion element in the focus group two. Player 9 spoke about not knowing a teammate after two to three years of playing with them. Therefore, it might not be about team bonding and every one being best mates, it might be more about teammate understanding. For example, you don't have to like your teammates but you do have to know what makes them tick and how to communicate to them.

There is frequent reference to being at the college in the AASE academy to get better and maybe players see this as a development place rather than a place to win games for the team. A team that comes first in all aspects over the individual. For example, development over performance, and why you might see more players acting individually compared to as a team.

02/02/2018

Coaches showing anger at results (a negative influence) may in fact produce a positive influence in players as they see that the coach cares about the performance of the team and that they have the same goals as the players. If the players are annoyed at a loss then the coach should be also. The coach has an important role to play here. The coach may also provide the facilitation of reflection (e.g., you need to think about this...). Also, a player commented on frustration of an incident but didn't feedback to any one and, therefore, it was still on his mind and affecting his performance.

I have interrupted people a few times during interviews and focus groups, and I need to allow them to continue the whole of what they are saying. The information I am after may in fact appear as they continue and I could make a note to come back to it afterwards. However, that may lose the connection between participant and myself if I am writing as they are talking to me. Agreeing and expanding points is not helping with the transcription of the information. Players not adhering to things, like being at practice 20 minutes early. Some players will and, therefore, those who don't are seen as not caring and putting as much effort in (goals not aligned) and coaches may wish to ensure the preparation is structured.

Observation notes:

A significant situation in this practice was the drill the team were running, which seemed to be an advanced tactical drill, did not work and failed several times. The coaches carried this on for 12 minutes without success. After this time the head coach brought the players in, spoke to them for several minutes in the middle of the hall, and they then reran the drill with two positions, which were taken up by players, not in the drill. This seemed to be a move to simplify the drill and aid in the understanding of the players. Following a more successful drill, I expected the coaches to rerun the more complicated first drill but they gave the players a drinks break and then moved on to a shooting position drill, one which I have observed them performing before and was clearly known to the players. This indicates that the coaches may have given up with the first drill and adapted the session accordingly. They did not try to continue to push a drill that was not working.

During the failures, there were several of the better and older players who were getting quite animated. There was a particularly negative feel to what was happening. They were getting annoyed with other players who were making errors. However, it seemed that the better players were also making errors and that may have fuelled their anger. It is unclear whether the head coach stopped the drill because the players were being negative towards

each other or that the drill was no able to be completed. It could also be that the players were making it worse and were not in a good mental state to complete the drill after several attempts.

08/02/2018

There are several mentions of the negative spiral where things will just get worse and worse, and an indicator of a lack of coping strategies amongst the players. I did some work with some of these players recently and talked about a negative spiral and, therefore, is this a reproduction of this? It could be that they are now more aware of a process that continually causes negative emotions. However, there seems, so far, limited evidence of this being used (e.g., in the guise of coping strategies). Although, it does provide a reflection of it rather than feeding of new information which is biased.

Being prepared for practice by being there early and doing things properly seems to be a show to self and others that the player is motivated and wanting to improve and win. I have been thinking about who the target audience could be for a study like this one. There will be an impact upon general coaching but very much seems that student-athlete populations would benefit from this, mainly due to the lack of research in this field that has been applied to student-athletes (e.g., all AASE academies in the country will have students who are working towards these influences). Maybe it is worth offering this research to the AASE organisation and, therefore, if written for publication it may help to be written in a way that helps people set up their AASE practice environments.

I have yet to schedule an interview date with the head of sport. This needs to be done ASAP as his schedule is very busy.

11/02/2018

Need to ensure ALL statements hold a code for players and coaches. This code to be colour coded or have a tag in the column before or after. This is so the coach's comments can be separated from the players etc... In regards to what to do with splitting opinions, I believe it would be best to highlight a category, as done before, and then use the evidence from each participant to paint the story.

16/02/2018

In regards to the goals or what players respond to, it seems they need to see it happening (e.g., the ball going in the hoop is a clear objective measure of their ability). Therefore, it

seems that all goals require a measureable factor, and a measureable factors that perhaps others can see. This may be why effort is not on the player's radar are much as it should be, especially as they mention it a lot when not directly linking it to performance, because it is far more difficult to measure. Someone might tell them they are putting in effort and its good, but they might not be able to see that over the mistakes and errors they are making with things that have a high recognisable content (e.g., shooting, assists, beating another player etc...). In regards to players getting on in a team, this should have a lot of factors that indicate what players need to have in a team environment.

Observation notes:

In this observation I was looking at individual differences between players. Specifically, their communication, socialising, effort, confidence. This is clearly a very complex area and it was evident that players also shifted their positions during practice. I observed a successful player at the start of practice who seemed confident, but by the end of practice they did not seem confident and were making a lot of mistakes.

There were players who continued on a high level of performance throughout the session. For example, it was observed that two players made very few errors and mistakes throughout the whole session and these players seemed very confident throughout. They had their head high and postured a confidence display within the group. They were also very vocal. It's interesting that one of these players was a first year that wasn't a player who received many minutes in matches.

This practice session followed a loss last week. There was a different feel to this practice and the players seemed more focused and were working better together. Apart from the one younger player, most of the younger players did not perform well and they were more isolated. The core of the players that play in the matches seemed far more cohesive and the younger players were more on the periphery.

17/02/2018

There seems to be a few areas that lead to influence indirectly a few experiences down the line. For example, the recovery session and importance of recovery may be boring during the time that players spent doing it but the effect it has on the future performance may be significant. Players need an awareness of this.

Expectations are prominent again and in a wider context. It appears that it's not just the players and their expectations but if the expectations of the coach are not aligned to the

player's ability there will be issues. Therefore, the coach must pitch the session and their expectations at the correct level because if the players can't succeed this will be a problem for them and a negative influence.

Getting positive feedback even when failing in gym on an exercise is common place in S&C. This has not been happening in games and matches when players fail or make a mistake. It seems that in the gym when a player fails it doesn't affect anyone else but in a match or training competition it will affect other players and, therefore, you will find negative comments from players that negatively effects other players. This is a big area to explain the internal goals of each player and how other can affect their goals.

19/02/2018

A line of inquiry has once again appeared through performance expectations. There is also a strong line regarding the fact that players need to put in high effort even when fatigued because it simulates a game. These two areas are not contradicting as it may first look. A player will need to amend their performance expectation when fatigued, however, they must ensure that effort levels are high as these must be maintained to keep performance up. It seems to be a fine balance the players are working to, they need to ensure they adjust their expectation in regards to what state they are in but they must ensure they are putting in high effort to hold performance level high which mimics a match situation.

20/02/2018

The on court time spent by players seems to be completely regulated by the coaches, but the off court areas can cause problems and the players are unregulated. For example, if a teacher out of the sports department (e.g., maths) has negative feedback and the player gets behind at work this may not get reported and can be negative. If the problem is in the department then this can come back to the coach and be addressed. It comes down to support systems being in place. They are there with the player's performance and development on court but might not be there off court. I'm not sure where this sits? There is also a lack of support at home towards performance.

02/03/2018

Off court areas seem to produce influence and they tend to be mostly unregulated. Independent players will be better with these but those who are not will require more support and regulation of their activity. For example, what they eat, when they rest,

support with work etc... The mind-set needs to be that everything in their life will impact their basketball. There should be a holistic view.

03/03/2018

I believe there is a line of enquiry with the perception of what players think of other people perceiving? What if they read the situation incorrectly? For example, a player thinks others are motivated negatively by comments from coach etc... However, I can't really make this statement unless there is more information. Therefore, the perception of a perception will have to be closely analysed for its merit and if it should or could be included.

04/03/2018

Shows of negative emotion from players after mistakes from teammates could be seen as a sign of their weakness rather than yours. The whole area of communication is massive and will need considerable work to assess its components. There is, so far, a distinct leaning towards positive communication being more affective for practice performance and negative communication being damaging. Especially with positive communication being more effective immediately and possibly negative communication having a longer effect, which is difficult to obtain measures for.

When initial coding of adding data items to excel I will place the player code after the comment in a bracket which will help to identify where it came from. It might also be worth adding the page number to it so I can locate the statement when writing it up.

A contradiction has appeared in focus group 1 where the players stated that development activities should focus upon team performance but then went on to say that personal development is key over the team. Therefore, it may be that as long as they are involved in the team and their goals are to win and improve as a team, their personal development is linked to this and therefore acceptable. It seems that to help out a teammate which a player can't see benefiting them personally or through the team the player would not want to do it. Therefore, personal development holds motivation. Team development holds motivation as long as they are invested in the team and it meets their goals of team success, but helping out an individual without anything is seen going towards the player helping, there is no motivation to do this and is a negative influence. There is far more drive towards the self. This may be due to the AASE programme being a 'half-way house' between school and then their next big step.

05/03/2018

Following the final initial coding on the excel spreadsheet, I will need to perform a tidy of all themes and develop the placement of content. This could be done by printing out all of the theme titles and working through them to ensure there is no repetition and that all data units are accounted for. After this I need to copy the page because the first stage of coding is complete and I will need to know how many initial themes emerged. With each step of theme building (e.g.; higher ordering) I should keep a copy of the page so that when reporting the findings I am aware of what themes were in which phase. I believe the lower/first order will be considerable.

Also, there may not be a need to separate into positive and negative themes as many of them have both positive and negative parts to them. Again this comes down to the fact that individuals will perceive things and react different. Therefore, it's only a suggestion that one thing may work over another for most people and not all.

06/03/2018

Going back over the Braun and Clarke (2006) thematic analysis procedure it states that literature reading should be minimal if inductive and considerable if theoretical. In my position I'm not sure I can argue one or the other as I have read around the area but I'm not specifically looking at recent theories so I guess it has to be inductive. Future coding would save time if the participant code is added on the left hand column. This would allow for a further accuracy of coding the correct participant to their statement/data item.

10/03/2018

There are several key areas to look at in regards to the writing up of discussion points. These include individuality where there needs to be reference to the clear existence of the individualities between the players. I need to ensure the discussion is closely linked and refers to the higher order themes. Status and performance expectation seem to be quite significant influencers. In regards to effort, players playing for team and putting in effort for team is putting in effort for you. With status, if players are playing for the team then they are playing for you! There are links to achievement motivation here possibly.

In the preparation factor there are influences starting just before practice. These influences could have a massive bearing on what happens in practice, especially because current form seems so important. There appears to be a need for a preparation time to be set in to practice time (e.g., if practice on court starts at 4pm then the session starts at 3.45pm)

Players being overworked and having practice sessions at inappropriate times was blamed as a factor contributing to fatigue. It was also suggested a lack of organisation, planning and independence would affect players. They have on court practices planned out for them but they also need support to help them to be more holistic, so they are prepared when they come to practice

In the team drive theme, unfortunately it appeared participants found it easier to react naturally and emotionally with their communication, which may result in negative communication as shown with the several comments. This will be good to discuss how its ability to respond in the right way and how it should be deemed as a weakness if negative communication is given because people can't control it. Knowing how people communicate seems very important. The players appear to not need to get on but you need to know how they communicate. This is important for both players and coaches. It also seems paramount not to single players out and attribute success to the team. For example, it seems it might be potentially negative to award an MVP or MOTM award within the team as this may break team cohesion.

There is a need for players to be independent outside of practice. Maybe not enough support given to them. Give players responsibility both inside and outside of practice. There is a lack of leaders and this may not help with support. If a player feels like they are the team, then anything that anyone else does for the team is doing it for them. Therefore, there may not be such a thing as a team and selfless player, they all have individual selfish goals, it's just their perception is that they are the team and therefore if that person does well for the team they do well for them. This needs to be clarified. The above also links to the player goals as they will all have individual goals but if the goals are linked to team them this may be better.

Having a holistic view has a big impact. At first look it seemed a contradiction between fatigue in practice and the need to simulate matches and play fatigued. In fact, the in-practice fatigue wasn't the problem, it was the lack of recovery as the players needed to play tired, and this was accepted. The lack of facility time was mainly picked up only by the head of sport. This could be due to players just getting on with it but the early mornings did have an impact. Lack of equipment wasn't picked up by anyone else. Agreement that practice performance links to competition was an important insight. All participants agreed that practice performance holds a linear relationship with competitive performance. This is important contextually. Also, academic and practice performance appeared to be linked.

There has been a lack of research in the performance environment field with student athletes.

APPENDIX C: Study Three Audit Trail

Developing The Practice Environment Model

This appendix details the audit trail for study three. The contents of the study three audit trail is listed below:

1. Participant information sheet
2. Informed consent screenshot from WBQ
3. Recruitment email sent to coaches
4. Recruitment email sent to AASE coordinator
5. Study three raw data
5. Study one raw data
6. Interview transcript with participant 'George'
7. Interview transcript with participant 'John'
8. Interview transcript with participant 'Paul'
9. Interview transcript with participant 'Peter'
10. Interview transcript with participant 'Richard'

Participant Information Sheet: Web-based questionnaire study

This study has been approved by the University of Winchester ethics committee.

Researcher and contact details:

Researcher: Steve Smith

Email: S.Smith7.15@unimail.winchester.ac.uk

Telephone: 07737 719551

If at any point during the study you have any questions, you may contact the researcher (Steve Smith), or if at any point during the study you feel something is wrong or have any concerns you can contact the project leader or chair of the University Research and knowledge exchange ethics committee, Dr Maru Mormina.

What is the purpose of the study?

This study aims to evaluate a framework of performance factors that influence AASE basketball athletes within the practice environment. This study gathers data from diary responses over an entire season via an online form.

Who is doing this research and why?

The Department of Sport and Exercise at the University is conducting this research as part of a post graduate research project.

Once I take part, can I change my mind?

Yes. You can withdraw at any time, for any reason and you will not be asked to explain your reasons for withdrawing.

Will I be required to attend any sessions?

You will not be required to attend any sessions.

How long will it take?

The data collection process will be over the entire upcoming season. A diary response will be required weekly and will take approximately 1 minute to input into the form.

How will I complete the online form?

Your coach will provide you with the link to the online form. They will also advise you on when to complete the form and this should be done in private.

Will my taking part in this study be kept confidential?

Please be assured that all the information you give will be retained in the highest confidentiality and will only be used for the purpose of this research and any publications related to this research. You will not be identifiable from any publication or dissemination of results of the project with data being anonymised by the researcher. The information you provide will be stored securely under the Data Protection Act (1998).

Informed consent screenshot from WBQ

Informed Consent (to be completed after reading the information sheet) *

The purpose and details of this study have been explained to me. I understand that this study is designed to further scientific knowledge and that all procedures have been approved by the University of Winchester Ethical Advisory Committee. I have read and understood the information sheet and this consent information. I have had an opportunity to ask questions about my participation. I understand that I am under no obligation to take part in the study. I understand that I have the right to withdraw from this study at any stage for any reason, and that I will not be required to explain my reasons for withdrawing. I understand that all the information I provide will be treated in strict confidence and will be kept anonymous and confidential to the researchers unless (under the statutory obligations of the agencies which the researchers are working with), it is judged that confidentiality will have to be breached for the safety of the participant or others.

I agree

Email to AASE coach

Reference: Practice Environment Research

Dear Coach

Thank you for responding to the request from the AASE coordinator. I very much value your participation in this study. To recruit study participants, please could you disseminate the attached participant information sheet to your players. Each participant will be required to complete a weekly diary entry onto a secured online form. The entry should be completed in privacy. I will send you the link to the form on a weekly basis. To discuss the best way to send you the link and to discuss any other questions regarding your role in this study, please could you contact me on the telephone number below at your convenience.

Kindest Regards

Steve Smith

PhD Student

Email to AASE coordinator

Reference: Practice Environment Research

Dear [name removed]

As part of a post-graduate research study I am attempting to evaluate the existence of influencing factors within the practice environment. The psychological performance influences emanating from practice have been given limited previous research attention. I have conducted research with [coach name removed] at [team name removed] recently and would very much like to continue my study of the AASE practice environment to include other academy teams. I would like to invite all academy coaches and players to partake in this study.

The requirement of involvement for coaches is to disseminate the study information and supply players with an online form to be completed weekly. The online form will take approximately one minute to complete per week and asks players to recall the positive and negative performance influences they have experienced in practice that week. If you believe this project to be worthwhile could you please pass this email on to AASE coaches and ask if they are happy to partake in the research. I would be more than happy to discuss any elements of this research over the phone.

Kindest Regards

Steve Smith

PhD Student

Study Three Raw Data

Positive Influences	Negative Influences
Seeing the consistency of my jump shot improve	Guards messing up the plays and turning the ball over meaning we can't actually set up an offence
That we are bonding better as a team and that our plays we are running are becoming a lot better.	Sometimes we moan at each other when we get something wrong and it puts us down as a team
I played with energy	The communication
Starting to gel better with players	Air balled a shot in training
I had my best day of basketball yesterday and it made me feel accomplished and actually happy that, as a result of me persevering, improvements have been made	Other people judging and opinions on me and making me overthink about myself too much
Made good decisions in practice and played well defensively	Not being able to play in the men's game over the weekend.
Understanding of all plays has improved.	Passing up on open shots and making mistakes that I wouldn't usually make.
Playing good	Opportunities
Good decisions in men's practise	Playing like physical crap on Monday morning
Good team mate encouragement	Not feeling good enough at men's
Coaches helping out	Players comments
Team cohesion	Nothing
Improving my basketball IQ	Being criticised about how I play

College coach watched the team practise.	Nothing
team relationship strengthened	N/A
Team chemistry has improved	My own performance
Good team support	None
Felt that I have gotten better	Re-occurring knee pains
People going hard at each other.	Missing shots
The team winning in scrimmage	Getting turnovers or missing shots
Teamwork	Having an injury.
Good energy within the team	My back injury and not being on court
When everyone on the team had each other's back and gave 100%	Missing too many shots, not playing to my potential and not getting too much playing time
Learning plays and timing of movement	Minor injuries
Shootings improved	Other teammates
Competitive game	Teammates getting angry at each other
The sense of togetherness	Being tired so not going at 100%
Making some shots	Getting down on myself when I make a mistake
Praise of players and coaches	I made mistakes
Positivity of the entire team	Lack of energy
Good workout Thursday morning after the barking game , good way to bounce back from a loss	Poor attitude following weekend game , didn't look to improve on Monday

Marquis hyping me up during play	Teammates making mistakes then getting angry and somehow blaming it on me
Learning plays	Not making shots
Playing well and becoming more off a team	Just getting frustrated in a few trainings recently
People encouraging me when I make a good play during a drill.	When our team loses a drill.
Playing well together as a team	When the team loses energy because we aren't playing well
training well	Struggling paying attention
Happy with the effort I'm giving	When we don't train as good as we can
Made shots	Being a sub
The energy around the squad. Positive	None
Improving from experience	Messing up
Had a good practice on Monday, people working hard	Not playing well in practice
Nothing	Unable to play to full potential
I played aggressive defence	I missed a lay up
Everyone put in effort	A lot of stopping and starting as some people didn't know what to do
Scoring a tough shot	Turned the ball over a few times in a row
I realised that I think I'm the best on the team	other people judging or speaking about me
Team chemistry	Being injured / lack of players

Good comments	how people speak to others (not really at me)
Communication on defence	The rotation
defensive intensity	Overall play offensively
Making high percentage of shots in contested situations	Poorly executing plays while scrimmaging
playing well and getting selected for the team	making simple mistakes
When we run an offence and it leads to a very good option	When our team loses a drill.
Playing better defence	Missing wide open shots
Everybody switched on at training	Me messing up
I'm getting up there for dunks, more confident	Press break, guards turning the ball over
Winning	Loosing
Team coming together after a tough loss	Friend quitting basketball
Good team work	Nothing
	Getting really aggravated sometimes in men's and not enjoying it due to getting angry with others. Just not feeling positive and not wanting to be there
just being more consistent	
When we executed the drills well	When my training team wasn't winning
Appraisals	reminders of past games
Everyone worked hard and tried to be better on Monday training.	Every still doesn't want to get shouted at by coaches so hide in sessions

Was on time to training and completed all sets and reps in my gym programme	Not training as well I I could of
General improvements	Air balling a three
Watching Teams ball movement succeeding and playing well	Being injured messing up
shooting is going well	have spells of bad play
When we run an offence and it leads to a very good option	When our team loses a drill.
Getting a good offence set and scoring off it	Getting a few turnovers in a row
Been playing better an hitting more of my outside jump shots	Bad communication with teammates
My scoring is improving	Team is ditched off and not pushing everyone else
Hitting open shots	Decision making in Pick and roll
That we were energetic in spells of training	We weren't energetic for the whole session
Being able to do more and being more involved with also not being an kid at people as much	Making mistakes in training from a bit of lack of concentration but also getting angry at players occasionally
Rotating the ball	Intensity
Good few training sessions before hand	Nothing
Winning	Loosing
Stretching	Sore body
Hitting 4 threes	Bad training session

I have played consistently, limiting my turnovers	I haven't shot the ball well
Making good plays	Making mistakes
Rebounding, finishing through contact	Getting blocked
Good team practice	No communication
Nothing	Haven't played multiple games since I've been at my school
Stretching	Bad knee
Teamwork	Not enough minutes
My team win in practice	Getting turnover and not making shots
Good Passing	Missed layups
Communicating better in training with teammates	Negative comments that isn't constructive
Pick and roll passing has improved	unforced turnovers
Team chemistry	The fact me as the captain can't be on court
Made a few jump shots I didn't think I would	Let me opponent beat me off a dribble drive situation
Trainings are enjoyable	N/A
Legs feel good	N/A
My shot feels good	Everything seems to be going to worse and worse
Playing well in games and feeling positive in training	Nothing bad has happened in training but feeling stressed off the court with physiological issues through college and out of college has just made training not

	as interesting and enjoyable as it should be
Good hustle	People moaning at each other
Energy	Communication
I've been improving my free throw shooting	I've been less confident with my dribbling
Learning plays and timing of movement	Sore knee
I have been shooting better	We are playing soft against each other
I contributed positively to a good training session helping to prepare my team for a game	I didn't finish my whole gym programme
Competitive training with under 18s	Didn't train to my best for academy
Good shooting	Playing in a new position and not doing well
Me having a good shooting session	Me messing up
Being more aggressive	Not making as many shots
played good defence	got beaten easily
Good team effort	Nothing
Improving on previous shooting scores	Not achieving potential in games
Intensity was high	People taking positive criticism negatively
Positive mind-set during practice	Nothing
N/A	Missed a lay-up & shots
I've been improving my ball handling	I've been shooting really badly
my hamstrings were sore after physical	had a poor shooting day

Playing better defence	Stupid turnovers
Doing well in practice	Missing shots
Playing well in training	Messing up, mostly getting turnovers
Pushing the ball in transition	Communication
Team atmosphere	Nothing
Team chemistry	I'm injured
Having good possessions in a row	Messing up on the drills
Been dunking hard without thinking	People not looking me in the eyes when I talk to them, trying to help
Solid defence for the most part	Inability to score at all it feels like
	In men's I was very angry and pissed off with players which I expressed in the session and was annoyed with how it was treated. In the academy I'm getting angry with a couple of players who in general aren't being part of the team and aggravated me a lot this week in which I haven't felt in the whole year
Having a really good couple of sessions and seeing improvement	
Had a good 1st practice back from injury	Had to miss out individuals cause of my back
Good ball movement	Bad communication with each other
Winning	Loosing
Making shots	Tiredness
Great team effort	None
Got picked to go states	Had a bad guy
We prepared well for the game	Had two tough losses
Fast break steals	Not getting selected

We worked are getting better at reading how to play against different defence.	My team lost in training
Nothing	Nothing
Shot feels good	Arguments in training and feeling like a lot of people hold something against me
My footwork is going well	Teammates not listening or playing switched on
Worked hard and had good sessions	Being out of shape has made it harder
Our ball movement and staying together as a team	Shot selection
I made a right handed lay up	I got rim checked on a Dunk
Injury is feeling better	Lost game by 1 point
Good team practice before a game	Making poor decisions on offence
Having a few good possessions back to back	Getting frustrated at myself for missing shots
Being able to play a variety of positions	Feeling under pressure
Stayed focused	Come off of a tough loss
Nothing	Nothing
Out working teammates	No
Good energy	Lost a drill
Drills	Free throws
Starting to get confident	Comments by players
Great team work	Maybe could've worked harder at points
Scoring with relative ease	Not much

Scoring the most in last week's game	Not winning player of the week
My confidence has improved	Stagnation of the offence
More confident in training sessions and have been trying to be as happy and positive as possible to help me	Lately people are being really negative with each other with in comments
miss out the facts that if I miss a shot or get a bad turnover	
Energy	Communication on defence
The team I was on winning a few 5v5 games	Not getting the plays right to start off with
Had a good team effort in practice	N/A
broke press	turnovers
When we run an offence successfully lead to a good basket	When energy is low and we are not performing to the best of our ability
Shooting well	Teammates not trusting me
Learning plays	Bad team training
Positivity within the team	Poor performance, missed shots etc...
Good practice session	N/A
I communicated with my teammates throughout practice	I turned the ball over to much during practice
Made shots	Doing plays wrong
Gyming well	Poor training
Good	Mind-set.
Encouraged by teammates	Turned over the ball a lot
Good team work	Missing shots
I have started to be very confident	Controlling emotions when something is not going my way

Recovering from injury	Not playing to my full potential
Energy	Communication back on defence
Running the sets at a new position and knowing it	Getting a few turn overs in a row
Team trained well together despite having very short training	Personally played poorly in training
When we run an offence successfully which leads to a good basket	When energy is low and we are not performing to the best of our ability in terms of execution
Had a good training session which made me feel positive about this week's game	Didn't complete my gym programs during the session
Recovery from injury	A lot of negative thoughts and actions
Good session	Not having a full team training before our game
Good EABL training	Terrible u18s training
Performed fairly well	Just angry with games ATM and the situation with games which pisses me off and means when going on in games I'm angry and feel massively underrated if I'm honest.
Playing a bit better	Lack of team chemistry
Shot feels good	Knees feel weak
Bonded better as a team, become more understanding of one another	Concentration levels of some team mates
Knowledge of the plays	Communication
Getting some of the new sets we use	Not getting shots to fall which usually would

Good training and played well in session	Just not being motivated and feeling annoyed/ upset about certain things which dropped my confidence and made training harder and stressful
Made shots	Felt slow
Shot well in all training sessions	Made basic mistakes
Made a three pointer	Got beat to the basket by offensive player
When we run an offence successfully which leads to a good basket	When energy is low and we are not performing to the best of our ability in terms of execution
Working with the team	nothing
Winning practice drills	Turning over the ball
Good gym session	My defence
We went at each other at training	Gym didn't go well
Made shots	Team arguing
Good few training sessions before hand	Nothing
Team chemistry	Communication
Getting along better with team mates	Arguing all the time about who's right
Became more confident	Made some bad decisions but i know how to recover from it
Having a few good possessions on offence	Not knowing the plays at different spots
Nothing	Feel more un-athletic than usual which is so bad
Energy	Decision making

Feeling strong

Nothing

Making shots

Not good gym session

Making shots

Felt tired

This week I've felt I haven't been able to play as good as I know I can and feel I'm not being given the opportunity which makes me stressed and overall makes me feel and think negative things which affects my performance.

Nothing really

When we run an offence successfully lead to a good basket

When energy is low and we are not performing to the best of our ability

Trained well as a team in academy sessions

Shot poorly in all training sessions

Training well as a team

Missing shots

APPENDIX D: Study Four Audit Trail

An Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis of Coach Perceptions of the Practice Environment

This appendix details the audit trail for study four. The contents of the study four audit trail is listed below:

1. Ethical approval
2. Participant information sheet
3. Informed consent form
4. Interview schedule
5. Study one raw data
6. Interview transcript with Coach One
7. Interview transcript with Coach Two
8. Interview transcript with Coach Three
9. Interview transcript with Coach Four
10. Interview transcript with Coach Five
11. Interview transcript with Coach Six



UNIVERSITY OF
WINCHESTER

Monday 12th November 2018

Steve Smith

Department of Sport, Exercise and Health,
Faculty of Business, Law and Sport,
University of Winchester,
Hants, SO22 4NR

Dear Steve Smith

Re: Faculty of Business, Law and Sport RKE Ethics Application [BLS/18/37]

Title: Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis of Coaches in the Practice Environment

Thank you for your submission to the University of Winchester, Faculty of Business Law and Sport (BLS) ethics panel.

On behalf of the Faculty of BLS RKE Ethics Committee I am pleased to advise you that you have received a favourable opinion for the ethical content of your application. Favourable opinion is for five years and is only for the documentation submitted for review on 16/10/18. If the project has not been completed within five years from the date of this letter, re-approval must be requested.

If the nature, content, location, procedures or personnel of your approved application change, please advise the Head of the Faculty BLS ethics committee.

Yours sincerely

Dr James Faulkner

Head of Ethics in Faculty BLS

University of Winchester

Participant Information Sheet

An Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis of Coach Perceptions of the Practice Environment.

This study has been approved by the University of Winchester ethics committee.

Researcher and contact details:

Researcher: Steve Smith

Email: S.Smith7.15@unimail.winchester.ac.uk

Telephone: 07737 719551

If at any point during the study you have any questions, you may contact the researcher (Steve Smith), or if at any point during the study you feel something is wrong or have any concerns you can contact the Faculty Head of Research, Prof Maria Burke.

What is the purpose of the study?

This study aims to explore the positive and negative performance influences as perceived by coaches within the practice environment. Data will be gathered through semi-structured interviews. Although much research has been conducted studying performance influences, there is limited study within sporting practice environments.

Who is doing this research and why?

The Department of Sport and Exercise at the University of Winchester, and specifically Steve Smith is conducting this research. The study is being conducted as part of post graduate research.

Once I take part, can I change my mind?

Yes. You can withdraw at any time, for any reason and you will not be asked to explain your reasons for withdrawing.

Will I be required to attend any sessions and where will these be?

Participants will be asked to attend an interview with the researcher. Interviews will take place in a location that is comfortable and easily accessible to the participant.

How long will it take?

Interviews will approximately last longer than 1 hour but no longer that 2 hours.

Will m7 taking part in this study be kept confidential?

Please be assured that all the information you give will be retained in the highest confidentiality and will only be used for the purpose of this research. You will not be identifiable from any publication or dissemination of results of the project. The information you provide will be stored carefully to ensure privacy and should any of your contributions be used in the write up of the research any personal details will be omitted to protect your anonymity.

What will my role be in this study for data collection?

Participants will be required to partake in an interview with the researcher where they should answer questions honestly and be able to expand upon areas of interest to both themselves and the researcher.

Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis of Coaches in the Practice Environment.

INFORMED CONSENT FORM

(To be completed after Participant Information Sheet has been read)

The purpose and details of this study have been explained to me. I understand that this study is designed to further scientific knowledge and that all procedures have been approved by the University of Winchester Ethical Advisory Committee.

I have read and understood the information sheet and this consent form.

I have had an opportunity to ask questions about my participation.

I understand that I am under no obligation to take part in the study.

I understand that I have the right to withdraw from this study at any stage for any reason, and that I will not be required to explain my reasons for withdrawing.

I understand that all the information I provide will be treated in strict confidence and will be kept anonymous and confidential to the researchers unless (under the statutory obligations of the agencies which the researchers are working with), it is judged that confidentiality will have to be breached for the safety of the participant or others.

I agree to participate in this study

Your name

Your signature

Signature of researcher

Date

Semi-Structured Interview Guide (Coach)

This is based upon coach perceptions of what they do and what they see happening to player performance in practice.

How old are you?

How many years involved with this team?

How many years coaching?

How is current practice performance of the team?

Does practice performance reflect competition performance?

Any examples?

How do you measure practice session success?

Has anything happened recently in practice that you think led to a good performance (individual or team)?

What factors positively influenced team performance in practice?

Has anything happened recently in practice that you think led to a poor performance (individual or team)?

What factors negatively influenced team performance in practice?

What are the greatest positive impacts upon player performance during practice?

How do players act? What do they do?

What are the greatest negative impacts upon player performance during practice?

How do players act? What do they do?

What do you do to increase player performance in practice?

Are players different / do you treat people differently

Upon reflection, what have you done in the past that has caused the team to perform poorly?

How have you adapted anything recently that went poorly?

Is there anything else that you believe occurs to players in practice that is positive upon performance?

What do players do that results in positive performance?

Is there anything else that you believe occurs to players in practice that is negative upon performance?

What do players do that results in negative performance?

Have you noticed players reacting to negative situations positively?

Could be in the same session or over a week or so

And why do you think this happens?

Have you noticed players reacting to positive situations negatively?

Could be in the same session or over a week or so

And why do you think this happens?

Do you have any final suggestions for helping maximize player's chances for performing well in practice?

Player Characteristics

		Players who need too much direction; always needs to be led by coach (lack of responsibility for
1.1	Players having responsibility	1.2 self)
		Players not able to lead
1.1	Players responsible for effort	1.2 themselves
	Committed players wanting to	
1.9	achieve	1.2 Players not prepared
		Not taking responsibility to prepare self on own before
1.4	Players who seek challenge	1.2 practice (various points here)
	Independent players who take responsibility (although not independent in a team	
1.4	environment!)	1.3 Lack of prep work e.g. sleep / nutrition etc... (goes with responsibility)
	Being able to prep themselves	
1.4	and the responsibility of doing it.	2.1 High personal standards to achieve - although this could back fire Expectations
	Players focused and committed	
1.1	with energy	2.3 Easily distracted players - lack of desire and motivation to achieve / improve.
		Lack of focus - social media distractions during pre-practice
1.6	100% player commitment	2.3 periods.
		having a mind-set that BB is only an on court activity will lead to
1.6	Highly motivated players	2.9 poor choices
1.7	Players taking responsibility	

- players being in control and taking responsibility for their own development
- 1.9 development
- 2.1 Players wanting to improve
 - Highly motivated players. These characteristics must show why)
- 2.1 High player effort levels
 - High commitment from players to improve and towards the team
- 2.1 Competitive nature in players - links with mental make-up)
 - Independent players have time management skills - *a "perfect" player description seems to be developing e.g. the list of things that a mature player has.
- 2.3 Player is responsible off court with decisions they make in lifestyle
 - Lifestyle decisions with a focus upon bb performance.
- 2.3 Independent player preparing well for practice *different from independent mind-set
- 2.4 High effort
- 2.4 High player work rate
- 2.5 Honest and open player
- 2.5 players that want to improve

Success and experience in dealing with and overcoming adversity and challenges -
the traits needed in players, this very much comes from their development - on

2.7 and off court! - this can link to coping

Players who can deal with
pressure - players need ability to
cope; where does it come from?

2.8 Experience?

professional mind-set both on

2.9 and off court (BB 1st)

2.9 BB first in life

Responsibility: players choose to
do the right things off court and

2.9 make correct decisions

Motivated in own time - don't
want to let the team down and
therefore will work hard* more
powerful not only to let yourself

2.9 down but also other people!

Future opponent focus

Preparing for future
opponents/matches (tangible

1.1 focus/outcome?)

Preparing for upcoming

1.2 competition / match (tangible)

1.3 Focus on upcoming match

Upcoming match increases
performance through..... Need to
find out and state some reasons

2.2 why!*

Prep for match is a tangible focus? The players have something physical in front of them. What does competition do to them? What does research

2.2 say?

Practice with upcoming match focus - does this focus the attention more? Again gives them something they can see , which seems so much more

2.6 powerful

Tangible success

Player success / tangible success

1.2 in practice

1.2 Players making mistakes

1.2 Success in competitive situations

Previous performance (can be positive and negative)

Having a tangible influence in practice e.g. you can physically

1.3 see the good you are doing

1.6 Players not achieving

Match and competition

Using non--controllables as a measure of success/performance (again, these will be tangible)

1.1 simulation

2.4 *should this be here???

Tangible success (completion of

1.3 skills)

Experiencing success (again this is towards the tangible side of achievement - maybe why high effort or good performance is not

1.3 as powerful?)

2.4 Tangible success

Tangible results like seeing ball go

2.4 in hoop *need to explain tangible

Tangible success (could state that current performance is key but the tangible successes make up current form - however, this is not

2.5 good for practice as its different to comp

2.5 Success / winning

Tangible goals (outcome they can see) - although not good to focus upon solely as can go wrong, it's a powerful tool to use with

2.6 players

Coping ability

1.5 Coping ability

Players who problem solve (have

1.4 the ability to do so)

Having the ability to cope with

1.4 tough/challenging situations

1.5 Resilient players (copers)

Perseverance and resilience (ability to cope with challenging

1.2 and difficult situations)

Acceptance of errors/mistakes (type of resilience and coping)

1.5 not effected by errors?

Players being resilient to short-term poor performance (this is an

1.5

1.5 No coping ability

1.4 Lack of resilience after failure

Players overly affected by poor

1.5 current form (lack of resilience)

1.4 Lack of coping

Lack of coping/resilience (*need to research coping and resilience for this) what are they coping with etc...?

2.2

*Trying to control the uncontrollables (need to explain the uncontrollables)

2.2

*Players too dependent on

1.6 coaches (lack of responsibility???)

example of resilience!) they know
it will change!

Player individualities and their
e.g. coping ability/how they react
is down to previous experience

1.7 (development experiences)

Player personality important (e.g.
resilience, coping, responsibility,

1.7 maturity)

1.9 Players can problem solve

Players who find their own way
(responsibility, without needing
too much guidance - this links to

1.8 learning by doing?)

Players who think for themselves
e.g. again this is responsibility
and a level of maturity * the fine
balance between needing

1.9 support and not!

2.4 Having coping strategies

Players who are able to reflect
(again shows an ideal facet of a

2.4 player) Maturity

Only trying to effect what you
can control - this again adds to

2.4 ideal traits of player

Players who self-reflect (goes in
maturity and responsibility

2.5 theme? E.g. sub themes should

be containing the depth of what a responsible player will do.

Players who accept weaknesses,

2.5 extra?

Players who apply diminished

2.5 emotion

Players who focus on

controllables/only try to affect

2.5 these.

Ability to deal with adversity

2.7 (coping strategies)

2.8 Players who reflect

Forms of negativity can actually help players develop resilience but they have to be able to overcome it and therefore it has to be very carefully managed. But most of it can't be worked on as life experiences are and how people react to them are

2.7 uncontrollable

2.9 Can learn from mistakes

Team first & cohesion

Individual first

1.5 Putting team 1st

1.2 Players who are not working for the team, but rather just themselves

1.5 Team 1st mentality

1.3 Players who are individual and put themselves first

1.5 Players who and are able to contribute to team

1.5 Negativity towards others (can be general and specific)

1.5 All goals lead to team performance and not individual

1.6 Independent approach, which causes annoyance at teammate failures

- 1.6 Team working together
- 1.7 Teammate you compete with doing well (individualistic approach as against the player not for the team)
- 1.8 Team before self
- 1.7 Not getting selected for matches - again this is individual approach
- 1.8 team focus
- 1.8 Individual focus - focus upon rankings within the team and competition - this is where the intra-comp side of things gets tricky!)
- 2.4 Team focus
- 2.3 no team first drive
- 2.7 Team first player
- 2.3 Individually focused players
- 2.7 Team minded players
- 2.3 Too much negative emotion (possibly too focused upon self and how things effect the self) strength in numbers?
- 2.7 team first player
- 2.4 Individual focus
- Players putting team above self (very hard to do if they don't realise that the individual can only achieve if the team achieve!)
- 2.7 Individualistic players
- 2.7 Self/individual player hurts team - need to state a list of why (part of the ideal traits)
- 2.8 Individuals
- 2.8 Jealousy - jealous of other players performing well - this does not help the team as individualities are apparent.

- 2.2 Expectations too high
 - Expectations based upon ranked position in team (other players can fluctuate in form - therefore focus upon on performance for team rather than against others)
- 2.2 Too focused upon what others think
- 2.2 Rating self against peers
- 2.2 Competing against teammates

Team cohesion

- 1.8 Players that get on (strong cohesion on and off the court)

- 1.9 Players buy in if feel part of the team *

- 1.6 Lack of team chemistry

Culture - this should be part of the session structure

- 1.8 celebrating team success and not individuals within the team

- 1.9 All players are important (there is a clear team first - everyone is important)

- 2.9 Secure environment to make mistakes in - coaches and players not judging.

- 1.4 No security to make mistakes

- 1.5 Players not knowing culture of the team (e.g. new players to team) - use the Gifford paper for this one!

- 1.7 No security to fail - too much pride/social/ranking! Culture is not correct possibly

session structure (coach)

- 1.6 Adaptable coaching

- 1.1 Poor sessions decrease player confidence

		Too much information during practice, especially new info such as tactical info against another team (although a match focus is good!)
1.6	Coaches adjusting sessions if needed (flexible coaching)	2.6
1.7	breaking down skills (coaches doing this in sessions) may link to goals and not giving them too much to think about in session	2.6
1.8	Athlete centred approach	2.6
1.8	Player led session	2.6
1.8	Having players input into session - making them aware the session is for them/the team, therefore they should input	
1.1	Player led session	
2.3	Giving players responsibility for own development	
2.5	goal break down into smaller goals (more manageable)	
2.5	flexibility in coaches (for poor performance in session is changed)	
2.6	Not going off plan (although doesn't show flexibility , however only if adding more in) - need to state it's not simple as changing a poor session to something fun is different	
2.7/2.8	Challenging practice environment	

Coach expectations

- | | |
|-----------------------------------|---------------------------------------|
| Setting correct goals for player | Too high coach expectation of |
| 1.6 ability | 1.6 players |
| 1.8 Common team goals held by all | 1.6 Too high expectations for players |
| | Coach expectations not being |
| | 1.4 realised |
| | 1.6 Not reaching coaches expectations |
| | Coaches who set goals against |
| | 2.5 uncontrollable targets. |

Coach support or coach role

- | | |
|----------------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| | Lack of coach support when |
| | needed (therefore a fine balance |
| | between too much and not |
| 1.2 Trust in coaches | 1.2 enough!) |
| | Not singling out players for poor |
| | performance/mistakes (same as |
| 1.2 Clear coach direction | 2.4 positive) |
| | Critical feedback should be given |
| | to group and not individuals when |
| 1.3 organised practice sessions | 2.4 in group setting |
| | Coaches showing favour towards |
| 1.7 Coaches knowledge of players | 2.8 one player over others and team |
| Having 2 way communication | |
| 1.8 between coach and players | |
| 1.9 Regular coach feedback | |
| Coach having knowledge of | |
| players and their different | |
| 2.3 reactions to situations | |

Coaches are positive towards
players (could also be positive
2.4 communication)

Direct coach feedback (regular
2.4 coach contact)

Having coach guidance for goal
setting (but not too much as need
to have independence, goldilocks
2.5 zone!)

coaches who understand their
2.6 players

Players working towards end
goals - must have a future vision
and then have break downs of
2.6 that goal into manageable chunks

2.8 Coaches are honest and truthful

coaches who provide challenges to encourage resilience training and using the
team to work together and support each other (this is key as if players achieve on
2.8 their own they won't be a team player!

Achievable challenges so low
level negative but must use
support from others to achieve
within the team - no individual
2.8 success!

Aware of progress against end
2.8 goals

Current performance

2.2 Success from goal achievement

1.3 Current form is poor - not
successful or achieving cause's
negativity which leads to several

other bad things:

communications, not working as team etc...

Not reaching expected

2.5 Success/achievement in practice

2.2 performance (e.g. expectations)

2.6 Winning and success

Positive communication and behaviours

Negativity towards teammates

(can link towards being out of team mentality and individual

Positive feedback from coaches

1.6 and players

2.3 focus)

1.6 Supportive behaviours

2.3 Negative communication

Coaches being negative towards

players (make it clear that it's not

1.7 Positive encouragement

2.6 just players but also coaches

Displays of negative emotions by

1.7 supporting players after errors

2.8 teammates and players

Positive support and

2.3 communication

Singular out players (could be linked with individuality???)

Singling players out for errors,

1.7 especially in front of group.

Singling out one player with praise

will hurt other members of the

1.7 team

Intra-team competition

Intra-comp can be good in long-term to drive up motivation and performance.

1.8

Competition in practice increases

1.8

match simulation

*comp within and amongst teammates is good if the chemistry is good and the players

1.8

have a team first mentality

Competition in practice (need to

2.5

expand on this and state why!)

Competition in practice - need to

2.6

state why!?!? Use examples

Match simulations (link with

2.6

comps but need to state why!)

Intra-team comp causes short-term negativity and poor team

1.8

chemistry

Focusing upon ranking position in team and where you are against others is bad - need to focus upon

1.8

your effect upon the team

*Lose in practice is short-term

2.7

damaging to player

*Team losing can give future

2.7

increase performance

*Loses can build resilience and future improvements but players must be aware of the short-term negativity and therefore don't

2.7

take it as a result of their ability

*it seems that: You only learn

2.7

when you lose!

*added? Reason why is that not effected by team result - but should be! Therefore is it better for players to take a team lose hard as this will develop for

2.7

future!?!?!??

Not being selected (holding a lower rank position than others or

2.8

what you believe it to be)

Off-court

Positivity gained from off court
2.2 activity Over training and fatigue
Good nutrition (decisions made in
lifestyle) Burn out, over training was
2.5 Decision making 2.2 mentioned.
2.8 Tiredness

Coach one interview for IPA study

Age 31 years

Gender: Male

Ethnicity: White British

Date: 02/10/2018

Years within Academy basketball programme: 7 years

Interview length: 52 minutes plus warm-up period of 20 minutes (72 minutes total)

Researcher – How is current overall team performance?

Participant – We don't have the best players across the academy if you compare us to the likes of [team name removed] and [team name removed] but they are a group that is focused. Maybe, because they know there are stronger teams, they know that intensity must be higher. They have been engaged well this year. They want to learn, improve, get better. As a whole I'd say we have been better than the sum of our parts so far. The most important thing for me is to keep the improvement going... there's been improvement with most of the players. You got [player name removed], he started slow but has made a big impact in the games lately. I'd say overall the results have been good, not outstanding, but we are playing to a higher level than expected.

Researcher – Expected by you or others?

Participant – I'd say both. You wouldn't expect these players to be getting some of the results, say only losing to [team name removed] by eight and beating [team name removed]. I guess I'll expect a lot from players. Maybe others do think we are playing to our station. I'm not sure. I wouldn't say they would look at us and say we were average. We have a lot of players outside of national level.

Researcher – Does that make a difference?

Participant – 100%. You can take a team and make it better, to a level. But you can take a really good team and take them to a much higher level.

Researcher – Do those better players practice to a higher level?

Participant – Depends what you mean by higher level? If its effort then it doesn't matter. I've had teams in the past where they have been good players but didn't work as hard. Other times I have weaker teams that practice really hard because they want to improve. Saying that, I've had team that were quality and then training really hard. Obviously the best combo.

Researcher – How is the current practice performance of the team?

Participant – The level is high. The players do work hard this year. There's been some sessions which died, but on the whole it's good.

Researcher – Is that all players who are performing well in practice?

Participant – No not all. Some take no responsibility for themselves, they have to be... they need their hand held through practice. The step up isn't taken by everyone, its laziness really or maybe they just able to do it. Some players need far too much direction, they can't do anything on their own. In the past when they hit the 18's [under 18 age group] I gave them far more responsibility but most of them aren't ready to handle it. They couldn't prepare themselves for practice and that effects the whole team. I got sick of walking onto court and players sat down on their phones not ready to go. Nowadays I have to drip feed responsibility to them but that's still no guarantee.

Researcher – So some have responsibility and some don't?

Participant – The better players, ones been in the academy, club set up for a long time. The players that we have come through our club are better because we spent years working on those things. Some players come in, the third years, some can't handle the work. Or we get some youngsters who haven't been in a programme and they aren't responsible.

Researcher – What do you mean by being responsibility?

Participant – A player who works hard, doesn't need me to talk them through everything. They are the ones who can't get warmed up right, they mess around. Outside they eat junk and get no sleep. They are just really tardy. A player who takes responsibility for themselves always improves the most and develops at faster rates. They take their basketball seriously and really want to get better. They want to be here more than anywhere else. They are always prepared for practice, have great time management and I don't need to get on their backs. But there are some players I'm constantly chasing and they just don't have the same motivation.

Researcher – Does practice performance reflect competition performance?

Participant – some players coast in practice. They won't do well in matches. Sometimes they do and switch on to perform. Some players are very busy in competition but don't play well in matches, aren't to a good level. It really depends on the individual. Although I'd say that if you regularly practise to a good level it's going to translate to matches. It's all about attitude because good attitudes lead to a better player. Some players might not always hit high standards all the time... they are better players so won't need to be at 100% all the time. They can coast into practice and still be the best but they have to keep up their personal standards.

Researcher – How do you measure practice success?

Participant – How hard they work, if they have high team intensity, if they contribute... that's a big one, if they contribute to the team in a positive way. If they run practice well and take responsibility. I wouldn't measure practice but I know whose doing well. You can see who's up and whose downs.

Researcher – Do players always expect to practice at the same level every time they train?

Participant – They need to keep their standards high. I think they will probably try and come in at the same level. Although they might be fatigued and need to go at a lower level for that practice. If we have a big game and then training the next day we take the level down.

Researcher – What about individual players. Do they change their expectations if they don't feel 100%?

Participant – I don't know if they change their expectations. They will always try to work hard. They might feel more pressure.

Researcher – What happens with the pressure?

Participant – They put pressure on themselves. They might get negative, play worse, make errors. They might get into a bad place. If they miss shots or make errors then it can get worse. Obviously because they might be tired. They can get a lot worse. There's the negative spiral that they will get in to. If it's going to get worse then it probably will.

Researcher – So do they do anything differently before or during training?

Participant – I think they try and keep to same standards all the time which may be a mistake. During the session... They might need some time to get away from the court.

Researcher – Do you encourage them to think about the expectations they set themselves before training?

Participant – Just for them to try as hard as they can and keep the intensity levels up. They should keep as positive as possible. They might make mistakes but keep it positive. If they make mistakes then they make mistakes. Mistakes and errors are never going to be taken as a positive but they can quickly make a player lose their head. It's like I said before, you need to be able to handle making errors and if you don't reset yourself and go again then things will get worse and worse. It would be great if players could ignore errors and just carry on. Keep the positivity in the session and keep their playing standard high.

Researcher – Has anything happened recently in practice that you think led to a good performance?

Participant – A good match performance, or in training, as we've been good recently in both.

Researcher – In practice.

Participant – There's been a few positives recently. We've had some good performance. Players we have will need everything to go right for them really. A good prep period in between training is essential. We did some really good work recently with the S&C coach and that has helped. If they are prepping right then things are much better on court. If we have a match coming up then things pick up in training and players put in higher intensities. I'd say that if everything comes together then that works out well. Oh, and a big one would be current form. If they are playing well already then they keep this going. One of the guys was playing really well recently and has been taking it into games. He's stepped up a level this year and has improved a lot.

Researcher – Do you have any other examples of anything recently where you had a good practice?

Participant – I'd say that the team performing well is really good for performance. If the players are getting on well. We have a tighter group now and overall performance is looking far better. Players buy in if they feel part of a team. If we can get them to have

each other's backs then that is only good. Get everyone working together and for each other.

Researcher – Why didn't that happen at start of season?

Participant – New players coming in. It's always the same. We always recruit third year players in to strengthen but they won't know anyone. It's important to try and get them imbedded into the team as quick as possible. Try and get everyone socialising as well off court. The house helps. If they stay there then they get into the mood of things quicker. Then it's just about getting it right on court. It takes a few months. We did have a big win the other day and they boys are still pretty high off of that. Also, I'd say that if players are taking responsibility... if we get the leaders out on the court then that's good. We also need a purpose to drive them. We need something to work to.

Researcher – What do you use as a goal?

Participant – Matches are the biggest. But personal goals as well as that can drive the players to improve. They need to see where they are going, see what they need to do and then do it. Each player will get a goal to work... maybe not just one, a few goals to work towards in the season and to keep checking they are on track. Sometimes it can slip, it's easier at the start of the season because it's all fresh but as you get into matches it becomes harder to keep on an individual basis as the team goals become priority. We try to meet at least once a week in between lessons one to one. Don't need to see everyone but it's important for a lot of the players. It keeps the focus strong.

Researcher – Do you link team goals and individual goals?

Participant – I think they go hand in hand. Everyone works towards the same goals. If you aren't working towards the team then that's not going to help the team. The players want to improve but they do it by helping the team to win. It's probably important... maybe the teams like a stepping stone for them to improve and move on but it's got to be for the team. Sometimes it isn't and sometimes these kids will just play for themselves.

Researcher – What are some of the positive impacts upon player's performance?

Participant – Getting players to take responsibility, to reflect upon what they are doing. I would get players to self-reflect both on the court and off the court, be open and honest, and what hasn't gone well. Make a list, make the improvements you are going to aim for. If you have a goal, like an outcome of what you are looking to get to then your focus can

improve so much more. It's a really important step to get them to have control, focus on what they are doing, take their own improvements into their own hands. Give them the control. It's so important players keep learning from the mistakes they make. If there's a culture of learning from losing then players will develop quicker. So I guess it's important that players will lose a lot and then that means they can learn from it. Also, if players are playing well, having a great practice will be based on performance. If they are putting in the required effort and then some they will have a good performance. For me it's all about the effort, not so much about the outcome indicators as they will come with effort. Players will focus on the outcomes though and that's... as we said earlier, they can get down on themselves. It's the control thing. Keep control of what you can and not what you can't.

Researcher – So it's important that you help them through the goal setting stages?

Participant – Yes, we will sit down with them and help them see the problems. Although, you have to see the problems first. I've had players who don't see their faults and that's tough and they won't improve. Some players also only look at their own game with no thought to how the team needs them. They might as well not be here either because they don't help the team. They need to think about that when they reflect on what they need to improve on. As it's always got to be to improve to aid a team because that's why you play basketball, to win games. You can't win on your own.

Researcher – Has anything happened recently in practice that you think led to a poor performance?

Participant – Players don't manage their time very well. Their nutrition might not be good. The modern player has access to so much social media it's crazy. They say they can't sleep and that's probably because they don't ever switch off from it. They're probably watching films till the early hours and not thinking about the effects on their basketball. I think that's a big problem. Them keeping their focus. There's also a massive lack of reflection by players. They don't always work out what is good for them, bad for them. They will just keep going. It's like that Einstein quote I think about madness being something you do wrong over and over and not changing it.

Researcher – Do their distractions spill over into practice?

Participant – Yes it can. The players don't get ready in practice. Like, I'll come in for the warm-up and some players have been on their phone before sat at side. I mean that's not common. Maybe start of season but now they all know. It goes back to what they did

before, are they tired, are they focus, ready to go, do they have the energy we need from them. Are they motivated to compete? If they aren't in a state to put it in then practice will suffer. If they want to be a performance athlete they need to be a performance athlete all the time.

Researcher – How do the players interact in practice with each other, are they positive or negative?

Participant – We try to instil in them to be positive to each other. It doesn't help if they communicate badly. They get emotional... it can be very emotional and if they communicate with emotion, especially if it's negative, it's not going to be taken well by the other person. It's the same with us [coaches]. If we are negative then we don't get a great response from them.

Researcher – So it should be positive all the time?

Participant – I wouldn't say all the time. There's always moments when you need to be negative... players differ as well. Some guys' like [player name removed] would play far better if you were negative... not negative as such, but communicated in a way that others wouldn't be able to take. Most of the players though need to control their emotions. They need to keep everything focused and being positive within the group can help with that.

Researcher – And you are as positive as you can be?

Participant – Yes, I'll always try to be. I'll be direct and to the point and then encourage as much as I can. It's about a relationship. If you can get them on side then they will put in effort. It's a balance between being a friend off court and having the respect on court and that players will work for you. I'll need to keep everyone thinking they can achieve. Positivity will promote success. Emotions are... negative emotions are not good. They damage confidence.

Researcher – So communicating with emotions can be negative towards performance?

Participant – Absolutely, it's the time when they don't have control, or think about what they are doing. You don't want players playing with much emotion as it can get on top of them and can be negative. You want them to play level headed so that when they communicate with each other they are controlled and think about what they say. The control is important, communication that comes from a place of [negative] emotion will damage the group performance.

Researcher – Do you work hard to ensure your sessions run well and do you adapt them if needed?

Participant – I'll try and work on what we need to work on. There will always be a specific aim to the session, say we got a big game or there's a play we need to work on, or shooting. I'll keep it fairly standard. You can't put too much extra into the session, you stick to the plan because if you increase the difficulty by adding in more technical points then the players can't handle it. You don't want to overload them. You work on what you work on. Saying that, sometimes, maybe more times than you want, the session might break down and go wrong. Drills go wrong and need changing. If it isn't working you go off plan and set it right or the session will be wasted. But I don't want to do it, it's a need to do it. Like you said, you need to adapt sessions.

Researcher – You said earlier that players need to learn to lose to improve, therefore, is it good that players will fail in practice, say fail in a drill?

Participant – Yes. Competition against players will also see wins and losers so when we compete in practice we will get those. Maybe they are small outcomes, maybe large. If players are making mistakes then they might get negative in the session but overall it helps their improvement. I'd say it's good for players. It's a motivator. There's nowhere to hide and it's up to you as to whether you are big enough to respond. To respond to losing to a teammate or in a situation you want to win. Although the short-term effects can be damaging.

Researcher – So would you say that actually failure and negativity in practice might help?

Participant – Yeah, I guess it doesn't go well there and then but there is an improvement over time. So maybe yeah, but if it's always negative I don't think that helps. I don't think it helps to win that game the next week. I think it's complicated and always a fine balance.

Researcher – Do players cope with negative situations well and turn them into positives?

Participant – I'm a firm believer in giving players adversity so that they can overcome it. They will be a better player for it. Like we might have a training session that puts them under pressure and that's the aim. They don't know we are doing it and it's interesting to see who can handle it and who can't

Researcher – So who is better?

Participant – The better players deal with it better.

Researcher – Is that because they find the situation easier to deal with because they are better?

Participant – Yes maybe. They might have more experience. They need to be able to achieve the problem. It's about overcoming that problem so if the player can't overcome it then it's no good and will cause them more problems. You need to be able to overcome... those demons in your head saying you can't do it or making you think the game is lost or the team aren't playing well.

Researcher – Does that come down to effort again then, applying effort in these situation will help?

Participant – Effort and intensity is vital. Players who can keep going even if they are struggling... it's not blind effort though. If somethings not working and just keeping on going through it and the same outcome occurs then that's not good. You need to be able to recognise the issue, think it through, maybe change something. But you always need to try hard and put in maximum effort. That's when it comes back to negatives because if everything is negative then they won't be able to achieve but if they are achieving something tough then that's massively positive. Getting the balance right... you won't get it right every time and I don't think it's something you will do all the time, you just put out the drill or situation and let the players go from there.

Researcher – So balance is massively important, is there a ratio between positive and negative?

Participant – Positive far more but some negative. You don't want too much positivity because then people are complacent and they don't have a challenge to aim for.

Researcher – What do you mean by complacent?

Participant – If a player thinks everything is great and going well then they won't improve. They won't have anything to aim for. There's no good constantly telling someone how great they are or how great everything is because they might get too arrogant and feel like they don't need to play hard. I've had really arrogant people in the past in training and they just don't... they don't want to work hard and they train badly and it effects the whole group.

Researcher – What do players want to do in practice?

Participant – They want to play, to compete. Play hard. It's enjoyable to just go out and play. If you are a competitive person, which they all will be, then they want to play and compete.

Researcher – How do players respond to being selected for matches, or not selected?

Participant – They know who is playing were. Like, they know who are the better players. Within a couple of weeks the players sort themselves out into a... like two teams, or maybe a few groups within those teams. Like we have the starting five who start most games, then the bench, then the [secondary competition league name] players. There is disappointment at the start but then they just need to lock and deal with it. If I've got to make a tough selection decision then I'll make sure the players know why. I like it when they get upset because it means they want it. But, they always accept my decision and I feel I have earned that with them over the years. Again, it's getting the respect from a solid relationship between me and them. The respect for the coach is definitely important. Trust is needed. If players trust you then they will respect the tough decisions. I'd say it's been easier in the last couple of years because it's obvious who should be playing where.

Researcher – Anything else in practice that can be negative, something that occurs maybe from you in the past?

Participant – Getting the practice session right is important. The players need clear indications of what to do. They need to take it on though, they can't be told what to do throughout. I mean they need to get instructions of the plan and then take responsibility for themselves. Again, responsibility, taking responsibility for your training and your development is a really positive thing. If players aren't working together then that won't go well. If they are arguing then that's negative.

Researcher – What about anything else you can think of that may lead to a positive performance influence?

Participant – If players succeed. If they hit shots or making passes or achieve in anyway. Sometimes it can be what they did a few days ago.

Researcher – So current form is important?

Participant – Possibly the most important I think. If the player is playing well then they feel like they can do anything, well maybe not anything, but they are more robust, more able to deal with challenging situations. If you give a high confidence player a difficult situation

then they will be able to deal with it better than someone who is low on confidence. If players win in practice that can be really positive. It can be team or individual wins. Obviously individualistic players will be better with a self-win and the team player will be effected by a team win in training.

Researcher – Is there a big difference between an individualistic player and a team player?

Participant – There's a pretty big difference. The individual will look to themselves only and they can affect the group really negatively as they are only in it for them. They might be a better player and be able to do something amazing in games but overall they won't be great as they will damage the team with mistakes. The team needs to come first. You should always be doing things that benefit the team. Obviously if you get better that helps the team but with decision making in games then you need to put the team first. That's sometimes the difference in training compared to matches where you need to put the team first in matches but you can put yourself first in training.

Researcher – Anything else you want to add about influences from the practice environment?

Participant – Players need to achieve. Players need a... like a professional attitude to take with them through both the court and their lifestyle, say when at home and around college. It's also important that the team is in a good place. That they know each other well and get on.

Researcher – Any negatives?

Participant – Maybe that they don't take responsibility. If a player needs their hand to be held through training then that's not effective. Not effective for the session and also not effective for their development.

Coach two interview for IPA study

Age 27 years

Gender: Male

Ethnicity: White British

Date: 04/10/2018

Years within Academy basketball programme: 4 years

Interview length: 49 minutes plus warm-up period of 14 minutes (63 minutes total)

Researcher – How is current performance of the team?

Participant – Doing ok, about what is expected. Maybe a bit better than average. I'd say that matches have gone ok and we are still trying to improve in training. We haven't played that many games yet so it's still a transition period.

Researcher – Do you think that practice performance is reflecting what you are doing in matches?

Participant – I think they are pretty well linked. I know that if we have a great training session then it's highly likely the match will be good. There's always some games that might not go well but if the positivity is high then there's confidence in the matches. If we can get buy in during training then it's all good. If we can get the players playing as a team and not looking at just themselves, if we can get a solid unit in training going at it together and then take that to the court, then that's good.

Researcher – Do you have a group that works together well?

Participant – It's getting there. It's better than last year, we've had a few of the individuals leave so it's starting from a clean slate this year. You want to get just a few... a sprinkling on high effort and high intensity players, I think we have them this year, and that makes the rest of the group come together. They will lead the rest of the players to a better place.

Researcher – Does that group function as a collective from practice to competition?

Participant – I'd say so, yeah. If the group doesn't function and achieve in practice then it doesn't translate. You'll need everyone... all players should contribute to the team in some form. So yes, if the teams doing well... although individuals do impact it. If they aren't

ready to go, they aren't focused it can make a difference. Basically, don't let the team down by having a poor practice attitude as it will affect everyone. If they can stay together and work as a group in most things they do then that's good.

Researcher – Is there any conflict?

Participant – There's always some conflict between players, like all the time. It's rare that players, and I'm talking about good players, that they don't have an argument on get annoyed. Although [player name removed] was fairly solid with that. He didn't... he would always be positive and motivating for the guys, a really nice lad and he was a real team player, he didn't care about his own performance it was all about the team. He was excellent to have around. Sometimes arguments would happen and he'd step in and calm it all down. Also a really good guy for people to look at, like as a role model. He would work really hard all the time, work for the team.

Researcher – Has anything happened in practice recently that you think led to a good performance?

Participant – In our last game, leading up to it, we had some good practices where the guys were seriously locked in. We trained really hard for specific plans we knew they would bring. We scouted hard as a team as well, not just the coaches, but everyone was looking at tape. We worked on everyone's job and how we were going to play them. I remember we looked at guarding, shooting potentials so we close off the court where we need to, stuff like that. We made a pretty clear plan of what we wanted to achieve and the players bought into it big time.

Researcher – So practice was easy?

Participant – I wouldn't say easy as the guys didn't work that well at the start because they were still working things out in their heads because a lot of the information was new. It's like, a couple of the guys weren't comfortable with what was needed from them. They weren't comfortable probably because they thought they couldn't do it. But they could do it. Everyone has areas of weakness, or areas that they need to strengthen... that they might not be as strong as other areas. We want our players to look for areas to develop, everyone has them. So we put up some challenging sessions that pushed the guys and eventually we came through and won the game at the end. I think it helped that we ran a lot of the plays and they worked well for us in practice. The players could see what we

wanted them to do and because they were successful they believe in us, as coaches. Believe we can set them up well and get a win.

Researcher – What was the most successful drill or method for the players in that situation?

Participant – It was playing matches and playing the specific drills. We had like five on five all the time and gave out the rolls and even though everyone knew what was happening, the guys did a great job of keeping it real and as match like as possible. So I think the act of being in the situation and feeling it, feeling the plays and seeing the success of it. Like, we'd hit the three pointer or get the steal or to the post. If we get the feel for it in practice then that comes across in matches.

Researcher – Has anything happened in practice recently that you think led to a poor performance?

Participant – The game before last. We spent probably the same if not more time on them... this is what happens with a new team as they didn't do as well as last week because we had to tell them what to do more. We had a big meeting after because they didn't do anywhere near what they needed to and luckily it seemed to work because last week was so much better. But the other game the... there's a lack of responsibility, or there was... we started the year with a group that didn't take the responsibility that we needed them to take. The guys didn't really know each other and would mess around a lot, not mess around in a jokey way but just not be focused and ready to go. It's hard, especially when you have younger players, but we [coaches] need to give players some slack for them to pick up. If we tell them to do this and do that, when do they get the opportunity to do something for themselves? We had to keep telling them to do everything. Like, warm-up right, do this, do that. That was not a good situation because you need players to take it on, we've [coaches] got enough to be doing without having to sort them out through stuff that we shouldn't be touching.

Researcher – So what happened in the sessions?

Participant – They were all really sluggish, slow, couldn't be bothered, or that's what it seemed. The mistakes as well... they either got really annoyed or disappeared into their shells. We were not sharp at all for the match against [team name removed]. That's why the meeting was called after because we weren't happy, they weren't happy. We just didn't get what we thought we'd get out of the match and looking back the training

standard was really poor leading up to it. The meeting cleared the air and we set down some clear goals of what we want to happen and they all bought into it. They agreed with them, we made them think of them, even though we knew what we wanted to put down anyway.

Researcher – Do the players often go through patches of quality performance and then come off it or has it been steady progress throughout?

Participant – It's up and down. I mean everyone... the athlete is not going to be able to hold themselves at a level consistently as they will always go up and down. It's like... all the players we have gone through patches. Players can be achieving one minute and then playing terribly the next, and sometimes it doesn't take much [failure] to send them over the edge. They will just have a bad game or a bad session, lose that little bit of confidence they had and then they are gone. Its hit and miss. If they played well in the last match then that's good. If they have had a good run in practice and are feeling good it usually carries on. Obviously it will break down at some point. They might be tired or have a poor shooting session or make errors in games. In my experience it doesn't take more than a bad practice to set someone back.

Researcher – What would you say are the greatest impacts on player performance in during practice?

Participant – That's a tough one as there's a lot going on, lots of things that can impact. I've always said that what the player does on the court is really important. If you play bad in training and then what do you expect to happen in matches? You can't just train rubbish and then expect things to be good. You got to hold a high standard all the time, with whatever you are doing. Practice session, good standard, shooting session, good standard, even stretching session, good standard. Keep yourself up all the time and then you see the improvements.

Researcher – So what does that look like in practice?

Participant – Seeing your efforts rewarded. Seeing your shooting going well, making the right pass and it coming off. If they see it then they will believe it. The ball going in the hoop is probably the one stand out, up front one for me. Like, we work on routines all the time, set drills, if the players do them well then that lifts them, if they don't do them well, can't do them then that effects them.

Researcher – Will they then give up and lose motivation?

Participant – Sometimes yeah. Belief in oneself and the ability they have is massive. I guess if its game related then it makes a big difference. You see guys will lose their heads completely if it goes wrong. Like, you'll see it... I see that once a player gets down on themselves, their performance drops. It doesn't help the team one little bit. I've had several meetings already this season with one of our new players trying to get him to understand the reactions he gives on the court effects his teammates. He gets annoyed and they get annoyed. We are trying to make him get it but it's just the way he is.

Researcher – What do you do with players who lose motivation?

Participant – We try and build them up. We get them focusing and trying hard in practice, not put too much expectation on them but get them playing hard and focusing on that. So trying to get to play at a high effort level, a high standard. It's good to keep your standards but sometimes the players get so annoyed if they make errors, I tell them this is the place to make errors. So try and keep the pressure off a little bit but at the same time put the pressure on them to keep trying, keep locked in, keep the intensity really, really high and it'll come eventually.

Researcher – What happens when players go into a negative period?

Participant – They play crap. They will sulk and give up. Not everyone but some will. They don't think they can do anything but I think if we can get them to put the ball in the hoop and build them back up then that's good. It comes back to achieving in practice, really important part of practice is achievement.

Researcher – So if they achieve they will do well?

Participant – If they effect what is happening on the court in a positive way then yes.

Researcher – So are there any other, I know we have just talked about negatives, any other negative impacts in practice that you would say are the greatest influences on player performance during practice?

Participant – The programme is gruelling. Like, keeping on top of physical fatigue is big for us. It's very tough and the players need to look after themselves on their own. Again, can they take responsibility for preparation? We do push them a lot, especially hard with studying as well. Do they sleep right? That's a first thing. Do they eat right? Do they stretch? Do they do the pre-hab stuff we set them? Do they keep on top of their physical condition?

Researcher – Do you know who is better at it than others?

Participant – Where we are now, a lot of the guys are new to it so it's improving all the time. I would say it effects practice a lot if they don't do it. You know who is doing it really and who isn't, again, that's the mind-set we look for. If we get a player going at 50% in practice then that no good. They drop off half-way through. If they train sloppy then they play sloppy so we need them to be on the right level. Like, we will give them time off or do a session that works for the whole team, like if we know they are fatigued say after a heavy weekend then we give them a slower and more technical session so they can recover. Or we will cancel S&C in the early morning, maybe move it to the afternoon, or get the physio in, make sure all the players have access. At the end of the day we want players who are in a good state, an acceptable state for us to work with.

Researcher – So how many players do you have that struggle?

Participant – There's a few but we hope they improve. It's never going to be perfect. The one's that aren't as good just don't really have that drive inside them. The ones that do have this internal drive to push them, maybe make the sacrifice, others just do what they want. Players that need help, need the attention, need it through most of the session as well. They might be the players that need to be told what to do all the time. The ones that can't handle it as well might be the ones who go into themselves more if they make an error. They aren't as stable mentally as the better players. We had a guy, few years back, he was brilliant, like the one player I think of as stand out, the player you want in your team all the time because if he wasn't playing well you could really get in his ear. The more negative you were towards him the more he picked up his game. He was great.

Researcher – So there's a difference in coping strategy?

Participant – Again, the best players will be the best with this. They can find a gear to go to, to take their level up a level if it's hard. There's always a contribution towards the team, if they can't do it on their own, like with their own game, then they will bring in others or work off of others to get them back up. The team is what's important so what can I do towards... what's the contribution I can make towards the team succeeding? It's team first mentality. That's why cohesion of the group is key. With a raw group you won't get that but with a good group they will try and work for each other. What can you do for the team, what can you influence? It's better for us to have these players that can fit into the team and put the team first. Individual players are a problem.

Researcher – In what way?

Participant – They might be players who haven't played much in this environment and maybe they accelerated quickly through the junior programme so it's always been about them. They can be selfish, they haven't been taught it's not right. That's from guys outside the programme as well because you don't know why they have come from and what experiences they have had. They need to be an individual but one that's puts the team first, checks their ego at the door and take on the team mentality. Individual players are going to lose sight of team... of team goals. Basically, you can play bad, that's fine, but are doing what you can for the team. Are you putting the team first of your performance is not where it should be?

Researcher – What do you do to drive up performance in practice?

Participant – Definitely get the players competing against each other. In scrimmage, like 5 vs 5 or 4 vs 4 or 3vs 3. Getting them playing each other is good for them to compete. It's great for match simulation, the team can get at each other and drive up the standards on the floor. It sharpens them up. I'd say it's something they enjoy, when they compete against each other and it's a chance for them to try out what they have been developing.

Researcher – So any form of competition is good in practice between the players?

Participant – Yeah I'd say so. Like scrimmaging is really good. Players are looking to score on each other in practice, like get one over on a teammate. The problem comes when they try to score for the sake of scoring. There's possibly a better option in that move, but giving players a target of scoring, or it could even be rebounds, and with those you can't guarantee where the ball is going to go. If they don't hit the target then they don't achieve and it's a negative. So, it's something that is powerful.

Researcher – Can it effect player's negativity if it doesn't go their way?

Participant – 100%. If they lose then they aren't happy but that's what I would want. We don't want athletes who are happy to lose.

Researcher – Do better players get upset and negative if they lose out to lesser players?

Participant – It depends on the situation. But yeah... yeah I'd say that... I'm just thinking of an example. Like when [player name removed] got dunked on by [player name removed]. He was fuming. He put in so much effort after and that was good but he shouldn't have switched off. He took it as a given that he would be on top of him. So it does sharpen them

up if the weaker players are gunning for them. Sometimes though, it's happened before, players will lose their heads and... last year, maybe two years ago actually, [player name removed] stormed out the session because he was having a terrible practice. It was getting right into his head and he couldn't deal with it at all. He was a bit like that and I had to go after him and calm him down. The session was a bit flat after that because he lost it completely.

Researcher – Did he come back in the session?

Participant – Nope, he was done so that was it. I don't know why he was like that, he's a bit hit and miss anyway, a bit unstable.

Researcher – Do you get regularly problems with players?

Participant – It's difficult when you get such different players and you don't know what individuals will do what to the team. Before I had one guy who was stand out the best player. Everyone on the team knew he was the best player, we went to him for everything. The other players could have put in more but everyone relied on him. I'd say we didn't have a good team that year because you can't play with just one guy. I think they all got a bit sick of it in the end. It was all about him. It was a good lesson to learn for both the players and me as a coach. I think it's better to have a team full of team players rather than having these individual stand out guys as they can't do everything. You'll see it lots of times when you have an individual, like isolate one single player. If it's in front of the team say, positive or negative. Picking out players for bad plays in the group will only result in them losing their head. If you pick out the one guy we always go to, then players don't commit as much.

Researcher – What's a good practice session look like and what do you need to do to get a team working together, especially if something needs to be fixed?

Participant – Keeping everyone in control of what they are doing and not letting them lose the control by making sure we set up a practice session that they can achieve in... achieve together and work together to get to the goal. If it goes wrong then changing it up. If the effort isn't there, play is sloppy, the guys are locked in then that's when we need to change something. Like change the rhythm, chuck in something more fun, get the energy back in session. Maybe it's about letting them just play a bit, or it might be to take down the technical side, the complexity of what we are doing.

Researcher – Do you set them a lot of goals per session?

Participant – Not a huge amount, say three or four. There's things we want to achieve, get out of the session but it won't be too much, you can't do too much as it's a waste of time.

Researcher – What sort of goals do you set?

Participant – Like, getting them into certain patterns of play, if we got a certain team coming up then making sure they know what to expect. It's always to bring 100% effort. We won't focus totally on outcomes, although the players will. Like, you can set someone a... like a point scoring challenge in a one on one or two on two, or a three point, but it puts a lot of pressure on. I find if we are... if we get to the point where we might be giving outcome targets... setting goals for point scoring opens up a lot of difficulties as you can play well and effect the game even though you don't score that much. It's not the same as a game where we will look, the will look [players] to get a certain amount of points. It's not like we say, you need to score 20+ today, it's more of the expectation that's what we want to happen.

Researcher – What if the players don't hit your expectations of performance?

Participant – Then we change it up. Plan B is needed. It's probably because we set the session too high. It can happen in the earlier days when you don't know who you got, like we might think they are more capable than they are. Not in the sense of technical ability say but in what they can do as a team. It's a case of then stripping it all back and going again, in something new. Stop what you were doing and do something else.

Researcher – So you set the bar too high?

Participant – Yes, sometimes. We might get frustrated but the players will be more frustrated so that's when you need to react quickly. If you go down a path of fail for too long then you might lose them for the session. They need to get it. They can't go through a session and not get it, not achieve it, that frustrates them. There's a difference in players though between those not happy to leave something and those happen to leave it.

Researcher – What does the frustration of players look like?

Participant – They have a standard they try and meet and if they can't get it then they get annoyed, frustrated, easy to blame someone for something. They might get negative. The stronger the team the better the encouragement. You might one or two players getting angry and that can bring the session down, but if the group is a good group then they will all keep going and support each other and usually we get a positive results from that.

Researcher – So players will hold high expectations and if they don't hit them in training then it effects them, does it happen often?

Participant – No one can stay up all the time. I think the players do have... I think we push them to get their standards high. I can see them losing it if they don't hit what they think they should. I would say that players try and keep their standard.

Researcher – Do they change their expectations if they are feeling, say tired or ill?

Participant – I don't know

Researcher – When players are low do they get more negative if things go wrong?

Participant – Yeah I'd say they do, but they are low so they will get more negative if they don't achieve on the court. The other day [player name removed] came in and was clearly not feeling great. He had a shocking session, was terrible, didn't play well at all and you could see how much worse he was. I did think what was the point in coming to training if you can't compete.

Researcher – How is communication across the group?

Participant – I'd say it's getting better. It will always start off negative... you'll get the guys being negative to each other but we try and get them to be more positive.

Researcher – Is positive communication better than negative?

Participant – Yes. If a player gets it wrong, it's not good. If you encourage them and make them feel like they can do it then they probably will, or have a higher chance to in the future. If the players lead on this then that's the best possible way as they will be in charge and taking responsibility for themselves in training. No one wants to be that one guy who is singled out for making that mistake. They don't want the coach calling them out and especially don't want to be called out by their teammates. It may be going wrong but if we can be positive as a group it will lead to positive performance.

Researcher – So no negativity what so ever?

Participant – Sometimes you need it. Some players need it more than others. Some hate it and won't respond but there are some players who might pick themselves up if they a playing bad, maybe low intensity levels. You need to work out who's who and what you need to say to them.

Researcher – Have you noticed any recent examples of players reacting positively to negative situations?

Participant – It's the guys who are open to communicate and are able to take a breath and relax to see the situation, they are better to switch it around. Like, a challenging situation is something they want, they thrive in them. Guys who are quieter might go inside themselves and get depressed and things will get worse and not better. But in practice it's our job [coaches] to get the players through tough moments and get them to deal with them so they can cope with negative times in games. Like, last year we went to [team name removed]. They are a good team and it's quite hostile. We were down the first half into the 3rd quarter, it was really tough. The guys came together really well and we got momentum and went up in the 4th [quarter] and won by three. I don't think we win that game at the start of the season but the boys had a lot of demons to get through in that game, things were tough, we started slow but I didn't see the guys getting angry with each other. I think if they did react negatively to it then we lose.

Researcher – Have you noticed players reacting negatively to positive situations and their performance decreasing?

Participant – Maybe managing the group to keep it too positive. Picking out... like I said before about picking out one stand out guy. Other players won't then get any praise even though they deserve it because if it's all on one guy then it's good because the team are winning but it's not good for others because they aren't valued as much. Competition maybe. That's something we find positive but if a player loses out to someone else then that can be negative. Again, like with players not playing because there's someone better in the team, like they are better for the team so they should be playing. It happens when players are close in ability, like they both have a good argument for playing but only one can so one's going to be upset. But the team should come first but they don't think about that because they want to play.

Researcher – So competition is bad?

Participant – Not bad. You need the competition to get better. If you aren't comparing and working hard to improve, fighting that guy you are coming up against. If you have a team of players who are similar ability then everyone will improve more because they compete more in practice. If you know you are going to always lose out then why bother? Or if you know you are the best why bother? If players compete then they get the best out of each

other, but the balance has to be there. You might lose out in practice but that fuels you for next time and to improve so you don't lose again. It can't be positive all the time because you don't get the want to improve needed.

Researcher – Is there anything else you want to say about influences within the practice environment on performance?

Researcher – I think if the practice is high intensity, everyone working hard and wanting to get better then that's the best environment. Team cohesion within the group is massive. If the group aren't together then they won't achieve. Players taking responsibility and leading themselves is also important. Keeping everything as positive as you can is really important. As in the communication and the support to each other should be encouraging and positive. The session needs to be well set out as well. Something for the players to be challenged with but not too hard. Negatively... I'd say fatigue. And if you aren't performing at the level you think you should be.

Coach three interview for IPA study

Age 36 years

Gender: Female

Ethnicity: White British

Date: 09/10/2018

Years within Academy basketball programme: 10 years

Interview length: 47 minutes plus warm-up period of 11 minutes (58 minutes total)

Researcher – How is current practice performance of the team?

Participant – Yeah, it's not amazing but it's ok. There's a lot to work on still. Some of the players aren't where I want them to be. There's not a great deal of commitment maybe from everyone. On the whole maybe I want to see a bit more from everyone maybe outside the court. Work a bit harder in being ready to train. There a bit... wet really, some of them. They could do a lot more.

Researcher – So a lot of the players need a lot of support from you in practice?

Participant – Yes I'd say it's deeper as well. It's getting an attitude that is quite professional, looking to be good in everything you do.

Researcher – What do you do with those players?

Participant – Yeah, so [player name removed] struggles a bit. Say in training if he wasn't doing well it's better to encourage him and make him feel positive. He would need an arm around the shoulder, all the players knew to leave him alone after he went into one. It was almost like you needed to take him out the session there and then. I'd give him some gentle feedback and a few minutes out the game to reset. It's just the person he was, very introverted". If you take him away from a clutch situation and build him up that would work the best. He was a good player but needed a lot of work.

Researcher – Do you think that practice performance reflects competition performance?

Participant – Training is where you practise what you do on the court in matches so they are the same. If you train bad then you can't expect to play well. You don't just press a magic button and all of a sudden you can play. It's a rehearsal for the main event.

Researcher – And success in practice, how would you measure that?

Participant – Well it's how well the players do. Do they hit their shots, do they work the plays, do they work together, is there a really high intensity and they get after it, do they want to be there and want to succeed. I think that buying into basketball helps a lot. Do they put it first in their life. Some of the best guys in previous years put it first. That's definitely the best mixture. They got to want to be there and improve. If they don't then what's the point of them being there? They won't work very hard. Also, I think it's what the team as a whole wants to achieve. If the most of them just want to play a bit and aren't that bothered about winning versus if they actually want to win and get better and then there's a better atmosphere to training and I prefer it far more because they want to win and I want to win.

Researcher – Has anything happened recently in practice that led to a good performance in either an individual player or the team?

Participants – The group are tighter. Players know the drill, the routine. They know that they need to be ready at this time and are starting to take responsibility for themselves. Like we need players to be responsible. They're young adults, turning into adults and they need to learn these skills. Basketball... all sport is good for that. You need to do stuff on your own. We need players to be able to think for themselves and take on the responsibility for their development but we don't want them to be too independent that they only look out for number one. There is a difference between players who are independent and can get themselves ready for practice and those who have an independent mind-set that doesn't put the team first. That's something that isn't good for practice when you get someone just there for themselves.

Researcher – Why is that?

Participant – Basketball is a team sport, so basically you can't do it on your own. If you train on your own and only worried about yourself then how does that translate to a team sport? It doesn't. If you are only in it for number one then that doesn't translate into the group performing well.

Researcher – What do they do?

Participant – They will take on shots when they shouldn't. Not make the right decision. That's probably what sums it up. If you make a decision that doesn't work best for the team then that doesn't work out. [Player name removed] would do that. Really selfish. He

would just shot all the time. In practice we would make set plays and he would have to be a position that was beneficial for him or he wouldn't be interested. I mean he was one of the better players anyway but it had to go his way. If it didn't, say he made mistakes then he would get down and wouldn't want to play. Usually it might happen in training games, five on five maybe. He's only interested in his scoring stats and getting one up on teammates. At practice he can make some really bad decisions and it annoys all of us. If he's shooting badly then he might as well not be there.

Researcher – Would it be something small or sustained errors that would push him over the edge?

Participant – It would depend on the situation. Maybe what mood he was in. It wouldn't be a set thing all the time. If he wasn't playing well then that would always affect him the most. Maybe... it's at the start of the session if he turns up bad. Sometimes it can be going well at the start and then there's a trigger, something goes wrong with another player or the level, maybe the focus drops and things get worse. I remember a couple of years ago we would have regular fights between the players in practice. It's different now though. Much more professional and the players have spent longer in performance groups. Not that fights don't happen now but it's an argument that will finish quite soon.

Researcher – And everything resolved?

Participant – It depends. Most of the time it will affect those players for rest of session. Like I've said, there's no set design on what will happen.

Researcher – Anything else in practice that has happened positively recently to the team?

Participant – It's mainly about the team at the moment. Getting the team to do things together, as one, working together. It's important to get training player centred so my training sessions have them at the heart of it. It's an athlete centred approach. They buy into things, it's for them to develop after all. They will move on after a few years so they come here to develop as a player, as a person and they need to take it on themselves. There was a... last week, actually maybe two weeks ago, I did a really physical session as they needed it. It was hard and I thought they were struggling but fair play to them they knuckled down and got through it. One month ago I reckon most of them don't get through that. Maybe they moan about it. Maybe... there might be a few that struggle, or won't do it and then that effects everyone else, others might not work hard, maybe the whole session has to change because a few people say something. So, going back to the positive,

everyone supported each other and encouraged and made it positive. Basketball is a positive sport and if you see the positive encouragement all the time but it was good to see it when things got tough. It was also tough mentally so that was good to see.

Researcher – Has anything happened recently in practice that you think led to a poor performance?

Participant – You got to keep training to the right level. If you don't then you can't get a good session from it. Don't do too much, stick to plan. I'd say doing too much in the session doesn't help the players. It's like firefighting constantly, you try and fix everything that's going wrong and can be far away from where you should be. Realise you can't fix everything at once. It's tough but it's best just to stick to where you planned to be. Players not doing very well is worrying and will affect them. If the session is one where they don't achieve, this links in really well with the session as well because if it's too hard then they won't achieve, if it's too easy then it doesn't challenge them. One session we spent 45 minutes trying to get a play down, it wasn't difficult but they hadn't done it before. We had a big game the next day and had to get it that session and they couldn't get it. They were tired from a monster physical gym session the day before which didn't help. They got at each other a lot but by the end they all got it and left happy. It's about perseverance. There was a point where I was going to call it off but I'm glad I didn't.

Researcher – How do you set the right level?

Participant – Know your players. Experience of working with these players. Knowing what they can do and what they can't. The goals of the team need to be met.

Researcher – What goals do you set?

Participant – Everyone has goals to meet. We set everyone some personal goals. But they have to meet the team goals in some way, or that the goals of the individual will be linked to making the team better. But to be honest that's going to happen anyway because if we can get them better than the team will benefit anyway so it doesn't matter too much. But it will help if players and me are setting goals only to be reached by players working together towards the benefit of the team.

Researcher – So you set goals for the whole team to achieve and the players know they link to the team to get match performance better?

Participant – Yes. Players will want to improve themselves but they might not exactly want to put a team win first because it's about them but they are linked and they should want to do well with the team even if they have their own interests at heart.

Researcher – Do they compete against each other if they are mainly focused on themselves?

Participant – competition is key in practice. It's a great chance for players to get at each other and drive performance up. It's great to have them competing withdrawn other. The players go at each other, it gets them sharp and ready. So I wouldn't say that it allows players to just focus on themselves because it will almost always be team focused. There might be a time when they go one on one. I think that competition doesn't mean it's all about yourself. It's rather are they an individual person or a team person.

Researcher – What are factors that might negatively influence team performance in practice?

Participant – I think it comes down to the people, the players you have in the group. I've had players that are really good for training and those that aren't. I was saying before about players that can ruin training and [player name removed] last year... Before that, was like that. He sucked the life out of the group. He was just so depressed all the time. On court and off court. We'd meet him and he'd say that nothing was wrong and that he enjoyed what he did. It was a relief when he left. It wasn't a great season.

Researcher – were the players aware of him.

Participant – yes absolutely. He liked by some but most didn't really... They might appreciate him on court but he was childish and caused issues in the group. Outside, social time, he did a few things that upset others. Maybe not with the players in the team but with the mates of theirs as they all hang around together. He wasn't missed when he left.

Researcher – got any trouble makers this year, or how did you deal with him?

Participant – this year is pretty good. I've got more guys the other way this time. Like [player name removed] and [player name removed]. Both lead the team well in training. [Player name removed] is a good player. He was always up for the challenge and would actively seek out them out. He dealt with clutch moments brilliantly. He's my go to guy.

Researcher – in matches or training as well?

Participant – in training definitely. He would lead the players and i would use him to communicate to players outside and he would organise a lot of stuff. I think you need probably a few of those players each year. I don't know what the numbers would need to be, say if you only had one star, one leader, or if you had one bad... I know from experience that one bad attitude player is enough but I'd say you need more than just one good guy if you wanted to have a good training group. Maybe three could be enough but I'm not sure.

Researcher – What would you do to increase player performance in practice?

Participant – I would say that players who do well, perform well in practice is important. If they do well in practice then they will be positive. Have a positive experience, take that into the next game. So Poor performance is... You can't always stop it. You can't guarantee someone is going to achieve but you can set a training session up to minimise fail. No mistakes. Poor performance comes from dwelling on what mistakes you make. We always need to be looking forward and not backwards, which is massive as well. If a player makes a mistake do they respond well or not.

Researcher – do some players struggle with mistakes?

Participant – everyone makes mistakes, everyone. The best players in the world, LeBron he'll make mistakes. Players who think they are perfect and then something goes wrong and then they drop their heads.

Researcher – so they have high expectations?

Participant – most will yes. Most will... I don't think its big expectations. Sometimes players get annoyed after one mistake. Maybe it doesn't affect them totally but consecutive errors will cause problems, they'll be negative. That's not good for performance.

Researcher – do you treat those players differently?

Participant – you'll have to. It's always difficult when new players come in. We won't know the new players, how they tick. Do they want an arm around the shoulder? Do they react to criticism? The other players as well. That's why it's important for a team to bond and get used to each other i think. Once you know how to talk, how to communicate to a teammate then its better.

Researcher – What have you done in the past that has caused the team to perform poorly?

Participant – ha nothing it's always perfect. No there's lots that can go wrong in training. Not getting it to excite the players. If they don't enjoy it then they won't be as intense. Not

having a target, so again if the drills and the plan is not continuous... If you just walk on court and just do a practice that's not at least been thought out then there's no direction. I think that players being tired can have an effect. The session after the last match, depending how close it is, needs to be changed.

Researcher – what do you do if the session goes wrong in some way?

Participant – depends on what happens. You'll need to change it all up maybe. Take it back a step. Don't let the players fail and fail and fail. If they do then they don't believe anymore, they don't have confidence.

Researcher – do you have any specific examples?

Participant – highly technical, say working on plays we haven't done before. If a team plays in one way then... It depends on the players though. Do they have experience of learning out have they learnt similar plays before. I always do it step by step now and make sure we can do it before we move on. Although some might struggle and can hold everyone else back.

Researcher – Is there anything else that you believe occurs to players in practice that is positive upon performance?

Participant – playing as a team. That's really positive is everyone is on the same page. If the players take on the responsibility of being a team player and not just worried about themselves. It comes down to our direction don't get me wrong, if we direct them in the way to work as a team, but the players need to bring that to the table as well.

Researcher – what do you do to make that happen?

Participant – got to make sure everyone pulls in the same direction. Getting everyone to support each other. Don't leave anyone out. No one allowed to be an individual. The individuals of a team will destroy that team spirit needed to get a good team performance. The other thing with that is that if players go individual and in it for themselves then that might give a bad impression to others. Say if one player or two aren't interested in the team, in other players, then that causes others to follow. If that player is moody, aggressive, then others are more likely to be the same. There will be an effect on the whole team.

Researcher – What do players do that results in negative performance?

Participant – a lack of effort if they don't focus and give intensity to the session. Motivation needs to be high to get a good session, to get that improvement, development from the players.

Researcher – Have you noticed players reacting to negative situations positively and why do you think this happens?

Participant – it's a good way to train, getting challenge in. Not fail as that will stay negative but allowing the players to respond to a tough situation, where they have to be resilient and overcome it. I think it's an individual thing, some players are better than others at it. Doing a shooting drill under pressure, maybe not from players but pressure of consequence like they have an amount of suicides to run if they miss.

Researcher – so you can train resilience?

Participant – yes, players can get better at it. Better at dealing with tough situations.

Researcher – are those players the better players?

Participant – id day that a tough situation is better dealt with by the more experienced, skilled player. That's basketball though, it's not going to be easy. If you compete then you compete to win and that's from the other side as well. The other team don't want you to win.

Researcher – Have you noticed players reacting to positive situations negatively?

Participant - can't think of any to be honest. I think it's best to be positive. Maybe if it's over the top. Like if someone is constantly positive, I don't think that will work. Motivation comes from negativity, or comes from something that you need to overcome so that's not going to present well. Mind-set might change, be different, I can do it compared to i can't do. There are always players that don't believe they can do it and some players that always think they can. Although those players might fail and get but more for that failure because they think they can do it but they can't.

Researcher – do players change their performance expectations before training or do they always keep them the same?

Participant – keep the same. Probably play to what they think they can do. Maybe some think, like I said, that they can do more or maybe that they can't.

Researcher – but they won't change their goals or expectations of say they feel I'll or tired of are out of form?

Participant – probably not but I don't know if they do or not. I can see them probably playing worse if they think they can do something they can't, be negative because they fail. I can see that.

Researcher – Do you have any final suggestions for helping maximize player's chances for performing well in practice?

Participant – I don't think so. I think we have covered everything.

Coach four interview for IPA study

Age 42 years

Gender: Male

Ethnicity: Other White

Date: 15/10/2018

Years within Academy basketball programme: 3 years

Interview length: 63 minutes plus warm-up period of 21 minutes (84 minutes total)

Researcher – How is current practice performance of the team?

Participant – it's a challenging season, this year's going to be a tough. Don't have the personnel we need to compete where we want to. Just one of those years, sometimes they are strong and sometimes they are not. The younger group, the one below is stronger and they will be better. They work hard but they aren't going to achieve much as the level isn't there. It's a lot easier to build the team up with players who can... players to be put into certain situations, positions, stress positions and mould what you need.

Researcher – Do you feel that practice performance reflects the performance in competition?

Participant – Sometimes... most of the time. The team work strong together then they will bring it in matches, if they don't work together in when they practise then it won't happen. Basketball of a game of relationships. If you have a great working relationship then that pays. Like I said, we don't have that group this year as much as we want it. If the group is running well then you can expect the court performance to be strong. If the players are working together its more powerful than anything else we can put together. Player power is right, get them working together... as a unit they will succeed, you won't succeed on your own. You don't get anywhere with the wrong attitude at this point. You need to have the right attitude to mix with the rest of the players to get that team performance.

Researcher – What are some examples of the team not practising very well?

Participant – Not working for each other. Not caring about each other. Not being able to do what we want, play the plays we want them to play. Really it's about a lack of respect to

me, to the team. You need to have that in order to show to everyone, to yourself, so you can push on as a team and work together through tough times.

Researcher – If they fail in practice does that impact them negatively?

Participant – Yes absolutely. /they drop their heads, the confidence is gone from them. I would say that if you come to training, without a positive attitude and a frame of mind that means you are going to push yourself to your limits then just don't bother. Go do something else. This is a serious sport, we all want to win, you should always want to win and that means bringing it every opportunity you have. Build your confidence, play well, train hard and take it out into competition. That's where you show what you are and what you are made of, simple. It's the arena you get viewed by everyone so you need to have it.

Researcher – So what does successful practice look like, how do you measure it?

Participant – It's a feel. You can feel, sense it when it's right. We, I can see it from the lines, the players know when they have done well. Did they compete well? Did they win their personal battles? Did they leave knowing they did everything they could? I don't measure the success against anything, I just know if it's been good. You can see it in the players, are they happy? Did they work really hard and are happy at the end. Did they bust a gut and then leave smiling and knowing they did well? It's my job to tell them what they are doing but they need to experience it first, that's foremost the most important aspect. I used to come off court crawling and that's where you want to be, if you want to be the best you can be.

Researcher – Has anything happened recently in practice that you think led to a good performance?

Participant – The other day we had a great practice. Everyone got involved and the flow was top level. It was a real good team training... team drills that built the team, challenging players with tasks where they need each other will build the group, and we did real well all training.

Researcher – What do you think caused it?

Participant – The older players. They led the team well. They were all competing against each other but in a good way, like he could put in more intensity and who could get their team to step up. Once they took the lead then the rest will follow. No idea why they were like that that day. Although we did challenge them as a team, not as an individual. We try

not to challenge the individual, that's not basketball. We need to be challenging players with tasks where they need each other as that's a team, that's a team sport in action. I can't tell you how many times I've had to learn that lesson playing. You always aim for yourself but come match down... it's like going to war, you don't do it on your own, you do it as a group. Not one player. I said it before, you don't, you can't get along as a sole player, a lone wolf.

Researcher – What has happened recently in practice that you think led to a poor performance, maybe as individuals or as the team?

Participant – There's sometimes issue with... I think that we have had an over competitive moments recently. Going on what I said earlier it's easy for players to go too far, that has happened fairly recently. They are very competitive. I had thought about this recently that if all the players are always going hard and looking to win there's not really any chance for players to try stuff out. No one wants to fail, there's no room for errors. I don't know if I make them compete too much? A lot of what we do is scrimmaging. It raises the standards but I do think they don't get to try new things out. I'll have a think about this for the future. The balance between the two things is important so that you get maximum from the training.

Researcher – did it have a strong effect on the team and its performance?

Participant – Well they got a great workout. It was ultra-competitive. I don't know, maybe they need to practice elements more... perhaps the balance between it isn't right. There's stuff we need to practice that it really important for the upcoming game but it needs to be done in a game situation so they have to learn quick, if they don't then they won't get it and we fail as a team. We'll need to hold ourselves accountable if we don't pick up the plays, we don't put down the intensity. Take responsibility and get it done.

Researcher – Is it maybe that they are too individual and independent if they compete against each other all the time in practice?

Participant – Like I said its balance but selfish players we don't need. Selfish players will hurt a team. If it's not going right for them then they get down on themselves and turn on other players. Last year [player name removed] squared up to [player name removed] because he wasn't passing to him despite the team playing really well and it surprised me because I didn't think he should of passed to him in those situations anyway.

Researcher – What would you say are the greatest positive impacts upon player performance during practice?

Participant – It comes down to what the players bring most of the time. Are they hungry for it, if they are then they will work hard and the practice will be positive. Being able to overcome tiredness or poor performance, being able to step up to the plate regardless of what's going on. Resilience is in the form of what the players have done in the years before we get them and it's much harder to increase their resilience in the time they spend with us. I don't want to have players in that can't cope with what we are doing, they need to have a strong upbringing in basketball, know the score and how everything works. You don't want fresh, green players coming in regardless of ability or potential, we need it now.

Researcher – Do the players always turn up to training thinking that they will play to their maximum potential?

Participant – Well they should do. We expect them to bring the intensity needed to play in this team and represent [club name removed].

Researcher – What if they are fatigued and can't reach their expected standards?

Participant – They aren't tired enough to not try. They can still stand and they can run so that's what they need to do. It's no real excuse to say I'm tired. They need to work hard to ensure they are not just thinking about themselves and that the team comes first. Don't be that one selfish player who isn't interested in others.

Researcher – Do players suffer from a lot of fatigue?

Participant – Yes they do and so they should because they train hard to get the results and performance they want. Being in a good... a great physical condition is very important. You need to be able to get yourself to a level where you can keep on pushing yourself, it translates to the game. If you play 40 minutes then you need to play hard for that time, or if you are in rotation then bring it hard for that amount of time. But if you train hard and at a high intensity for the whole session then you are going to get more out of it.

Researcher – Do players need to find their condition and responsibility outside of practice?

Participant – Yes. They need to look after themselves. Eat right, get sleep. It's all part of the challenge... they take it on or they don't, there's lots to challenge them. Any time when they train they look for challenge, to make themselves better. We love getting players who seek to challenge themselves at every turn. They are highly motivated individuals who

want to be as good as they can. There's two types of players, those who will compete well only in certain circumstances and those who will compete every time because all they want to do is go up against others. These are the players that rise to the top. You don't want the others, it's important that we get those players in as they want it more.

Researcher – What are the greatest negative impacts upon player performance during practice?

Participant – like I said above it's about taking on the challenge or not. So if they can't think for themselves and we have to tell them exactly what to do then that's not effective at all for us. We don't need those players as it can affect all the practice we do. Maybe not having friends in the group as well. It's better to have friends... though if they are too friendly then that doesn't help because they don't take it seriously, mess around and waste their time, my time, everyone's time, just not helpful to the group.

Researcher – How do players act if they don't get on well?

Participant – They will not talk to each well. Like they will get on each other's backs far too quickly. They trash talk each other, be really negative. There's not much encouragement.

Researcher – Should communication between the players always be positive?

Participant – No always. If someone needs a rocket then that should happen. If they aren't doing what they should be doing they it needs to be said but a team never wins when everyone is fighting each other in the team. They need to support each other and make sure that everyone believes they can achieve something. If they don't then that's not good as they won't perform very well. The team will suffer, so I think positive communication is very important for players to reach the goals they want to reach. You can control how you talk, its easy... well not easy until you know why you should be doing what you should be doing.

Researcher – So players focusing on what they can control is important and effective for team performance?

Participant – It's the only thing they can control, what they can control, obviously. What I mean is don't spend ages worrying about, I don't know, the weather. The weather will be raining, sunny, cold, you can't control it and that's like anything in life, in basketball. I can't control us winning a match, you can't even 100% control three's going in. Let's say you have a player who always hits three's, i mean will never miss a three. They can control it

100%. You wouldn't lose a match at this level. The other team might guard you for it but then that opens up other avenue. Thing is you can control it, you can't know it's going in. That why we will work on the controllables. We try to work on the controllable elements of basketball. For example, players can't control whether the basket is good so why spend time worrying about it? Should do that in all of your life. You can guarantee you will worry less.

Researcher – What would you do to increase player performance in practice if it was not good enough or mistakes were being made?

Participant – Get the players to focus on just one thing. So take away the need to do too much and just look at simple things, things that only take one focus. Then you can get them back to working hard and getting their confidence back. Confidence is very, very important. It's what you need to drive yourself on the court.

Researcher – Would you increase competition or take it away?

Participant – That totally depends on the situations. If the competition doesn't work then change it, take it away, but if it's the other way round, maybe we are working too hard on tactical, complicated work then a challenge against another might be the way to go. You'll see it hit people differently though. If you take say a drill... I can see how one versus one drills can affect the loser. I guess it's the clearest indication that they failed. So like I said, if you fail then that's not good as you won't be confident. You'll need to keep the players confident. So, if there's anything you need to do to make the session positive then it's to get the players confident again, get them succeeding, get them believing again. How you do that will be different, will be different from different types of players. Like, top guys will respond differently because everything will be different compared to weaker players who might need a real low level confidence booster to get them back on track. Get them on the right level.

Researcher – So would you say you treat players differently?

Participant – You absolutely need to. Everyone's an individual, different level, different experiences in training up till now. /everyone needs to be on a level but how you get them there might be different.

Researcher – Do you always tailor your practice sessions to everyone in it?

Participant – Maybe not, maybe it's about pushing the weaker players up. We don't have much time with the players so it's really, really important that we work on the important stuff for matches. It's a bit sink or swim, if you can't make it then it's no good for you. If you can then great, let's make this team great, all of us together. The most important thing is that you join the team [emphasis out on team]. You work hard and play together.

Researcher – So your practices are very team based.

Participant – Yes they are, it's important to keep them there, keep them working together. The whole session needs to be vibrant you know. Everything buzzing. There's no better place when practice is buzzing; everyone working for each other. There's nothing negative, it's all positive. If we can get the right players playing the right way with the fire in them, then they will train extremely hard.

Researcher – If you reflect, what have you done in the past that has caused the team to perform poorly?

Participant – Maybe too... Sometimes it's easy to let players go at it one on one or too hard as a team versus another team. We are all the same team in the end.

Researcher – So what happens?

Participant – The players get at each other a little too hard. We want them to compete but sometimes they might push it too far maybe. That's been a problem in the past, especially with the ego in the team who need to prove to each other, prove to everyone that they are the man. Not playtime a teammate in training but they want to get one up on someone else.

Researcher – What do you do to stop that?

Participant – It's really kind of tricky because you'll not... You don't want to stop it too much but then there's a fine line that can be crossed too far, then they don't play as a team. Because practice is the time player's display their ability and they need to hold their position in the team. If you are this, you are that. But it can go too far. They can go too far and it hurts the team, hurts the ethos, can hurt relationships.

Researcher – Would it be good to have all the players to get on really well then?

Participant – Again it's all about balance. Always about balance. If they are too friendly, too interested in having a laugh then it won't work. They don't want to be here. But if they don't know anyone...Like it they don't know, maybe even care about someone else.

Thunder to get on, want the other person to succeed so that the team succeeds. If we have individuals... Again it comes down to the type of players we have. They need to before the team, I oh for the team you know. Getaway I do t know anyone from the team, I don't feel part of it. If it's my mates then we do it together ahead win together, we lose together, but we are a team that battles hard.

Researcher – Is there anything else that you believe occurs to players in practice that is positive upon performance?

Participant – I think we covered it with success, and that then breads confidence which makes us perform as a team.

Researcher – is it tough to make every player succeed within practice, as that can be quite challenging?

Participant – Very. They might walk in already defeated. Head down. They might not be in the right frame of mind. They might not have their heads, their focus where you want it, where you need... where they need it to be.

Researcher – Why might that be?

Participant – Tired maybe. Not got enough rest, not enough time to recover as its all tough. Not confident. Could be anything. Anything happening outside. You can tell if someone is feeling good when they walk in. Some guys are always up but you can tell when they aren't as confident, you can just tell, if you know them as a player.

Researcher – So a player needs to treat themselves well?

Participant – Vital. Virtually important that happens. If you take it seriously then those players will do the best. Some lose their way but I clearly wasn't for them. Some Players come in really good, on it. Then realise it's not for them by the end. Their dreams of playing in the states won't happen. But if you want it, you got the skill, then there's always a chance, an opportunity you can be a good player.

Researcher – Is there anything else that you believe occurs to players in practice that is negative upon performance?

Participant – Not having a focus. A drive. Not having something to aim for. With... Like a small goal or a big goal and a goal that pushes you somewhere. So when you don't have it that can affect you. Your focus isn't there do that's important.

Researcher – Goals for the individual or for the team?

Participant – It's going to be for both. The team has a goal. The individual needs their own goals to work to so they improve them self. But like I've said, everything is towards the performance of the team to win. The team comes first. That's clear and the individual can want to do this and do that but that really need to focus on the team. Team, team, team.

Researcher – Have you seen players reacting to negative situations positively?

Participant – I think negativity is not what you want. It's a champagne is what you want so maybe there won't be any negativity as long as it's... It's seen as a challenge, so you don't have negativity. I think if you see something as negative and you can't deal with it then you won't. I remember when i was playing that, it took me time to realise it, but anything that doesn't go your way, don't give up, find a way round it. Try and compete. So it... Also it depends on the players, like if you have a top player then they can deal with it, they can perform. The player who can't and isn't as good, isn't that good for a reason and that's probably the reason.

Researcher – On the flip side of that have you noticed players reacting to positive situations negatively?

Participant – I wouldn't say so no. Maybe overconfidence could be a problem. Maybe putting your ego first. So say you are a top guy, to performing player, that's good, you have confidence. But that can lead you to a fall. You can be overconfident. Maybe not try as hard in training. Not do what you should outside. That could be one.

Researcher – Why do you think that happens?

Participant – You don't think about the team, just yourself, not the whole team like you should. Only worried about you and that isn't for the team. The team lose out, you lose out. The practice is crap. So you don't get the workout you need. It's a cycle. You don't want that to continue, you want it to be healthy.

Researcher – Do you have any final suggestions for helping maximize player's chances for performing well in practice?

Participant – Just to train hard. Support your team, your teammates.

Coach five interview for IPA study

Age 29 years

Gender: Male

Ethnicity: White British

Date: 18/10/2018

Years within Academy basketball programme: 4 years

Interview length: 61 minutes plus warm-up period of 18 minutes (79 minutes total)

Researcher – How is current practice performance of the team?

Participant – The team are performing well in practice. They are not, perhaps, realising what they are doing there into the court quite yet but it is a difficult period the first few weeks of a team in a new season. We are performing to a good level in competitive matches but I believe the team could do far more in practice, perform to a higher level, which will translate to a better performance on the court.

Researcher – Are there new players to adjust to, or new players that need to adjust to the new team?

Participant – We have a few... two new players but they are not going to impact the team that much, they are on the fringes. I think a lot of the players have improved since last year and it's getting them to the right level now, the right level to be training at the intensity that they need to be at. So it's not about devising a whole new set up, just tinkering here and there to get the level up.

Researcher - So you think that practice performance will reflect competition performance?

Participant – Yes, I think it's the best marker we have for players at this level. What we, what they do in training, how they practice is really important to what they do in a competitive situation. If you are playing well in practice then more likely than not that can carry forward. In the past... going back to what we said about new players, I know other teams struggle with this much more than we do, new players coming in can struggle in practice as they don't understand the set-up of the team, don't know the culture. They might struggle in practice, drop their confidence and their level with lower. They can

struggle, especially with guys from out of area where their last team was really different. Say that the relationships they had in the team or the culture surrounding the team was different, that will have an effect. You need to keep the training session as positive as possible to allow the players to grow and develop and find a level of confidence that means they will have a good level of performance. This can be both for their continued development as players and for how they compete in matches. So practice level, practice focus, and what players do will be so important for their overall development and game.

Researcher – How do you measure performance in training?

Participant – I get the players to look at their performance, their match stats, their physical condition, if they feel stressed, things like that. We try and monitor it best we can, or more importantly get the players to look at it themselves and give them the responsibility to look at... to reflect upon their effort and performance levels. If they are training tired then recognise it, what might be making you tired? If you are carrying an injury then the best thing to do is to recognise that and rest yourself. Always be aware of what you are doing and how you will go about doing it. If there is constant reflection occurring within the players then they are better suited... better equipped in their development.

Researcher – Has anything happened recently with an individual, small group or whole team in practice that you think led to a good performance?

Participant – We have been working... I'll always try and put the ball in the player's court, that's a pun! We try and get the players to be, like I said, responsible athletes. Responsible for themselves and their own development. We want independent players who can problem solve and find their own way. That is how players can develop and improve themselves. We've had discussions about recovery and how the players should approach everything they do such as gym training and, what we talk about with practice.

Researcher – Do you want independent players, solely independent players in practice?

Participant – Not so far as they will not mix well... You want and train the team to be a team and that's really important because it's a highly coordinated sport where the difference between winning and losing can be based on the interaction between the players within the team. But you do need players to not be so reliant on the coaches to do everything for them. What you want is a player who can think for them self, problem solve, but also work well in a team. If they are too independent, maybe selfish, then that's a problem.

Researcher – Do you have any examples of that happening?

Participant – We had [player name removed] with us. He was a real talent but wasn't interested in the team. He was focused purely on himself so would train very hard, do everything we needed him to do but you could tell he wasn't quite in it. He was highly driven to make it to the States [on a scholarship]". I think it came from home a lot, a lot of pressure and guidance. The problem with... there isn't a problem to train hard and get to the next step, by the way he went on to the states and is doing very well. But not only in competition games but at training, he would not socialise with others, he put himself above everyone else. It was fine at the start because everyone respected his ability but by the end the rest of the players were sick of him. He wouldn't be a team player and give anything else to anyone else. He would get on peoples backs, he expected everything to be perfect for him and if it wasn't then he would not be happy and it affected the whole group. Not always but there many occasions. The issue with having individuals within the group is that it produces an environment of individuals focused upon themselves only and not anyone else, not the team, and the team is vital.

Researcher – Now for negative influences, anything happened recently in practice that you think led to a poor performance?

Participant – With the negativity a player brings if they are selfish, so what I said before really. There's a level, maybe even low level, but a level of negativity that can spread across a group. It's important to stay positive, when players get down on themselves they start being negative towards their teammates, their communication can be aggressive. They start to lose discipline and it can effect what we do with the team. So I'd say that keeping the players positive and working in a cohesive way. Also, I'd say that not having a match focus is... if players, the group having nothing to play for that can be negative. Players will be motivated to develop themselves, or they should be, as much as they want to play in competitive games, but when a game is upcoming then it gives an extra drive and focus for players. It's something to aim for. The reason we play basketball is to play in games so it's important. There's more of a lock in from the players if we got a game coming up. I'd say performance definitely increases on the whole in those sessions. Everyone is locked in and ready to go. Effort levels are really high. It's what the players are there to do so it's the most important training sessions. You can see the whole group raise themselves, raise each other, when we are honing in on a game.

Researcher – Why do you think that is?

Participant – The game is about playing so you want to get out there and play. You don't want to lose, you want to win. Winning in sport is powerful, losing is a powerful motivator so you want to be in those situations. We are successful, we do very well most years, recently the record has been excellent. Players want to win and taste success.

Researcher – Would you say that a competitive match is something the players can relate to as a tangible outcome?

Participant – Possibly. I think it's the competition element that they want. I think it might help that we can scout, we can prepare for set plays. But overall it's the challenge of winning, being a winner and fighting to get that win. Sometimes it's tough to keep the players focusing when we might be playing inferior opposition but we can rotate to give more players an opportunity and force all of us to maintain our high standards.

Researcher – What are the high standards?

Participant – Putting in high effort and not switching off your focus. Maintaining your top level despite anything else going on. Making sure you support your teammates and ensure the group succeed in competition.

Researcher – What are the overall greatest positive impacts upon player performance during practice?

Participant – The bond between the team, between the players if it's strong then that can have a huge positive effect. There's the ability to up what you do. Some years... it differs a lot between the group. I mean this year we have a far more solid team than we had last year in regards to their cohesion. We can get the players too hard at each other, play to compete, train to compete but still have that comradery as a group. We can go really hard at each other during practice and I do think it's because of the team chemistry this year. No matter if they train well or not, if they get beat by someone. There's no superstar or individual that stands out, everyone is working for the team. They all get on well off the court, which is good. After training the lads joke and have a laugh, and it's a great atmosphere. It's been a joy to take them this year. There's barely any negativity. Not that they are perfect with what they do, no, they still aren't reaching their potential, they are far better as a group but they have a few more mile stones to reach before they can comfortable say they are a good team and capable of good things.

Researcher – How do they act then that makes it positive and makes them a cohesive group of athletes?

Participant – They support each other. They challenge and push each other hard but its all about improvement. There isn't any malice to it. They don't want to beat on each other just for the sake of it to say I'm better I'm the best. There is always the undercurrent of the team coming first. Don't get me wrong, they all want to improve... it's about getting a balance between wanting to improve and be for yourself and also for the team.

Researcher – Is the balance difficult to achieve, and is it different to a competitive situation?

Participant – With training? Yes, training is about development whereas playing, the team needs to come first. I would say it's difficult, certainly it's difficult to get someone to focus on improving them self but on the other hand turn round and say that they must focus on playing in a team with others.

Researcher – Why does that occur?

Participant – You got to think why the player, the student is here. Are we a team or a... a training centre for improvement. We are sort of both. So on the one hand you have someone saying you have to reach all these personal goals and that you need to focus on yourself and improving yourself, then someone else, me or another coach, then starts to put a team together and work on plays as a group. It's a subtle difference maybe. Maybe it's not something you will see. But it's a big difference between club work. When you work with a club it's more towards the team. Sometimes you get players here who don't perhaps think of... won't focus on the competitive league match element. It depends on the individual. But I think if you get a balance between self-improvement and then sacrifice for the team then that is the best.

Researcher – What are the greatest negative impacts upon player performance during practice?

Participant – Being put down. Being criticised by others. Again, it comes down to the team element. It's not a healthy environment if there is constant infighting or negativity. You won't get the team functioning you need.

Researcher – Why do you think players are like that to each other?

Participant – Similar to... it's a selfish thing, they think that they don't need their teammates and it is all about them. Also if they are playing badly, not performing where they need to be then they pass it over to other. If they aren't happy then why would they

want someone else to be happy? It's something that occurs in life, if you are unhappy then you are likely to pass it on to someone else.

Researcher – Why might they not be performing well?

Participant – It could be so many things. There's lots of reasons why a player might be playing badly, there's too many to count.

Researcher – Are the expectations of players before practice possibly too high do you think, they don't react to being tired for example?

Participant – Yes that could be the case. I'm trying to think... we have had [player name removed] into his second year now. He had to be on top form all the time, he wouldn't accept anything less than 100%. He would get really angry if he didn't hit his level. He was in the gym every day and in the end we had to restrict what he did. Now if a player is tired and not recovering as they should then I can see this happening. Coming into training and thinking they are going to be at 100% but physically, or mentally, are unable to reach that level.

Researcher – Do you think any players reflect on that and change their expectations?

Participant – I don't know. I think they might. It's difficult when you want to try your hardest at practice. There might be a situation... a player wants to hold their level to be high. They want to maintain their level and play to that. I see players when they don't perform to, as you say their expectations, then they will struggle. They won't be able to keep it together.

Researcher – So are some players able to cope with poor form better than others and, therefore, have you noticed players reacting to negative situations positively?

Participant – Yes, absolutely, there are players able to cope. They are the ones that might be performing badly but get on with it, don't focus on the errors. I'd say it's rare for those players to exist at this level, it's a form of professionalism, a higher level of ability.

Researcher – So they maintain a high level of effort still even though their performance is lower?

Participant – Yes, it could be an expectation that they might not always play to their best and maybe expect to play poorly. In fact you'll find a lower level player might do that, will be happy to make errors and almost expect that to happen. A stronger player won't be happy with errors, they won't be at their best, so I'd want that to occur. I want a player

to get upset at a bad performance. If they don't do that, that tells me they might not want it. They don't have the mind-set needed to increase their level. You need to be resilient to that fact. You will make errors so how are you going to deal with it?

Researcher – Is resilience something you work on in training?

Participant – Players need to deal with a challenge, therefore, they need to be resilient to situation that occur, that might occur in a match. It won't always be good. We'll try and do resilience building during practice, although if we make it too tough it's counterproductive because the players will fail and you don't want practice to be a failure environment. That won't teach the players effectively. You need challenge but no failure. It's ok to fail but then there is a response needed so failure is ok but not in the long-term. You shouldn't constantly make your athletes fail. They won't enjoy that, but give them a challenge to overcome yes.

Researcher – Should you give them challenges for them self to overcome or as a team?

Participant – Both, you need the two. You have to push yourself and you need to push the team. Adaptations won't occur, player skills can't improve if there isn't a test for them or a challenge of constant practice where you are looking to get more success the longer you do it for. Say you have set a player a free throw challenge at the start of the year to have 70% from the line. They might fail constantly at first but you should see an improvement and those improvements are the reinforcing facts that keep a player pushing, motivated to continue to improve them self. But if you set a target of 100%, even 90% from the line then that's a set up for failure because they won't reach it. So it's important to set it right, important to set the goals and challenges hard but ones that can be achieved.

Researcher - Have you noticed players reacting to positive situations negatively?

Participant – That's something that can happen. I think that the team winning is positive but you might find some who want the team to lose because they didn't get selected. So it's more on a team basis than an individual basis. If you achieve then that's only going to be positive. If you have a great training session then that's going to be very positive for improvement and the team. As we said before, if the team plays well together and goes well, if the team has maintained an effective level of cohesion then that can't be bad. That's going to be good. So for this I wouldn't say that positives are negatives other than on a team playing front with team selection.

Researcher – Is it difficult to leave players out then and how do they react?

Participant – They... some react poorly, more so at the start [of the season]. Within a few weeks, say ten or less training sessions together then players will know where they stand within the team.

Researcher – So there is a pecking order in the team?

Participant – Well yes there's an understanding, everyone knows where they are in the team. Some players are closer than others. We have a strong, say 11/12 players so we can rotate those and there is little difference but some players will be a higher level than others but that's just sport. You have to catch the guy in front and stop the guy behind you from catching you up. That drives you forward as they'll also be someone stronger than you, most of the time.

Researcher – So in your group at practice, everyone knows their place in the team, knows who is above and who is below?

Participant – By now there is clearly a group... they will be the selected players in competition and the players know, they know who they need to target. By now it's clear. Everyone knows their place, knows who's the best and worst in each position. There's a target for each player, target in their head that they want to reach that person's level.

Researcher – So there's a lot of competition amongst teammates in practice?

Participant – There should be healthy competition. So the players have the opportunity to push themselves.

Researcher – Can it be too competitive and cause problems?

Participant – Yes it can do. It can come down to individual battles and that can go too far, players can get demotivated or push it too far and get too physical. It comes down to who gets the better of who, they aren't putting the team first, they just want to keep their pride. It's good they go at each other but sometimes it boils over and yes it can cause problems.

Researcher – What do you do to increase player performance in practice?

Participant – Take a view that is more than just the sum of training, turning up and just doing that. Make the players want it, give them a platform to build upon and to allow them to develop. But it will always come down to, and this is why the player mentality is key, all down to how much you want it. If you want it then it's your life.

Researcher – So you would encourage them to do things outside of basketball for the benefit of what happens on court?

Participant – Yes. Players need to look after themselves and make sure the decision making is correct and appropriate and not for other reasons. A professional attitude is not something just for a professional athlete, it's a mind-set that can be applied to any aspect of life that you want to achieve in. Basketball would be one of those areas in life that the more you put in the more you get out of it.

Researcher – Have you done anything in the past that has caused the team to perform poorly?

Participant – Possibly the control of sessions, especially if we are doing something new or difficult. The plan won't always work out. There needs to be a possible change and I remember... that's something that stands out in memory. If I think back then training sessions that went wrong or didn't work out and needed to be changed, stopped, a break, something needed to be done. Every team is different, even every day is different, players might be up or down, tired. It could just be a different day or we are trying something specific, different, you need to be able to think on your feet and keep the players playing, it's a fluid situation.

Researcher – Do you have any final suggestions for helping maximize player's chances for performing well in practice?

Participant – So, I'd say that they have healthy relationships within practice. Have a healthy relationship also with the outside of practice, the activities they perform so the recovery for example of the body is maximised. There is a love for the sport and a heavy need to want to learn and to get better. There is a drive and motivation, when they train, to want to get better and push themselves so they are always looking to improve and get better.

Researcher – What would you remove if you could from a practice environment?

Participant – I wouldn't remove the competitive edge and competition between the players but I would remove the solely selfish player who disrupts what the team does. But you don't perhaps know who they are and they won't always be disruptive. Removal of laziness. Not letting players have their phones at practice is a big one for me as it distracts them.

Coach six interview for IPA study

Age 47 years

Gender: Male

Ethnicity: White British

Date: 01/11/2018

Years within Academy basketball programme: 8 years

Interview length: 52 minutes plus warm-up period of 17 minutes (69 minutes total)

Researcher – How is current practice performance of the team?

Participant – We are struggling to be honest. We just don't have the players. In the [competition name removed] we are a weaker team, we don't win many. The boys are good though, they are a good bunch of boys and in practice they work hard, they don't maybe expect too much else other than to train and enjoy what they are doing. But it's not great being a team that loses a lot. I think most of the boys just train here and focus on other games they have [reference to other teams]. It's a strange mix of them happy to train hard but very little need or want to achieve leading up to games, there's little expectation and maybe there is a lack of fire.

Researcher – Do you think that practice performance reflects what happens in competitive matches?

Participant – I think we have a very different... it's not very aligned between competition and practice with us. I think that because we are quite behind and there is almost inevitability with most games we separate, they separate practice to competition. Although I'd say that if you are training well then you are playing well. They go hand in hand and you can't deny that at all. It's certainly the case with all players.

Researcher – Do you measure practice session success?

Participant – The performance in training. The outcomes they produce are all measured and I know who is up and who is down, form does change.

Researcher – Do the players know how well they are training?

Participant – Yes they do, it's obvious because everyone can see the results of what everyone is doing. If the players are doing it then they are doing it.

Researcher – What do they use then?

Participant – Lots of things like the ball going in the hoop, making successful passes, turnovers, rebounds, winning in scrimmage, I'd say they make a big impact in practice.

Researcher – Why do you think they have a big impact?

Participant – It's out there, it's clear, its outcomes the players can see and more importantly they are the things that can have an effect upon the scoreboard. If you are scoring hard then that makes a difference. It's like kids basketball, if you score then that's the most important thing so that's what you need to keep doing. Nothing changes as you grow up, you need, want to score because that's an impact.

Researcher – Is it for them to achieve then?

Participant – Yes, they need to have an impact, they need to succeed.

Researcher – Does it hurt the team?

Participant – I guess it can do, I'd say that point scoring is a big driver. Some players might even disregard recent team instructions and go it alone. I'll take those players straight out, we don't need them, they are no go for us. That can happen in games but it comes from a mentality they have. A person driving to the basketball to score when it's the wrong option completely.

Researcher – Does it hurt the team?

Participant – Yes, in competition and when we train. Could be one of the worst, no, probably is the worst factor in a team, that player who has to be number one. If they are working only for themselves then that doesn't work out in this sport. Yes they may want to move on from us as better players, that's why they are here after all, but sometimes they can't get their heads round the fact that they need their teammates to succeed. For example, [player name removed] was always negative towards one guy on the team, he wasn't like in our top two guards and didn't get many minutes, but one week he had to scrimmage with [player name removed] and by the end I had to take him out the game because he got so much stick from [player name removed] that the team and everyone in it was suffering.

Researcher – Has anything happened recently in practice that you think led to a good performance?

Participant – We had an excellent training session last week. It was very competitive and a lot of the players stepped up and performed really well. There was a fantastic atmosphere in the hall. They enjoy competing against each other the most and it's the best way to motivate a response from them.

Researcher – Response from losing a match?

Participant – No, just a response from them to play harder. At the end of the day they just want to play. So if I get them to compete against each other then you know they are going to put in maximum effort.

Researcher – Can that go wrong if some players lose out, say if they don't get the result or performance they expect?

Participant – It can do, yes, there's an issue if players lose out to someone or a group they think they should have beaten. The less mature and better players take it harder. It can absolutely kill confidence. They wouldn't cope with a loss well, they don't have those coping skills. Good or bad? More on the side of bad at the time. How bad? Well it can be really bad as the... a player who performs badly in training is going to get depressed for one, they could get angry if it's really bad, they pretty much won't have a good session.

Researcher – Do they cope with it, the better players?

Participant – I would probably say that how would you know? You don't get to see a player have an absolutely episode at one minute and then be fine the next, it's not a switch, you can't just decide to feel something.

Researcher – Do players who can cope never get like that then?

Participant – Yeah they won't even get that far, to that level of losing it because they can control it. Controlling how you feel is important, it help you maintain a good position to be able to play. Every single player has got it in them though to lose it?

Researcher – Why is that?

Participant – Tiredness would be the number one for me. If you are tired then everything will drop. Say your physicality will go, your mental capacity is shot, you won't perform as well.

Researcher – So would you say that players will not adjust their expectations towards their performance if they are tired?

Participant – I don't know if it's... you wouldn't do the same preparation for training which might happen as you might be more lax in that area. If you arrive and you feel under 100% then absolutely you should not be looking to perform. You have to manage it in a way where you can still get something out of it and that might not happen possibly.

Researcher – So players might not adjust their expectations in practice sessions if they don't feel great and that might cause them to be negative if they perform poorly?

Participant – Yes, I would say so.

Researcher – Has anything happened recently in practice that you can think of that led to a poor performance for an individual or the team?

Participant – So not being prepared to go doesn't help as we have been saying. There's a reason why a player might not have prepared. They might stay up too late and not eat good foods. Focus shouldn't stop when you leave the court, the more you put in outside the better you feel when you are on the court. Again, what we said earlier with performance in practice. If players are throwing up bricks in practice then they usually carry that on in poor practice. Players getting at each other, that's an impact.

Researcher – How should players communicate?

Participant – With intensity. Don't hurt each other. Keep it focused on the court. Girl problems came into practice last year, which was not funny. Two guys with the same girl, I don't know what happened but that was a week or two of fun [sarcasm]. They used to be really good friends and I heard they might of had a fight... it was outside of training, I don't know if it happened, to be honest I didn't care, I only cared about how it affected us and the team sessions, which it did, which annoyed me.

Researcher – Did it get resolved?

Participant – No idea. It was... lucky it was the end of the season so we finished, they left, no idea what happened.

Researcher – What are the greatest positive impacts upon player performance during practice?

Participant – Training as one unit. The team is at the heart of what successes we have. A player may have had a great game but they didn't win the game, the team won. So yes, when we come to practice we try to do everything together. Although I don't know how many games we won [humour]. Players believe in themselves more, in what they are doing if they are supported. If you know, you can rely on someone else then that helps a player to achieve and perform well in practice.

Researcher – So support is key?

Participant – Its critical. Not just from the players but from the coaches as well. I need to support the team best I can, each individual players needs to be supported and not put down. Why would you do that? Why would you put negativity on someone? That doesn't help someone.

Researcher – What happens when a player receives negativity?

Participant – Most of our players will get into a negative spiral if we have a go at them. There's this one lad who goes well within himself if anyone says anything to him. Most of the boys respond better to support and that's always the way. Keep them up, keep their heads up.

Researcher – What would you say are the greatest negative impacts upon player performance during practice?

Participant – One of the most important is the communication between... within the team. You'll get a disruption to the team when the communication is off. I'll make sure I'm clear with instructions and I'd rather stand there for another few minutes answering questions than them getting it all wrong. Again, it links to the session in itself and how I can model it, adapt it, prepare it so the players have a strong sense of what's to be achieved and what's possible and what they need to do to get something from it. If the players can't communicate to each other also that will cause problems.

Researcher – What do you do to increase player performance in practice?

Participant – Get the players socialising. By that I mean doing something that means that you have to work with this guy, you have to get that bond with another person, another few people and have fun with it. It's not an individual sport so you need to have socialising with other players in training. Independence is great but not when you go off on your own

and don't fit into team goals so it's about setting the team goals, setting the team tasks and getting those players to work together.

Researcher – Is it hard to get players working together?

Participant – Not at all, it's built in. The only problem would be if you get boys who don't get on or get the player who doesn't want to work in a team, that's rare.

Researcher – Do you treat all players the same?

Participant – No because they are all different. It's the same in the sense of we expect the same from every player but there exists a difference between personalities. One player won't, one person won't be the same as someone else so you need to keep it like that.

Researcher – Is there anything else that you believe occurs to players in practice that is positive upon performance?

Participant – Competitive drills, getting the boys going up and down like I said. They are good for building resilience. If you got someone going at you, what you going to do? How do you deal with it? It's especially good for the weaker guys going up against the stronger players. It gets you sharp.

Researcher – Is there anything else that you believe occurs to players in practice that is negative upon performance?

Participant – Not really anything I can think of that we haven't already discussed. The belief of players and their confidence is really vital to practice and the success the players can have. It's tricky with a group that is used to... accepted losing and failure on a regular basis. It's about believing you can win although having an attitude that means you keep working hard despite competitive results is good. They don't let those results get to them that much, it's actually interesting for them, interesting dynamic that almost splits the two apart and I think we have that.

Researcher – Have you noticed players reacting to negative situations positively, so coping with something that goes wrong?

Participant – Well that's the resilience of the player. That's what we will work on. Training time is time for building resilience. That's what we try to do. So a bad situation leads to a resilient situation.

Researcher – Can a bad situation lead to a bad outcome?

Participant – Oh absolutely it can. Boys get down on themselves all the time. It will never not happen in training but it's a place for that to happen.

Researcher – On the flip side, have you noticed players reacting to positive situations negatively?

Participant – I don't really think... you need to see most positive situations are good though. Because if you say it's positive, if you see it as positive then surely it's actually positive for the team, for performance. You look at something positive for performance then that's effective. You might be overconfident and then not trying as hard but then that's negative so it's not positive as it could lead to a loss.

Researcher – Why would someone be overconfident, what causes that?

Participant – Thinking something, someone is going to be easy to beat than they are. The first game of the season we thought, or I should say that the players thought, that we would win. That's great to think you can win but they were all saying in the week before that we were going to win, there's no way we lose to that team, they got this player and that and they aren't that good. So a little bit of a relax here and there and then that's what can happen, you lose. Happens in training as well. You think something is easier than it is, don't relax too much because you won't have the focus and fire to get it done.

Researcher – So being relaxed in practice is not good?

Participant – It depends. If you relax too much then you don't try as hard. But if you are too tight then it's not effective so you need to relax a little bit. Getting the balance right. Can you get the enjoyment factory of basketball to come out in training? That's when you get the players to relax enough to perform but focus enough to perform as well.

Researcher - Do you have any final suggestions for helping maximize player's chances for performing well in practice?

Participant – I think we have covered pretty much everything.

APPENDIX E: Study Four Audit Trail

Improving the Practice Environment of a Basketball Team

This appendix details the audit trail for study five. The contents of the study five audit trail is listed below:

1. Ethical approval
2. Participant information sheet (players)
3. Participant information sheet (coaches)
4. Informed consent form
5. Programme of data collection
6. Player focus group transcription – Phase 1
7. Coach focus group transcription – Phase 1
8. Observation field notes – Phases 1 and 2
9. Coach focus group transcription – Phase 3
10. Player focus group transcription – Phase 4
11. Observation field notes – Phases 3 and 4
12. Player focus group transcription – Phase 6
13. Coach focus group transcription – Phase 6
14. Observation field notes – Phases 5 and 6
15. Raw theme data – Phases 1-6
16. Friedman test analysis



Steve Smith
Sport, Exercise & Health
Faculty of Health & Wellbeing
University of Winchester

13/11/2019

Dear Steve,

Re: Improving the Practice Environment of a Basketball Team (HWB_REC_19/03_Smith_B)

Thank you for returning your updated ethics application to me and rebuttal responses to the reviewer questions. Your answers comprehensively address the queries posed and clearly highlight the changes made to the documentation. I have now reviewed these and I am pleased to confirm that your project has received a favourable opinion.

If the nature, content, location, procedures or personnel of your approved application change, please contact me directly.

I wish you well in taking your project forward.

Best wishes,

James Faulkner
Faculty HWB Ethics Officer
Email: James.Faulkner@winchester.ac.uk Tel: +44 (0)1962 624932

Participant Information Sheet (Players): Improving the Practice Environment of a Basketball Team

This study has been approved by the University of Winchester ethics committee.

Researcher and contact details:

Researcher: Steve Smith

Email: S.Smith7.15@unimail.winchester.ac.uk

Telephone: 07737 719551

If at any point during the study you have any questions, you may contact the researcher (Steve Smith), or if at any point during the study you feel something is wrong or have any concerns you can contact the project leader or chair of the University Research and knowledge exchange ethics committee, Dr Maru Mormina.

What is the purpose of the study?

This study aims to evaluate a psychological intervention strategy within an academy basketball practice environment. The study adopts an action research approach that places participants as researchers.

What is action research?

Action research contributes to practical problems by collaborating with the members of the environment by turning them into researchers, which allows for an evaluation of the applied intervention from multiple sources within the environment and permits the individuals to make decisions that guide the research because they are best placed to do so.

Who is doing this research and why?

The Department of Sport and Exercise at the University is conducting this research as part of a post graduate research project.

Once I take part, can I change my mind?

Yes. You can withdraw at any time, for any reason and you will not be asked to explain your reasons for withdrawing.

Will I be required to attend any sessions?

You will be required to undertake normal practice activities. In addition to this you will be asked to attend regular player meetings with the coaching staff and researcher. You may also be invited to attend a focus group during the study

How long will it take?

The entire study will last for 20 weeks, excluding holidays. Each player meeting will last no longer than 45 minutes and focus groups may last for 1 hour.

Will my taking part in this study be kept confidential?

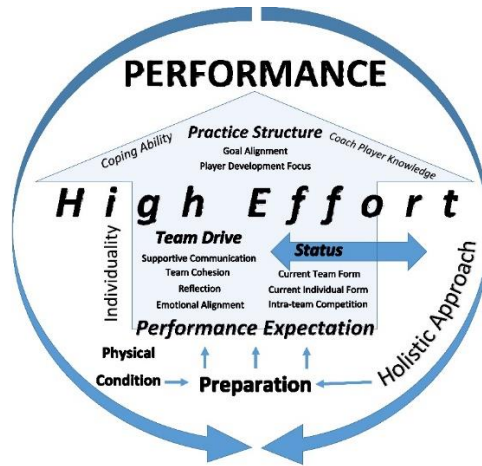
Please be assured that all the information you give will be retained in the highest confidentiality and will only be used for the purpose of this research and any publications related to this research. You will not be identifiable from any publication or dissemination of results of the project with data being anonymised by the researcher during the transcription of focus groups. All focus groups will be audibly recorded and deleted once transcription has taken place. The information you provide will be stored securely under the Data Protection Act (1998).

Will I need to do anything during the study?

The intervention study will be based upon the Practice Environment Model (see below).

The five intervention strategies that players will be asked to be involved in are listed below:

1. High effort as primary goal
High effort to supersede all other training goals e.g. performance, outcomes, skill acquisition, which become secondary achievement goals.
2. Pre-practice performance reflection (performance expectation)
Reflection upon current mental and physical state.
3. Supportive communication towards teammates
Players who are subject to negativity will decrease overall team performance.
4. Goals must enhance team performance
Independent goals set by players must enhance team performance.
5. Preparation for practice
Holistic approach to performance includes decisions and lifestyle made outside of practice.



Participant Information Sheet (Coaches): Improving the Practice Environment of a Basketball Team

This study has been approved by the University of Winchester ethics committee.

Researcher and contact details:

Researcher: Steve Smith

Email: S.Smith7.15@unimail.winchester.ac.uk

Telephone: 07737 719551

If at any point during the study you have any questions, you may contact the researcher (Steve Smith), or if at any point during the study you feel something is wrong or have any concerns you can contact the project leader or chair of the University Research and knowledge exchange ethics committee, Dr Maru Mormina.

What is the purpose of the study?

This study aims to evaluate a psychological intervention strategy within an academy basketball practice environment. The study adopts an action research approach that places participants as researchers.

What is action research?

Action research contributes to practical problems by collaborating with the members of the environment by turning them into researchers, which allows for an evaluation of the applied intervention from multiple sources within the environment and permits the individuals to make decisions that guide the research because they are best placed to do so.

Who is doing this research and why?

The Department of Sport and Exercise at the University is conducting this research as part of a post graduate research project.

Once I take part, can I change my mind?

Yes. You can withdraw at any time, for any reason and you will not be asked to explain your reasons for withdrawing. However, coaches will be actively involved in the research process and be part of changes.

Will I be required to attend any sessions?

You will be required to undertake regular meetings with the researcher and attend coach focus groups or interviews throughout the study.

How long will it take?

The entire study will last for 20 weeks, excluding holidays.

Will my taking part in this study be kept confidential?

Please be assured that all the information you give will be retained in the highest confidentiality and will only be used for the purpose of this research and any publications related to this research. You will not be identifiable from any publication or dissemination of results of the project with data being anonymised by the researcher during the transcription of focus groups. All focus groups will be audibly recorded and deleted once transcription has taken place. The information you provide will be stored securely under the Data Protection Act (1998).

Will I need to do anything during the study?

The intervention study will be based upon the Practice Environment Model (see below).

The intervention strategies that coaches will be asked to be involved in are listed below:

1. Primary player goal for all training sessions:
 - High Effort
 - High effort to supersede all other training goals e.g. performance, outcomes, skill acquisition, which become secondary achievement goals.
2. Coaches to use different approaches with different players
 - Coach knowledge of player preferences used to alter communication and support type
3. Player unsuccessful achievement:
 - Low effort and error: Negative communication
 - High effort and error: Positive communication
4. Aligned training goals set by coach. No player training to independent goals
 - Any goal set for players should ultimately be for the team and they should be aware of this if specific-player goals are set
5. Success through team activities
 - Training activities must allow players to achieve as/with a group or team
6. The team is only as strong as its weakest part
 - All players have an effect upon the squad. Players to look after each other as a struggling player will affect all other players

Informed Consent Form

The purpose and details of this study have been explained to me. I understand that this study is designed to further scientific knowledge and that all procedures have been approved by the University of Winchester Ethical Advisory Committee.

I have read and understood the information sheet and this consent form.

I have had an opportunity to ask questions about my participation.

I understand that I am under no obligation to take part in the study.

I understand that I have the right to withdraw from this study at any stage for any reason, and that I will not be required to explain my reasons for withdrawing.

I understand that all the information I provide will be treated in strict confidence and will be kept anonymous and confidential to the researchers unless (under the statutory obligations of the agencies which the researchers are working with), it is judged that confidentiality will have to be breached for the safety of the participant or others.

I agree to participate in this study

Your name

Your signature

Signature of researcher

Date _____

Programme of Data Collection

	Data collection		Programme of data collection										
	Week												
Phase 1	1	10/09/2018	Intervention meeting		Questionnaire	Coach Meeting	Field notes taken						
	2	17/09/2018	Intervention meeting		Questionnaire	Coach Meeting	Field notes taken			player FG interviews			
	3	24/09/2018	Intervention meeting		Questionnaire	Coach Meeting	Field notes taken				coach focus group		
Phase 2	4	01/10/2018	Intervention meeting		Questionnaire	Coach Meeting	Field notes taken						
	5	08/10/2018	Intervention meeting		Questionnaire	Coach Meeting	Field notes taken					Observation	
	6	15/10/2018	Intervention meeting		Questionnaire	Coach Meeting	Field notes taken						
Phase 3	7	29/10/2018	Intervention meeting		Questionnaire	Coach Meeting	Field notes taken						
	8	05/11/2018	Intervention meeting		Questionnaire	Coach Meeting	Field notes taken				Coach Focus group		
	9	12/11/2018	Intervention meeting		Questionnaire	Coach Meeting	Field notes taken						
Phase 4	10	19/11/2018	Intervention meeting		Questionnaire	Coach Meeting	Field notes taken					Observation	
	11	26/11/2018	Intervention meeting		Questionnaire	Coach Meeting	Field notes taken			player FG interviews			
	12	03/12/2018	Intervention meeting		Questionnaire	Coach Meeting	Field notes taken						
Phase 5	13	10/12/2018	Intervention meeting		Questionnaire	Coach Meeting	Field notes taken						
	14	07/01/2019	Intervention meeting		Questionnaire	Coach Meeting	Field notes taken						
	15	14/01/2019	Intervention meeting		Questionnaire	Coach Meeting	Field notes taken						
Phase 6	16	21/01/2019	Intervention meeting		Questionnaire	Coach Meeting	Field notes taken						
	17	28/01/2019	Intervention meeting		Questionnaire	Coach Meeting	Field notes taken						
	18	04/02/2019	Intervention meeting		Questionnaire	Coach Meeting	Field notes taken					Observation	
	19	11/02/2019	Intervention meeting		Questionnaire	Coach Meeting	Field notes taken						
	20	18/02/2019	Intervention meeting		Questionnaire	Coach Meeting	Field notes taken			player FG interviews	coach focus group		

Focus Group Transcription – Phase 1

Tuesday 18th September 2018.

Week 2

Player Meeting

Group 1

Total time 28 minutes.

Players present:

Finn

Harry

Liam

Oli

Pete

Rich

Researcher: I want to go through those five things that we spoke about last week. Focusing upon practice rather than just competition, effort was our main primary goal, anyone want to kick us off as to how that went this week?

Liam: I think effort levels went higher certainly as week went on. What we were doing in practice this week was more defence based so it was, just, everyone was trying to work harder and there were more consequences if we didn't work as hard so I felt there was more of an emphasis upon effort and trying harder.

Researcher: What about you individually?

Liam: Like I said it was defensive based so when you need to try harder.

Researcher: Did that come from the coaches?

Liam: Yes to be fair the coaching was quite tough in terms of if none of us... like the other day they stopped practice and said we need to sort this out because none of you seem like

you want to be here, its dead. Once that happened everyone flicked a switch and everyone worked much harder.

Researcher: What's anyone else's take on that?

Finn: Like he said, the effort levels eventually just rose because obviously coach said you need to put in more effort [coach said, not from the player] because its defensive based and effort is one of the key elements to it [possibly not understanding the terms of effort in relation to the skill, e.g. moving faster and putting in high energy is different than applying general effort?], but if you are not talking more and putting in the effort then it's not going to be good at all is it?

Researcher: Can you remember what the key idea was of putting effort in?

Response: Silence from group.

Researcher: So, we cannot control a lot of things, such as whether the ball goes in the hoop, getting to places on time because there might be road works. The only thing we can control 100% is the amount of effort we put in so don't focus upon non-controllables. Did anyone just focus on effort this week or just on skill attainment?

Liam: When we did the defensive drill we focused on getting the stop and I didn't really think about effort as I was more worried about what I had to do technically [is effort something that should be thought about if you are doing it?].

Researcher: Can we say that effort was not really the focus upon any player this last week?

Pete: I feel like effort may have risen but there were like a lot of other things we choose to focus on as well because there were a lot of different bits we did this week and obviously effort did increase but with that we had more to think about and we looked into things maybe too much instead of effort itself.

Researcher: Did anyone have a complete flop in practice where they were annoyed with their performance?

Rich: Yesterday I was trash and couldn't shoot. I had like four air balls. I kind of didn't get over it and it frustrated me, things just got worse. In terms of technical stuff I rated myself like a 3 [assuming he is referring to 3 out of 10], very low. It had a definite negative impact on me. Because someone like me I think I'm a shooter [evidence of the perceived player inside and not hitting the expected level, or realising that player in the real world] so if I'm shooting badly that kind of reflects badly on me, with that expectations.

Researcher: If you focused upon just effort rather than where the ball went would it have made a difference?

Rich: Yes, probably, yeah.

Researcher: Anything else this week in practice?

Finn: I think I lowered, took more things into consideration, like when you said [last week], when you have training the night before and lowering my standards slightly of how I would perform usually [sniggering from around the room as this was exactly what I said last week and this may have been said for my benefit!].

Researcher: Did that help your practice?

Finn: Yes I think so because it was more positive rather than me thinking that I'm not doing as well as I did last time or... I found it effective.

Researcher: So looking at pre-practice performance, I noticed that you guys only did it straight after and none after that [laughs around room – someone added that they still thought about it]. You said you thought about some of the things?

Oli: I think about doing it. But it just feels like something extra, there's also no Wi-Fi in the sports hall. This is an issue.

Researcher: Maybe you need to do the form before getting to the sports hall maybe. I personally... [Researcher then explains the benefits of pre-practice reflections]. How much thought did you put into it?

Group response: Fairly unanimous that they didn't do it].

Rich: I think about trying to think about how you are going to mentally act and how you are not going to get annoyed in the session, stuff like that [this is the player that apparent had a go at a teammate, so he seems to know he gets annoyed and shouldn't].

Researcher: So it's more to do with how you should act in training rather than how you felt physically or mentally?

Rich: Well yeah just that [player didn't what to answer – possibly due to him being the one that was involved in the episode].

Researcher: What do you think you guys need to do to start thinking about reflection and using the form? [Researcher then explains the purpose of the form and how it can benefit the players].

General responses from the group were made: I forgot. I didn't do it. Just didn't get round to do it. Didn't practice. Couldn't be bothered. I was tired as had two training sessions. I didn't think about it.

Researcher: Can we start to do it for next few weeks every session? [Researcher explains the power of reflection and how it will help].

Researcher: How's communication been this week?

Harry: I think it's been better than what it started with but it's more like encouraging and productive and it's not like shouting at each other. It wasn't like majorly shouting, it was like two words and it was just gone, but that didn't happen until today [something happened today].

Researcher: does everyone else feel supported? So no negative communication this week at all?

Liam: Not really, not unless it's like taking the piss, yeah like friendly banter. It's like taking the piss in a joke way it's not taking it too far like ripping into someone, it's all banter. I feel like there might have been moments when we wanted to but I think we did a pretty good job of adjusting to making a conscious effort to not do that.

Researcher: Do [coach name removed] and [coach name removed] get on your backs if there's any negativity?

Rich: They just don't accept it. Coaches do a good job on that.

Researcher: Anyone got any highly independent goals at the moment?

Oli: I want to get better so I can play again. Laughing and jokes around the group.

Researcher: How has practice preparation gone this week?

Pete: I reckon much better now [maybe I should have phrased the question more towards decisions]. Especially before practice because last week we got called out for messing about and not being ready to train and then this week by 11, before the coaches were there, we had started warming up and were ready to go basically.

Researcher: So you could have done some reflection then?

Pete: Yes, we definitely made more of a conscious effort to be ready for training after that first meeting.

Researcher: So the coaches had a go at you for not being ready, so in your heads what does that mean?

Finn: We weren't prepared to train, we weren't ready. We got kitted up and were ready to go. We think it's like having food. Being prepared mentally for the session and all of that. I'd say we were ready mentally this week for training. [I'm not convinced they were ready mentally as discussion based around being kitted up, and warming up before practice and no mental preparation]. I've started having longer sleeps and trying to eat more fruit. [There seemed to be an effort to eat better].

Researcher: So preparation got better this week, but were you actually reflecting on what you were doing because firstly today you said you weren't thinking about too much like where you were. I mean you mentioned it but I think everyone else was a bit hmmm. But then you and you said that everyone was prepared and thinking about things so there's obviously a bit of a difference here. I think in your heads it might not be right there on what you are doing.

Liam: I feel like after some practices like, I know yesterday after a shocker of shooting from me I stayed after practice and just shoot to just try and prove you can shoot again. So I reflected after the last session being like I shoot bad so I stayed afterwards to shoot to try and get, you know. I think there is a level of reflection but just not a high level.

Researcher: I think there are definitely gaps before the start of practice, there isn't that real thought about where am I going to be today against my scale in my head [The researcher then describes the benefits of it and how effort should be the main goal]. How's the bodies?

Rich: By the end of the week I'm tired, by Friday I was dead. I slept a lot. I got home Friday and pretty much just went to bed. I ate good food though.

[Researcher then recapped on what the players need to be working on going over the player information sheet]

Players added that having music during practice was really important.

Focus Group Transcription – Phase 1

Tuesday 18th September 2018.

Week 2

Player Meeting

Group 2

Total time 29 minutes.

Players present:

Adam

Ben

Evan

Neil

Simon

Researcher: So who remembers the five things we worked on last week?

Group response: The five players were able to recall all the areas we worked on last week.

Researcher: Did anyone have a really bad moment in practice this week?

Evan: Missed shooting threes. It was just the little things like I missed an open layup [skill based activity] and it's just a little frustrating because I know how easy it is but I completely missed it but I didn't really let it affect me too much though [although he did remember it]. I just thought at the time that it was bad but then I just carried on.

Researcher: Did your practice performance drop after that?

Evan: I don't think so, it didn't really drop it kind of kept the same intensity I would bring anyway. It was negative but I feel like for me I just need to not think about it and carry on because those little moments will hinder my performance [seems like a player with good coping skills].

Researcher: Did anyone feel they just went with effort and didn't worry about tangible skill based activity? [This question was based on effort needing to be only applied as a strategy to get out of performance slumps]

Adam: I went into the game Wednesday thinking if I put effort in then everything else around it will fall into place so I think it's a good mentality to have as a team [was this an answer he thought I wanted to hear?]. I'm not sure it helped on the Wednesday match but did at weekend [not practice focused as he mentions matches].

Researcher: Doing your defensive drills this week, did you feel you need to put in effort without consciously thinking about doing it?

Neil: The effort would be there on defence but then you can say like technically how we are doing it and communicating it, it wouldn't be too effective for defence.

Researcher: Anyone had a wobble because they didn't achieve a skill based activity?

Ben: The other day I was so tired but I was kind of chilled because when you said last week focus on effort... before those practices I was thinking like about everything but like you said after that I was just focusing on effort and I'm pretty happy with the way it went and what I'm doing in practice now [surprising answer after only a week].

Simon: I think the worst moment training wise was Monday when I had continuous laps on defence which kind of cost our mini group that we have, I'd say that got me down initially but better late than never I kind of got my head up after that and started getting back in focus but I was annoyed that it didn't happen straight away. I had about 5 minutes of just being in my feelings. I just think I felt I was putting in effort but due to technical mistakes like not looking in one direction or not communicating properly and I think that took a toll when I took the criticism and after that it started to shape up after that but it was a bit of a late response.

Researcher: What feedback did you get?

Simon: About communication, keeping your head up on a swivel.

Researcher: [Researcher explains the purpose of the web-based questionnaire and need for it]. How did everyone feel they reflected before practice this week?

Evan: I just needed to clear everything that happened that day and get on with the training because if like if I clear my mind and just think of what I was learning in that moment the training [then mumbles]. I didn't really think about how I felt before just to think mentally

what am I going to learn today and forgot about everything else, just like this is important right now then all the others will come later.

Ben: I didn't really think about it, like when I come in I know what I'm here to do and feel good so it's like I don't really think about how I'm feeling physically or mentally, it's just like I come in to do what I need to do so I come in and get on with it. Practice has been alright [said not with positivity] this week, like there's still... physically I feel like, not tired but restricted sometimes because of my shoulder.

Adam: Sometimes I'm just proper dead so I didn't really expect anything of myself at training so it ended up me just having clear thoughts rather than having these expectations and I was alright.

Researcher: [Researcher explains the need of performance expectations is to stop the negative spiral from occurring and the importance of using the form]. Do you guys buy into this?

Evan: It's been a lot better, we've come in and we've done shooting or stretching beforehand and when coach comes in, like yesterday in training we just got into our warm up like with stretching so when coach came in he didn't really have to say anything and we got straight into it, everyone was focused. So I think starting a bit better than before. [Should performance expectations only be done if there is a warning sign before practice of a problem?].

Researcher: [Researcher talks about thoughts of being ready for practice at the moment may be more along the lines of am I ready by being kitted up and already in hall ready to go. However, it may be that performance expectations may only need to occur if the player is in a crisis. Researcher asks all players so try to complete the form before training. However, as above I'm not convinced they need it unless they are having a crisis].

Researcher: How has communication been this week?

Neil: It was good until this morning. Like we will be supportive in certain things but then as we get frustrated then it will get towards our teammates. So it's not like it's been terrible but it's been constructive and then sometimes it slips and then we...

Evan: I think throughout the week encouragement has been up there a lot and supporting each other but this morning [player name removed] and [player name removed], I think [player name removed] was just annoyed and he kind of went at [player name removed]. I

don't really know... on my part I don't have a problem it is what it is, its basketball. For me we are in a drill but the type of drill we did was quite physical so it's like you need to get under your opponents skin, we are allowed to hold and foul and build pressure so we can make it match simulated. In doing that, I'm not too sure what he's thinking or feeling, because I'm defending him the way he's going at me is like.... Instead of trying to play the drill and do what you need to get passed me he's trying to go through me so he was giving me constant elbows. I don't know if on purpose but he was pushing on me. When I tried to say at the start just chill and what you're doing will be called a foul and I'm only doing it to help you get better. Also you do it in the game then you are going to get fouled out, then the team will suffer because we are down one, it's just spiral. He kept shouting and I left it, he kept playing for a bit and then he got really angry, threw the ball and squared up to me but it got defused and he got chucked out.

Adam: You could see it coming a mile off, [player name removed] was getting annoyed [could there have been an individual or teammate intervention here?] and going at [player name removed] but every time they seemed to be matched up because of the rotation [maybe coach needed to rotate more and see this happening]. You could see something was going to happen but I didn't think he would do anything.

Researcher: What was he getting annoyed at?

Adam: Me personally I think... I don't think you can get that annoyed at the drill or [player name removed] putting in effort or something else, who knows? [When speaking to the head coach in an office conversation, the coach indicated that [player name removed] had made a lot of individual mistakes and did not cope well with them].

Simon: I think that [player name removed] doesn't like to fail too much and then when he does failure it does get in his head quite a lot and then it just bothers him and sometimes he puts out that anger in the wrong way, he doesn't really mean to but it's just you know like you can't really hold out in and he puts it out in the wrong way. It's the stuff he can't control that causes him the problems.

Researcher: [Researcher identifies this as a really good example of effort focus].

Researcher: [Researcher discusses how players can support each other when going through bad patches]. It's a perfect example of what not to do. But can we support our teammates?

Ben: it's a perfect example especially as I had said to him to chill out, like when he started shouting I was like... cool. So then I stepped it up a bit. So I guess it's on my part a little bit

but me personally I'm not going to back down because you are coming at me, that's not how it works, so I'm going to step up as well. Personally how I saw it, if you are going to go at me in a certain way and you don't like, and your cool about going at me in a certain way, but then I come back at you on that same level and you don't like it, then to me I don't particularly care [very defensive attitude].

Researcher: [Researcher explains about changing behaviours over a long time and how difficult it was for the player to not react, but the best outcome for the team was to not react]. The behaviours you make in practice can effect performance and therefore everything that needs to be done has the team at its heart. I'm not expecting anything this first week but in 6 months' time I'll expect you to be practicing better. How has preparation for practice gone this week?

Adam: After a session, me and [player name removed] quite often get a quick stretch in with partner stretches just so because we know if we do it we will feel a lot better in the day. I think I'm losing hours in my sleep, because I'm now catching the bus and it takes longer – there's nothing I can do about it as I can't get a lift in anymore. I'm sleeping much better than I used to, like these early sessions that we have now it's still something I'm getting used to. I'll wake up and then I feel like I'll just take a little extra sleep and I can make it, but I'll be a little bit late to the session so... I don't know because I am sleeping pretty well, I'm getting enough but it's just getting used to the early wake up, it's just getting everything ready and going, I just need to get used to it.

Researcher: How many people have seen me walk past the balcony area this week? [Researcher refers to losing time by wasting time at viewing area, which is the social hangout for basketball players]. Does everyone feel they are using their time wisely?

Simon: I think I've spent my time well, I've been using the period from yesterday... we had S&C at 6pm so I stayed and found a computer and did some homework to fill in my time, I feel better for doing that.

Researcher: So we all feel we are preparing well?

Group Response: Group members seem positive in their unanimous reply.

Researcher: [Researcher then repeats the five areas to work on over the week].

Researcher: Is after college more difficult than morning training?

Neil: I've never trained during school before, we've only had like one on one individual but an actual training session in the day... who does that? You finish school then go to training. Training is early, like at 7.30 and I try to get up at about 6. Today I woke up at 6.30 and I was tired.

Coach Focus Group Transcription – Phase 1

Date: 26/09/2018

Week 3

Total time 27 minutes.

(This meeting followed the initial two sessions with the players)

Researcher: The group discussed all the aspects of the intervention. We looked at high effort and how it should be a component that is always there with players, regardless of having to think about it.

Head Coach: It's a pre-requisite for the group. They must put in high levels of effort with whatever they do.

Assistant Coach: Although I don't think it's something that we see all the time in some of the players.

Researcher: When don't you see it?

Assistant Coach: Early morning training can be a challenge for the players. Then you'll also see it in other times with off-court... it's always more in off-court, like with meeting punctuality and say food decisions.

Researcher: After speaking with the players after the last few weeks it seemed that for them to think about high effort and solely that was detrimental to other areas, like their ability to focus on technical and tactical information. It might be better used as an intervention strategy that we can use as it's a controllable element for them and not reliant on anything else.

Head Coach: Yes, I would say that high effort should be inherent, inherent in the best players certainly. If we can get them not even thinking about it then that's the best way forward. I think the players have so much to thinking about technically and tactically that to focus on something else could hurt development.

Researcher: Could you ensure that if you see poor performance and a lack of coping then you will encourage the players to focus on effort and forget on-court success.

[Both coaches agreed with this].

Researcher: Have any players been displaying negative emotions in practice recently and an inability to control them or move them from negative to positive?

Assistant Coach: [Player name removed] can still get into his feelings a lot, and quickly. But he has been catching himself a little bit better recently but he has been very up down. However, previously there were no ups and a lot of downs but the peaks and troughs are now closer together of late.

Head Coach: There's a few other players that get down on themselves and go insular when they make mistakes. They don't have outbursts at the team, its more in general comments like muttering under breath. Players will get down and be placid. I'd say it's a big issue for us, for the team. The players emotional can be poor and that's an area... we might have seen some improvements, but it's an area that I think we should work on a lot to move us forward. What were you thinking in that regard?

Researcher: I think the weekly meetings will form the basis for teaching them, for example, that effort should be used as an intervention, which we talked about, and that the team performance is based around the decisions of individuals. I'll keep pushing the information to you at the meetings and we can maintain the influence from both meetings and on-court practice sessions.

[Both coaches agreed]

Researcher: [Researcher further explains how he will focus on effort as a way of getting out of performance slumps that spiral into further performance negativity. That the players should forget about everything else and just play hard. Do you see the benefits of that?

Head Coach: It's an interesting one that because [Player name removed] does do that [put in more effort] after an error and then can lose his head and charge the ball and make another mistake so his effort is too high.

Researcher: Is that in matches or training?

Head Coach: In matches.

Researcher: I would say that that is a strong emotional reaction to an event in the competition situation and may not be the same as what will occur in training. Within training the negative spiral can take a player from good to poor over a time period which ruins their, and potentially the teams, performance in the session. His need to win the ball

back in matches is certainly an issue when he makes a bad mistake. Therefore, this may not be an effort issue, this may just be an incorrect response issue. The practice effort response is when a string of negative situations are happening and is effecting performance.

Assistant Coach: So the thought process of players need to be changed.

Researcher: Yes, hopefully the practice interventions will be seen in competition match situations and the ability for the players to control and cope with negative situations will be better.

Head Coach: It's definitely thought processes that need to be changed initially. It's a game management issue and how the response... we tell players, after a turnover, to get back to defend rather than attempt to win the ball back and cause more problems. Therefore, yes, I guess it's not really anything to do with effort as an intervention for crisis. It's probably not [player name removed] putting in more effort after the errors, just him not listening to instructions [a clear indicator of coach education].

Researcher: It links very well with the team drive aspects of the intervention. {Player name removed} thinks that he will be better off trying to get the ball back, even recklessly, and that causes more damage to the team. He needs to recognise that the team comes first. Of course, it may be the fact that he wants to look socially better to the team. He wants the others to see he is trying hard for them and that will be more important than benefiting the team. This is certainly an intervention we are working on.

Assistant Coach: That does sound right. He will always be looking for what the other think of him. Like the social ranking we've talked about a lot, he wants to be up the top so I'm starting to notice a load of things he does to push himself up the ladder. Getting everything to think he's a great team player and will do everything for the team whereas actually he might be doing it for himself only. I don't know if he knows that or not, that's something I'll need to discuss with him [Assistant coach shown a strong understanding of the interventions here].

Researcher: That's certainly something you can speak to him about personally and we will continue this work in the weekly sessions.

Researcher: In regards to performance expectations there was a serious lack of buying from the players in regards to the form and have you noticed an improvement in them filling it in?

Assistant Coach: We are asking them if they have done it before training starts and they all have, or say they have.

Researcher: Are you giving them a little more time before training?

Assistant Coach: To be honest the before training time is fine because they have that time with you.

Researcher: How's it gone with giving them time after training to finish filling it in?

Assistance Coach: That's fine, it only takes them a few minutes, actually not even that. They get it done very quickly. I just tell them to do it then, straight after the session finishes before they leave.

Researcher: Do they do it on their own?

Assistant Coach: Last session they did it in silence, which was a bit strange to have them quiet for a bit. But they were all quite tired. I don't think they all did it straight away though. I tend to leave them too it but I think some leave it. Do you know when they do it?

Researcher: There are certainly different time periods to when the form gets completed.

Head Coach: I think it's good to implement the reflection session every week before training. They don't do enough of it so hopefully we will start to see some changes in them and you can gather more data and they start to perform reflection. This will be a start which will hopefully get them doing more in the week as well rather than just on the one session.

Assistant Coach: I think the best day is Tuesday if they are going to do it because Monday is full training as well as Tuesday so they have the potentially to be highly effected by EABL practice environment by that Tuesday afternoon session.

Researcher: How has communication gone within the group recently, do you think there has been much change yet?

Head Coach: Negative communication has been better I'd say. There have been emotional responses but not directed at anyone in particular. They seem to communicate ok with other.

Assistant Coach: I had it the other day a bit, you weren't there for that morning session when [player name removed] lost his head. He was just getting on everyone's back.

Researcher: Did you stop it?

Assistant Coach: Immediately, but it was really general low level things throughout, it was difficult to pinpoint and say that was bad and don't do it. But I could see it was having an effect on the practice, it was bringing the level down.

Researcher: So he doesn't get it yet then?

Assistant Coach: No way, but we knew he was going to be the one that needed the most work. I noticed he improved after the first week, like he knew we were looking at him and he was better but maybe by habit he has slipped back into it. Hopefully over the weeks to come he'll improve it. I'll certainly keep looking to get on his back if he continues it in practice.

Researcher: Why didn't you stop it if you thought it was effecting the team negatively?

Assistant Coach: I should've done. He kept saying out of my ear shoot I think. He was also saying he wasn't directing it to anyone in particular, and I know we spoke about that, that the low level interference, that it doesn't need to be at anyone as it can still effect the group. In hindsight I should have removed him maybe as I don't think he would have changed as he was just in one of those moods.

Researcher: So what do you mean and what was the response from it not directed at anyone?

Assistant Coach: Huffs and puffs, or generic negative term, it's so obvious though that's it's in response to something that someone has done, an individual. They know it, we all know it. It doesn't help anyone but the player just does it. It's not effective for the team. It happened as a group more in the first weeks but not so much now. So I would say there has been an improvement overall. Again, it's just a few players now who do that.

Researcher: Do you think it's the work we have been doing?

Head Coach: I think it is. We spend a lot of time on it on co-court [positive communication]. I know you do and the players do seem to be able to adapt to that quickly, maybe more than the other things so it's not a surprise that they may have improved with that.

Researcher: And areas where there needs great improvement?

Head Coach: I think we have a long way to go for players not thinking about teammate mistakes as a negative and then communicating that too them. We keep saying that a mistake is not meant but it'll take time for players to understand that.

Researcher: I would say that the team first focus, team first decision making is not seen by all the players yet. It's very important for the whole group and the other interventions. Are there any other elements you see within the team that are positive in regards to communication and team cohesion?

Assistant Coach: The huddles are getting better and we can get more out of it. Rather than in transition, the players understand that the huddles are good for discussion. Say, when [Head coach name removed] blows the whistle after a drill we meet up and communicate then and be effective rather than players arguing over a point that doesn't even matter and certainly does not help the team and play at that time. We told them that there is a time to reflect upon this, the video play back is a great time rather than in the moment when it doesn't help the team. When we see the video there is less emotion and it simmers everything down. We are further down the line in communication sense from pre-season to now.

Researcher: Is it a fact of not letting the players focus on the past as they can't control what happened then?

Assistant Coach: Absolutely, the control thing is massive and something we have been talking about on-court as well. It's something they all do, they will focus on it and then when it doesn't come off get really annoyed despite the fact they can't directly effect it

Researcher: I guess you guys have not seen this as it's down to player responsibility but how do think preparation for practice has gone?

Head Coach: At the moment no one has been flagged for losing weight or lacking energy. Often its only when they hit rock bottom when we know about it. I don't think I've seen a significant change from the start of the year, but it's very much early days still.

Assistant Coach: I look at what we are working on and I see them maybe getting better in some areas. But it's not enough to say yes they think about everything they do and that is great now and we have a better team who performs to their maximum in each training session.

Researcher: What about some of the coach specific interventions, say with different approaches for different players?

Head Coach: We are starting to look at the newer players more and seeing if they respond to communication differently. I can see that they do and it's something we talk about, we wouldn't do that before.

Assistant Coach: We'd talk about it after a problem and now we discuss it straight away and I think that will help.

Researcher: And getting the team to succeed as a team and not on their own?

Head Coach: That has been interesting. It's been good, I like the idea, but we need to get our heads around it a bit more I think. Although, when we do that, just that in a session, I'd say it's a more productive session. The atmosphere is better and it's more competitive.

Researcher: How are you dealing with the fact of making every player part of the team?

Head Coach: We've had that with players not in the squad and trying to still get them in the practice group and letting everyone know their value. We do speak to the group... they know what's what though so that's difficult. I certainly something we need to work on as coaches.

Researcher: [Researcher summarised the intervention plans with the coaches] Do you want to change anything currently?

Head Coach: Well we are looking at the high effort as intervention so that changes from the original document but other than that I think we carry on with what we have.

Assistant coach: Yep, agreed.

Phase 1 and 2 Observation Field Notes

Week 1. 11/9/2018

Field notes following weekly meeting with players

The first meeting went well with players seeming to take on board the plan for the season. The players seemed to be unsure of the concept of putting effort first above all else. This may be because they require cognitive energy elsewhere and they need to focus upon technical and tactical components of the sport rather than just putting in effort. This factor will require more explanation for the players to understand the implications. The coach was a driver of effort in the group so they were not using this when they needed to increase performance. This would, therefore, mean they are not responding to poor performance with high effort. They are responding to negative performance with anger and frustration that doesn't aid future performance. Players still had a lack of understanding over effort and the fact it is the only controllable element. The players stated many areas of their sport that they felt were controllable, which were not under their direct control. The players provided evidence of feeling negative if they did not reach their expected level of performance and this would escalate and get worse.

Coaches had to reinforce being ready for practice. One of the players discussed 'being ready to practice' as being on time and kitted up, not about mental state and readiness. This mind-set is not appropriate for what the coaches want from the players. More sleep was cited as being needed due to work load increase at the start of the season. There was some mention of food from players. Diet, in regards to preparation, was an area that requires attention. There's a requirement to be focusing upon putting team ahead of all else. Players indicating that they were the most important element within practice. For example, there was no indication that, until it was stated in the meeting, that there was thought given towards behaviour that is good for the team. Players were only concerned about themselves. This theme/factor seems to be more towards an attitude towards the team first but this appears to be an area that needs a lot of attention in the future as they require further explanation as to the benefits of putting the team first and how that will develop the individual's performance. For example, every decision a player makes must be one that puts the team first because individuals cannot succeed without the team, therefore it's the most important aspect.

Coach discussion points

I raised with the coaches specific areas from the first meeting. High effort from the players throughout practice will be encouraged by the coaches. It is expected from players but they will emphasis this more, especially during challenging times. Players viewed preparation differently to what the coaches perceived. I suggested incorporating a practice period into the session, e.g. if the coaches wanted to start practice at 4.30pm they would tell the players it started at 4.20pm to allow them a period for mental focus and preparation. Preparation on a whole is an area that needs focus. We decided that this should put stated in weekly meeting with myself but the coaches would encourage better preparation, e.g., sleep and nutrition, where they can.

We also discussed the team first attitude of players, which also incorporated positive communication and cohesion within the group. The coaches were very keen to encourage a behaviour that promoted team success over all individual success and would ensure that this is implemented within practice sessions. This would take the form of consistent reinforcement throughout practice. However, the coaches were keen for me to push this in weekly team meetings. The coaches stated that it was clear that overall, it was clear that the players had very little understanding of the intervention strategies and it would need effort from both the researcher in weekly meetings and coaches within practice sessions to integrate the strategies.

Week 2. 18/9/2018

Field notes following weekly meeting with players

Good response rate from players remembering areas in second group. The first group was not as good. A player did refer to what was said last week regarding performance expectations and he said it helped the player. However, most of group didn't do it. This was further discussed during the meeting. The online form was only used following the meeting last week and not before any other practice session. The players said it was an extra thing for them to worry about and do, and it was not something they thought about. Therefore, the players have not bought into the benefit of the online form as a reflection tool as well as a measurement method. It was clear that most players did not change their behaviour before practice. This indicates the position that players are currently in as they seem to be unable to perform mental or physical preparation activities. The questionnaire may only need to be given out following the weekly sessions for the near future so that they can trial and see the benefit.

An incident did occur where two players engaged negatively with one player being ejected from practice. This was not a common occurrence but all the players were aware of the negative effects this gave. However, friendly banter was spoken of as being important but not when it became negative. It was mentioned that a player thought about or wanted to give negative communication after consecutive mistake but didn't, which did aid in one area. However, the player should not have even thought about it as a negative as the teammate is trying and mistakes will happen. This shows there is a lot of room for improvement. This also possibly shows that the group aren't there yet as there should not be the 'thought' of negative communication. However, it did show an adjustment on their behalf.

There is not a team first mentality currently and this is an area for considerable future work in weekly sessions. This needs to become a key area and needs to be clear with players and coaches that all the decisions must put the team first. I needed to reinforce a lot from last week with group 1. Players were reminded of key areas again and how they could ensure they are engaging with them. Music was mentioned as very important by one player.

Coach discussion points

The first discussion point was the buy in from the players for the online form. The online form does take a measurement, however, it is also a tool for the players to reflect upon their physical and mental state before practice. The coaches agreed to push the completion of this form before training. It was also agreed that the form should be completed after the weekly meeting before the practice session so that there is control from myself and the coaches can focus on it in just that practice session.

In regards to communication, the coaches were aware of issues. Coaches don't accept any negative communication within the group. However, it is still occurring so it may not be an area that they can control in the group. If players are thinking it, it will still cause problems and, therefore, there is a strong need to educate the players in this area so that we can improve this element. The coaches indicated that there didn't seem to be any clear improvement so far in the players in the areas we were focusing on. When coaches were asked their thoughts on the player that did manage to resist in making a negative comment to a teammate that made an error the assistant coach wondered if he should have had negative thoughts in the first place because the teammate didn't mean to make the error.

Week 3. 25/9/2018

Field notes following weekly meeting with players

Players are now only filling in online form weekly because they have not been doing it unprompted. This also allows us to give them the time needed to complete it in privacy and with enough time to fully reflect. In regards to data collection, there should be a significant amount of weeks under investigation and the quality of the data could be higher and there will be less gaps.

Players indicated that they thought about practice but what was happening in the future (e.g. during practice), not how they felt at that moment before and what their expectations were. Some players indicated that they had started to think about themselves and their state before practice but only when they were very tired. Therefore, it seems that the reflection for performance expectation may only need to be performed if the players do not feel 100%. Players stated that it was hard for them to perform performance expectation reflections for before practice, some of the reasons given were forgetting, didn't get round to it, couldn't be bothered, was too tired, didn't think about it. We discussed the need to start it in the weekly lesson and then the coaches making sure they prompt players afterwards.

The team as a whole seem to have shown no ability to see problems occurring and implementing an intervention, which included what the coaches do. The coach could stop conflict occurring and needs to intervene. Players mentioned teammates not supporting them through rough patches, which further indicates that there may not be an understanding yet of the team first approach and positive communication. This was repeated and discussed with the team. Players referred to preparation as only being punctual and kitted up ready to go rather than being in an optimal mental state. There is a need for coaches to get them to perform pre-practice expectations before practice.

Coach discussion points

Lack of form filling in was addressed by the coaches making sure they did it at least every Tuesday. If this carries on throughout the year then this should be effective data collection as it's just before matches and is well within the AASE programme. The players indicated barriers to the completion of online forms. Coaches indicated they will make sure players have time at the end of the practice session to complete the form. The coaches did indicate that the last week was better in player effort and communication.

Players indicated that they needed to reflect upon expectations only if they didn't feel at a good level. The coaches saw this as a mechanism for coping and will be important to stop it effecting negative performance and performance getting worse. The coaches and myself were still keen for the players to reflect upon their performance despite their physical or mental condition before practice and, therefore, worthwhile to keep going and not just getting players to do if feeling below par. If players deemed themselves to be at 100% then this reflection would make no difference to potential performance but if it was below 100% then it could help to negate any poor performance in the practice session that could lead to further performance detriment.

Week 4. 2/10/2018

Field notes following weekly meeting with players

It is becoming clear that effort as a primary focus may not be appropriate. It seems that effort as a primary focus may be most appropriate as a coping strategy if performance is poor or worsens during practice and the player cannot stop it spiralling downwards. Effort seemed needed when a crisis (e.g., unable to increase performance and performance continues to worsen) was occurring. It seems it may be a coping strategy for when performance drops and negativity is experienced. The model needs to be adjusted so that players employ high effort when a crisis is occurring. Therefore, high effort should be also seen as a coping strategy. Players agreed that if they had engaged a high effort focus when poor shooting occurred it may have helped. Effort should still be high throughout but as a primary focus over technical work etc... may cause a lack of focus. This is mainly because if players are playing well they will be putting in effort without having to think about it.

The preparation period before practice was said to help players focus on the session. However, I'm not convinced that players are thinking about where they are now, more towards the future. For example, they reflect upon the practice session and what they are going to do in it (e.g., their future performance). We discussed the need to reflect and think about their current state, which would subsequently influence their future practice performance.

Frustration was said to cause poor communication and not being able to stop frustration was a further element that caused negativity and poor performance. A player said that "when things go ok it's ok, but when they go wrong then they really go wrong".

This indicates a lack of coping and a player not succeeding becomes frustrated. Players who had an altercation didn't respond in the best way for themselves and the team. They didn't understand the damage they were causing the team by first the individual getting frustrated at the other player by not recognising the problems occurring. The group discussed why a team first mentality would actually benefit yourself as an individual because without your teammates you cannot achieve your own goals and objectives. The Team first element not in operation here and could well be because of this type of programme at the college. Players are here for personal development over team success so this may never be achieved. The outburst by the player was caused by mistakes being made e.g. technical mistakes. A lack of teammate support was quoted as causing poor performance.

Coach discussion points

All agreed effort should be seen as a way of coping or an intervention rather than a mind-set above all other things, as the players have too much to think about as it is. High effort is still expected throughout all elements of the team and the players. Coaches could understand and had seen a player who may still have crisis but the peaks and troughs have been closer together now. This has been noticed over the last few weeks and could be an indication of an effect of the intervention. There are certainly players who will display poor performance and have a negative crisis and, therefore, an intervention is needed. Coaches were made aware of the players not yet fully understanding the reason for putting the team first but they stated a more positive team appearance over the last week with better positive communication.

Further discussion upon effort and coping was discussed. Effort needs to be viewed in the correct way. In practice effort is employed when a player hits a negative. To avoid further negativity they should just focus on effort, e.g. if they are fatigued then they just worry about effort, and coaches said they would encourage that to happen if they observed it in practice. It's not the same as making a mistake and then an instant reaction. Therefore, further discussion within the weekly sessions is required to promote high effort as an intervention.

During the discussion with coaches, the questions about their fatigue levels and stress levels would be better asked before training so they can use that as a reflection activity as to how they currently feel for the session, e.g. this helps with performance expectations in the session. So, the general questions will be moved to the start of the

form and not left until after practice. This change took place on 10th October 2018 and will have a beneficial impact upon the reflection process of players and their predicted performance score set before practice.

Week 5. 9/10/2018

Field notes following weekly meeting with players

A decision was made by two players to perform further practice after a failed practice session. Therefore, improving preparation before next practice. Reflection is therefore evident upon a poor practice session (it was after poor shooting so again based upon tangible skills). They indicated that they understood the holistic approach required to basketball and it was a driver that made them want to perform extra practice activities.

As a group we again discussed high effort focus being needed in crisis situations rather than a primary focus and the players were happier with this. They felt they didn't need to focus on this if everything was going well but could see why it could be effective. They all agreed that this would be something to use as a coping mechanism but they would also need to ensure that they maintained a high level of effort through all the activities they did. They reiterated that when in a normal state there is too much skill and tactical information to think about and that just effort would not be an appropriate focus and high effort is shown anyway. Effort will be used as a strategy to not think about too much before practice (e.g., don't need to over think anything, just worry about putting in effort).

Players need to recognise problems and issues within the team when they occur as this appears to be an area they are lacking understanding. For example, they need to know what a problem is and what is not, therefore, they need a clear understanding of situations and incidents that do not hold benefit towards the team first. As stated previously, this environment is one of personal development and a stepping stone and perhaps lacks in a team first drive. We discussed at length what the advantages were in putting the team performance first and how that will advance individual performance. We also discussed why a purely individual approach would be damaging to individual performance within a team sport. One player indicated how being overly competitive in teammate versus teammate drills had caused negativity and a problem between the two players. This should be raised with coaches.

Coach discussion points

Communication has been better but general negative comments are still being made. Although there has been a vast improvement, specifically within the last week. The weekly meetings will continue to keep working with the players on a team first attitude and communication that is support and positive, which includes an understanding that players are not purposefully making errors and if they are given negative communication their performance will only get worse. For example, everything the player does has an effect on the team and they need to think about this with every decision they make in practice.

In regards to preparation, we need to use the form so we don't catch them at rock bottom. The completing of the form was noticed by coaches as a tool to improve preparation of the players. We discussed that reflection may be the cause of this. Coaches did comment that they had seen far less negative spiral situations in the last week and that the group, on the whole, seemed far calmer.

Intra-team competition issues were raised with coaches. There was discussion based around previous study findings in regards to competition being a vital component that may cause initial negative experience but how that would be advantageous to future performance and development. We all agreed it was a necessary tool within practice and that I should address the need for it in the next weekly meeting.

Week 6. 16/10/2018

Field notes following weekly meeting with players

Technical mistakes were discussed heavily in this session as the biggest measure of success for players. We discussed why this could be problematic if they failed in their performance as they may not be controllable. We discussed that trying to control elements of performance that cannot be controlled can lead to negativity. The importance of the tangible outcomes may never change, therefore, effort needs to be seen as an intervention during crisis as this is controllable.

One of the players spoke of not needing to reflect and they just get on with it. They think towards the future and what is to come rather than being mindful of the present and what led up to the present state. This again is an example of the need to focus upon why we use performance expectations before practice to focus upon the now. Most of the group seem to be aware now of why it is important to reflect upon current state and many gave examples of when they used it and when they actually changed their expectation.

One player had added that they felt physically bad and then didn't expect too much from the session, which allowed him to not enter a negative state during practice. There certainly seems like players are using the form more to set performance expectations if they feel fatigued or tired. Setting performance expectations are stronger when in current negative or diminished state.

Players are still tired due to their new schedule of training and this week was harder than most. They are struggling with early morning training. This was an opportunity to discuss the importance of preparation in the form of recovery. Players said they are using time wisely at the moment. The morning training sessions were described as tough and a lack of preparation beforehand would not help them get through it. All players agreed the need for effective preparation for the morning training and spoke of what they have done this week.

It is clear again that skill based activities and the failure to complete these activities at an acceptable level causes a significant source of negativity. Evidence of some coping strategies used. Player mentioned not letting the negative affect them. They stated that they focused upon effort only when they started to get annoyed and that it helped them to not get worse, although it didn't help them recover fully. However, if they were not 100% physically or mentally then they would never get back up to a high level and maybe just to stop the performance determination is effective enough for a better practice session. The purpose of using effort as a coping strategy was to stop a negative spiral from occurring and this seems to have happened.

Some of the key areas were: poor performance and focusing on negative feelings/emotions but was able to recover. It is highly technical in this environment, mistakes by players cause large amount of negativity still, allowing negativity to continue showed no coping ability and this occurred less but still happened with some players, and players are still trying to control uncontrollable elements of performance and this is causing negativity. All of the above were discussed and progress has been made over the previous weeks in the player's responses and understanding.

Coach discussion points

Moving forward into next weekly meeting after half-term break and into the next phase the following were discussed as priority: Effort: when to use as an intervention and how to use it, a team first orientation still required explanation on how the little things can

affect the team, especially those not aimed at anyone but are general negative behaviours and preparation to check that everything went well over the break and discuss any issues players had. Coaches were positive of the current programme and could see decreases in large performance drops within individual players, better communication and support within the group, and better group cohesion.

Observation

The observation was unstructured. However, it aimed to assess the presence of elements set out on the intervention strategy. The following text is a write up of the notes made during a practice session. On the whole, individual players displayed a high degree of effort throughout the session. However, there were several players who showed less concentration at certain moments in the session. These were mainly around times where players were rotated and when not involved they didn't seem to have a focus upon what was happening on court, which was something they were asked to do. I did notice that the players who spent more time off the court were not regular EABL players.

A communication issue came up after approximately 15 minutes where a player had criticised another player for making an incorrect decision. What was interesting here was that the player who had been criticised didn't make a single response to the criticism. This episode then finished without any perceived effect upon any player. It could have been that because the player had not reacted then this stopped the communication from being negative as it didn't cause a negative reaction. However, the player that had given the negative comment made a mistake in the very next run through of the drill, a mistake that I believed to be uncharacteristic of the player's ability. The player then got quite annoyed with himself. Again, there seemed to be no ill effect upon the player who got criticised in the rest of the session

Before the session started, the players used the questionnaire. Following practice the assistant coach clearly asked player to complete the questionnaire and all seemed to do it apart from one player who left straight away and another who kept shooting free throw shots. It did not take the players long to complete it. Possibly two minutes passed until they all had done it. And were clearly either doing something on their phone, e.g., texting, or were changing their kit e.g., shoes. There was no evidence in the session of a player having a drastically poor performance. However, I noticed that two players seemed to be less confident than they usually are during the session. Their heads were down and did not talk much. After the session I checked their questionnaire responses and one had

not expected to perform well because they felt ill and the other had thought they would practice well (6/7) but after the session recorded a lower actual performance (5/7). It was unclear what effected them but it may have been the expectation of performing well, which they were unable to meet.

Coach Focus Group Transcription – Phase 3

Date: 05/11/2018

Week 8

Total time 31 minutes.

Researcher: Do you think the players are coping well with completing the questionnaire and that they are using it as planned for reflection?

Head Coach: I was and maybe a bit worried with some of them that they are just doing the questionnaire because coaches say they have to do it, not because they see the benefit in it. I'd say I think they are looking into it more as a reflective tool, maybe it's that they do it anyway and don't need to be reminded about it now.

Researcher: So you think players only fill it in because you make them feel it in?

Head Coach: It's maybe something I can reflect back on and how I've delivered it, how we've delivered it in the session. I might be too quick to just say do it and give no real explanation of the benefits of reflection. But somethings obviously not clicked for some of them to see the value in it. I guess I haven't shown them the value of it as much as I could have. At the moment... I guess with anything, if they don't see the value in it they don't do it. Although I think there has been a better understanding within the players of how they feel and what expectations they should be setting.

Assistant Coach: I think they do, I think there is more reflection from them. Maybe they just see the questionnaire as annoying but they do and have actually taken something from it now. Saying that, most of the guys do it all the time, there's a handful that might need pushing, especially the older guys who don't think they need any help or don't want to look like they are doing something like that, I don't know.

Researcher: Have you noticed that there are better performances over the last few weeks, and that the interventions areas are coming through?

Assistant Coach: It has been better certainly. It's a more consistent high quality of play and performance. I've 100% seen less negativity from players and they are getting quite close as a group. The cohesion is really strong. Players are understanding their roles a lot better and understanding what we what from them on the court. They are executing things a lot

better. Whether that's down to the changes I don't know as it could be anything. Like we said at the start, it's difficult to measure it as it's so complex. But I'd say things like, say preparation... the players are focused when they come into training now, more than before. They are switched on earlier.

Researcher: Have any negative spirals happened?

Head Coach: They are always going to happen. No matter who you are they are going to happen but there's improvement for sure. They still happen but it doesn't boil over to the levels it did earlier in the year. There's still emotion and selfishness, there's still a lot of frustrations, but it seems to not go into the lows that it did before. They [players] kind of recognise it a bit quicker and come out of it quicker. I'll speak to the boys if they are going through a tough patch and just remind them about a few things and it seems to be good. It's about understanding yourself and the situation, if you know that this will happen and I deal with it like this then it's going to be much better for performance.

Researcher: Is that following the same pattern as previous years?

Head Coach: It's very different this year due to the players but I would say that it is already on par with last year and considering where we started that's pretty good.

Researcher: why has the group been so different?

Head Coach: This is our worst group in a way at the start because there are so many different players, it's the most amount of external players we have brought in before. So previously there have been a lot of our own club players that know us and our philosophy, know the pathway. Now it's a lot of players that have come in thinking ok I've come to [team name removed], I've got to have a great year and then I'm going to go on. They don't know our club structure, they don't really know what we are about. Previously there have been only two or three external players and the rest of the group is our group and know what we are about then they have conformed to the group. But now it's kind of a 50/50 split, there isn't that core group that know the [club name removed] way or the [team name removed] way. You do have that selfishness, you don't have a group moving forward and people jumping on board with that group, it's kind of a bit fragmented and the start of the year was one of the toughest yet. But to have the psychological stuff in there this year has been a massive boost as it's meant we can take a tough group and move them forward a lot quicker.

Researcher: So you are still seeing selfishness in the players and it's a bit of a killer for the team still?

Assistant Coach: Yes, selfishness and certainly different players coming from different areas and us not having the practice time with the group. So we have S&C sessions, we have individual workouts but only 2.5 hours a week for team practice here with all the boys in one group without the splits. You can't integrate a team and flush out those attitudes, that selfishness, you can't get people to buy into their role or what they can do to benefit the team in 2.5 hours a week, you just can't do it. They need to hit it as a team as early as possible. I can see that this has happened a lot with this group so it's good.

Researcher: Do you feel that people are only here for themselves and that they are their only route of success?

Head Coach: Yes. However, I think that they buy into it if they are playing and playing well, but as soon as there is any adversity they struggle. If they are not performing well then it's all about them, all the weight is on them, they become very insular. So ultimately it's selfishness.

Researcher: So intervention wise that is an area that needs to be addressed?

Head Coach: Yes, and in the chats we have had it's certainly going to be the hardest one to change. I think we all agree that to switch their mind-set from self to team will be hard.

Researcher: Do you think it's because the players will practice to better themselves but in a match it's different because they are playing in a team?

Assistant Coach: It's the mix then that's hard right? It's getting the players to work for themselves and improve themselves but then there must be an end goal of playing in a team and making sure you are effective for that team. It's a different mind-set from practice to matches for sure but I think we've all been pretty clear that the team agenda is strongest overall as it doesn't matter why a player wants to get better, they just want to and will so they do it for everyone.

Researcher: What about communication, how is that going?

Assistant Coach: Communication has got better. What are we now, quite a few months in? There's still times in adversity when there's not effective communication, doesn't get the right result, communication with too much emotion or it's slightly negative, but it's a big improvement from where it was. The body language, like with the tutting, has stopped.

The communication where it's out of the person's control, like if someone misses a shot or drops a ball, that has stopped. I haven't heard much from that lately, which is good. They are understanding it and I think genuinely for the most part when they say something in a huddle or a 1 on 1 it's to help the person they are speaking to which is a good sign. I think the work you've been doing with them on this has been effective and there's a clear understanding among the group now to what is acceptable and not.

Researcher: It's probably an easy thing for them to see so that's maybe one thing that has started to help this season [tangible evidence], they now know if they are negative then it doesn't help. Are you seeing any signs that forms of negative communication is going to be bad for performance at the moment?

Head Coach: Yes, I think with the group we have it is because you need.... You got to have a very strong relationship with each other to be able to use a negative as a positive, for you to say "come on man" or for whatever it may be, like "you are better than that". But there's times you can (be negative) if you have a good relationship with someone you can give them a little negative comment because they know it will fire them up because you got a strong relationship with them, but we are not there. We don't have any really strong relationships so any negative is going to get someone's back up. So yeah it's got to be positive, it's got to be packaged as helpful... this persons going to help me otherwise nothing can be said.

Researcher: Is it tough for a group like this to get strong relationships if the players change every year?

Assistant Coach: I'd say you build up a team over a year and then it's great, then we finish. It's the nature of the beast I'm afraid, it's just the way it is.

Researcher: And you said that you are struggling with time as a group together and relationships could be accelerated with more time?

Assistant Coach: Yes, we would probably have it cracked by now if we... like other academies have their group on weds, Thursday, Friday, practice as a club and games with the same academy at the weekend. So now those guys are together 7 days a week, they are going on 2 away trips a week where they are all together and that's just helping the group dynamic. Whereas we break apart where some don't really see each other as a group on Thursday, Friday, Saturday, Sunday, some of them go to under 18s, some go to

division 3 or division 1 and all their roles are different in those teams so when they came back on the Monday it's like oh I don't really get to play on this team, which is not ideal.

Researcher: Have you noticed if players are tired and they train, have you noticed any complete declines or are they more able to deal with it?

Head Coach: Yeah, I think the ones that have struggled, [player name removed] and [player name removed] have been better but he's selfish when things.... I think there's times when he's tired and there's more chance for him to become frustrated, [player name removed] has been better but it's been.... with [player name removed] its more about the emotion and the stage of the game rather than, I think how tired he is. Yeah so I'm not sure how, I haven't really thought about how external things might have a correlation and the times they have become frustrated.

Researcher: Do you think that preparation is improving as a whole and is it resulting in better practice performance?

Head Coach: Yeah, from what I've seen, from pre-practice preparation, they are all there well before the time. They are doing their pre-habilitation, they are shooting, they are getting themselves mentally ready. I don't see much laughing and joking, they are doing things that are game related that will help them [evidence]. It will engage them and get them ready for practice so they are ready for the start of practice. As regards to away from the court, I don't really know.

Researcher: Going forward, looking at the intervention areas, the way that they expect performance, there may be those players that have those negative experiences in training, there may be people who are selfish, where would you want the improvements to be currently and are we on the right lines?

Head Coach: I think we have isolated several players that need more support. Would you agree?

Assistant Coach: Yes

Head Coach: The big ones are [Player name removed], [Player name removed], [Player name removed] and [Player name removed]. You got [Player name removed] and [Player name removed] who stand out as being very selfish because of how, what they are when things don't go their way.

Assistant Coach: It's a maturity thing for me, it's not about level of ability.

Head Coach: The team might be going well but if things aren't going well for them they are sulking. That is noticeable and takes away from on court performance of the team. [Player name removed] is very insular when things don't go his way, again if he is unable to score then he becomes very insular and has body language is poor. With [Player name removed] it's the other way, he wants to win at all costs, but it's almost controlling those emotions.

Researcher: Again we spoke about the controllables and do you think this is important?

Head Coach: It's extremely important and an element that they need to be working on. I know you have worked on this in the past, last year, I think it's an important message and possibly the route to a lot of the problems they have because they try and control what they can't and that brings them down. That's maybe when they spiral into negative and more of a negative state.

Researcher: So control is important to maybe get added to intervention in some way?

Head Coach: Yes, absolutely. It's all so [Player name removed]... that he is able to help the team the best he can. Rather than boiling over... but he is trying to make a conscious effort with it but I think that is something that he needs additional support with.

Player Focus Group Transcription – Phase 4

29/11/2018

Week 11

Total time 32 minutes.

Players present:

Chris

Gary

Liam

Jim

Neil

Simon

Harry

Researcher: In practice over the last weeks has anyone needed to implement a strategy due to negative situation?

Liam: Sometimes the training sessions might start flat which is always a negative because we don't have that much time to train so it's like if we start off flat then that training session might reflect in how we play. It's a negative. If it happens to me I try to give some energy, clap, say good job to the next player and so on.

Jim: I will sometimes certainly focus on just working hard. The other day I was so tired and I knew it would be poor so I just got on with it. Like you said, ignore the outcome of what I was doing and just get on with it. I didn't practice that well still.

Researcher: But did things get worse?

Jim: Not really, they just stayed where they were. I knew I was tired so it was just one of those things, nothing I could've done about it, it is what it is.

Researcher: Would you have done that before we started this year?

Jim: Probably not.

Researcher: Anyone else?

[Silence for several seconds. It seemed that it wasn't the fact that no one would discuss but they may not have had an example to share.]

Chris: I think I have been in this situation. I've stopped the downward spiral that we have talked about but I can't like start an upward trend, so I can like make it plateau but yeah.

Researcher: How do you stop it?

Chris: Just by stopping reminiscing about mistakes. Thinking about what's next rather than what's been. But it doesn't actually make my performance improve it just stops the continuous decline.

Researcher: But that's positive because it shows that you are aware of what's going on. What about everyone else?

Simon: I'd say like if you are having a bad shooting day, try and impact the game in another way so maybe try and get rebounds and give the ball to other players to see if they can score, if they are playing better than you.

Researcher: Do you remember how we have spoken before about a bad period and putting maximum effort in, anyone done that, forgetting about errors made but just playing hard. Any examples?

Neil: My example is because my three's weren't really going in, in games, I can't really score a three, which I'm capable of scoring, so in training I do other aspects like drive to the basket more and do more jump shoots but obviously if I'm free I'll shoot the three, it's just like...

Researcher: So you are looking at other avenues?

Neil: Yes.

Gary: I didn't have the best start, like I struggled with the play from changing to this training, but I have been putting in 100% effort in the last few weeks and I can tell its improved because I had two good games at the weekend and played well in my first game for college, so just giving full effort it has seemed to work in some way.

Researcher: So you think you have just picked up your intensity rather than needing an intervention?

Gary: Yes

Researcher: So would you say that you have used effort as an intervention strategy that lasted a significant amount of time rather than just a moment in one session?

Gary: It's been something I've been thinking about all the time now.

Researcher: You guys must have had a time when you have come to practice tired, has anyone got an example of adjusting their expectations before the start of practice?

Liam: I feel like it's worked a little bit because it's got me thinking about why I'm tired and stuff like that and I start thinking about I need to sleep more, turn my phone off at night and eat better, so I feel it's worked.

Researcher: But not in practice, more outside of practice?

Liam: Yes, but it does help in practice.

Harry: Like, I didn't think about it on Tuesday because I was well late after lesson and didn't think about anything and it really affected me because I wasn't prepared. I just got straight into training and to be honest, I wasn't 100%, I probably knew it. The session was terrible in terms of my performance.

Researcher: Anyone expected less of themselves in practice so they don't get as down on themselves?

Simon: Like on Thursday we had training and then a game after, I was dead. I was so tired and I thought I'm probably not going to have my best session here, I obviously tried and because it was division three you are playing against men and you are going to try and work because you are the youngest one there but it's just hard to go when you are tired. Before hand when you had training before and games, it's really tiring.

Researcher: So you guys are all happy with the idea of reflection is that you won't ever be able to change the outcome of a session if you are tired, but you can stop yourself from falling into negative a mind-set and negative spiral if you accept that you might not hit top level, or are you guys just turning up and whatever happens, happens?

Gary: I actually think it's sometimes a bit of both. I think that sometimes when you are giving 100% effort it's difficult to have those thoughts consciously about what do I expect of myself because you are just thinking effort, effort, effort. Whereas there's less time to

reflect to think am I playing to the level that I expect myself to be, are other people's expectations matching my expectations?

Researcher: What happens though if you are on a downer, and in the session you start to play badly? Maybe your feet aren't moving as they should? You aren't hitting the standard you want? What happens?

Gary: I would say the effect is dampened somewhat but I wouldn't say it's completely reduced because... staying in that mind-set where I accept I'm not going to play as well, I don't know... it's difficult for me to grasp.

Researcher: Do we all feel it's quite tricky to get to practice and say I accept I'm not going to play the way I want to or is it quite difficult to accept?

Simon: It's difficult because you are competing with other people around you and you don't want to show them that you are not as good as them [social/ranking aspect]. At the end of the day you always want to be better than the people around you. If you are competitive in your sport then showing that you are not as good... I don't, personally like that really, I hate it when people say they are better than me, but it depends on who you are as a person.

Researcher: So if you have ten training sessions in a row and the first nine you are happy, do you feel like if the 10th session is bad then people will judge you on that?

[Researcher note: is effort related to goal type? e.g., if player is individualistic orientated then they may just put effort into scoring and then not in the team moves such as defence. Therefore the type of person will dictate where they apply their effort and it's not something that can be used as an intervention. Is it physical effort they need to put in? Do these players (younger players) realise what fatigue they are experiencing?]

Chris: Most people will look for your mistakes more than what you do well, depending on who you are talking to. So people.... you can counter with a positive but they will just come back with a negative you have done in the session, which can bring it all down for you.

Researcher: So are we all still feeling that the team cohesion is strong?

Harry: It's certainly stronger than my first year and what it was maybe last year as well.

Liam: I think that because there is limited spaces [due to a big squad] all the positions are very competitive so you have to fight for your spot.

Simon: So you feel that the extra competition is maybe meaning that... but you are a team so at no point should your teammate be making you feel you are substandard. If you have a bad session shouldn't you be able to go, yeah I had a bad session there and get on with it.

Researcher: Do you guys feel you can't do that because it's so competitive?

Liam: Sort of. Because its competitive it doesn't have to be like someone saying oh they out played you, it's like in training, obviously [player name removed] is someone that I'm up against most of the time and if he has a better training session than me he doesn't actually have to speak to me but me and myself know what I'm capable of and I'll be like, damn, I've really done poorly and it's more like reflecting on yourself rather than what other people say. I think that can really effect you as well [it's the personal reflection of ability, e.g., not on what others say but your opinion of yourself set against personal standards]. The kind of person you are, the traits you have, will determine stuff like that.

Researcher: But him playing well, is that not good for the team?

Liam: Of course but...

Researcher: If he's playing better than you at training and gets more minutes than you in games is that good for the team?

Jim: I think it's good for both because if he is stepping up then that means I have to step up and it makes it more competitive and we both have to step up. It's got a positive and a negative, everyone wants to get the most minutes, the most points, everything. But it's still a team effort so it's cool we are getting wins but that just means I got to sort myself out and do a lot better. Its bitter sweet.

Researcher: So is it safe to say that team spirit is better but everyone is still in their heads out for themselves. For example, to be playing and achieving for yourself and, therefore, the team is secondary?

Simon: At the end of the day we have all come here to play for ourselves and the basketball so like you want to do well for the team but also for yourself if you want to do something with basketball, like if you want to go to America, you can't go if you are clapping on the bench like it's not going to be a big impact but playing as a team is probably the most important part because if the team plays well then you play well.

Researcher: So, there is conflict between you and the team but with you guys its different because it's a halfway house to develop and move on. It always comes out in the previous

work I've done that the team needs to play well and be the focus but no one seems to actually follow through with it. You struggle with the conflict. Thoughts on that?

Neil: It's about finding the right balance. As an individual you set yourself goals and what you want to achieve by the end of the year but if the teams winning then by the end of the year if you win a Championship and you underperform then you'd rather take the championship win than your stats. But I think it's about finding the balance.

Chris: I think we have gotten better as a team. I know I think about my decisions more and that when you said that if my team mate isn't doing well then that means they won't do well for me so I help them more. So really they are linked aren't they? Because if my teammate plays bad, we play bad, I don't get what I want.

Gary: I think it would be unrealistic to be completely altruistic, obviously it's a basic human mind-set to be selfish in a way but is kind of accepting the realisation that the team winning is self-serving to everyone else and trying to maximise how much you can serve the team.

Simon: I think if the teams winning and you are doing your job then that's the ultimate thing, like the best thing. If you are doing your job and the teams winning then... but then if you underperform and the team wins then its best that the team wins because obviously you are relying on the rest of your teammates to step up if you have a bad game where it's so competitive in training that's where you know that your teammates have your back if you have a bad game.

Researcher: Would you say that an upcoming opponent switch focus towards the 'us' of the team against the 'them' of the opposition. Rather than the 'me' or 'I' in a group of 'others' that I have to compete against with the former causing competition and motivate so that's good in long-term and the latter will cause group cohesion?

General response: Not sure on that.

Researcher: Do you think that if everyone came with the idea that everyone was selfish and to be selfish, but if everyone realised that if the team goes first then you are being selfish because if the team does well, then you do well. It's a different way of looking at it. You can only do as well as the team performs. But I don't think you guys can get your heads in that space because you are here for yourselves, is that true?

Gary: I think it's difficult to realise that because you don't actually experience the end results until after you have made that decision in your head. You can't say that if I do completely accept the team then this will definitely happen. There's a degree of uncertainty to everything and that's what makes the decision so... it creates so much conflict in your mind as to what do I actually want to achieve in the time, or the minutes, or the position I'm in.

Neil: But I would say that thinking about this has helped the team. I think that we all think a lot more about each other.

Harry: The team definitely has more of a drive now as we sort of know it's good for us, but like he said, it is difficult to get into that mind-set. I probably need to work really hard to get it.

Chris: At the moment we can take an example, like if our team like is winning, like if we win the game, and some players haven't played, then you can actually see, their body expressions, obviously they are not happy so they don't see the team actually won but you can see they want their individual effort to be part of the team. But for one point we have got a very talented team so we trust each other a lot so that's why I think...

Liam: Me personally I feel we are more of a team but I think we all have a long way to go. It's this conflict between yourself and the team. Its realising that if you put the team first you put yourself first, are you still developing?

Neil: Like the energy from the bench is better now. So like when people are getting subbed off we are giving high 5's and more participation on the bench and everyone is supporting each other [Evidence of potential intervention success].

Jim: I do think about others more. If he can help me win then I'll help him get there, it's for me at the end of the day anyway so that's good.

Researcher: How's the communication in the team been going?

Simon: I feel like it's improved a lot. Especially because like with personal experience it's obvious that frustration can get on to you with mistakes that may cause you to act differently. So like turn overs, errors, or missing shots or not making the right moves. It can affect everyone. Some people know how to deal with it in the right way but I feel a lot of us have kind of learnt how to communicate and communication has got a lot better, like not shouting at people and just talking in a mellow, calm way.

Researcher: Interesting how you said learn as it's not an in built trait, you learnt how to speak in this environment and the people within it. It's the fact that you have started to think about how to speak to each other and how if one player gets down, you being negative doesn't help them, doesn't then help the team and therefore doesn't help you [Evidence of intervention].

Neil: I think its knowing each person, I think different people react differently to how you speak to them. Some people get an arm across the shoulder and a quiet word and other people react and get motivated by shouting at them.

Researcher: Looking at mistakes now, do we all accept that making any form of negative communication won't help a teammate because negativity is contagious and it will spread across the team. That you need to accept that your negativity will impact upon yourself?

Simon: I think that support is vital for every player. If we support each other then we can bring many wins.

Jim: We've noticed it this year as well by having a downward effect, speaking to people, me and [player name removed] with [player name removed] and that we found that out in a game, we ended up going down by 14 and then we said at half time that we will say how we want to be spoken to and then we ended up winning by 7. It's good seeing the results of that, but it's taken a while to get there. Yeah but it's pretty much a brand new group this year and obviously it's going to take time to form communication and a bond.

Researcher: Can you speed that up, is it about spending time together?

Liam: I feel like it's the scenario, because what happens over four weeks of training and what happens over two days could be different. So like with in games and stuff. So like in two days, let's say that we train once, we are not going to know each other that well but over four weeks of training together, like knowing how each other plays, certain mistakes that occur. From like week 1 to week 3 you know that [player name removed] doesn't want to be spoken to like that, I'll just bring him to the side and talk to him calmly and like matt doesn't mind being spoken to in a stern way just not shouting at him and stuff like that. Over a longer period I feel like it is more beneficial.

Researcher: If you played [team name removed] who you lost to at the start of season now, would you win after the time you have spent together now?

Liam: Yes, 100%.

Researcher: So it's all down to the team and there were problems?

Neil: We were all fresh and didn't have that chemistry together.

Researcher: Are the lifestyle decisions outside of practice good?

Gary: I feel like they are good for me. I feel like I've improved. I am drinking more water and stuff like that. But I know that he had chips today [pointed to another player in jest who responded that they were hungry]

Researcher: Are the bad choice foods helping with fatigue if we think about what we do outside of practice will affect our basketball?

Liam: Not really

Researcher: What about sleep?

Simon: Yes, trying to get eight hours a night

Researcher: Is everyone else ok?

Gary: I think it's with people with long travel times. Like [player name removed] has recently moved closer to the college and it's tough for people to get enough sleep when they are travelling so much. I'd say I don't struggle with it the most but I'd say like with some. Trying to maintain A levels and being very conscious about everything going on it can kind of just manifest, there's a lot of anxiety as to am I doing everything right, am I kind of reaching the minimal or exceeding what I have to do to be in good shape or have a healthy mind-set and healthy lifestyle.

Researcher: Do you get angry and annoyed if you don't hit the standard?

Gary: I'd say I get more anxious, I don't get angry but.... having those pressures and stresses, in an ideal world I wouldn't have to think about them, it's unavoidable in certain circumstances.

Simon: The last two years we had small squads and it was kind of like groups of two or three here and two or three there but this year I feel like everyone is really close this year.

Researcher: Its strange for a big squad to be like that isn't it?

Simon: No, it's weird, obviously everyone is trying to achieve the same thing so that might be the reason [a common goal amongst every player].

Researcher: I'm hoping that what [head coach name removed] and [assistant coach name removed] is feeding into the group about a team first mentality is good and helps with the conflict. The group look like it's getting there but there is still conflict and the next step would be to get over that hurdle. Would you agree?

General response: All player agreed.

Phase 3 and 4 Observation Field Notes

Week 7. 29/10/2018

Field notes following weekly meeting with players

This session was after half-term. The players had a different training routine. I took this opportunity to encourage a reflection upon the implementation strategies. They were asked to write them down on a piece of paper and a description given. Every player was able to recall the strategies, however, there was varying levels of detail, which may indicate a difference in the depth of understanding between the players.

We started discussions with the questionnaire. Players stated that they were happy with filling in the questionnaire and that they could see the benefits of it. One player gave an example of how it helped them during half-time to think about how they felt before their individual training. There was a very tough physical challenge in the morning and then training in the afternoon. They felt tired but stated they lowered expectations for the afternoon session and they actually played far better than they predicted they would. This was good evidence to suggest that players are benefitting from reflection prior to practice.

Further discussion saw raised the issue of effort and that effort was still to be seen as more of a coping strategy because when focusing solely on it, it can become disruptive. Also, high effort was again stated as being almost subconscious and a behaviour that is ingrained. Communication was stated as generally better and this would be evidence in an observation of the practice environment. Looking at previous field notes, there may be a need to use control as an element within the strategies. This will be discussed with coaches.

Coach discussion points

This session was short due to a coaching commitment that needed to be covered. Discussions covered a recap of the strategic interventions moving forward. It was agreed that the current strategies should be continued but further discussion would be made next week when we have been back for a week and the coaches had more time. We discussed the need for control and what the players tried to control but due to time limits we would discuss in detail next week. I raised with the coaches the need to ensure that they focused heavily this week on the strategies as the players may not have been subject to them the week before and behaviours may start to slip as it had only been 6 weeks. They agreed.

Week 8. 05/11/2018

Field notes following weekly meeting with players

A player stated that they weren't sure about the need to think about how they felt before practice. On further probing they felt that they didn't need to because they felt ok. It may well be that the reflection acts as an early coping mechanism and only needs to be done before practice if they don't feel at 100% fitness. It could also be that performance expectations are still not being made that well by players. The problem could be that there are still ranking and social issues if they don't perform well. Therefore, it doesn't matter at all if they don't feel great they just need to hit their standard for others to see. This will be raised in the next meeting.

Part of me thinks that the above links in with team drive as they are all very much independent still and this could be because of the setting they are in. AASE is a halfway house to the next step. Therefore, they aren't focused on team doing well, only themselves. They don't seem capable of breaking this cycle. [Player name removed] talked about this brilliantly in player forum. However, if they do break it and play for the team and put the team first then everything will be better for themselves, which is in line with the previous research. It appears that team drive may have improved but not to optimal levels. This may not even be possible in this environment due to it being a halfway house.

Preparation seems to have stayed fairly static if the player responses are to be used as evidence. I don't think it has massively improved yet. This may be a maturity thing and the ages there are at they don't have the knowledge and experience to work on their own nutrition and sacrifice parts of a social life. This does link heavily with performance expectation. Maybe they just aren't at a level where they put their basketball first as they still have their studies and other areas of their life that are important. It could be that these strategies are needed but some of them are not possible to implement because the players are not capable of carrying them out without significant intervention being made.

Coach discussion points

This week's coach meeting was replaced with a coach's focus group. One area that was discussed with players last week was the need for players to only try and control what they can control. The coaches were asked their opinions on this and said how important it was. It links well with the strategies and across several of them. For example, players cannot control how they feel physically and mentally at every occasion, despite trying to

with better preparation. Therefore, they can't control it and that means performance expectations are needed. It also links into coping strategies. There seems to be a strong need to add this into what is discussed each week with players and this will start next week.

Week 9. 12/11/2018

Field notes following weekly meeting with players

Discussion started around the need to hold a social position within the team even if players felt they couldn't achieve the performance they wanted to. This is very much in line with the previous research performed in the current programme. The players used this as a basis to understand why they might feel under pressure at training and how negative spirals can occur if they don't recognise it. This also helped with the need for reflection before practice.

There was a strong discussion point around control. Players were asked to name what they could control on court and most stated far more than just effort. Effort is the only controllable factor they have so it was interesting to see the player recognise and understand this and take it forward. They were instructed on how this may impact upon several of the strategies we are working on.

Coach discussion points

Coaches were advised on current progress with the players. We discussed the control session we did with the players. Overall, there was general discussion about progress. Coaches were still trying to implement the strategies the best they could in practice but did admit they may not have put as much effort into employing them this week. They would reassess and move forward stronger in the next session. The coaches did state that they had some very good sessions recently, which may have contributed to them not thinking about the interventions because everything was working. One area in particular was the communication between the players that they believed was very strong.

Week 10. 19/11/2018

Field notes following weekly meeting with players

This week players had discussed feeling tired due to a hard S&C session yesterday and we discussed the need to reflect on this so that expectations shouldn't be too high. However, as discussed before we spoke about using it more so as an intervention if they

felt like they might be under standard. For example, if players felt tired but thought they would still perform well then reflection may not be needed. However, if a player did feel like they were struggling before practice then they should decrease their expectations to protect against a negative spiral and performance catastrophe. Another point raised was the need to not allow social/ranking position to take control of what we are doing. Every player was happy to attempt to try this and not judge others and not have the pressure from others put on their shoulders if they felt they couldn't go 100%. All players agreed that they wouldn't be overall focused upon just a one off training session and having the group all accept it seemed like a great movement moving forward as there were a lot of discussions about how players felt in the session. One player at the end of the session stated how much better they felt now that the group had talked about one poor moment or one poor practice session not defining you as a player and because we were all on the same page he felt more relaxed going forward.

However, to conclude, it was important for myself to let the players know that they should still be competing against each other. One player did raise this that they didn't want to drop their expectations. Therefore, it certainly is something more of an intervention but as players constantly train at substandard condition, this may be more common than they thought. This discussion dominated the weekly meeting and little was spoken about other strategies.

Coach discussion points

No coach meeting was held this week due to away fixtures and staff holidays. However, in a conversation in the office the Head coach spoke of a player suffering from a lack of confidence after a run of poor performance. The player was one that had been highlighted before as someone who may struggle mentally with many aspects. The player had not been particularly responsive in many meetings. The coaches asked if I could discuss potential solutions for him to try.

Observation

A different approach to the observation was taken. Rather than a narrative being written across the entire session, I noted down occurrences as they happened in time. Each observation starts with the time the note was written:

17.28 Pre-practice prep. Players arrive after team meeting but no coach as of yet. 18 players at practice. Team had scouting meeting before practice, Head Coach not present.

Player prep done in sports hall. 'Booting up' was done and socialising was evident. Lots of humour, laughing, players stretching. The more vocal older and higher status/level players were leading social exchanges.

17.32. Players organised themselves in a warm-up routine, which was started by [player name removed]. Warm-up was relaxed. Not all players were doing the same thing at same time. Some players shooting and using ball as they go up and down the hall. The atmosphere seemed more relaxed than focused. However, it seemed organised and players were doing what they should be doing. Not all players shot, seemed to be most confident leading that. Still no coach present.

17.35. Warm-up was done as group but each player had own individual process.

17.37. They had intensity in warm-up but was relaxed. They did seem to follow a structure that was pre-planned.

17.38. Coach arrives and team had a hands in at start.

17.39. Started drills. Lots of support and clapping while individuals did physical drill. Had high effort through short intensity independent drill.

17.40. Clapping got louder as drill went on. Lots of high 5's after completing drills. This is very much engrained into these players from the basketball culture and is perhaps not an indicator of better team cohesion. There was total focus on tasks and no messing around.

17.43. Teamwork, pass defence drill. High effort and constant support. I do wonder if problems occur in these similar drills or is it more with competition drills where players go up against each other. Could it be that problems occur when decisions have to be made by players? One injured players was in the hall shooting. Therefore, he was still involved with the group at practice.

17.45. Success was applauded. It seems that structured drills (no personal decision making per say) is controlled.

17.49. [Player name removed] missed a shot and showed negative reaction momentarily, recovered well however. There was significant evidence of high effort high and intensity from the group. Support was given after a mistake. All players listening to coach. Highly structured coaching session. During scrimmage there are some players leading huddles.

17.57. Some players waiting a while on the side line, which seemed to be the weaker players, before they rotated and joined in. This was a tactical exercise for the next competitive opposition so the team players were used more.

17.59. There is a sign of a player getting down after mistake, his team had less loud players and support wasn't as much as the other team. He was also left out of a huddle for an unknown reason. He didn't look happy. He was a weaker player and seemed to not get the support from the others, which may be because they expected it from him. He appeared to become less motivated as it went on. He was also spoken to by coach with feedback after errors. One of the older players fell on the floor and two other players went straight over to help him up.

Week 11. 26/11/2018

Field notes following weekly meeting with players

This week the players took part in a focus group rather than weekly meeting. During the transcription process of the player focus group it became clear that interventions were adapting. Players were also picking them up at different rates which begs the question of do we continue with more one to one work with players who are struggling over those that are not.

Coach discussion points

We discussed a potential problem with a key player who had lost a lot of confidence. I had spoken to the player and, in line with the strategic interventions, advised for him to try to forget about outcomes and just focus on applying as much effort as possible. He also spoke of not being able to complete certain skills and again this was an opportunity to suggest to him that controlling things that are not controllable will not be an effective approach. This was interesting because he had missed the meeting when we focused on what each player can control. The coaches did say that they saw a better performance from him in yesterday's practice and speaking to the player after that session he said he just ignored anything that was going on and just played basketball. He felt he had less pressure on him and had accepted he was in a slump and did feel better in the session. At the end of the coach discussion there was a strong feeling that we needed players to understand that controllable factors are most important when looking at negative performance spirals. For example, looking at high effort is important because it's the only controllable factor.

Week 12. 03/12/2018

Field notes following weekly meeting with players

Discussions were mostly centred on control and how effort was a highly controllable factor when players were in a negative crisis and performance was only getting worse. The session also covered some communication and team first factors. The team had consecutive competition successes over the past few weeks and there was a far improved mood in the team. Practice performance was also said to be high and that players were playing well. There were some players who were quieter and have seemed to take a backward step in the group since the start of the season. These players were fringe team players or 2nd team players and they seemed to be taking a subordinate role in the group.

Coach discussion points

Following the meeting I spoke to the coaches about the players who I thought were taking a more subordinate role in the team. The coaches informed me that they had started the year ok but as the 1st team formed they dropped their motivation in practice and performance fell off in the whole. They then picked up again once they realised that they were in the lower team, possibly having accepted that fact. Those players were then not particularly vocal in any sessions but would get on with the training in a workman like fashion. It seemed the players had accepted their position within the team but had struggled for performance at the start as they were pushing themselves to compete against players with superior skills. This may be evidence of performance failure and negative spiral after expectations of performance being unrealistically high.

Week 13. 10/12/2018

Field notes following weekly meeting with players

Due to researcher being absent from the college this week no weekly meeting was undertaken.

Coach discussion points

No coach meeting was also undertaken.

Player Focus Group Transcription – Phase 6

19/02/2019

Total time 27 minutes.

Players present:

Adam

Ben

Jim

Evan

Pete

Rich

Researcher: Thinking about your current state in practice and the reflection opportunity you have been given to think about your performance expectations, have you been using it, have you found it useful?

Evan: I feel like my expectations of myself have lent towards more towards putting in more effort and doing the things I can to effect myself instead of getting down about missing shots and all that stuff.

Researcher: In regards to effort, do you feel you are applying an effort focus at the right times in practice now?

Evan: Yes I think so.

Researcher: Do you think about how you are feeling before going in to practice [directed at another player]?

Rich: Yeah, sometimes... obviously if I'm a bit tired or a bit tight then I think... I expect not to have the greatest session against say if I was coming into the week fresh, had a good

stretch and felt fine. Definitely think about it a lot more now, more than I did at the start of the year, yes. It has helped a lot as well, it's something that has really helped me get a grip on things.

Researcher: Do you still have mental slumps?

Jim: Oh yeah.

Researcher: So even when you prepare for it you still have them?

Evan: I feel like there's a point in basketball when your shot isn't going and that's what you rely on and it just keeps missing and that starts to get to you.

Researcher: Even if you are feeling tired and feeling crap and you probably think that you won't shoot that well?

Adam: I think that's because you expect such high expectations of yourself, like if you make a few mistakes in a row you just think... it's on yourself more than anything else. But to think about it coming and to think and about what you might be thinking... I think that readjustment will help by having to think about what you expect and how you feel... compared to how you feel.

Researcher: So maybe there might still be an area where you don't think about expectations beforehand or do you think you are getting to a point and realise I'm having a bad session and it might be because of that.

Evan: Well I know it's happened so can't really control it sort of thing. I know I'm having a bad session so I like just deal with it and look forward to the next one sort of thing.

Pete: I'll do it all the time now, think about how I feel about training. Sometimes I'm good and sometimes I'm not. I'd say I don't get any surprises or any shocks now. If I'm playing well in training then that's good but if I all of a sudden don't play very well in training then there's probably a reason and I would have thought about it already.

Researcher: Has communication gotten better with the team as the season has gone on?

Jim: 100%, yeah. The way we speak to each other has become much more calmer, we have adapted to individuals and being able to talk to them in certain ways and...

Adam: The thing is it's more effective as well and more to the point than... People obviously, like when we are in huddles people at the start of the season like will all be like what do we say now and how do we problem solve this and that. But now we are like right we sprint into huddles, get this, this and that done and get on with the next play and try and improve on it.

Researcher: Are you guys far more positive when you speak to each other now, do you realise that if you give someone crap then that's not very effective?

Evan: I feel like there are sometimes lapses...

Pete: But that's like once every two weeks.

Evan: Yeah, yeah. So with certain individuals that can be harder but we always... if we do say something negative then we will reinforce that with something positive for what we are about to do next.

Adam: We are just trying to be more positive this year I think. It's something that has gone well.

Researcher: Do you still get annoyed at other people, you may not express it but do you still get annoyed, or do you accept it?

Jim: Sometimes you do, like if they make a few mistakes in a row then you just like, oh well, they aren't really trying to make a mistake because why would they? It's all about being patient, I'll be more patient with people now.

Adam: Or not even that. Like, we've said that they need to not stop doing something but maybe change the way they do it. So the team needs to change, not just the one player, so it's better for the team.

Jim: Like find a solution for themselves for the problem they are having.

Researcher: And do you support people with that?

Jim: Yeah, yeah.

Researcher: So, when we talked about controlling the controllable's, how is that going?

Pete: I'd say it's better, like in terms of... sometimes it isn't sometimes it is. So, to be honest since we've had a meeting we've done pretty well. That's not been a point where somebody is noticeably having a bad game or a bad session, everyone has been consistent, I've been quite consistent.

Researcher: But if you are in practice do you get annoyed in practice with something you can't control that has happened. What do you think?

Rich: Obviously everyone does, don't they? If you are a shooter and you are missing your shots then obviously you are going to get annoyed at yourself. But obviously you can't control if the ball goes in or not, you can't control the shots you are going to be taking and the position of others players around you and maybe like how much time you have to shoot. But I do still get annoyed.

Researcher: So have you tried to not let it effective you as much?

Evan: Yeah, I think me personally I think I've got better at that. If I miss a shot I know that I've missed it, so what, big deal, I'm going to get another one and have a few possessions anyway so... You try to make it up on defence anyway, obviously if you miss a shot... it's next play, next pay mentality has got a lot better with the team.

Adam: I think the team are much better at not thinking about what just happened with a mistake as it's the past and you can't control it, you can only control the present and then what happens next. I think the next play mentality has gotten so much better with the team, that's been a real positive this year.

Pete: And I feel like the communication from the coach... we've had a few one to ones where... I feel like the way they have come across to the players has made them more confident in their abilities. They definitely did that for me when they said I needed to stop hesitating on my shot, if I'm open then shoot the ball, that's what we want you to do. So I know in my mind what I'm doing is what they want me to be doing, so regardless of whether it goes in or not I feel confident and not pressured, it's the right shot to take and not a bad shot so as long as it's within the offence, like not taking the piss then yeah.

Ben: I think knowing your teammates and coaches have confidence in the shots you take and if you miss it then it's like oh ok that's the right shot at the end of the day, but I'll do when I missed... but then next time I'll probably, I'm probably going to make it 8 times out

of 10 that's probably the one or two times I'm going to miss it. So obviously I think it's better. I don't worry anymore about the coach having a go at me. If what I do is for the team and I'm doing what I'm supposed to then I feel positive and confident.

Researcher: What you say you have become more resilient over the season, say you make a mistake but you've got a bit more...?

Evan: We don't panic in games. The [team name removed] game was one, like we were down a lot, and then what happened with [player name removed] he just got... we were without him for about, what, 10 minutes of the game, probably 10 minutes in the 2nd half when it was quite a crucial time in the game. Then obviously we stay together and we were resilient and like damn, he's gone, we still got players who can step up and make a difference, and ultimately that's what happened and we ended up winning the game so. I think if we were in that situation at the start of the year, I don't know if we would have won that.

Pete: No, no, that's very true. Because we had that slightly earlier in the year against [team name removed] but it wasn't such a big swing and then... even the most recent game against [team name removed] we were like down 6 going into the 2nd quarter, we played horrible and then in the 2nd we kind of reeled it and it was closer and then in the third it was a complete blow out. I think knowing that we have gotten through tough situations against good teams and also won and the fact that our record right now is like 11 on 2, I feel like the fact that we have gone through so many of those hard moments with such good teams that no matter if we are losing or not we still have complete confidence we can win.

Adam: I've been here for a few years now, and I don't think we win those types of games until this season. That's like a real fight and steel within the team. We got the bit between the teeth and know I can trust everyone around me. I'm far more team driven. I'd say I'm for the team more than just me.

Researcher: Has that come from better relationships in practice:

Adam: 100%. Training is loads better and the lads are firing.

Researcher: So last area to look at, have you guys been thinking about lifestyle and preparation for practice outside of on court basketball activity, have you been thinking more about recovery and nutrition?

Jim: I actually have. Like my... not so much nutrition but my sleep and rest so... my sleeping pattern is shocking, but like the last few weeks I've been maybe trying to get a least 6, 7, 8 hours sleep up to like 10 hours, making sure that I at least get a good solid night's sleep to make sure I'm resting.

Researcher: Does that make your performance better in practice?

Jim: I feel like I'm more ready, regardless of whether that improves my performance in practice, but I think it does. I'd say I feel like when I go to practice I feel more ready, I feel more awake, I feel more rejuvenated.

Researcher: So it must be good for practice?

Jim: Yes of course.

Adam: Obviously it's helped with my sleep. I try and get at least 8 hours of sleep but my nutrition... my nutrition is getting better but it's finding good foods that I can eat. I do think about it a lot.

Evan: Like it hasn't made a huge difference but if there's a healthier snack I can take... its like even if, with the meal deals, I'll pick like the grapes instead of... so it's like little small adjustments but...

Jim: Yeah like I'm having orange juice now over a coke or a fizzy drink, so it's little small adjustments, it's not big but it's like improving.

Researcher: But you are thinking about it and it's on your radar?

Jim: Yeah I think about everything I'll do now. No matter what it is I'm always analysing and that's helped me a lot this year to be ready to go.

Researcher: Does it help practice performance?

Evan: I think it does. Like, if you eat a dominos and ice cream, then I sleep for like a few hours I feel terrible the next day so I won't train well at all.

Coach Focus Group Transcription – Phase 6

Date: 18/02/2019

Week 20

Total time 30 minutes.

Researcher: Now that we have reached the end of the intervention process I thought we would go through each section and discuss how we feel now. If we start with preparation for practice, has that improved?

Head Coach: I would say that the players have improved a lot over the season.

Researcher: More so than previous years?

Head Coach: Yeah I think so. I would... you always get a buy in from the players the more the season goes on, especially from the new players. But because we had a lot of new players in this year, their first year with us, I would say it's been successful and that the improvement has been a bit better than before.

Assistant Coach: Yeah, I'd say the players have a better prep time. So at the start of the season players would do different things and at different times but I think they are more... more regimented now and seem to be switched on all the time. It might be that we get to the meat of the season now and they know they have to focus more.

Researcher: What about outside of practice and on-court?

Assistant: I'm not that sure about outside. When I see the players, say where they hang out, I don't see that much has changed. They still do the same things. I'd like to think they make better decisions but I'm not that sure.

Head Coach: It has been beneficial though to get into their heads about a more professional lifestyle. Again, getting them to think about what they do and how it might affect them. These kids need to have that education and then the support from each other to build it up. Some fall away and there's the better players who push on. It's a time when some players realise they are good enough and what to go on and those that give up. We've had a few of those this year, just don't see a future in it whereas maybe a year or two ago they might have thought that they would go somewhere and that basketball would be a big part of their life.

Researcher: What happens to them?

Head Coach: No idea really. Maybe they realise they aren't as good. I think that once you know you don't get much of a game here then what's the point of going to the States? I think they know they aren't at the races with it. It's almost like they get a reality check, maybe they didn't have all the information they needed before but they certainly have it now and then they realise.

Assistant Coach: It's hard as well. It's not easy to get to a decent level. You need to have the skill, have the motivation, get lucky as well. College will make all those decisions for you, comfortably.

Researcher: Looking at the preparation for practice, have players bought into the reflection beforehand upon their imminent performance?

Head Coach: I think they have. I think it's worked really well. I don't know if they would do it without us pushing them to do it.

Researcher: Do you mean the questionnaire?

Head Coach: Yeah, I think without us almost making them do it would they do it?

Researcher: But if the questionnaire was mainly a data collection process do you think the players have been helped by a mechanism that makes them reflect, and maybe that behaviour might stick?

Head Coach: It's hard to say as I'm not in their heads. I think the fact they are reflecting is really positive. Whether they have changed their behaviour and will now reflect all the time I don't know. To be honest I don't quite know if they reflect before the other sessions that aren't on the Tuesday.

Assistant Coach: I think they might. I think they might be more aware now. I mean we were looking at it improving a negative drop off right? Actually I think the Tuesdays are better than other sessions but on the whole I think it's been improved.

Researcher: Why do you think the Tuesdays are better?

Assistant Coach: Well, I can't think of the last time I had a player lose it on a Tuesday. It does still happen when a player, you can see them, just nose dives and is just terrible. There is almost more of an acceptance of it happening though. So actually it isn't as bad. But on the Tuesday training, again we say it to them before the training session, but they

certainly have less of a drop off. So they may have been going from here to there at the start of the season [coach indicates with his hands a high point and a low point] but now I'd say the low point is so much higher [coach moves his lower hand up so there is a small difference between his hands].

Researcher: So they don't have the dips?

Assistant Coach: No, and that's where I think we have had the benefit.

Researcher: Do you think that has only happened due to the strategies we put in place?

Head Coach: We've said it all along that we can't really be sure it's just that. I think, we think it's made an improvement, so hopefully it has. We start to talk about it with the men's team a bit. So looking at how we feel physically before practice and then what we might do if we don't feel great.

Researcher: Do you still think there is a social ranking element within the team?

Assistant Coach: 100% and that's where I think it might fall down sometimes. Say if a player knows they can't hit top level they might still expect too much of themselves if they are competing with another player.

Researcher: But have you seen an improvement with a better group cohesion?

Assistant Coach: Well yeah. So it could be that, like if they are a better group who don't see constant in team competition between themselves and they support each other then maybe they don't care as much if they play bad. So it's maybe everything or nothing at all [coach laughs] it's tough to know. I can see how it has definitely improved.

Researcher: So the team supporting each other has improved throughout the session?

Head Coach: That's been a massive change. I firmly believe the players start to think about each other more and how they communicate. We have had a really good season [results], we've taken on [team name removed] and beaten them. All the games we didn't do well in were at the start of the season so it's great now. Whether that's the performance of the team in matches helping? Probably won't hurt.

Assistant Coach: There is certainly a vibe in the team now. There is a real vibe to support each other. There's no much negative emotion in practice.

Head Coach: I think it changed almost weekly and improved almost weekly. You could see it getting better all the time.

Researcher: But again I guess it could be anything going on [humour]?

Head Coach: Yeah it could be but this year has become a strong year for cohesion and that's despite having a load of new players in and that's the important thing for me, we had a group with predominantly first years, not first year age per say, but new to the team and they all are now really close. It's the closest group I've ever had.

Assistant Coach: Also it's not that they are close but they maybe have respect for each other more. They don't ruin each other because they know it's going to hurt themselves. I reckon that's the thing, its understanding that everyone is in it together and if someone drops their performance then it'll hurt everyone. That's the thing we got through to them this year. The cog, everyone is a cog and if one doesn't function then the machine can break. I think they get it. In the past we have had some real individuals and I don't think we got any today. You say that?

Head Coach: Absolutely, no individuals that are only in it for themselves. The group is a group and it's been a huge positive influence. Maybe something that has made the most difference. It effects everything the group... team do.

Assistant Coach: I'd echo that. That is really important for every aspect. Like we've said before, we have had players in the past and teams that don't support each other and it's not good for the team to perform.

Researcher: Do you think that it also has something to do with the players being told, or rather, being pushed to have team goals so there is less individual achievement?

Assistant Coach: I think it's important for the player to have their own personal goals, but I also think they need to understand where they fit into the team. They need to balance them. If a player is only working for the team then there is no balance but if they are working for themselves to improve, which improves the team then that's best. The team is the most important element because of that and then I think that works well and is something we move with.

Researcher: Have the players responded well to the team drive strategy?

Head Coach: I think it's about us as coaches as well adapting to the change. I don't think it was anything new, I just don't think we would hold it at the forefront of what we do in the sense of right we need to think about this specifically. I think a lot of what we have done we would have done anyway perhaps, but it's been effective to get the players to

understand what needs to occur. Saying that, when we meet with players it has made me remind them that what they are doing is for the benefit of the team.

Assistant Coach: Also, I'm getting players to work more with at least one other person to succeed. So, it's a bit like, why just get them on their own doing something, how can I get another one or two people to join that process so it's more team based. By now in the season we are training for the big matches so it all becomes team focused. At the start of the season it might not be so that's where we grow it and get more benefits then that then come forward and help us through the rest of the season.

Researcher: Have the players and yourselves responded better to the controllable factors in practice.

Head Coach: That's important to know because if you go chasing something you can't 100% control then you are going to fail most of the time. As an on-court, in the moment intervention that works well. I speak to the players a lot about control and then about the emotions they have and how they communicate. So thinking again about reflection, do they think about whether they can control it or not? And then if they can't then they shouldn't be focusing on that.

Researcher: So that has been more above intervention if something goes wrong and stopping it from getting worse.

Head Coach: Yes, it will help stop then chasing something they shouldn't

Researcher: You mentioned emotion, so has the emotion left the players in their communication?

Head Coach: I'd say that they would not communicate with as much negative emotion. Like I said earlier, it's been loads better.

Researcher: With interventions, what do you think about the high effort strategy?

Assistant Coach: I think it's a good way for the players to stop thinking about the things that got them into a bad state in the first place. I don't think effort has been a massive problem with us as all the guys put in intensity.

Researcher: What about effort outside of practice?

Head Coach: I think it will translate over. If you put in high effort levels on court and you want to play well and improve, develop, then you need to give it 100% effort in everything.

I can see why... for me it comes down the control again. Effort is controllable, we need to kill the emotional responses, the negative emotional responses from players and they are more likely to happen when there's a player trying to control something that they just can't control.

Researcher: Thinking about emotions and how they speak to each other, do you think the players have improved their communication now?

Head Coach: There's an overall communication improvement. I mean, you'll have to ask all of them [players] but I think they'd say that they realise when there is a time for negative comments and when there isn't.

Researcher: Did you have to give any negative communication to the high level player who wasn't putting in effort?

Head Coach: We are far more knowledgeable now I think of what communication we what to use, what will work best. It can work... any play who isn't putting in the effort could get feedback from us. It's not about them being put down, it's letting them know that it isn't good enough.

Assistant: Yeah, it's not that we are giving them a barrage of abuse it's just that they need to pick it up but you wouldn't say to a play that is unable to do something technically and tactically, independent of effort, that they need a rocket. It wouldn't work, they haven't got anywhere to go. I remember you saying that the player would respond to a threat if they are capable and when we have effort as the controllable part then that will be good for performance.

Head Coach: I'd say 99% of what we say is positive and that's because the players will be putting in effort so we are all good. I can see when we need to be negative or why another player might be negative, but not when the player makes a mistake because you can't help errors and mistakes, it's about how you respond to them.

Researcher: So do you think the interventions have worked?

Head Coach: On a whole I think they have. There's been some key parts that I think the group have a lot of already, but I do think that things like reflection is so important for players and that has been effective

Researcher: What would you say?

Assistant Head: I think the players are a closer group after the year. I know we have started from a low cohesion point at the start of the season [many new players] and that's what makes it a good achievement. The level of play over the last few weeks has been really strong.

Head Coach: I wish we could give the players more support with things like nutrition and outside lifestyle support. I think that would help a lot. I think we've seen a lot of the players develop in games as well, which is good to see. Maybe a player didn't start very well but then they have improved a lot.

Phase 5 and 6 Observation Field Notes

Week 14. 07/01/2019

Field notes following weekly meeting with players

The start off this session took a similar process as the previous meeting after a week's break. It was more important to recap the strategies because there was an extended break over Christmas. The researcher went through a recap with the players and discussed how they felt each strategy was going. Players indicated that they thought about the lifestyle decisions they made over the time away from college. However, some said they still made bad choices but at least they realised they were doing it. We discussed the issue of social ranking within the group and players still said that they felt a level of pressure to stay above the players who they felt were below them. They said it made them sharper to know there was competition but that could be very hard. However, several players recognised the need for the pressure and that actually they didn't really think about how others were playing against them unless their teammate wasn't trying hard enough. This is an interesting shift away from looking to beat a teammate to cement an ability position in the team, but rather looking for a teammate to do well against them to it makes them play harder. When asked did they make ranking decisions anymore, one player said they just got on with it and let the coach decide.

Leading on from that the researcher asked if perceived ranking in the team was still a cause for large negativity if players lost out to what they perceived were lesser players. Some players indicated that it was a strong source of negativity. One player said that it was a fear that drove them on but it was stressful. Another player indicated that the fear of not being at the desired position was a very good driving force to keep working hard. Therefore, it seems that this is in line with the previous research but another indication that although it causes negativity it still may be a factor that motivates players to train at a high intensity. One player indicated that it's a stress you need to deal with and if you overcome it then you will improve and develop. I got the impression that players no longer viewed this as a problem but as a challenge. It was interesting for the team to use the term 'stress', something that I don't recall them using before in terms of how they feel in practice with intra-team competition. But it appears clear that if a player does underestimate a perceived lesser skilled teammate and loses then they will experience a

significant amount of negativity due to perceived ranking position in the team not being realised.

Coach discussion points

The coaches were pleased with the state of the player on their return. I indicated that in the meeting the players mentioned making better lifestyle choices, which could have helped them. Between the player and coach meetings I spoke to two players in the corridor and they said that they had even gone for runs over Christmas, which was something they had never done before. The reason was that they knew they had over indulged over Christmas and that they wanted to off-set this. They had done this independently but had spoken to each other, I believe after the player meeting, which is why they felt compelled to tell me in the corridor. We all felt that the last two phases had been effective in delivering the strategies and that players and the group collective were showing promising signs of change. Practice had been positive before Christmas and the most important element of this weeks practice was to reinforce the key strategies that the players and coaches were working on.

Week 15. 14/01/2019

Field notes following weekly meeting with players

This week we started discussions with the interventions that players were using when they felt they were losing control of their performance. The players were able to state the use of effort, stopping the attempt to control the things they can't control and seeking support from others. Many examples were given from the last few weeks and months. Again, discussions went onto support with the team and how all players felt the support was good, especially a lack of negative comments recently. One of the players indicated that the negative comments, which could have been general or specific to a person had stopped and this was echoed by the group. Players still got frustrated but less so with each other and if they were it was not known by others.

This followed onto a discussion about how the players felt if another player made an error. Previous discussions had covered the need for players to realise that teammates do not make mistakes on purpose and that by giving that teammate further negative communication it will likely worsen that players performance. The researcher stated that a natural response was to see the short-term effect upon personal goals but with an understanding of long-term effects, a players approach may be different. A player spoke

about how they viewed mistakes by other players differently. They said that if a player is clearly not trying then I might say something, but if they are trying really hard and just don't succeed then they bring them up. One area that was stated as being unforgiveable and would not receive positive encouragement was that of either not following team direction or if they were overly selfish and didn't pass to the teammate if they were in a better position. The team doesn't stand for it, we are in it together and act as one. Therefore, this is evidence to suggest that selfish and individual play still occurs and that players can recognise this and will likely use negative communication. However, another player did combat that by saying they used positive feedback and players will respond better than being shouted out.

Coach discussion points

No coach meeting was undertaken this week due to the inability to find an appropriate meeting time.

Week 16. 21/01/2019

Field notes following weekly meeting with players

This session contained the players discussing the individual strategies and giving examples of where they may have used them. There seemed to be an effective knowledge within the group of the strategic interventions. The need for reflection and how the players saw how the strategies could cross over to affect their performance expectations was raised. Several individual meetings were undertaken with key players who needed assistance. For example, there was a need to discuss communication with one player. This player was highlighted as someone who would still make general negative comments in practice and it was discussed that the damage that could have on other players and the atmosphere of the overall team. The player knew that they were getting frustrated but didn't know why. The researcher suggested they focus on the strategies that have been implemented with the team when they feel frustrated

Coach discussion points

The coaches were positive in their beliefs that performance expectation reflections were effective for practice performance. There were several practice sessions where the coaches new the players were tired, yet the players seemed to deal well with the session. This was especially apparent when one coach had stated that the players were tired and the performance level of the session was below standard but no player was seen to drop

their energy level and not enter a negative spiral. This didn't happen in the earlier weeks of the season. The coach stated that this was the best example yet of the successful integration of the strategies. Following on from this the coaches also stated that team spirit was still high, which was matched by positive communication.

Week 17. 28/01/2019

Field notes following weekly meeting with players

During this week's session the researcher used Kahoot (game-based learning platform) as a measurement tool to gather the opinions of the players. Questions were asked regarding the strategic interventions. This tool of measurement could be effective for use in a longitudinal study such as this one if players were measured weekly. Possible issues could be the social way in which the group use this technique. However, the results could give an indication at this late stage as to the player's perceptions of the strategic interventions. The results are below:

Question: Are you thinking about your current state before training?

Answers: Never = 1, Sometimes = 6, Most training session = 5, Every training session = 4. This results was positive in that only one player indicated that they did not perform pre-practice performance expectation reflection.

Question: Do you let teammate actions effect you negatively during training?

Answers: All the time = 0, Some of the time = 5, Rarely = 8, Never = 2. Again, an encouraging response to see no player perceived to be affected by negative comments and possible saw the individual who was giving the negative comment as making an error.

Question: Do you communicate positively to your teammates during training?

Answers: Never = 0, Sometimes = 2, Most of the time = 10, Always = 4. This result suggests that players are communicating far more positively in practice with each other. However, there may still be circumstances when they do not as these may the times that require a non-positive response, which is something that does require far more attention within the practice setting.

Question: Do your teammates communicate positively to you at training?

Answers: Always = 2, Most of the time = 9, Sometimes = 4, Never = 1. As expected these results mirror those from the above question.

Question: Do you try to control the uncontrollable?

Answers: I try to control everything = 5, I'm 50/50 = 8, I only control what I can control = 2.

This result suggests the players are not where they need to be to have a decreased potential for a negative performance spiral. This appears to be an area that the researcher and coaches could focus on in the upcoming weeks.

Question: Are your lifestyle decisions outside of training effective for improving performance?

Answer: My lifestyle is perfect for basketball = 1, I try hard and get most things right = 9, I struggle to do the right thing but I try = 4, I make terrible decisions = 1. This is encouraging as a whole.

Coach discussion points

In this week's coach meeting we discussed the results of the questions asked in the player's session. We were pleased with the results as it indicated that the players had understood and started to implement the strategies into their practice behaviour. However, one result did stand out, which was the players, as a whole, still not able to relinquish control of factors that they couldn't control. This is an interesting area and one that came to prominence only a few weeks previously but is clearly a factor that might have an influence on the performance of players in practice. It appears that players who try to control elements of practice that are clearly out of their control can cause negative responses in practice. These negative responses can cause further negativity and are capable of placing the player into a negative spiral. This explanation was stated by the head coach. Currently it seems the players may still be effected by this and something that could take precedence in the player meeting next week.

Week 18. 04/02/2019

Field notes following weekly meeting with players

Following on from last week's meetings, the control that players perceived to have in practice was addressed once again. The researcher led an activity that was designed to get players to understand what they can and can't control by placing statements into two piles. Once the exercise was complete, all of the placements were discussed. Many players were still looking to control factors that had elements that could not be controlled. The only factor that could be controlled fully was that of effort. Effort then become the

discussion point for it being an intervention that the players could use if they entered a negative performance period, which is something that has been part of the strategic interventions. Control appears to be such an important element of the practice environment and should, therefore, be added to the practice environment model and linked with high effort component.

Coach discussion points

In this week's meeting we briefly discussed the need for coaches to ensure they were working with players to focus on controllable elements in practice. They agreed to indicate before the practice drills what the players should be concentrating on and what they had no control over. At the end of the week I asked the coaches if they felt it had been effective and indicated that they felt it was. They said it was a good opportunity for players to think about what they wanted to get from the drill and no player had poor performance during it. The players did not always complete the drills successfully but because they were focused on the controllable elements, the coaches suggested this may have stopped them from being overly negative. For example, the coaches explained a drill they ran where players were put under pressure to shoot. The pressure was unpredictable and in some cases it was impossible to shoot accurately and mistakes were made. The players were advised that they could not directly control the ball going in the hoop and when they missed the coaches felt they dealt with it better than they had done before. This was clear evidence of this strategy working in a drill that had the potential to cause significant negativity.

Week 19. 11/02/2019

Field notes following weekly meeting with players

In this week's meeting the researcher asked the players to recall the strategies and give examples of their use. It has become very clear at this stage of the study that players have a clear understanding of the strategies and have used them in practice. The measurement of their effectiveness is questionable but the players appear to perceive them as positive towards performance. The statistical analysis will provide further evidence as to the success of the strategies.

Coach discussion points

The meetings with coaches this week were fleeting due to other commitments. Most of the discussions surrounded the upcoming important competitive matches rather

than practice. Communication and team cohesion was perceived to be in a strong position. However, when asked if the coaches felt the programme had been a success then both believed it had. They also believed that they could identify where the improvements had been made and linked it directly to the work done this year.

Week 20. 18/02/2019

Field notes following weekly meeting with players

The weekly meeting was replaced with a player focus group.

Coach discussion points

The coach meeting was replaced with a coach focus group.

Raw Theme Data Phase 1

Central concept	Theme
<p>High effort should be unconscious</p> <p>High effort takes away from technical and tactical thought processes</p> <p>High effort increased performance</p> <p>Coaches can drive effort rather than coming from players</p> <p>High effort is a pre-requisite and should not need to be thought about</p> <p>High effort inherent so best as an intervention</p> <p>High effort as intervention and not a primary cognitive process</p> <p>Effort is controllable so could be an effective coping strategy to stop further performance decreases</p> <p>Players don't always show high effort</p>	<p>Effort</p>
<p>Negative spiral</p> <p>Lack of coping ability</p> <p>Players are up and down with emotions</p> <p>Players effected by mistakes and have little coping strategies</p> <p>Negative emotions rife within the team when things go wrong</p> <p>Negative spiral will occur in practice</p> <p>There is a need for players to deal with negative situations better</p> <p>Players try to control far too much, especially trying to control elements of performance they cannot control</p>	<p>Coping</p>
<p>Not reaching performance expectations will cause decreased performance</p> <p>Player focus on future and not the present</p>	<p>Performance Expectations</p>

<p>No performance expectation leading to clearer thoughts</p> <p>Performance expectations needed more as coping strategy</p>	
<p>Evidence of positive communication</p> <p>Teammates making errors causing negative communication</p> <p>General negative communication is far more common than singling out individuals but is still harmful</p> <p>General negative communication spreads to the whole team</p> <p>Some players far worse than others with negative communication</p> <p>Contagious negative effects</p> <p>Negativity towards another player is harmful</p> <p>Communication has improved but there is still a long way to go</p> <p>Contagious negative effects</p>	<p>Communication</p>
<p>Intra-team competition causing team cohesion issues</p> <p>Players not acting in a manner for the benefit of the team</p> <p>Players having an individual goal focus</p> <p>Team first mentality is lacking and needs improvement</p> <p>Players playing for self and not for the team</p> <p>Effort towards the team can be disguised by a social faking of effort towards the team</p> <p>Individual outlook from best player who is looking for social recognition</p> <p>Players needing to know each other</p> <p>Practice sessions deliver better quality when players achieve together</p>	<p>Team Drive</p>
<p>Lack of preparation through adjusting to new practice regime</p>	<p>Preparation</p>

<p>Preparation activities that have benefitted practice performance</p> <p>Lack of player preparation for early morning practice due to tiredness and fatigue</p> <p>Not enough reflection is done by players currently across many areas</p> <p>Preparation seems unchanged in some areas</p> <p>Lack of reflection to prepare better</p>	
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Raw Theme Data Phase 2

<p>Effort not as a primary goal but used as a coping strategy to stop negative spiral.</p> <p>Effort agreed to become a coping strategy in practice due to reasons stated.</p> <p>Effort intervention</p> <p>Control</p> <p>Less negative situations experienced</p> <p>Players still trying to control uncontrollable elements of performance and this is causing negativity</p>	<p>Coping Strategies</p>
<p>Failure to complete skill based activities causes a significant source of negativity</p> <p>It is a highly technical environment and mistakes by players cause large amount of negativity</p>	<p>Failure</p>
<p>Thoughts towards the future rather than being mindful of the present</p> <p>Most of the group seem to be aware now of why it is important to reflect upon current state</p>	<p>Performance Expectations</p>

<p>There certainly seems like players are using the form more to set performance expectations if they feel fatigued or tired</p>	
<p>The preparation period before practice was said to help players focus on the session</p> <p>Decisions made away from practice that improve preparation towards practice</p> <p>Form completion used as a tool to improve preparation of the players</p> <p>Morning training sessions were tough and a lack of preparation beforehand would not help them get through it</p>	<p>Preparation</p>
<p>Team first mentality would benefit yourself as an individual because without your teammates you cannot achieve your own goals and objectives.</p> <p>Players are here for personal development over team success so a team first mentality may never be achieved.</p> <p>Players not yet fully understanding the reason for putting the team first</p> <p>As stated previously, this environment is one of personal development and a stepping stone and perhaps lacks in a team first drive</p> <p>A purely individual approach would be damaging to individual performance within a team sport</p> <p>Although intra-team competition can affect the team, it is vital for player development for various reasons</p> <p>Intra-team competition is a vital component that may cause initial negative experience but advantageous to future performance and development</p> <p>Players need to recognise problems and issues within the team when they occur</p>	<p>Team first mentality</p>

<p>General negative comments are still being made. Although there has been a vast improvement, specifically within the last week.</p> <p>General negative behaviours can impact the group</p> <p>Players that give negative comments after a teammate mistake experience negative performance influences</p> <p>Improved communication and support within team with a general decrease in poor performance</p> <p>Poor communication due to frustration</p>	<p>Communication</p>
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Raw Theme Data Phase 3

<p>Use of reflection on current state before a training session following a tough physical challenge where the player lower their expectations and performance was good</p> <p>Performance expectation reflections act as an early coping mechanism if player fatigued</p> <p>Ranking ability overrides adapted performance expectations</p> <p>Players need to hold a social position within the team even if they couldn't achieve the performance</p> <p>Some players believe they will not need to reflect on expectations if they feel good</p> <p>Individual players appear to struggle managing expectations</p>	<p>Performance Expectations</p>
<p>Effort seen as more of a coping strategy because when focusing solely on it, it can become disruptive</p> <p>High effort was stated as being almost subconscious and a behaviour that is ingrained</p>	<p>Effort as Intervention</p>
<p>The halfway house: Players are not focused on the team achieving but only themselves</p>	<p>Team drive</p>

<p>Playing for the team and putting the team first causes greater success for the self</p> <p>Team drive behaviours have improved</p> <p>Enhanced team cohesion within group leading to less perceived negativity</p> <p>Selfishness and individual outlook still exists in the team</p> <p>If players are individually focused they will have less resilience to adverse situations</p> <p>Coaches highlighted more work needs to be done in changes mind-sets from individual to team</p> <p>If things don't go well for the individual then they sulk, that's become a good indicator for coaches of an individual focused player</p> <p>Difficult building a team when players change all the time (links to success of intervention so far)</p>	
<p>Communication between the players has improved and is cited as being very strong.</p> <p>There's an understanding that players don't make mistakes on purpose and that support will be better for them than criticism</p> <p>Communication has improved</p> <p>Communication through high emotion and can become negative in moments of adversity</p> <p>Increased support given to players from teammates if they make a mistake</p> <p>Relationships need to be strong if you give negative communication but not there yet.</p>	<p>Communication</p>
<p>Players are not at a level where they put their basketball first due to other areas of life holding high importance</p>	<p>Preparation</p>

<p>Players are more focused and switched on before practice</p> <p>Players arriving to practice before time and undertaking reflection</p> <p>Players more engaged for practice</p>	
<p>Players attempting to control factors of performance that are uncontrollable can cause poor performance</p> <p>Inability to control factors out of control is a significant leader towards negative spiral</p> <p>Control should be added as an intervention</p>	Control
<p>Social pressures can be challenging in the practice environment and this can cause negative spirals in performance if not recognised</p>	Intra-team Competition
<p>WBQ reflective tool may be too coach led and not player led</p> <p>Coaches believe players are reflecting more on the whole</p>	Reflective Activity
<p>Less negative spirals</p> <p>Far less lows due to players recognising potential negative situation and can cope with them better</p> <p>Improvements in performance declines</p>	Coping Strategy

Raw Theme Data Phase 4

<p>Performance expectations to be used more as an intervention if players feel fatigued</p> <p>Not wanting to drop the expectations for practice</p> <p>Players accepting their position within the team</p> <p>Players pushing themselves to compete against players with superior skills can cause failure</p> <p>Not allowing a social or ranking position to take control of what players attempt to achieve</p>	Performance Expectations
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<p>Conducting performance expectations make players think about how to maximise their preparation</p>	
<p>Having a balance between intra-team competition and team activities</p> <p>There is a competition within the team to be better than the players around you</p> <p>Good response from players to reflect upon own performance after being outplayed by teammate</p> <p>Having to fight for your place this year</p> <p>If overly competitive then difficult to get good team cohesion</p>	<p>Intra-team Competition</p>
<p>High support for teammates during high intensity individual physical drills</p>	<p>Communication</p>
<p>Evidence of recovery from an error and momentary negative reaction</p> <p>Player didn't practice well but there was no downward spiral of performance</p> <p>He was unable to recover back to normal level but allowed sufficient practice to be undertaken following a negative situation</p> <p>Not worrying about mistakes and just getting on with it</p>	<p>Coping</p>
<p>Lack of support to weaker players in the team</p> <p>Being a player for the team if personal performance is poor</p> <p>There are common goals amongst players.</p> <p>Still a strong need for the self exists and a balance needed between self and team</p> <p>Teammates getting better forces you to get better</p> <p>An understanding that you can't achieve without the team</p> <p>An understanding of why teammates are important to the self</p>	<p>Team Drive</p>

<p>If the team does well then that means you succeed</p> <p>Difficult for players to see a team first approach is best for self</p> <p>Players who don't get to compete in the team may not want team to succeed as they have no effect over the team and are not a part of it.</p> <p>If you put the team first you put yourself first</p>	
<p>Focusing on effort rather than performance outcomes when performance is poor</p> <p>High effort is important because it's the only controllable factor</p> <p>Player applied effort when tired and didn't think about outcome</p>	<p>Effort Intervention</p>
<p>High effort levels have increased performance</p> <p>Players thinking about applying a lot of effort to everything they do</p> <p>Thinking only about effort can take away from thinking about other elements of practice</p>	<p>Effort</p>
<p>A player believing they are in control of the outcome of skill activities</p> <p>Not being able to complete certain skills caused negativity</p> <p>Player focusing on just playing basketball and not thinking about skill or performance outcomes</p> <p>Effort was a highly controllable factor when players were in a negative performance crisis</p>	<p>Control</p>
<p>Fridge team players or second team players seem to be taking a subordinate role in the group.</p> <p>Lowered motivation levels in practice and performance when not fulfilling targets against others</p> <p>Difficult to ignore position, rank, or reputation against others</p> <p>Overly focused on what other people think of you</p>	<p>Ability Ranking</p>

<p>Teammates should not judge others after bad performance</p> <p>Players should not be thinking about what others think of them as it's out of control</p>	
<p>Being positive to teammates if situation is negative</p> <p>Communication has improved</p> <p>Players have learnt to communicate better by understanding why positive communication is effective and negative is not</p> <p>Players thinking about how to speak to people</p> <p>Acceptance that negative communication can be contagious and not help team performance</p> <p>Need time and openness to understand how to talk to each other</p>	<p>Positive Communication</p>
<p>Teammates have your back</p> <p>Teammate support is better</p> <p>Takes time to form bonds in the team</p> <p>Strong group cohesion this year</p>	<p>Team Cohesion</p>
<p>Not having time to reflect in preparation period before practice affected performance poorly</p>	<p>Preparation</p>
<p>Need negative situations to push on</p>	<p>Negative Motivation</p>
<p>Lifestyle choices have improved</p> <p>Pressure to do everything</p> <p>Stress from other areas of life</p>	<p>Off-Court</p>

Raw Theme Data Phase 5

<p>Players indicated that they thought about the lifestyle decisions they made over the time away from college</p>	<p>Preparation</p>
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<p>The coaches were pleased with the state of the player on their return after break</p> <p>Activities undertaken away from practice that they had no partaken in before</p>	
<p>Damaging negative comments influence the atmosphere of the overall team</p> <p>Increased support, especially a lack of negative comments recently</p> <p>Less negative general or specific comments</p>	<p>Communication</p>
<p>The player knew that they were getting frustrated but didn't know why. The researcher suggested they focus on the strategies that have been implemented with the team when they feel frustrated</p> <p>Using coping strategy when feelings of losing control of performance.</p> <p>The players were able to state the use of effort, stopping the attempt to control the things they can't control, and seeking support from others</p>	<p>Coping</p>
<p>They said it made them sharper to know there was competition</p> <p>several players recognised the need for competition pressure and that actually they didn't really think about how others were playing against them unless their teammate wasn't trying hard enough</p> <p>Evidence of a shift away from looking to beat a teammate to cement an ability position in the team, but rather looking for a teammate to do well against them to it makes them play harder</p> <p>Ranking ability decisions were less frequent and players should they just get on with it and let the coach decide</p> <p>Competition now not viewed as a problem but as a challenge</p>	<p>Competition</p>
<p>One player said that it was a fear that drove them on but it was stressful</p>	<p>Negative Motivation</p>

<p>A negative situation is a factor that motivates players to train at a high intensity</p> <p>Stress means you need to deal with it and if you overcome it then you will improve and develop</p> <p>If players are not trying then negative communication is appropriate</p>	
<p>Coaches stated that team spirit was high and matched by positive communication</p> <p>Players not following team instructions</p> <p>Selfish players who only play for themselves</p> <p>The players acting as on team</p>	<p>Team Drive</p>
<p>Tired players who dealt with the practice session and had no negative performance</p> <p>Performance level of the session was below standard but no player was seen to drop their energy level and not enter a negative spiral, which didn't happen in the earlier weeks of the season</p>	<p>Performance Expectations</p>

Raw Theme Data Phase 6

<p>Control is an important element of the practice environment and linked with high effort component.</p> <p>Coach led indication before a practice drill on what the players should be concentrating on and what they had no control over</p> <p>Players focused on the controllable elements of practice suggests this may have stopped them from being overly negative</p> <p>To stop worrying about what can't be control</p> <p>Players more consistent and not being so controlling</p> <p>Still get annoyed when uncontrollables don't go well but there's less of a negative effect</p>	<p>Control</p>
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<p>Not effected by past mistakes as much as it doesn't define me</p> <p>Next play mentality - can't control the past</p> <p>The acceptance of uncontrollable poor performance will lead to less negative influence</p> <p>Control aspect better</p> <p>Players have stopped chasing the uncontrollable</p>	
<p>Effort is an intervention that the players could use if they entered a negative performance period</p> <p>Effort good as an intervention to negative crisis because it can be controlled</p>	<p>Effort Intervention</p>
<p>Effort higher in group</p> <p>Player effort leads to positive coach responses</p>	<p>Effort</p>
<p>When not feeling 100%</p> <p>Using Performance expectations before practice help improve performance</p> <p>Performance expectation reflections do help performance</p> <p>Recognises a poor performance is coming and can deal with it</p> <p>Knowing and evaluating what doesn't work</p> <p>Performance expectation reflections have helped players</p> <p>Performance expectations have made an impact on performance</p> <p>Less of a negative drop off in practice performance with less frequency or magnitude as before so significant drops in performance don't happen</p> <p>Tuesday practice sessions have less negative performance and that is when they do the WBQ</p> <p>Social ranking can impact on performance expectation adjustments</p>	<p>Performance Expectations</p>

<p>Large improvement in communication</p> <p>Calmer communication</p> <p>Players thinking about the individual more now with their communication</p> <p>If negative communication is given then positive will follow, which has not been done before.</p> <p>Coaches communicate more positively to players</p> <p>Coaches giving clearer messages so even if it doesn't work the player knew it was the right decision</p> <p>Coaches not reacting negatively to mistakes</p> <p>Team support improved through better communication</p> <p>Players think about how they communicate to each other now</p> <p>Less negative emotion from players</p> <p>Less negative communication in group</p> <p>Negative communication used by coaches only when effort is the problem as its controllable</p>	<p>Communication</p>
<p>Acknowledgement that players aren't making mistakes on purpose and are more patient</p> <p>An error from a teammate is a problem for the team and not an individual problem so finding a solution as a team is required</p> <p>Trust from knowing teammates are with each other</p> <p>A lot of new players so the improvement in cohesion is greater</p> <p>More respect for each other</p> <p>Players don't hurt each other with negative comments as much as they know it will affect them</p>	<p>Team Drive</p>

<p>Less individual approaches now from players and more approaches towards the team</p> <p>There's a balanced of goals between individual and team with the self-goals feeding the team goals</p> <p>Beneficial for coaches to have a focus upon team first mentality</p> <p>Effective to stop individual success and this has improved team ethos</p>	
<p>Lifestyle improvements have been made</p> <p>Have more energy</p> <p>Nutrition is better but it's tough to find good foods</p> <p>Thinking about all decisions outside of basketball because they will impact my basketball</p>	<p>Lifestyle</p>
<p>Improved preparation activities in group</p> <p>Players more structured and organised in their preparation</p> <p>Players acting more professionally</p>	<p>Preparation</p>
<p>Coaches are still prompting players to complete the WBQ</p> <p>Players who reflect will perform better</p> <p>Players are more aware of what they are doing now</p>	<p>Reflection Activities</p>

Friedman Analysis Test

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Comments		
Input	Data	F:\phd study 5\SPSS Final stats May 2019.sav
	Active Dataset	DataSet1
	Filter	<none>
	Weight	<none>
	Split File	<none>
	N of Rows in Working Data File	18

Missing Value Handling	Definition of Missing	User-defined missing values are treated as missing.
	Cases Used	Statistics for all tests are based on cases with no missing data for any variables used.
Syntax		NPAR TESTS /FRIEDMAN=CF1 CF2 CF3 CF4 CF5 CF6 /MISSING LISTWISE.
Resources	Processor Time	00:00:00.02
	Elapsed Time	00:00:00.02
	Number of Cases Allowed ^a	142987

a. Based on availability of workspace memory.

Friedman Test for current fatigue

Ranks	
	Mean Rank
CF1	4.22
CF2	4.03
CF3	2.97
CF4	3.17

CF5	3.81
CF6	2.81

Test Statistics^a

N	18
Chi-Square	9.662
df	5
Asymp. Sig.	.085

a. Friedman Test

NPAR TESTS

/FRIEDMAN=CS1 CS2 CS3 CS4 CS5 CS6

/MISSING LISTWISE.

NPar Tests

Notes

Output Created	08-MAY-2019 18:48:09
Comments	
Input	Data F:\phd study 5\SPSS Final stats May 2019.sav

	Active Dataset	DataSet1
	Filter	<none>
	Weight	<none>
	Split File	<none>
	N of Rows in Working Data File	18
Missing Value Handling	Definition of Missing	User-defined missing values are treated as missing.
	Cases Used	Statistics for all tests are based on cases with no missing data for any variables used.
Syntax		NPAR TESTS /FRIEDMAN=CS1 CS2 CS3 CS4 CS5 CS6 /MISSING LISTWISE.
Resources	Processor Time	00:00:00.03
	Elapsed Time	00:00:00.03
	Number of Cases Allowed ^a	142987

a. Based on availability of workspace memory.

Friedman Test for current stress

Ranks

Mean Rank

CS1	4.33
CS2	3.92
CS3	3.36
CS4	4.08
CS5	2.67
CS6	2.64

Test Statistics^a

N	18
Chi-Square	14.480
df	5
Asymp. Sig.	.013

a. Friedman Test

NPAR TESTS

/FRIEDMAN=PP1 PP2 PP3 PP4 PP5 PP6

/MISSING LISTWISE.

NPar Tests

Notes

Output Created		08-MAY-2019 18:50:10
Comments		
Input	Data	F:\phd study 5\SPSS Final stats May 2019.sav
	Active Dataset	DataSet1
	Filter	<none>
	Weight	<none>
	Split File	<none>
	N of Rows in Working Data File	18
	Missing Value Handling	Definition of Missing
	Cases Used	Statistics for all tests are based on cases with no missing data for any variables used.
Syntax		NPAR TESTS /FRIEDMAN=PP1 PP2 PP3 PP4 PP5 PP6 /MISSING LISTWISE.
Resources	Processor Time	00:00:00.02
	Elapsed Time	00:00:00.02
	Number of Cases Allowed ^a	142987

a. Based on availability of workspace memory.

Friedman Test for predicted performance

Ranks

Mean Rank

PP1	3.75
PP2	3.69
PP3	4.00
PP4	3.22
PP5	2.56
PP6	3.78

Test Statistics^a

N	18
Chi-Square	7.554
df	5
Asymp. Sig.	.183

a. Friedman Test

NPAR TESTS

/FRIEDMAN=AP1 AP2 AP3 AP4 AP5 AP6

/MISSING LISTWISE.

NPar Tests

Notes

Output Created		08-MAY-2019 18:50:51
Comments		
Input	Data	F:\phd study 5\SPSS Final stats May 2019.sav
	Active Dataset	DataSet1
	Filter	<none>
	Weight	<none>
	Split File	<none>
	N of Rows in Working Data File	18
	Missing Value Handling	Definition of Missing
	Cases Used	Statistics for all tests are based on cases with no missing data for any variables used.
Syntax		NPAR TESTS /FRIEDMAN=AP1 AP2 AP3 AP4 AP5 AP6 /MISSING LISTWISE.

Resources	Processor Time	00:00:00.02
	Elapsed Time	00:00:00.08
	Number of Cases	142987
	Allowed ^a	

a. Based on availability of workspace memory.

Friedman Test for actual performance

Ranks

Mean Rank

AP1	1.75
AP2	2.56
AP3	3.78
AP4	4.44
AP5	3.33
AP6	5.14

Test Statistics^a

N	18
Chi-Square	42.227
df	5
Asymp. Sig.	.000

a. Friedman Test

NPAR TESTS

/FRIEDMAN=EF1 EF2 EF3 EF4 EF5 EF6

/MISSING LISTWISE.

NPar Tests

Notes

Output Created		08-MAY-2019 18:51:33
Comments		
Input	Data	F:\phd study 5\SPSS Final stats May 2019.sav
	Active Dataset	DataSet1
	Filter	<none>
	Weight	<none>
	Split File	<none>
	N of Rows in Working Data File	18
Missing Value Handling	Definition of Missing	User-defined missing values are treated as missing.

Cases Used		Statistics for all tests are based on cases with no missing data for any variables used.
Syntax		NPAR TESTS /FRIEDMAN=EF1 EF2 EF3 EF4 EF5 EF6 /MISSING LISTWISE.
Resources	Processor Time	00:00:00.00
	Elapsed Time	00:00:00.00
	Number of Cases Allowed ^a	142987

a. Based on availability of workspace memory.

Friedman Test for effort

Ranks

Mean Rank

EF1	1.92
EF2	3.44
EF3	3.39
EF4	3.75
EF5	4.22
EF6	4.28

Test Statistics^a

N	18
Chi-Square	20.142
df	5
Asymp. Sig.	.001

a. Friedman Test

NPAR TESTS

/FRIEDMAN=PR1 PR2 PR3 PR4 PR5 PR6

/MISSING LISTWISE.

NPar Tests

Notes

Output Created	08-MAY-2019 18:52:17	
Comments		
Input	Data	F:\phd study 5\SPSS Final stats May 2019.sav
	Active Dataset	DataSet1
	Filter	<none>
	Weight	<none>
	Split File	<none>

	N of Rows in Working Data File	18
Missing Value Handling	Definition of Missing	User-defined missing values are treated as missing.
	Cases Used	Statistics for all tests are based on cases with no missing data for any variables used.
Syntax		NPAR TESTS /FRIEDMAN=PR1 PR2 PR3 PR4 PR5 PR6 /MISSING LISTWISE.
Resources	Processor Time	00:00:00.03
	Elapsed Time	00:00:00.03
	Number of Cases Allowed ^a	142987

a. Based on availability of workspace memory.

Friedman Test for preparation

Ranks

Mean Rank

PR1	2.25
PR2	1.94

PR3	4.17
PR4	3.86
PR5	3.83
PR6	4.94

Test Statistics^a

N	18
Chi-Square	36.658
df	5
Asymp. Sig.	.000

a. Friedman Test

NPAR TESTS

/FRIEDMAN=SP1 SP2 SP3 SP4 SP5 SP6

/MISSING LISTWISE.

NPar Tests

Notes

Output Created	08-MAY-2019 18:53:02
Comments	
Input	Data F:\phd study 5\SPSS Final stats May 2019.sav

	Active Dataset	DataSet1
	Filter	<none>
	Weight	<none>
	Split File	<none>
	N of Rows in Working Data File	18
Missing Value Handling	Definition of Missing	User-defined missing values are treated as missing.
	Cases Used	Statistics for all tests are based on cases with no missing data for any variables used.
Syntax		NPAR TESTS /FRIEDMAN=SP1 SP2 SP3 SP4 SP5 SP6 /MISSING LISTWISE.
Resources	Processor Time	00:00:00.02
	Elapsed Time	00:00:00.01
	Number of Cases Allowed ^a	142987

a. Based on availability of workspace memory.

Friedman Test for support

Ranks

Mean Rank

SP1	2.03
SP2	3.22
SP3	3.36
SP4	3.39
SP5	4.42
SP6	4.58

Test Statistics^a

N	18
Chi-Square	23.480
df	5
Asymp. Sig.	.000

a. Friedman Test

DATASET ACTIVATE DataSet1.