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'There's No Place to Hide': Exploring the Stressors Encountered by Elite Cricket Captains

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Abstract

This study aimed to enhance understanding of stressors that elite sporting captains face in their role. The autobiographies of 12 international cricket captains were sampled. Stressors relating to the captaincy role were identified, and following thematic analysis, seven general dimensions of stressors were recognised. These included multiple roles, team stressors, interactions with players, selection, interactions with other personnel, the media, and extreme situations. It appears that stressors are heightened due to a combination of playing and leadership responsibilities that captains experience. Findings are considered, including how they might be used to inform practitioners and coaches who work with captains.

1 'There's No Place to Hide': Exploring the Stressors Encountered by Elite Cricket Captains

2 Increasingly, those involved in elite sport are under intense pressure to perform and
3 succeed, and an ability to deal with such demands is a key element needed for sporting
4 excellence (cf. Fletcher & Arnold, 2017). Indeed, in their review of psychological stress in
5 sport coaches, Fletcher and Scott (2010) outline the increasing demands of involvement in
6 competitive sport, such as continued selection and employment being influenced by the need
7 for ongoing successful performance outcomes. Fletcher and Scott conclude by highlighting
8 the danger of health and performance costs resulting from stress in this elite environment.
9 Consequently, sport psychology practitioners and researchers have conducted numerous
10 studies in recent years to examine the challenges and stressors faced in elite sport (e.g.,
11 Arnold & Fletcher, 2012; Olusoga, Butt, Maynard, & Hays, 2010; Thelwell, Weston, &
12 Greenlees, 2007). However, this research has yet to specifically examine stressors faced by
13 sporting captains, who must balance their role to play and compete at an elite level, with
14 leadership responsibilities both on and off the pitch.

15 The term stress has been defined as “an ongoing process that involves individuals
16 transacting with their environments, making appraisals of the situations they find themselves
17 in, and endeavoring to cope with any issues that may arise” (Fletcher, Hanton, & Mellalieu,
18 2006, p. 329). The key variable within this transaction that is of interest in the current study
19 is the stressors that exist in a sporting environment that can place a demand on those
20 participating within it. Previous research by Fletcher et al. has identified three different types
21 of stressors (i.e., competitive, personal and organizational stressors), and subsequently,
22 researchers have examined the stressors faced in a range of sporting contexts, and with
23 different populations, such as athletes, coaches, parents and sport psychologists. For example,
24 Thelwell et al. (2007) examined sources of stress in professional cricket batsmen. Findings
25 revealed 25 general dimensions of stress, which included elements specific to the sport, such

26 as a loss of form or concerns about the opposition. Cosh and Tully (2015) explored the
27 stressors faced by student athletes combining elite sport participation with higher education
28 study, and identified schedule clashes, fatigue, financial pressure, and inflexibility of coaches
29 as key issues.

30 Researchers have also considered the stressors faced by those who have a leadership
31 role in sport, with a number of studies focussed on stressors that coaches face. Frey (2007)
32 explored the stressors faced by American college coaches, with participants revealing nine
33 themes of stress. These included interpersonal/personal sources; other people; sources that
34 would lead to quitting; task-related sources; recruiting; time demands; being the head coach;
35 outcome of competition; and self-imposed stress. Thelwell, Weston, Greenlees, and
36 Hutchings (2008) examined stressors faced by coaches in elite sport and found a range of
37 performance and organisational stressors. Furthermore, Olusoga, Butt, Hays, and Maynard
38 (2009) interviewed 12 world class coaches to identify the stressors they face in their roles.
39 Ten higher order themes emerged, which included pressure and expectation, competition
40 preparation, and isolation. More recently, Thelwell, Wagstaff, Chapman, and Kentta (2016)
41 interviewed 12 elite level coaches to examine how coach stress influences the quality of the
42 relationship between a coach and their athletes. Thelwell and his colleagues found that coach
43 stress had mainly negative outcomes in terms of the impact on athletes, interactions between
44 athletes and coaches, and the overall quality of their coaching.

45 Cotterill and Fransen (2016) highlight that while much research has explored
46 leadership from the perspective of the coach/manager, limited research has explored athlete
47 leadership within the team, including the captaincy role which has been seen to provide an
48 important source of leadership within the team (Loughead & Hardy, 2005). Furthermore,
49 while numerous studies have examined the stressors faced by both athletes and leaders in
50 elite sport, limited research has specifically examined the demands faced by sport captains.

51 Voelker, Gould, and Crawford (2011) sought to understand more broadly the experience of
52 captains through interviews with high school athletes who were captains of their side. The
53 findings revealed participants' experiences of captaincy were overall positive in nature.
54 Within their findings, Voelker et al. found participants identified the captaincy role as
55 stressful, due to high expectations associated with the position. Gould, Voelker, and Griffes
56 (2013) examined best coaching practice in terms of developing team captains through
57 interviewing 10 high school coaches. In exploring this topic, one of the specific questions
58 asked coaches to describe the biggest issues and challenges they perceived high school
59 captains to face. Results highlighted various challenges, which included issues such as the
60 ability to balance multiple roles and demands, being a role-model for an extended period of
61 time, being a friend and being a leader to teammates, and being accountable for the team's
62 performance. It should be noted that these issues were highlighted by the coaches themselves;
63 therefore, it will be important for further research to examine this from the perspective of the
64 captains themselves. In addition, as current work has investigated captaincy at a high school
65 level, it is necessary to consider pressures in other environments, which can be heightened as
66 the competitive experience level increases (Arnold, Fletcher, & Daniels, 2016).

67 More recently, there has been an expanding literature base relating to captaincy in
68 sport, with researchers seeking to provide greater clarity concerning experiences of captaincy
69 at the professional/elite level across a range of sports including field hockey (Grant &
70 Cotterill, 2016), ice hockey (Camiré, 2016), and rugby union (Cotterill & Cheetham, 2016).
71 For example, Camiré examined the realities of captaincy at the highest levels of competition
72 by interviewing an elite captain of an NHL (national Hockey League) team. This captain
73 identified a number of specific challenges and pressures they faced, which included the
74 transition period when they first started the captaincy role, taking losses more to heart, feeling
75 additional responsibility for the performance of teammates, having to deal with more

76 experienced players, and the overall draining nature of the role. Further insights into stressors
77 faced by elite captains were provided by Cotterill and Cheetham (2016) who interviewed
78 eight professional rugby union captains, and found challenges of the captaincy role included
79 working with a mix of different players, the transition into captaincy, and the intense media
80 scrutiny. These studies were focused primarily on understanding the overall captaincy
81 experience, and while they gave us some understanding of stressors that elite captains face,
82 specific examples of stressors were limited and the current study looks to extend this
83 literature by providing a much fuller insight into the stressors faced in the captaincy role.

84 From an applied perspective, the ability of individuals to deal with stressors appears
85 to be key for optimal performance in sport. For example, Frey (2007) found several of the
86 college coaches interviewed suggested that if they were unable to manage stress effectively,
87 this would have a negative impact on their coaching performance as stress would impede
88 their focus and decision-making. Similarly, Olusoga et al. (2010) found coaches highlighted
89 how the standard of their work dropped, when facing stressful situations. The coaches who
90 were interviewed explained how this would result in the quality of communication between
91 themselves and the athletes decreasing, and in turn, a failure to get the best out of athletes.
92 Athlete stress has also been shown to result in a range of negative consequences, including
93 overtraining and burnout (Tabei, Fletcher, & Goodger, 2012), unpleasant emotions and affect
94 (Arnold et al., 2016), dysfunctional health and well-being (DiBartolo & Shaffer, 2002), and
95 impaired preparation for and performance in major competitions (Gould, Guinan, Greenleaf,
96 Medbery, & Peterson, 1999). Fletcher and Wagstaff (2009) identified the potential concerns
97 with health and well-being in professional/high-level sport, and furthermore, in a review of
98 studies investigating burnout in coaches, Goodger, Gorely, Lavalley, and Harwood (2007)
99 identified perceived stress as one of the three main correlates of burnout. A captain in elite
100 sport has numerous formal and informal responsibilities, as well as having to maintain a

101 focus on their own performance. As such, the demands placed on captains might have a
102 negative effect on both their sporting performance, and their captaincy role, and could
103 potentially lead to other undesirable consequences such as burnout if they are not managed
104 appropriately. In addition, Thelwell et al.'s (2016) research has identified several mainly
105 negative impacts of coach stress on the athletes they work with. Consequently, in sports
106 where the captain has an important leadership role, similar negative impact might also be
107 widespread amongst other players due to captain stress. Thus, as captains in elite sport face
108 multiple and competing demands, investigating the stressors that this population encounter is
109 worthy of further research in striving to minimize the negative consequences that can result.

110 In the current study, we sample captains from international cricket. There are several
111 underpinnings to the rationale for studying stressors of elite captains, and studying this in a
112 cricket context. First, previous literature has reinforced the need to examine the psychological
113 requirements of specific roles within sport (Thelwell, Greenlees, & Weston, 2007) and
114 captaincy is one specific role. Sporting captains take on multiple roles, balancing the need to
115 perform to a high level themselves with multiple leadership responsibilities. For example, in
116 cricket, on the pitch the captains take responsibility for motivating teammates, decision-
117 making, and tactics. Off the pitch, captains can have a large number of game related
118 responsibilities, such as selection, planning, leading meetings, as well a non-game specific
119 responsibilities such as speaking to the media, long term strategy, liaising with club officials.
120 In cricket, captains usually take on the role equivalent to a manager in other sports, with
121 specific responsibility to lead the team, with the coach being more of a consultant role. In
122 addition, cricket is played over long periods (test matches in international cricket last for five
123 days) and as well as increased playing time, cricket teams spend a long time together.
124 Furthermore, when playing overseas, teams can be together for weeks and months, thus
125 increasing the demands on international captains. Thus, it is likely that cricket captains will

126 face many challenges in balancing the demands of playing themselves as part of a side, as
127 well as their numerous leadership responsibilities; therefore, this sample seemed very
128 appropriate to examine stressors encountered.

129 In summary, the aims of this study were to extend our knowledge of stress in sport in
130 three main ways. First, we aim to expand on the stress literature by exploring the stressors
131 faced by a specific population (captains in elite sport), as to our knowledge, no research to
132 date has specifically examined stressors faced by captains. Captains have to balance a playing
133 role with leadership responsibilities, and it is important to understand the unique stressors
134 they might face in this dual role. Second, an elite sample will be used, since it is important to
135 understand the increasing demands of involvement in competitive sport (Fletcher & Scott,
136 2010). Third, we aim to use a novel source of data (from autobiographies) to illustrate the
137 demands faced by captains in an elite sporting environment. Overall, it is anticipated that the
138 findings will have a variety of applied benefits. We hope the results will develop a greater
139 understanding for captains concerning the demands of their role, and also enhance the
140 awareness for players concerning the stressors that team captains face. Furthermore, it is
141 expected that the findings will advance coaches and practitioners' understanding of working
142 with captains in elite environments. Specifically, it is intended for the findings to assist
143 practitioners in developing an understanding of the stressors the captains face in their role
144 and, in turn, informing practitioners of when they might offer specific support to captains.

145 Method

146 Autobiographical Research

147 Bakhtin (1981) highlights how humans convey their socially constructed experiences
148 through story-telling, and in sport, elite athletes typically tell their stories through the writing
149 of autobiographies. This has resulted in a vast amount of autobiographical literature on sport
150 (Cox, 2003). Specifically, Taylor (2008) suggests that autobiographies “represent probably

151 the most substantial body of published material on the history of sport” (p. 470). A limited
152 number of studies in the sport psychology literature have used autobiographies as a resource
153 for analysis to understand the experiences of elite athletes. Some studies have analysed one
154 autobiography, for example, Sparkes (2004) analysed the illness experiences of cyclist Lance
155 Armstrong in his book “It’s Not About the Bike: My Journey Back to Life”. More recently,
156 researchers have used stories from multiple autobiographies which allows a consideration of
157 diverse perspectives and voices (Howells & Fletcher, 2015). For example, Stewart, Smith,
158 and Sparkes (2011) drew on the autobiographies of 12 elite athletes in exploring their
159 experiences of illness, Howells and Fletcher used the autobiographies of eight Olympic
160 swimming champions to examine the adversity they faced in their careers and their growth-
161 related experiences, and Newman, Howells, and Fletcher (2016) examined athletes’
162 experiences of depression in elite sport.

163 Interviews or focus groups with captains would have been appropriate approaches to
164 allow the researcher to enter into a conversation with participants about the stressors they
165 encounter in their captaincy role (Sparkes & Smith, 2014). However, access to such a narrow
166 group of participants (elite, international captains) is difficult for pragmatic reasons, and
167 Sparkes and Stewart (2016) argue the case for using sporting autobiographies as an
168 alternative analytic resource to interviews due to the ease of access to elite performers, the
169 low cost, and the depth of insights autobiographies they provide. Stewart et al. (2011) support
170 this claim regarding insight, arguing that published autobiographies have the potential to
171 provide a rich source of data within the sport context. Indeed, Howells and Fletcher (2015)
172 highlighted the greater diversity in adversity-related experiences they found in their study that
173 used autobiographical accounts compared the experiences reported in previous research
174 involving sport performers. Smith and Watson (2010) highlight that readers of
175 autobiographies should consider that whilst autobiographical writing may contain “facts”,

176 they are not factual history about a particular time, person, or event; rather they offer
177 subjective truth rather than fact. Nevertheless, Pipkin (2008) argues that autobiographies
178 focus less on facts but the personal experiences of the writer throughout their life, which can
179 reveal a different, and deeper, kind of truth than athletes might reveal in telling about their
180 experiences (e.g., in an interview). Furthermore, Plummer (2001) suggests insights from
181 autobiographies enhance our understanding of social phenomena as experienced by the
182 individual who lived through them. Thus, the information from autobiographies appear to be
183 an appropriate resource to study stressors as experienced by captains in elite sport, as the
184 captains are recounting personal experiences from their careers that are important to them.

185 **Sampling Procedure**

186 A criterion-based purposeful sampling was used. The initial criterion for inclusion
187 was that the captains had captained their country in at least 10 international test matches. This
188 would show they had been captain for at least two full test series, including both one home,
189 and one overseas series, thus providing information-rich sources to represent the focus of the
190 study. We also chose only those who had captained in the last 20 years, thus accessing
191 autobiographical accounts more reflective of the current era (Crossley, 2000). A list was
192 compiled of 27 captains who met the sampling criteria. The first author carried out a search
193 which revealed 12 of these captains had written an autobiographical account which included
194 reflection on their time as a captain. Thus, these 12 autobiographies of international male
195 cricket captains were sampled (the details of the captains are summarized in Table 1). The 12
196 captains collectively represented five countries (England = 5, Australia = 4, India = 1, South
197 Africa = 1, New Zealand = 1), and, in totality, captained their country in 610 test matches (M
198 = 50.8, SD = 24.1), and 1040 one-day internationals (M = 86.7, SD = 53.9). The captains
199 used different genres of writing, with four as the sole author written (e.g., Atherton, Waugh),
200 seven with the captain as a primary author with a co-author credited (e.g., Hussain,

201 Vaughan), and one with the captain as an author and a narrator credited (Clarke). All books
202 were written in the first person.

203 ***INSERT TABLE OF PLAYER INFORMATION HERE***

204 **Procedure and Data Analysis**

205 After sourcing the autobiographies, the first author read through the accounts, and
206 identified anything within the stories that could be considered a stressor. This resulted in a
207 wide range of meaning units of data that illustrated different stressors faced. Having
208 transcribed all the stressors, the first and second authors read and re-read all of the text and
209 agreed on i) which were stressors, and ii) that they involved aspects of captaincy. For
210 example, stressors that involved playing form were excluded, but if captaincy was mentioned
211 as a reason for this (e.g., reducing practice time due to captaincy demands and then form
212 suffering), then these were included. Subsequently, a small number of meaning units
213 removed after discussion between the authors, after agreement that they weren't stressors
214 related to the captaincy role. Following this, the two researchers independently coded
215 meaning units into groups of common themes and general dimensions. Initially, an inductive
216 content analysis was conducted but in the latter stages of the analysis, deductive analyses
217 were used to place the data into the emerging themes. The final stage of analysis involved the
218 third researcher who acted as a "critical friend" (Faulkner & Biddle, 2002). The third
219 researcher was not involved with the initial data collection and analysis, instead, their role
220 was to provide triangular consensus with the first two researchers by confirming (or not
221 confirming) the placement of raw data themes into the higher order categories that had
222 emerged. In line with these suggestions, our research was underpinned by epistemological
223 constructionism (i.e., that knowledge is socially constructed) and ontological relativism (that
224 there are multiple and mind-dependent realities).

225 **Methodological Quality**

226 To enhance the trustworthiness of the data and the analysis, we considered markers of
227 quality research outlined by Tracy (2010), which consider (a) worthy topic, (b) rich rigor, (c)
228 sincerity, (d) credibility, (e) resonance, (f) significant contribution, (g) ethics, and (h)
229 meaningful coherence. For example, it is suggested that the present research can be deemed a
230 worthy topic due to the relevance and interest of understanding more fully the stressors faced
231 by cricket captains in elite sport. In turn, the study is practically significant for those who
232 work with captains in elite sport and would benefit from a thorough understanding of
233 stressors that the captains encounter. In terms of sincerity and the truthfulness of the data, the
234 nature of the writers of the autobiographies' 'subjective truth' is also acknowledged;
235 however, there is a credibility to these sources as it is 'their truth' (this aspect is considered
236 further in the discussion section). In terms of resonance, a depth and breadth of rich quotes in
237 the results were provided to allow readers to fully understand captains' experiences of
238 stressors in their role. Finally, with regards to meaningful coherence, this was addressed
239 through stating clear research questions, using an appropriate sample, adopting methods and
240 analyses that were suitable for investigating the questions, and then presenting a clear
241 analysis and the implications of the findings.

242 **Results**

243 The results derived from the data analysis process represents the stressors faced from
244 the 12 captains, retrieved from their autobiographical accounts. The raw data themes were
245 organised into seven general dimensions of stressors, which included dealing with multiple
246 roles, team stressors, interactions with players, dealing with selection issues, interactions with
247 other personnel, scrutiny and criticism from the media, and extreme situations. The following
248 section provides an overview of these key themes, with quotations integrated to illustrate the
249 stressors encountered in each theme.

250 **Demands of Multiple Roles**

251 All captains mentioned the specific demands created by the dual role of leading the
252 side, and combining this with the demands of playing themselves, and how this impacted
253 negatively on them. Smith (2009) described one incident when he had been out on the field
254 captaining for a long period, and then had to go out to bat with only a short period of the day
255 remaining. Smith highlighted how, 'Padding up even became clumsy. Perhaps it was the
256 cumulative result of the stresses and strains of the day's captaincy, but I felt the nerves as much
257 as ever before' (p.161). Hussain (2005) reflected more generally about how the greater focus on
258 captaincy impacted on his own play when going through a bad run of form, saying 'I wasn't
259 thinking about my batting. In a way, it was weak of me because I needed to get my batting
260 right, but I didn't have enough mentally to focus totally on the team, and then switch on to my
261 batting' (p.289). Both examples illustrate the stress the captains faced having to deal with
262 multiple demands placed on them.

263 A further example of the negative consequences of multiple roles came from Vaughan
264 (2009), who highlighted how his approach changed when he became captain.

265 but after being appointed I knew I would have to change my mental approach
266 because there was so much to think about. . . I would think about my batting for part of
267 the day and then be able to switch off easily. Then suddenly you are thinking about
268 other players, about the team and about your own performance as the captain. The result
269 was that it affected my concentration as a batsman, because when I was actually at the
270 crease I was not in the bubble the way I used to be and became more afraid of failure
271 (p.217).

272 Vaughan's reflections illustrate how the stressors of having multiple roles instead of the
273 ability to just focus on a playing role had a negative impact on his form. In addition, an
274 inability to switch off from the captaincy role impacted negatively on the captains outside of
275 cricket. Vaughan described feeling 'detached' when friends were around or when he was
276 playing with his children, and would 'occasionally be miles away, thinking about whether I had

277 made the right field change at a certain point, or whether a certain player would be best for us
278 to pick' (p.380). After a difficult tour, Tendulkar (2015) recalled his return to India;

279 I was going through serious mental turmoil. I was finding it difficult to unwind. In the
280 past, I had been able to leave the disappointments of cricket behind and switch off. Not
281 this time. Even when I was with my kids, my mind was still on the series (p.174).

282 Vaughan, Tendulkar and Waugh all referred to the mental toll they experienced,
283 particularly resulting from not being able to switch off from the captaincy role. Waugh (2005)
284 described that 'when things got tough, it meant taking a lot on board and bottling up my
285 emotions'. During one test series, Waugh recalled how he sat in his hotel room and 'it nearly
286 became too much... I was lonely, sick of being away from the family, tired of the media
287 intrusions and negativity, pissed off with my own form, and struggling for inspiration' (p.634).
288 All the captains in the present study had their principal role in the side as a batsman, thus,
289 they were judged as a player based on the runs they scored. Smith (2009) recalled one incident
290 when 'I was more nervous than usual in Pakistan, especially walking out to bat in the first test'
291 (p.13). Smith attributed these nerves to his poor form, and reflected that 'No sportsman likes to
292 feel his place in the side in the team is under pressure, but it's even worse as captain because
293 there's no place to hide' (p.13). Thus, poor playing form was seen to lead to additional pressure
294 when captains weren't playing well.

295 **Team Stressors**

296 The captains illustrated various issues they faced when dealing with the team as a
297 whole. This included dealing with the team's emotions on the pitch. For example, Smith (2009)
298 highlighted an incident when a key decision did not go in favour of his side. Smith described
299 that 'having spoken so much about controlling our emotions, here was a bloody stiff test for all
300 of us two minutes into the innings' (p.103). Alternatively, Strauss (2014) described the
301 situation of having to control emotions within the team when a match had started especially

302 well. England had taken three wickets in the first 13 balls of a game, and Strauss stated that ‘I
303 don’t think any of us could quite believe the start we had’ (p.261). In both situations, the
304 captain faced the challenge of controlling the emotions of the team, while also needing to keep
305 control of their own emotions. Similarly, captains faced the demand of talking to the team
306 when the captain themselves were not happy with the performance. In one unsuccessful match,
307 Tendulkar (2015) recalled how ‘At the end of the match, I called a team meeting and lost my
308 cool with the boys in the dressing room. I spoke from the heart and said the performance was
309 unacceptable’ (p.130). A similar example was provided by McCullum who described his
310 frustrations with certain attitudes within the team after a disappointing one-day international
311 competition;

312 While I can accept the losses, what I find far more difficult to accept is what I perceive
313 to be a continuing division in the ranks. We’ve talked about how we need to create
314 energy and intensity in the field, but it didn’t happen. . . I give it to the whole team
315 straight. I tell them we could have won this tournament but when you’ve got guys who
316 aren’t interested in representing their country, then we’ve got no chance (ch.16).

317 A further team stressor was identified by Waugh (2005), who highlighted that when he
318 became captain, he had to ask the delicate question of whether I would alienate myself from the
319 rest of the guys, or try and continue as I had in the past’ (p.507). Waugh reflected that it
320 ‘inevitably led to a distancing of relationships between me and the other players’, which was a
321 demand for him when becoming captain. In this instance, having to deal with such team issues
322 after having been a teammate and friend of these players provided a specific challenge that
323 captains face. Clarke reflected more directly on this issue and highlighted one example of
324 where the move into the captaincy role had resulted in the loss of a friendship;

325 It is tough to have your loyalties tested and divided. . . but I don’t know if [chairman of
326 selectors] has complete confidence that I can separate the captaincy from the friendships
327 and, if I can, whether it will cost me the trust of my teammates. Clearly it cost me [a
328 player’s]. (ch.14).

329

330 Interactions with Individual Players

331 The autobiographies include numerous examples of the captains dealing with difficult
332 individuals and certain problematic behaviours these players exhibited. Captains recalled
333 various incidents of player indiscipline off the pitch which became the captain's responsibility
334 to address. Many such issues were alcohol-related, including a group of players going out
335 during a world cup, and one being photographed drunk on a pedalo (Vaughan, 2009), and a
336 young player being in a fight in a night club (Taylor, 1999). Hussain (2005) also recalled
337 having to deal with a senior player being seen out very late in the city during a test match, and
338 Ponting (2014) outlined ongoing issues he faced with a player's drinking, which included the
339 player 'turning up at the ground still drunk after a night out' (p.357). Other examples included
340 Atherton (2003) and Stewart (2000) describing players being late and missing training, and
341 Ponting recalling the challenge of dealing with the fallout when a star player was to be sent
342 home at the start of a world cup for a drugs-related offence.

343 Captains also spoke of a variety of demands they faced from player indiscipline on the
344 pitch. Strauss (2014) had to deal with one player being 'completely withdrawn' (p.313) in
345 practice. Furthermore, Strauss had to deal with the impact of this out in the field of play, where
346 the player's poor attitude meant 'he [the player] seemed to be determined to let everyone in the
347 ground know how unhappy he was'. McCullum commented on having to address the poor
348 attitude of a player who had been the previous captain, and who was apparently still unhappy
349 with how this sacking was dealt with;

350 I can't pretend there weren't problems reintegrating him into the team after what had
351 gone on. That was a delicate process. . . Everyone else would chase the ball to the
352 boundary as hard as they possibly could; [the player] would jog after it. Everyone
353 would clap and support one another when there was a wicket; [the player] would stand
354 like a statue in slips with his arms crossed (ch.8).

355 A more direct example of player indiscipline was recalled by Stewart (2000), with one
356 of his bowlers making a ‘supposed head-butt’ against an opposition batsman (p.197). Similarly,
357 Waugh (2005) described an on-pitch ‘altercation’ (p.692) between his fast bowler and an
358 opposition batsman which ‘must have looked horrendous on television’. Dealing with such
359 player behaviour presents a unique challenge for captains who are also on the pitch themselves
360 and must deal with such behaviour at that specific moment in time, while also needing to focus
361 on the demands of the game. Indeed, Waugh commented that he ‘was most concerned with
362 organising a bowling change’ when the incident with his fast bowler occurred. In addition, a
363 further stressor may arrive from the repercussions of such incidents. For example, Waugh
364 describes how the head of Australian cricket ‘a couple of hours later... contacted me
365 demanding answers’, in challenging Waugh about the altercation and how he (Waugh) was
366 dealing with it.

367 Off the pitch, the captains recalled numerous times where they were faced with players
368 having problems outside of cricket, particularly when the squad were away on an overseas tour.
369 For example, Waugh (2005), Hussain (2005), and Smith (2009) all recalled having personal
370 conversations with teammates who were having marital problems. Hussain recalled one such
371 issue, when it appeared that being on tour away from family for long periods heightened the
372 issue for the players, and Hussain described the player to be ‘really struggling on the trip. He
373 was going through one of his dark phases, the most serious, I think, in his career’ (p.263).
374 Further examples of players in the squad facing specific issues included Vaughan (2009)
375 reflecting on a player suffering from depression, Hussain speaking to a player ‘distracted’ due
376 to an ongoing and potentially career-threatening injury, and Waugh recalling a player being
377 called home when his wife was diagnosed with a terminal illness. Ponting (2014) highlighted
378 the demands of supporting players, particularly when they were having difficulties away on
379 tour, and how he ‘spent many a long night with team-mates, who knocked on my door wanting

380 to chat about problems in their private lives, feeling homesick, or dealing with something else
381 critical to them' (p.493). Smith reflected on times when the side were away on tour players
382 came to him to chat through personal issues, and that the captain should have 'an understanding
383 of emotional intelligence, and knowing your players from the inside as well as the outside'
384 (p.152), which he believed is 'key to being a good captain'. Overall, the demand for a captain
385 of constantly providing a support network to players, whilst still maintaining focus on their
386 own form, appears a key challenge that the captains in the present study faced in their role.

387 **Dealing with Selection Issues**

388 Typically, in cricket, international captains would not have a direct selection role, and
389 while the captain might be asked their opinion, a team of selectors would usually choose the
390 squad. However, with a squad chosen, often a final team selection would be left to be made by
391 the captain and coach. This process presented a range of challenges, including issues with
392 making the selection decisions, communicating the decisions; and the consequences of these
393 decisions. In terms of making the selection decisions, Waugh (2005) described a specific
394 dilemma where his side were losing a series in the West Indies, and he was part of a difficult
395 decision as to whether a star bowler should be dropped from the side. Making such a decision
396 caused Waugh a significant challenge, as well as dealing with the consequences of having a
397 player very unhappy with such a decision. The captains disagreeing with the selectors was
398 another issue raised. For example, Tendulkar (2015) was frustrated with the 'occasions when I
399 wasn't given the team of my choice, and did not get the particular players I asked for' (p.119).
400 In making a specific team decision, and dropping a player when on tour, Waugh recalled a
401 three-way phone call with himself, the coach, and the head of selectors (who was at home and
402 not with them on tour). The selector thought the player shouldn't be dropped but Waugh
403 remembered the anger this provoked in himself, saying how 'I countered strongly, "You aren't
404 here! The change needs to happen now, not in a few weeks' time at the start of our home

405 season” (p.614). Ponting (2014) highlighted how ‘the only thing the skipper was not allowed
406 to do was to help choose the men who would follow him into battle, something that had always
407 seemed weird to me’ (p593). Thus, as the captains were accountable for their team’s
408 performance, the issue of their involvement (or lack of) in selection was a stressor that emerged
409 in the data.

410 Some captains talked about the challenge of directly communicating selection decisions
411 to players, which was often the responsibility of the captain. After making such selection
412 decisions, Waugh (2005), Atherton (2003), and Ponting (2014) all described aggressive
413 responses from players who had been dropped, with Atherton recalling one player saying
414 directly to him that the decision was ‘an absolute disgrace’ (p.90). However, a specific
415 consequence of selection decisions was the emotional impact on the captains themselves.
416 Waugh and Hussain (2005) both highlighted that decisions to drop a senior player effectively
417 meant it would end this player’s career. Waugh recounted in detail having to tell a long-term
418 teammate he was dropped from the one-day side. Waugh described the impact this had on
419 himself, having to tell his ‘great mate’ this, and how ‘knocking on his door and sounding the
420 death knell of half of his career put my heart rate into overdrive’ (p.459). After communicating
421 with the player, Waugh left his room feeling ‘totally gutted, experiencing a grief associated
422 with separation. I felt our relationship had changed in those torturous two minutes of strained
423 conversation’. Similarly, Smith (2009) described the scenario when a senior player and long-
424 time teammate had been dropped and subsequently announced his retirement.

425 The whole day was very emotional for me... for all of us in fact. I have a huge amount
426 of respect for Polly – his professionalism as a cricketer is one thing, but he also happens
427 to be one of the most decent men in the game, and was a great ally for me to have
428 within both squads. My head was spinning at various times during the day. We were in
429 the middle of a test match, but I couldn’t help thinking about how much his experience
430 would be missed (p.45).

431 Such a quote demonstrates the strength of Smith's own response to the selection
432 decision and subsequent retirement of a key teammate, and thus why deselection of a player
433 might be a specific stressor for a captain.

434 **Interactions with Staff and Other Personnel**

435 The captains expressed various challenges they faced with different people which
436 included members of the coaching staff, selectors, staff from the national governing body, and
437 even the crowd. Atherton (2003) spoke about the deep-rooted problems created by a head
438 coach who 'basically didn't share my philosophy', commenting 'it was clear to me at the start
439 [of working with the coach] that whatever provision I had had, and whatever plans I had made,
440 would be cast aside' (p.96). Vaughan (2009) similarly talked about the challenge of having
441 differences of opinion with a new head coach who came in and wanted to do things differently.

442 When I arrived in Sri Lanka I was basically told straight away about all the new team
443 directives: this is how we are going to motivate ourselves, this is how we are going to
444 warm up, this is how we are going to warm down, this is how we are going to conduct
445 team meetings (p.330).

446 When the coach asked Vaughan his thoughts, Vaughan's responded that the proposed
447 approach was at odds to what they'd been doing and how 'we already had a formula that had
448 brought pretty good results'. Alternatively, Tendulkar's (2015) exasperation with a new coach
449 was the lack of support the coach offered, with the coach's 'method of involvement and his
450 thought process was limited to leaving the running of the team to the captain, and hence he did
451 not involve himself in strategic discussions that would help us on the field' (p172). McCullum
452 expressed a different frustration with the coach, who McCullum not found inconsistent, and led
453 to him mistrusting the coach's motivations;

454 He was great company in social situations, and I really enjoyed sitting down and having
455 a beer with him and talking. . . Then next morning he would walk past me at breakfast
456 in a shitty mood. They were either huge mood swings, or... I began to feel that he
457 didn't trust me, and some of the senior players felt the same way. . . I developed a

458 suspicion that rather than try to get more out of his senior players, he'd decided to get
459 rid of us and was waiting for his opportunity (ch.4).

460 Hussain (2005) expressed his frustrations with a member of the coaching staff who
461 Hussain described as not being 'hard, dynamic, or imaginative enough to work with our
462 bowlers' (p.375). Furthermore, Hussain recalled having, 'lost it with him a couple of times
463 because he seemed to be more interested in having a fag and a drink with the bowlers than
464 giving them the necessary motivation'.

465 Another group that captains highlighted as a stressor in their role were officials from
466 their governing body. Both Vaughan (2009) and Hussain (2005) bemoaned the lack of support
467 from the English Cricket Board (ECB) when dealing with the issue of playing in Zimbabwe.
468 Hussain reflected that 'How could it reach a situation where I, as England captain, felt
469 abandoned, not only by the British Government but also and mainly by cricket's world
470 governing body and our own board' (p.1). Ponting (2014) recalled another incident where he
471 felt a lack of support from his own governing body. An opposing captain had accused the
472 Australian team of racism, and Ponting had asked the head of the Australian board to
473 'forcefully defend us' against the accusations. However, Ponting felt let down by 'most of the
474 quotes I saw from [the two key board members] concerned their efforts to save the tour, not the
475 Australian team's reputation' (p.477). Principally, a lack of support from the governing body
476 created demands on the captain.

477 **Scrutiny/criticism from the Media**

478 Numerous examples emerged in the data of captains describing treatment from the media,
479 and particularly the demands of dealing with the criticism they were subjected to. The captain's
480 own form, and in turn, the media questioning whether they deserved their place in the side, was
481 one example of such a demand. For all the captains in the present study, their principle role in
482 the side was as a batsman, and so as a player, they were judged by their batting performance and

483 the runs they scored. While on a run of bad form, Taylor (1999) described how ‘certain sections
484 of the media were now howling for blood’ (p.192), thus putting Taylor under additional pressure.
485 Media criticism also included negative references to the captain’s approach. Hussain (2005)
486 commented on how England’s play during his captaincy was described in the media as not being
487 ‘attractive enough cricket’ (p.300). Ponting’s (2014) Australian side were criticised ‘for how we
488 celebrated success on the field, or for the intensity which we played our cricket’ (p.200).
489 Decisions captains made were also criticised strongly by the media. Vaughan’s (2009) decision
490 to leave a test match to attend the birth of his daughter ‘seemed to spark a national debate ...
491 about whether it was right or wrong to attend the birth’ (p.179). Strauss (2014) was criticised for
492 missing a tour to Bangladesh, and the perception that while another senior player missed the
493 tour, he perceived that ‘there was plenty of attention focussed on the captain missing the tour. To
494 some people, it seemed that I was abdicating my responsibility, opting not to travel to an
495 inhospitable part of the world while my team mates suffered’ (p.236).

496 Captains also highlighted how the media might look to provoke a response from the
497 captain. Ponting (2014) suggested that in press conferences, he ‘could sense the pack waiting
498 for me to say something that would give them the day’s headlines’ (p.476). The press might
499 directly challenge a captain soon after a day’s play when the captain would have been tired
500 from fulfilling their captaincy or playing role out on the pitch. For example, after a close loss,
501 Atherton (2003) suggested ‘the aftermath’ including the post-match interviews ‘presented my
502 biggest challenge to date as England captain’ (p.87). Also, in a post-game interview after an
503 unsuccessful series, Ponting was asked the provocative question ‘would Australia have won the
504 series with a more positive and aggressive captain?’ (p.374). Strauss (2014) suggests that,
505 ‘press conferences were a game in their own right. Print journalists in particular, are keen to get
506 you to say something even a tiny bit controversial’. Strauss further reflected;

507 Back then, I could sense that they were dying for me to say something about Hussain or
508 Butcher that might be construed as disrespectful or imply that their best days were

509 behind them. It would have been a good story. I could imagine the headlines: ‘Debutant
510 slams ageing stars.’ Later in my career, I came to enjoy those verbal jousts with the
511 journalists. We all knew the rules of the game and their probing questions (p.66).

512 A specific example of the media challenging the captains was regards to them making
513 suggestions that there were problems between a captain and a certain player. Waugh (2005)
514 commented on how a ‘respected commentator’ had ‘stopped me for a quick chat’ before a
515 training session and ‘didn’t pull any punches, asking, “Is there a feud between [another player]
516 and you?”’ (p.526) Indeed, being criticised by respected journalists, many of who are admired
517 ex-players, proved an issue for the captains. Ponting (2014) recalls the incident where, after
518 setting a certain field for his spinner to bowl to, it didn’t work well. Immediately, former
519 bowler and now commentator Shane Warne was criticising Ponting’s approach on Twitter,
520 saying; “How the hell can Hauritz bowl to this field??... Feeling for Hauritz, terrible!!!... What
521 are these tactics?” (p.565). Thus, captains now have the demand of facing instant media
522 criticism while the game is actually progressing.

523 Not only did the content of the media criticism create a significant demand, but also the
524 amount and intensity of scrutiny was an issue. Stewart (2000) remembered being announced as
525 England captain and that ‘there were eight camera crews, around 50 reporters and I think the
526 announcement was live on BBC radio five and on Sky News... the whole thing took two hours’
527 (p.20). Atherton (2003) reflected on ‘being dismissed for 99 40 minutes before the end of play’,
528 and having been ‘batting for a draining 5 ½ hours’, he ‘barely had the chance to shower, change
529 and relax’ before being asked to do the evening press conference’ (p.119). An interesting
530 further demand that the captains faced was dealing with scrutiny from the media and others
531 after being successful. Vaughan (2009) described the ‘aftermath of the 2005 Ashes’ where his
532 English team had beaten rivals Australia for the first time in 18 years, and his increasing
533 ‘public visibility... the press’s perception of me fluctuating with all the glory and injury... all
534 the sponsor’s requests needing to be met’ (p361). Waugh (2005) described how winning the

535 cricket world cup ‘ensured stardom for the members of the squad’ and how ‘our profiles
536 skyrocketed overnight’. Waugh recalled how this caused him and his teammate brother
537 ‘immediate pain’ when a press photographer was taking photos of them at their grandfather’s
538 funeral soon after the world cup success. Waugh reflected that ‘this scrutiny was something
539 more than ever, I was going to have to come to terms with’ (p.542). And in summarising the
540 demands from the media that modern day captains face, Clarke quoted the words of former
541 captain Mark Taylor; “He says I’m the first captain of the generation when there’s
542 unprecedented 24-hour scrutiny in social media. It’s like the scrutiny of his time multiplied by
543 50, he says” (ch.12).

544 **Extreme Situations**

545 In their autobiographies, the international captains spoke of some unique and deeply
546 challenging situations faced during their time as captain. Vaughan (2009) described a different
547 political issue, being involved in ‘something of a moral maze’, which was the decision to
548 tour/not tour Zimbabwe, and reflected that as a cricket player and captain, ‘making complex
549 ethical judgments is not what we are trained to do’ (p.190). Unique safety issues were
550 challenges for captains to deal with, as Hussain’s England side also had to decide whether to
551 travel to Zimbabwe for a world cup match, and Smith’s South Africa side had to decide
552 whether to travel to Karachi due to security issues. The captains were involved in such
553 decisions that had potential safety consequences for their teammates. Taylor’s Australia side
554 had decided not to play a World Cup game in Sri Lanka in 1996, and he recalled how the
555 decision ‘had not gone down well on the subcontinent’ (Taylor, 1999, p.183). Because the
556 captain is seen as the figurehead of the team, then the captain faced additional consequences,
557 with Taylor recalling when in India during the World Cup;

558 The organisers took special steps to keep us safe . . . me especially. They obviously felt
559 that if there was going to be a target for dissatisfaction with the Australian cricket team,
560 it would be the skipper. For two weeks, I had two guards carrying Italian submachine

561 guns accompanying me everywhere and posted outside my hotel room in Calcutta. The
562 organisers had put me in a room of my own, on a different floor to the rest of the team.
563 If I went down to the pool the guards came too. . . I can tell you I didn't sleep very well
564 for those two weeks (p.183).

565
566 Other unique challenges captains faced included Hussain (2005) being on tour in New
567 Zealand and during a test match when the news came through that a teammate (who was not on
568 that current tour) had died in a car accident. Hussain describes the incident 'the most traumatic
569 of my career' (p.351), and recalled going in to the changing room and seeing the sadness of his
570 players, and a scene 'I hope I never see again'. A comparable situation was described by Clarke
571 when a close teammate died, and Clarke was faced with having to deal with the grief of the
572 situation alongside the responsibilities and expectations of leading the side;

573 Over the days following his passing, my role as Australian captain overlapped with my
574 personal grief at losing one of my best mates. It was hard to separate the two. Managing
575 the scene in the hospital, bringing players together, giving a eulogy at his funeral, and
576 then, after long negotiations, taking the field in a Test match two weeks later – I had no
577 chance to retreat into my private space and grieve for the bloke I regard as my little
578 brother (ch.18).

579 Taylor (1999) recalled finding out that two of his teammates had been involved in a
580 'bookie scandal' (p144), accepting money in exchange for information. Strauss (2014) recalled
581 being directed to the newspaper article online that revealed that opponents who they were
582 playing against in a test match had been caught being paid to deliberately bowl no-balls. A final
583 unique challenge was described by Ponting (2014), who recalled a close match where Australia
584 started the last day needing 44 more runs to win but only 3 wickets left. A teammate had been
585 hit in the head earlier in the game and doctors had told him that the concussion was so severe
586 that he was out of the test, shouldn't play for 3 further weeks, and Ponting and the team
587 management had been told that another blow to the head could kill him. Yet when Australia
588 lost wickets, the teammate had got his equipment on ready to go out and bat. Ponting recalled

589 having the 'duty of care' to the teammate who was determined to go out and bat, and how he
590 should handle the situation. In the end, Australia won the game without the player needing to
591 go out and bat, and Ponting reflected on the difficulty of handling his teammate, and how it was
592 'my job as skipper to make the call for him' (p.410). In each of these unique situations, the
593 captains faced distinct challenges concerning how best to deal with the issues they were
594 confronted with.

595 **Discussion**

596 This study extends previous research that has examined sources of stress in sport by
597 identifying a range of stressors that elite captains face in their role. The findings are partially
598 consistent with previous research that has considered the stressors faced by coaches and
599 players. For example, findings concerning feeling insecurity and self-doubt, worries about
600 own form, and dealing with the views of the media were stressors also seen in Thelwell et
601 al.'s (2007) study with elite cricketers. In terms of the leadership role of the captain, a variety
602 of stressors were consistent with those identified in previous research with sporting leaders
603 (e.g., Olusoga et al., 2009; Thelwell et al., 2008) such as dealing with athletes, team and
604 selection issues, and working with a variety of other individuals. A specific example was the
605 lack of commitment and professionalism that athletes exhibited, which both Thelwell et al.
606 and Olusoga et al. identified as a source of stress for coaches, with the captains in the present
607 study recalling many incidents of poor athlete behaviour. In the current study, the captains
608 also had to deal with the demands of athletes' emotional issues, and contextually, these
609 mostly occurred when the team were touring overseas. The present research also illustrates a
610 variety of unique stressors that elite captains face in their role. These include having to deal
611 with players in their team on the pitch (e.g., player indiscipline), the workload demands of
612 leading the team on and off the pitch, and the demands of the captaincy combined with a need
613 to maintain focus on their own play and form.

614 Recently, researchers have questioned the role and importance of the captain. For
615 example, Fransen and colleagues (2014) investigated how leadership functions within a team
616 could be delivered by multiply athlete leaders, and found that very little leadership appeared
617 to be provided by the formal leaders (captains). Furthermore, in their interviews with
618 professional field hockey coaches, Grant and Cotterill (2016) reported the captain's role
619 being largely a cultural relic, and lacking real importance. However, in contrast to the
620 contentions of Fransen et al. and Grant and Cotterill, our findings not only highlight the
621 multi-faceted role of the cricket captain, but also how this range of roles would be stressful
622 for the captains. Furthermore, while some stressors faced by captains appeared similar to
623 those reported in other studies, certain stressors seemed to place a greater demand on the
624 captain due to their dual role of leading and playing. For example, making selection
625 decisions, having to deal with the emotional demand of a teammate who has been dropped,
626 and having to deal with the media are all stressors that may be more intensified for captains
627 than other leaders after being engaged on the pitch in their playing role. Such findings
628 support and extend the findings of Camiré (2016), who also identified the draining nature of
629 the captaincy role.

630 Our findings present several specific applied considerations for coaches and applied
631 practitioners who work with captains at an elite level. Firstly, the findings of the present
632 study increase our awareness and heighten our understanding of the demands that elite
633 captains face. Such an awareness would provide a starting point for those who work with
634 captains in terms of understanding the demands so that they might then help the captains in
635 their role. Indeed, if elite captains in the world face such stressors, then the challenge for all
636 coaches and practitioners is how they might best support captains in their role. In addition,
637 the findings would also serve to create an awareness for other players, so they might more
638 fully appreciate the stressors their captain encounters. Following the development of the

639 awareness of such stressors, coaches or practitioners might work with captains to support
640 them, or help them develop coping strategies to deal with such stressors. Some demands
641 identified are internal issues and more deep-rooted, which a practitioner might work with the
642 captain to help them understand and address. Our findings identify external factors (e.g.,
643 dealing with other professionals, media) that are uncontrollable stressors, in terms of the
644 captain can't prevent them happening. In these instances, practitioners can help develop
645 strategies to deal with such stressors, for example, in terms of media criticism, practitioners
646 might help captains rationalise this, and devise coping strategies to deal with this.
647 Furthermore, future research might investigate the efficacy of such coping strategies
648 developed in training workshops in terms of helping captains deal with the demands of their
649 role.

650 It is hoped this research may have applied benefits in terms of informing development
651 programmes for youth athletes taking on captaincy responsibilities. Researchers (e.g., (Jones
652 & Lavalley, 2009) have identified that those involved in youth sport rate leadership as a key
653 life skill that must be developed in young people involved in a sporting context. However,
654 there is a paucity of research that trains young people in terms of their leadership
655 development. Voelker et al. (2011) interviewed high school captains, and results revealed that
656 the captains were inadequately trained or prepared to fulfil their captaincy role. Furthermore,
657 Gould et al. (2013) contend that athletes will not simply become effective leaders by being
658 named captain alone, and contend that those working with athletes should purposely and
659 proactively attempt to develop leadership skills over time. It is hoped that the results of this
660 study (concerning the challenges elite captains face in their role) will help inform training of
661 young athletes who are in a captaincy role in an elite environment. The findings of the current
662 study could inform workshops with young captains to consider how such aspiring captains
663 might deal with such challenging situations (what-if activity/scenario planning). Such

664 workshop activities could initiate discussions about effective coping strategies in dealing with
665 such future demands if they were to occur. The findings of the current study also revealed a
666 number of unique demands placed on the captain, such as having to consider situations
667 concerning the safety of themselves and their players. Indeed, as we were writing the current
668 manuscript, the English cricket team, led by Captain Alistair Cook, were having to decide
669 whether to travel to Bangladesh in light of recent terrorist attacks in the country. Thus,
670 workshops with aspiring captains might consider how these captains might deal with unique
671 demands of captaincy in elite sport if such demands were to emerge.

672 In addition, our findings could inform work with governing bodies to develop primary
673 stress management interventions, aiming to reduce the frequency and/or intensity of the
674 demands of the captaincy role. Stressors have been shown to result in mental health problems
675 for athletes (e.g., Gould et al., 1999; Noblet, 2003), and consequently, many sports now have
676 schemes to support athletes with such stressors that might lead to mental health issues. In
677 British football, the Professional Footballers' Association send members guidelines on
678 mental health which include materials that depict stressful situations they might find
679 themselves. In English cricket, the Professional Cricketers' Association runs a 'Mind
680 Matters' campaign to help players identify when they or their teammates might be vulnerable
681 to pressures in their sport. The present study adds to the existing literature that has identified
682 stressors that elite samples face, and thus, could inform intervention work that strives to
683 support positive mental health in elite sport. Indeed, if sport governing bodies are aware of
684 the additional pressures that captains face, they have a duty of care to offer support (Fletcher
685 & Wagstaff, 2009). This could take the form of Mental Health First Aid (MHFA) training for
686 individuals operating in athlete support and interaction roles (cf. Hadlaczky, Hökby,
687 Mkrtchian, Carli, & Wasserman, 2014).

688 It was beyond the scope of the current study to consider the specific impacts that the
689 demands had on the captains, and the methodological approach taken didn't allow us to
690 identify specific contextual factors that would impact on such demands. However, one extract
691 from Ponting's autobiography suggested that in a losing situation, this is when the demands
692 really impact on the captain. Ponting considered; "I wondered if most cricket captains have a
693 shelf-life", and reflecting back on his time as captain, acknowledged that, "Maybe the twin
694 pressures of leading a team that wasn't winning and scoring runs at No. 3 wore me down
695 more than I was prepared to acknowledge at the time". From an applied perspective,
696 practitioners need to be aware of the times when a captain is suffering from the demands of
697 their roles, and thus when support is needed to help them deal with such demands.

698 The current findings should be carefully considered in terms of the extent to which
699 they might inform other populations. The present study used elite cricket captains, and the
700 role of the captain in cricket is quite unique. For example, the example of Atherton batting for
701 most of the day (approximately 6 hours), and then facing the media is very specific to cricket
702 and not transferable to many other sports. However, stressors such as when captains need to
703 support teammates when away on a lengthy tour, or having to represent their team in front of
704 the media would be generalisable to captains in a variety of sports. The findings may also be
705 generalisable to individuals who take on other influential leadership roles in teams, such as
706 the quarterback in American football. Individual differences also might impact on the
707 generalisability of the findings, with the stressors identified in the present study maybe
708 impacting on the captains to different degrees depending on aspects of their personality. For
709 example, while extraversion has been found to correlate highly with leadership (see Judge,
710 Bono, Ilies, & Gerhardt, 2002 for a review), for a review), not all elite leaders might share
711 such a trait. Michael Vaughan appears an extrovert individual and made limited reference to
712 demands of the media, while Steve Waugh (perceived as being much more introvert)

713 described numerous examples surrounding difficulties he has with the media. Future research
714 might investigate how different individuals in a leadership role are impacted on in a different
715 way depending on elements of their personality.

716 The use of autobiographies provided us with a novel method to identify stressors that
717 captains faced in their sport. Indeed, it is interesting to compare the advantages of such an
718 approach compared to a more traditional approach using interviews. Using published
719 autobiographies allowed us to appropriately sample a range of elite sporting captains and
720 understand their experiences of stressors in their role. Sparkes and Stewart (2016) suggest
721 autobiographies are a relatively easy source of data to access information about elite athletes
722 when compared to accessing them for interview in person, and that they allow us to sample
723 larger numbers than would normally be possible for an interview based study. In addition,
724 previous studies on stress and coping using interviews with athletes and coaches which
725 provided more of a snapshot of experiences of stress and coping (Galli & Reel, 2012), and a
726 further advantage of using autobiographies is that the participants reflect on their overall
727 careers, which allows us a broader understanding of their experiences of stressors they faced
728 throughout their careers.

729 A potential limitation of our study was not being able to understand the specific
730 consequences of each stressor. Indeed, previous research has identified how high level
731 performers might not have succeeded to the extent they did if it were not for experiencing
732 stressors in elite level sport (Fletcher & Sarkar, 2012), and Collins and MacNamara (2012)
733 suggested that youth athletes might benefit or even need to experience adversity to ultimately
734 succeed in elite sport. Thus, the stressors illustrated in the present study might have helped
735 the captains develop and flourish in their role. However, such a suggestion is speculative, and
736 an interview approach might have allowed a greater exploration of such an idea Also,
737 previous research (e.g., Thelwell et al., 2007; Weston et al., 2008) has identified stressors and

738 accompanying coping strategies, which can offer applied suggestions for how those in elite
739 sport can deal with stressors. A novel approach for future research would be to take the
740 stressors identified in the present study and use them in interviews with elite captains, across
741 a range of sports, to understand which impact on them most in their own roles, and identify
742 specific coping strategies. Such research might also extend the literature by considering the
743 effectiveness of coping strategies used (e.g., Nicholls, Holt, Polman, & Bloomfield, 2006).
744 Future research might also use the findings of the present study to stimulate interviews with
745 individuals such as coaches and practitioners who work with captains, in terms of identifying
746 best practice in working with captains to allow them to deal with the range of stressors they
747 face in their role.

748 In our findings, it is noteworthy that the captains didn't describe many stressors that
749 occurred on the field of play, which contrasted with the stressors identified by players in
750 Thelwell et al.'s (2007) study. This may be because such competitive stressors are actually
751 less prevalent (e.g., Hanton, Fletcher, & Coughlan, 2005). Indeed, Arnold and colleagues
752 (Arnold & Fletcher, 2012; Arnold, Fletcher, & Daniels, 2013; Arnold et al., 2016) have
753 identified that organizational related demands can be particularly prevalent and problematic
754 for sport performers. Additionally, it may be the case that some competitive related stressors
755 did occur but weren't mentioned in the autobiographies. Autobiographies allow participants
756 to tell their story (Pipkin, 2008) and recall what is important to them. It is possible that some
757 aspects were omitted in the captains' stories because they were potentially trying to present a
758 certain identity (Smith & Watson, 2010). For example, the captains might want to portray an
759 image that they have a strong character, and can deal with certain challenges. However, the
760 depth of data and the amount of stressors identified in the current study indicate captains
761 were generally willing to highlight a range of challenges and difficult decisions they
762 encountered in their career in their autobiographies.

763 In summary, using autobiographies of the captains provided us with a unique insight
764 into the lives of these leaders in an elite sporting environment, as we have highlighted many
765 additional and unique stressors that cricket captains face that have not been reported in
766 previous research. These stressors particularly include the multiple demands of leading the
767 team combined with playing, and the continual demands of these dual roles, including having
768 to deal with individual players, as well as constant scrutiny from the media. We also
769 illustrated team stressors, as well as a number of unique and extreme situations. The present
770 study has therefore extended the literature by identifying a range of stressors they face in
771 their captaincy role, and thus increased our awareness of such demands. In terms of practical
772 applications of the findings, we hope they can be used to help in the development of captains
773 in terms of assisting them to deal with stressors, and in turn, be more accomplished in their
774 role. Indeed, in reflecting on his own development and working with people, Graeme Smith
775 honestly explains that ‘many people can move third man a bit squarer, but understanding
776 where he is as a cricketer and a person is a little harder’. Smith further reflects that at the time
777 of writing, he was ‘still learning, and I’m quite certain I will still be learning at the end of my
778 career. And after that’ (Smith, p.152), and it is hoped that the current study will assist in
779 supporting captains learn more about the captaincy role and how they might effectively deal
780 with the demands of their role.

781

782 Table 1

783 *Captain and autobiography details*

Captain name (co-author)	Year of Publication/ Title	Country of representation	Duration of Captaincy	Matches Captained (Tests/one-day)
Mike Atherton (N/A)	(2003) Opening Up	England	1993-98	54/43
Mark Taylor (N/A)	(1999) Time to Declare	Australia	1994-99	50/67
Alec Stewart (Brian Murgatroyd)	(2000) England Diary	England	1998-99	15/41
Steve Waugh (N/A)	(2005) Out of my Comfort Zone	Australia	1999-2004	57/106
Nasser Hussain (Paul Newman)	(2005) Playing with Fire	England	1999-2003	45/56
Sachin Tendulkar (Boria Majumdar)	(2015) Playing it my way	India	1996-2000	25/73
Graeme Smith (Neil Manthorp)	(2009) A Captain's Diary	South Africa	2003-14	108/149
Michael Vaughan (Mike Dickson)	(2009) Time to Declare	England	2003-08	51/60
Ricky Ponting (Geoff Armstrong)	(2014) At the Close of Play	Australia	2004-10	77/229
Andrew Strauss (N/A)	(2014) Driving Ambition	England	2006-12	50/62
Michael Clarke (David Tredinnick)	(2016) My Story	Australia	2011-15	47/92
Brendan McCullum (Greg McGee)	(2016) Declared	New Zealand	2013-16	31/62

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