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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 recognized. 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.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



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

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

## **Method**

### **Autobiographical Research**

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

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

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

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

### **Sampling Procedure**

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

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

\*\*\*INSERT TABLE OF PLAYER INFORMATION HERE\*\*\*

### **Procedure and Data Analysis**

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

### **Methodological Quality**

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

### **Results**

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

#### **Demands of Multiple Roles**

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

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

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

Vaughan's reflections illustrate how the stressors of having multiple roles instead of the ability to just focus on a playing role had a negative impact on his form. In addition, an inability to switch off from the captaincy role impacted negatively on the captains outside of cricket. Vaughan described feeling 'detached' when friends were around or when he was

playing with his children, and would ‘occasionally be miles away, thinking about whether I had made the right field change at a certain point, or whether a certain player would be best for us to pick’ (p.380). After a difficult tour, Tendulkar (2015) recalled his return to India;

I was going through serious mental turmoil. I was finding it difficult to unwind.

In the past, I had been able to leave the disappointments of cricket behind and switch off. Not this time. Even when I was with my kids, my mind was still on the series (p.174).

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

### **Team Stressors**

The captains illustrated various issues they faced when dealing with the team as a whole. This included dealing with the team’s emotions on the pitch. For example, Smith (2009) highlighted an incident when a key decision did not go in favor of his side. Smith described that ‘having spoken so much about controlling our emotions, here was a bloody stiff test for all of

us two minutes into the innings' (p.103). Alternatively, Strauss (2014) described the situation of having to control emotions within the team when a match had started especially well. England had taken three wickets in the first 13 balls of a game, and Strauss stated that 'I don't think any of us could quite believe the start we had' (p.261). In both situations, the captain faced the challenge of controlling the emotions of the team, while also needing to keep control of their own emotions. Similarly, captains faced the demand of talking to the team when the captain themselves were not happy with the performance. In one unsuccessful match, Tendulkar (2015) recalled how 'At the end of the match, I called a team meeting and lost my cool with the boys in the dressing room. I spoke from the heart and said the performance was unacceptable' (p.130). A similar example was provided by McCullum who described his frustrations with certain attitudes within the team after a disappointing one-day international competition;

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

A further team stressor was identified by Waugh (2005), who highlighted that when he became captain, he had to ask the delicate question of whether I would alienate myself from the rest of the guys, or try and continue as I had in the past' (p.507). Waugh reflected that it 'inevitably led to a distancing of relationships between me and the other players', which was a demand for him when becoming captain. In this instance, having to deal with such team issues after having been a teammate and friend of these players provided a specific challenge that



captains face. Clarke reflected more directly on this issue and highlighted one example of where the move into the captaincy role had resulted in the loss of a friendship;

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

### **Interactions with Individual Players**

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

Captains also spoke of a variety of demands they faced from player indiscipline on the pitch. Strauss (2014) had to deal with one player being 'completely withdrawn' (p.313) in practice. Furthermore, Strauss had to deal with the impact of this out in the field of play, where the player's poor attitude meant 'he [the player] seemed to be determined to let everyone in the ground know how unhappy he was'. McCullum commented on having to address the poor

attitude of a player who had been the previous captain, and who was apparently still unhappy with how this sacking was dealt with;

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

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

Off the pitch, the captains recalled numerous times where they were faced with players having problems outside of cricket, particularly when the squad were away on an overseas tour. For example, Waugh (2005), Hussain (2005), and Smith (2009) all recalled having personal conversations with teammates who were having marital problems. Hussain recalled one such issue, when it appeared that being on tour away from family for long periods heightened the issue for the players, and Hussain described the player to be 'really struggling on the trip. He

was going through one of his dark phases, the most serious, I think, in his career' (p.263). Further examples of players in the squad facing specific issues included Vaughan (2009) reflecting on a player suffering from depression, Hussain speaking to a player 'distraught' due to an ongoing and potentially career-threatening injury, and Waugh recalling a player being called home when his wife was diagnosed with a terminal illness. Ponting (2014) highlighted the demands of supporting players, particularly when they were having difficulties away on tour, and how he 'spent many a long night with team-mates, who knocked on my door wanting to chat about problems in their private lives, feeling homesick, or dealing with something else critical to them' (p.493). Smith reflected on times when the side were away on tour and players came to him to chat through personal issues, and that the captain should have 'an understanding of emotional intelligence, and knowing your players from the inside as well as the outside' (p.152), which he believed is 'key to being a good captain'. Overall, the demand for a captain of constantly providing a support network to players, whilst still maintaining focus on their own form, appears a key challenge that the captains in the present study faced in their role.

### **Dealing with Selection Issues**

Typically, in cricket, international captains would not have a direct selection role, and while the captain might be asked their opinion, a team of selectors would usually choose the squad. However, with a squad chosen, often a final team selection would be left to be made by the captain and coach. This process presented a range of challenges, including issues with making the selection decisions, communicating the decisions; and the consequences of these decisions. In terms of making the selection decisions, Waugh (2005) described a specific dilemma where his side were losing a series in the West Indies, and he was part of a difficult decision as to whether a star bowler should be dropped from the side. Making such a decision caused Waugh a significant challenge, as well as dealing with the consequences of having a player very unhappy with such a decision. The captains disagreeing with the selectors was

another issue raised. For example, Tendulkar (2015) was frustrated with the ‘occasions when I wasn’t given the team of my choice, and did not get the particular players I asked for’ (p.119). In making a specific team decision, and dropping a player when on tour, Waugh recalled a three-way phone call with himself, the coach, and the head of selectors (who was at home and not with them on tour). The selector thought the player shouldn’t be dropped but Waugh remembered the anger this provoked in himself, saying how ‘I countered strongly, “You aren’t here! The change needs to happen now, not in a few weeks’ time at the start of our home season”’ (p.614). Ponting (2014) highlighted how ‘the only thing the skipper was not allowed to do was to help choose the men who would follow him into battle, something that had always seemed weird to me’ (p593). Thus, as the captains were accountable for their team’s performance, the issue of their involvement (or lack of) in selection was a stressor that emerged in the data.

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

conversation'. Similarly, Smith (2009) described the scenario when a senior player and long-time teammate had been dropped and subsequently announced his retirement.

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

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

### **Interactions with Staff and Other Personnel**

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

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

When the coach asked Vaughan his thoughts, Vaughan's responded that the proposed approach was at odds to what they'd been doing and how 'we already had a formula that had

brought pretty good results'. Alternatively, Tendulkar's (2015) exasperation with a new coach was the lack of support the coach offered, with the coach's 'method of involvement and his thought process was limited to leaving the running of the team to the captain, and hence he did not involve himself in strategic discussions that would help us on the field' (p172). McCullum expressed a different frustration with the coach, who McCullum not found inconsistent, and led to him mistrusting the coach's motivations:

He was great company in social situations, and I really enjoyed sitting down and having a beer with him and talking. . . Then next morning he would walk past me at breakfast in a shitty mood. They were either huge mood swings, or... I began to feel that he didn't trust me, and some of the senior players felt the same way. . . I developed a suspicion that rather than try to get more out of his senior players, he'd decided to get rid of us and was waiting for his opportunity (ch.4).

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

Another group that captains highlighted as a stressor in their role were officials from their governing body. Both Vaughan (2009) and Hussain (2005) bemoaned the lack of support from the English Cricket Board (ECB) when dealing with the issue of playing in Zimbabwe. Hussain reflected that 'How could it reach a situation where I, as England captain, felt abandoned, not only by the British Government but also and mainly by cricket's world governing body and our own board' (p.1). Ponting (2014) recalled another incident where he felt a lack of support from his own governing body. An opposing captain had accused the Australian team of racism, and Ponting had asked the head of the Australian board to

‘forcefully defend us’ against the accusations. However, Ponting felt let down by ‘most of the quotes I saw from [the two key board members] concerned their efforts to save the tour, not the Australian team’s reputation’ (p.477). Principally, a lack of support from the governing body created demands on the captain.

### **Scrutiny/Criticism from the Media**

Numerous examples emerged in the data of captains describing treatment from the media, and particularly the demands of dealing with the criticism they were subjected to. The captain’s own form, and in turn, the media questioning whether they deserved their place in the side, was one example of such a demand. For all the captains in the present study, their principle role in the side was as a batsman, and so as a player, they were judged by their batting performance and the runs they scored. While on a run of bad form, Taylor (1999) described how ‘certain sections of the media were now howling for blood’ (p.192), thus putting Taylor under additional pressure. Media criticism also included negative references to the captain’s approach. Hussain (2005) commented on how England’s play during his captaincy was described in the media as not being ‘attractive enough cricket’ (p.300). Ponting’s (2014) Australian side were criticized ‘for how we celebrated success on the field, or for the intensity which we played our cricket’ (p.200). Decisions captains made were also criticized strongly by the media. Vaughan’s (2009) decision to leave a test match to attend the birth of his daughter ‘seemed to spark a national debate ... about whether it was right or wrong to attend the birth’ (p.179). Strauss (2014) was criticized for missing a tour to Bangladesh, and the perception that while another senior player missed the tour, he perceived that ‘there was plenty of attention focused on the captain missing the tour. To some people, it seemed that I was abdicating my responsibility, opting not to travel to an inhospitable part of the world while my team mates suffered’ (p.236).

Captains also highlighted how the media might look to provoke a response from the captain. Ponting (2014) suggested that in press conferences, he ‘could sense the pack waiting

for me to say something that would give them the day's headlines' (p.476). The press might directly challenge a captain soon after a day's play when the captain would have been tired from fulfilling their captaincy or playing role out on the pitch. For example, after a close loss, Atherton (2003) suggested 'the aftermath' including the post-match interviews 'presented my biggest challenge to date as England captain' (p.87). Also, in a post-game interview after an unsuccessful series, Ponting was asked the provocative question 'would Australia have won the series with a more positive and aggressive captain?' (p.374). Strauss (2014) suggests that, 'press conferences were a game in their own right. Print journalists in particular, are keen to get you to say something even a tiny bit controversial'. Strauss further reflected:

Back then, I could sense that they were dying for me to say something about Hussain or Butcher that might be construed as disrespectful or imply that their best days were behind them. It would have been a good story. I could imagine the headlines: 'Debutant slams ageing stars.' Later in my career, I came to enjoy those verbal jousts with the journalists. We all knew the rules of the game and their probing questions (p.66).

A specific example of the media challenging the captains was regards to them making suggestions that there were problems between a captain and a certain player. Waugh (2005) commented on how a 'respected commentator' had 'stopped me for a quick chat' before a training session and 'didn't pull any punches, asking, "Is there a feud between [another player] and you?"' (p.526) Indeed, being criticized by respected journalists, many of who are admired ex-players, proved an issue for the captains. Ponting (2014) recalls the incident where, after setting a certain field for his spinner to bowl to, it didn't work well. Immediately, former bowler and now commentator Shane Warne was criticizing Ponting's approach on Twitter, saying; "How the hell can Hauritz bowl to this field??... Feeling for Hauritz, terrible!!... What



are these tactics?" (p.565). Thus, captains now have the demand of facing instant media criticism while the game is actually progressing.

Not only did the content of the media criticism create a significant demand, but also the amount and intensity of scrutiny was an issue. Stewart (2000) remembered being announced as England captain and that 'there were eight camera crews, around 50 reporters and I think the announcement was live on BBC Radio Five and on Sky News... the whole thing took two hours' (p.20). Atherton (2003) reflected on 'being dismissed for 99 40 minutes before the end of play', and having been 'batting for a draining 5 ½ hours', he 'barely had the chance to shower, change and relax' before being asked to do the evening press conference' (p.119). An interesting further demand that the captains faced was dealing with scrutiny from the media and others after being successful. Vaughan (2009) described the 'aftermath of the 2005 Ashes' where his English team had beaten rivals Australia for the first time in 18 years, and his increasing 'public visibility... the press's perception of me fluctuating with all the glory and injury... all the sponsor's requests needing to be met' (p361). Waugh (2005) described how winning the cricket World Cup 'ensured stardom for the members of the squad' and how 'our profiles skyrocketed overnight'. Waugh recalled how this caused him and his teammate brother 'immediate pain' when a press photographer was taking photos of them at their grandfather's funeral soon after the World Cup success. Waugh reflected that 'this scrutiny was something more than ever, I was going to have to come to terms with' (p.542). In summarizing the demands from the media that modern day captains face, Clarke quoted the words of former captain Mark Taylor; "He says I'm the first captain of the generation when there's unprecedented 24-hour scrutiny in social media. It's like the scrutiny of his time multiplied by 50, he says" (ch.12).

### **Extreme Situations**

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

The organizers took special steps to keep us safe . . . me especially. They obviously felt that if there was going to be a target for dissatisfaction with the Australian cricket team, it would be the skipper. For two weeks, I had two guards carrying Italian submachine guns accompanying me everywhere and posted outside my hotel room in Calcutta. The organizers had put me in a room of my own, on a different floor to the rest of the team. If I went down to the pool the guards came too. . . I can tell you I didn’t sleep very well for those two weeks (p.183). Other unique challenges captains faced included Hussain (2005) being on tour in New Zealand and during a test match when the news came through that a teammate (who was not on that current tour) had died in a car accident. Hussain describes the incident ‘the most traumatic of my career’ (p.351), and recalled going in to the changing room and seeing the sadness of his players, and a scene ‘I hope I never see again’. A comparable situation was described by Clarke

when a close teammate died, and Clarke was faced with having to deal with the grief of the situation alongside the responsibilities and expectations of leading the side:

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

Taylor (1999) recalled finding out that two of his teammates had been involved in a ‘bookie scandal’ (p144), accepting money in exchange for information. Strauss (2014) recalled being directed to the newspaper article online that revealed that opponents who they were playing against in a test match had been caught being paid to deliberately bowl no-balls. A final unique challenge was described by Ponting (2014), who recalled a close match where Australia started the last day needing 44 more runs to win but only 3 wickets left. A teammate had been hit in the head earlier in the game and doctors had told him that the concussion was so severe that he was out of the test, shouldn’t play for 3 further weeks, and Ponting and the team management had been told that another blow to the head could kill him. Yet when Australia lost wickets, the teammate had got his equipment on ready to go out and bat. Ponting recalled having the ‘duty of care’ to the teammate who was determined to go out and bat, and how he should handle the situation. In the end, Australia won the game without the player needing to go out and bat, and Ponting reflected on the difficulty of handling his teammate, and how it was ‘my job as skipper to make the call for him’ (p.410). In each of these unique situations, the captains faced distinct challenges concerning how best to deal with the issues they were confronted with.

## **Discussion**

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

Recently, researchers have questioned the role and importance of the captain. For example, Fransen and colleagues (2014) investigated how leadership functions within a team could be delivered by multiply athlete leaders, and found that very little leadership appeared to be provided by the formal leaders (captains). Furthermore, in their interviews with professional field hockey coaches, Grant and Cotterill (2016) reported the captain's role being largely a cultural relic, and lacking real importance. However, in contrast to the contentions of Fransen et al. and Grant and Cotterill, our findings not only highlight the

multi-faceted role of the cricket captain, but also how this range of roles would be stressful for the captains. Furthermore, while some stressors faced by captains appeared similar to those reported in other studies, certain stressors seemed to place a greater demand on the captain due to their dual role of leading and playing. For example, making selection decisions, having to deal with the emotional demand of a teammate who has been dropped, and having to deal with the media are all stressors that may be more intensified for captains than other leaders after being engaged on the pitch in their playing role. Such findings support and extend the findings of Camiré (2016), who also identified the draining nature of the captaincy role.

Our findings present several specific applied considerations for coaches and applied practitioners who work with captains at an elite level. Firstly, the findings of the present study increase our awareness and heighten our understanding of the demands that elite captains face. Such an awareness would provide a starting point for those who work with captains in terms of understanding the demands so that they might then help the captains in their role. Indeed, if elite captains in the world face such stressors, then the challenge for all coaches and practitioners is how they might best support captains in their role. In addition, the findings would also serve to create an awareness for other players, so they might more fully appreciate the stressors their captain encounters. Following the development of the awareness of such stressors, coaches or practitioners might work with captains to support them, or help them develop coping strategies to deal with such stressors. Some demands identified are internal issues and more deep-rooted, which a practitioner might work with the captain to help them understand and address. Our findings identify external factors (e.g., dealing with other professionals, media) that are uncontrollable stressors, in terms of the captain not being able to prevent them happening. In these instances, practitioners can help develop strategies to deal with such stressors, for example, in terms of media criticism,

practitioners might help captains rationalize this, and devise coping strategies to deal with it. Furthermore, future research might investigate the efficacy of such coping strategies developed in training workshops in terms of helping captains deal with the demands of their role.

It is hoped this research may have applied benefits in terms of informing development programs for youth athletes taking on captaincy responsibilities. Researchers (e.g., Jones & Lavallee, 2009) have identified that those involved in youth sport rate leadership as a key life skill that must be developed in young people involved in a sporting context. However, there is a paucity of research that trains young people in terms of their leadership development. Voelker et al. (2011) interviewed high school captains, and results revealed that the captains were inadequately trained or prepared to fulfil their captaincy role. Furthermore, Gould et al. (2013) contend that athletes will not simply become effective leaders by being named captain alone, and contend that those working with athletes should purposely and proactively attempt to develop leadership skills over time. It is hoped that the results of this study (concerning the challenges elite captains face in their role) will help inform training of young athletes who are in a captaincy role in an elite environment. The findings of the current study could inform workshops with young captains to consider how such aspiring captains might deal with such challenging situations (what-if activity/scenario planning). Such workshop activities could initiate discussions about effective coping strategies in dealing with such future demands if they were to occur. The findings of the current study also revealed a number of unique demands placed on the captain, such as having to consider situations concerning the safety of themselves and their players. Indeed, as we were writing the current manuscript, the English cricket team, led by Captain Alistair Cook, were having to decide whether to travel to Bangladesh in light of recent terrorist attacks in the country. Thus, workshops with aspiring

captains might consider how these captains might deal with unique demands of captaincy in elite sport if such demands were to emerge.

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

It was beyond the scope of the current study to consider the specific impacts that the demands had on the captains, and the methodological approach taken didn't allow us to identify specific contextual factors that would impact on such demands. However, one extract from Ponting's autobiography suggested that in a losing situation, this is when the demands really impact on the captain. Ponting considered; "I wondered if most cricket captains have a shelf-life", and reflecting back on his time as captain, acknowledged that, "Maybe the twin pressures of leading a team that wasn't winning and scoring runs at No. 3 wore me down

more than I was prepared to acknowledge at the time". From an applied perspective, practitioners need to be aware of the times when a captain is being impacted by the demands of their roles, and thus when support is needed to help them deal with such stressors.

The current findings should be carefully considered in terms of the extent to which they might inform other populations. The present study used elite cricket captains, and the role of the captain in cricket is quite unique. For example, the example of Atherton batting for most of the day (approximately 6 hours), and then facing the media is very specific to cricket and not transferable to many other sports. However, stressors such as when captains need to support teammates when away on a lengthy tour, or having to represent their team in front of the media would be generalizable to captains in a variety of sports. The findings may also be transferable to individuals who take on other influential leadership roles in teams, such as the quarterback in American football. Individual differences might impact on the generalizability of the findings, with the stressors identified in the present study impacting on the captains to different degrees depending on aspects of their personality. For example, while extraversion has been found to correlate highly with leadership (see, for a review, Judge, Bono, Ilies, & Gerhardt, 2002), not all elite leaders might share such a trait. Michael Vaughan appears an extrovert individual and made limited reference to demands of the media, while Steve Waugh (perceived as being much more of an introvert) described numerous examples surrounding difficulties he has with the media. Future research might investigate how individuals operating in leadership roles are impacted in different ways depending on elements of their personality.

The use of autobiographies provided us with a novel method to identify stressors that captains faced in their sport. Indeed, it is interesting to compare the advantages of such an approach compared to a more traditional approach using interviews. Using published autobiographies allowed us to appropriately sample a range of elite sporting captains and



understand their experiences of stressors in their role. Sparkes and Stewart (2016) suggest autobiographies are a relatively easy source of data to access information about elite athletes when compared to accessing them for interview in person, and they allow us to sample larger numbers than would normally be possible for an interview based study. In addition, previous studies on stress and coping using interviews with athletes and coaches provided more of a snapshot of experiences of stress and coping (Galli & Reel, 2012), and a further advantage of using autobiographies is that the participants reflect on their overall careers, which allows us a broader understanding of their experiences of stressors they faced throughout their sporting involvement.

A potential limitation of the study was not being able to understand the specific consequences of each stressor. Indeed, previous research has identified how high level performers might not have succeeded to the extent they did if it were not for experiencing certain stressors in elite level sport (Fletcher & Sarkar, 2012). Additionally, Collins and MacNamara (2012) suggested that youth athletes might benefit or even need to experience adversity to ultimately succeed in elite sport. Thus, the stressors illustrated in the present study might have helped the captains develop and flourish in their role. However, such a suggestion is speculative, and an interview approach might have allowed a greater exploration of such an idea. Also, previous research (e.g., Thelwell et al., 2007; Weston et al., 2008) has identified stressors and accompanying coping strategies, which can offer applied suggestions for how those in elite sport can deal with stressors. A novel approach for future research would be to take the stressors identified in the present study and use them in interviews with elite captains, across a range of sports, to understand which impact on them most in their own roles, and identify specific coping strategies. Such research might also extend the literature by considering the effectiveness of coping strategies used (e.g., Nicholls, Holt, Polman, & Bloomfield, 2006). Future research might also use the findings of the

present study to stimulate interviews with individuals such as coaches and practitioners who work with captains, in terms of identifying best practice in working with captains to allow them to deal with the range of stressors they face in their role.

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

In summary, using autobiographies of the captains provided us with a unique insight into the lives of these leaders in an elite sporting environment, as we have highlighted many additional and unique stressors that cricket captains face that have not been reported in previous research. These stressors particularly include the multiple demands of leading the team combined with playing, and the continual demands of these dual roles, including having to deal with individual players, as well as constant scrutiny from the media. We also illustrated team stressors, as well as a number of unique and extreme situations. The present

study has therefore extended the literature by identifying a range of stressors they face in their captaincy role, and thus increased our awareness of such demands. In terms of practical applications of the findings, we hope they can be used to help in the development of captains in terms of assisting them to deal with stressors, and in turn, be more accomplished in their role. Indeed, in reflecting on his own development and working with people, Graeme Smith honestly explains that ‘many people can move third man a bit squarer, but understanding where he is as a cricketer and a person is a little harder’. Smith further reflects that at the time of writing, he was ‘still learning, and I’m quite certain I will still be learning at the end of my career. And after that’ (Smith, p.152), and it is hoped that the current study will assist in supporting captains learn more about the captaincy role and how they might effectively deal with the demands of their role.

Table 1

*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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