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

By Daniel Clayton,
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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
Transition

“A period or process of change”

“Boundary crossing”

Socialisation

“Learning”

“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
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 we lost [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 because he is known him for 2 weeks and its sort of something that much of a defeat and I really 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 just someone like that I’ve always been a captain and I’ve never been in that position someone yells at you and you fight back and it’s not acceptable and you can’t do football team”
“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 soo... 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 most... 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 everyw... 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 re... trippers I was literally like 0.5 all over in terms of hair”

Brett
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

New players arrive

Learn team narratives

The story is carried forward to the next season

Buy into the team’s story

Make sense of experience through narratives
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...
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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