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Learning from athlete stories: what do athletes tell us about transition?

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Task

- **In pairs: have a go at drawing a model of how players transition into teams**
- **Draw on your own experiences**
- **Be as theoretical (and creative) as you want**

“A period or process of change”

Transition

“Boundary crossing”

“Learning”

Socialisation

“Being introduced to values, practices & expectations”

Participation



Providing insights to the following questions:

- How do players *become* members of teams?
- How do they adjust to the team environment?
- How do teams socialise incoming players through language?
- How do teams maintain cohesiveness over time when absorbing new players?

Learning about transition through stories

Context: three year case study with one high performance university football team

- Player stories about transition
 - Recollections of personal experience
 - Anecdotes
 - Recounts and retellings of events
 - Issue based narratives
 - Flashpoint stories

Mine this (flashpoint) story for insights about transition

Dan: *“ok so moving away from the social side of things...could you describe any experienced besides from your injury of actually playing for the team itself”*

Henry: *“yeah last year I played in the first team and the 2nd game we played w [heavily] it was one the worst defeats of the club in a long time it was a horrible very well the whole team didn’t play very well it’s sort of its really it was a huge lost you can feel something going on because you’ve lost everyone from the club really young and losing that badly is really rare and it’s with people you’ve only and it’s a really weird experience because if the captain is gonna yell at you bec known him for 2 weeks and its sort of something that much of a defeat and I re challenge because I got into an argument with one of the players I just disagree because he was older and I thought I was right but you’ve aren’t allowed as a j someone like that I’ve always been a captain and I’ve never been in that positio someone yells at you and you fight back and it’s not acceptable and you can’t a football team”*

- Suffering defeat with strangers; making sense of a poor (individual) performance
- Tough defeat; tough circumstances
- Challenge to identity (i.e. leader)
- Younger/older barrier
- Learning deference to hierarchy; not being able to fight back
- Evaluation shows conformity to club hierarchy

Mine this (flashpoint) story for insights about transition

“there were some horrible punishments but mine was... the lad that I and when I say I came last I was told it was fixed that I was gonna that’s what happens when you come last you almost its gotta be so do it you get it not like right I’m not doing that and they thought I’d me and the guy had to have a race to see who would cut off the mo minutes and yeah as a result my hair was all uneven so it got shaved went back to some older boys house and then you go into the show covered in eggs from the initiations because eggs are thrown every you get showered and they they just cut my hair shaved it all off and over thinking that won’t be too bad as in in hair clippers id I didn’t r trippers I was literally like 0.5 all over in terms of hair”

Brett

- Proving self; seeking approval; gaining approval
- Hair being shaved off;
- Commitment; sacrifice;
- Risk taking; laddish ideals
- Self-portrayal as chosen; the right kind of lad;





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Shared team narratives: “a story a person tells is never entirely their own” ...

- Spotting patterns in the players' stories
- Team narrative in team welcome talks, welcome emails, etc.
- Told by club captains: specific socialising practice
- Used by players to explain transitional experience



Shared stories in the team

Dan: So erm, coming together as a team, so getting that team spirit so learning to play together...how would you describe your experiences?

Paulo: Ok, Ok, it's good erm *the most you're committed to it the better*, so you've got training *so if everyone is committed to training the better* so at the beginning the season when we've all going training we're winning when we at the it starts to fall apart we start to lose games I don't thinking I'm answering your question.

Dan: No no carry carry on

Paulo: *it's about commitment if there's commitment to the club that's what the 3rd years ask ask like "this is really good commit to it throw yourself into the football team the more you do it the more you get out of it"* the more the fresher do the more they get out of it I feel the two types of fresher the ones who go to training a little bit and plays a bit and then the fresher who goes [social] and goes tour and is into it and *gets the running joke* if you are just going training it's ok but if you going training with really good friends get much more out of it

Recycled stories



What can we take away from this?

- Transition is complex:
 - Degrees of socialisation; types of participation; levels of commitment.
- There is no transition without socialisation
- Not only about the stories players tell, but also the ones that they are told...



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Discussion: over to you

Your thoughts

- What changes would you make to your model?
- In your experience what has been done to help players integrate into teams?
- What kinds of socialising strategies have been employed?



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