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# Winning Formula, Man Management and the Inner Game: Commonalities of Success in the Ryder Cup and Super Bowl

## A Commentary

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### INTRODUCTION

In the stimulus article, Simon Jenkins provides an interesting and thought provoking discussion of “leadership” and “management” at the athletic and coaching levels, by reflecting on the experiences of Paul McGinley (Ryder Cup captain) and Pete Carroll (American Football coach). Based on my research conducted with national performance directors (NPDs) in elite sport, this commentary will discuss both the differences and similarities in leadership and management, suggest how the experiences of these constructs at the athletic and coaching level might relate to those of individuals operating at a managerial/organizational level in sport, and provide recommendations for leader and manager development.

### LEADERSHIP VERSUS MANAGEMENT?

Simon’s article brings greater clarity to the key components of and distinctions between the leadership and management constructs. Of particular note, was McCrimmon’s [1] differentiation, which stated that: “Leadership does not involve managing people to get things done . . . . It comes to an end once those led get on board. It sells the tickets for the journey; management drives the bus to the destination”. This difference in scope and vision between leaders and managers is often identified in the literature [2,3,4] – with leaders typically focusing on a broader meaning and purpose and seeking change and movement, whilst managers tend to emphasize the more immediate implementation of operations and seek order and stability [see also 5]. Examples of both leadership and management are evident in the stimulus article, with Paul McGinley *leading* and engaging his team by understanding every player’s attributes and peculiarities, and Pete Carroll discussing the system he is *managing* and implementing to help players perform to their potential. Despite the identified conceptual differences between leadership and management, it is generally accepted at a pragmatic and operational level, that considerable overlap exists and an individual’s role might entail elements of both. Indeed, leadership and management both involve influence, working with people under often changing and uncertain environmental demands, identifying and solving problems, initiating activities, and effectively accomplishing goals [6, 7]. To illustrate this overlap in practice, Northouse [7] highlights that leaders involved in planning, staffing, and controlling are also involved in management, and managers tasked with influencing a group to meet set goals are also involved in leadership. Similarly, in the stimulus article, while Paul McGinley perhaps views himself as more of a *manager* by his attention to detail in planning and his man management of key stakeholders and their emotions, I believe that he is, ultimately, also *leading* his team through his strategizing (e.g., “My job is to plot the next move, wind them up and let them go play”, “I wanted to . . . take things to another level”) and inspiration (e.g., communication and speeches in team meetings and dressing room images). Therefore, based on the above evidence and examples, it is suggested that the time at which leadership ends and management begins may not be as clear-cut in practice as is often proposed in the literature; instead, the two are frequently

intertwined and individuals may be acting as both a leader and a manager within the same role.

### **COMMONALITIES OF LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT ACROSS LEVELS**

A further observation that occurred when reading the stimulus article was that many of the aspects that are forwarded as important components of successful leadership and management at the athletic/coaching level parallel those in research with national performance directors (NPDs) on best practice at their level of functioning in Olympic sports [5]. In this work, four main areas of best practice performance leadership and management were identified (vision, operations, people, culture) and many of the reflections from Golf and American Football in the stimulus article appear related to these dimensions. For example, ensuring that any influences on and distractions towards a vision are identified and addressed (“One of the big questions I asked him was “how do you handle the mantle of being favorites?”), sharing the vision and inspiring others to invest in it (“...got everyone to be invested in the process”), strategically planning for training and competition (“The confidence necessary for performing at championship level over long periods of time can only be developed on the practice field through repetition”), communicating effectively with others (“See if we can find a way to communicate with them in a really good way” “He listened keenly to players’ opinions”), and ensuring everyone is aware of their own and others’ roles (“Each player had a specific role for the week”). Another commonality between leaders and managers operating at any level in sport is that they must be contextually aware of their surroundings and act accordingly [8]. Therefore, whilst there are many best practice leadership and management principles that are applicable across the different levels (e.g., athletic, coaching, managerial), there will also be nuances and idiosyncrasies that leaders and managers will need to contend with based upon their position and surrounding context.

### **LEADER AND MANAGER DEVELOPMENT**

It seems to be the case that many of the recommendations and suggestions that NPDs provided for other leaders and managers in a follow-up article [8] are already being followed and implemented by the cases in the stimulus piece. For example, establish an approach (“I asked myself “What is my philosophy?” “What is my approach?” and I came up with the thought”), understand roles within the team (“I saw my job as managing the situation, not as a motivator, I had vice-captains to do that”), enhance personal skills (“A lot of the qualities that I’ll bring to the table will be the ones that if I didn’t have them before I will have learnt them from the captains I’ve played under”), and strengthen relationships (“The caddies are a great source of information, and also their coaches and also their managers and the people they have around them. They are all important and I’ve spent a lot of time over the last few years gathering information”). Often such leadership and management skills are learnt from previous life experiences, observing significant others, or through trial and error of what does and does not work, rather than any formal training or education [9]. Certainly, in the present article, it seems like Paul McGinley has drawn many of his captaincy principles and behaviors from his own Ryder cup experiences and previous captains and role models. Some scholars have emphasized the importance of adopting a more formal educational approach [10] or enhancing coach leadership practice [11] to develop athlete leaders and captains [see also 12, 13]. This research has typically been conducted with youth or collegiate captains however; therefore, more research is required on leadership and management development programs in elite adult captains and coaches.

### **CONCLUSION**

To conclude, this commentary has drawn on research from leaders and managers at an organizational and managerial level in elite sport to help reflect on and discuss those experiences forwarded in the stimulus article. In addition, the commentary has presented both the conceptual differences and operational similarities between leadership and management, and suggested methods for informal and formal leader and manager development.

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## EDITOR'S NOTE

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