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5   Sport medicine and sport science practitioners' experiences of organizational change

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Abstract

Despite the emergence of and widespread uptake of a growing range of medical and scientific

professions in elite sport, such environs present a volatile professional domain characterized by

change and unprecedentedly high turnover of personnel. This study explored sport medicine

and science practitioners' experiences of organizational change using a longitudinal design over

a two year period. Specifically, data were collected in three temporally-defined phases via 49

semi-structured interviews with 20 sport medics and scientists employed by three organizations

competing in the top tiers of English football and cricket. The findings indicated that change

occurred over four distinct stages; anticipation and uncertainty, upheaval and realization,

integration and experimentation, normalization and learning. Moreover, these data highlight

salient emotional, behavioral, and attitudinal experiences of medics and scientists, the existence

of poor employment practices, and direct and indirect implications for on-field performance

following organizational change. The findings are discussed in line with advances to extant

change theory and applied implications for prospective sport medics and scientists, sport

organizations, and professional bodies responsible for the training and development of neophyte

practitioners.

Keywords: organizational change, resistance to change, management of organizational change,

employee turnover

Introduction

The globalization and commercialization of sport has been intertwined with its medicalization and scientization (Stewart & Smith, 2008) with performers becoming increasingly dependent upon sophisticated systems of innovative medical and scientific support as they seek a competitive edge (Waddington & Smith, 2009). Further, in response to requirements for establishing systems which instantly and consistently deliver success, those leading elite sport organizations have increasingly sought innovative practices for talent management and asset maximisation (Gilmore, 2009; Gilmore & Gilson, 2007). Much of this innovation relates to advances in sport medicine and sport science (SM&SS) and includes medical, therapeutic, psychological, technological, analytical, physiological, and nutritional expertise (i.e., sport medics and scientists; SMSs). The value of these SM&SS practices is indicated by the widespread emergence of and substantial financial investment in SM&SS departments, which are often labeled the "team behind the team" (e.g., BBC, 2012).

Despite the widespread emergence of SM&SS, elite sport remains a volatile professional domain (Fletcher & Wagstaff, 2009), characterized by personnel and organizational change due to demands for sustained success. Indeed, a common characteristic of such environs is unprecedentedly high turnover of performance department staff (i.e., players, coaches, managers, performance directors). For example, as noted by Audas, Dobson, and Goddard (1997) and more recently by Day, Gordon, and Fink (2012), one of the most enduring characteristics of the football manager's job is its chronic insecurity (Bruinshoofd & ter Weel, 2003; Cruickshank & Collins, 2012; Day, Gordon, & Fink, 2012; Flores, Forest, & Tena, 2012). In line with these observations, the average tenure of a manager in English league soccer is currently estimated at 1.55 years (League Managers Association, 2013) with more than half of the 92 clubs in the English league structure having a different manager to the one that started the previous season in 2012-2013.

1   The pressures for sustained 'on-field' performance are not experienced solely by

2   football as professional cricket has also experienced increased volatility in its operational

3   environment. Whilst not experiencing the same degree of dynamism and global exposure as the

4   English Premier League (EPL), coaching and management departures within the English

5   County League system appear to be increasing - as witnessed at Surrey and Northants during

6   the 2013 season (BBC, 2013b) - with commentators stating that it was becoming more common

7   for coaches to be sacked mid-season if relegation from a division was looming and making

8   parallels with managerial sackings in the EPL. This suggests that staff departures are more

9   likely as competition intensifies and rewards for elite performance increase. Naturally, SMSs

10   are not immune from these changes given that those responsible for leading and integrating

11   their practice into coaching, rehabilitation, and performance are those with the highest turnover

12   (i.e., Managers, Performance Directors, Head Coaches) with managers increasingly bringing

13   with them Assistant Managers, Coaches and other staff they have worked with before and are

14   trusted advisors in an environment more noted for the absence of trust.

15   Indeed, it is common for substantial changes to backroom and SM&SS staff following

16   managerial changes in professional sport. For example, Waddington and colleagues (e.g.,

17   Waddington, 2002; Waddington, Roderick, & Naik, 2001; see also Gilmore & Sillince, 2014)

18   have highlighted the nepotistic and ethically questionable employment practices of doctors and

19   physiotherapists in professional football. Moreover, beyond job security and integration

20   concerns, SMSs are likely to react to change in a range of emotional, behavioral and attitudinal

21   ways. For example, in their study of an English Premier League football club Gilmore and

22   Sillince (2014) illustrated how rapidly previously embedded SM&SS practices can be

23   deinstitutionalized following managerial change. The authors illustrated how SM&SS practices

24   that had been embedded for seven years were disestablished within a matter of months

25   following a change of manager, with a community of enthusiastic young SM&SS professionals

26   quickly leaving the organization. The authors proposed that the SMSs reactions to change were

1   triggered by a combination of factors. These included the previous manager's customizing of

2   SM&SS in order to make it inimitable for reasons of competitive advantage, the new manager's

3   failure to engage and understand these SM&SS practices, and the Chairman's desire to cut

4   costs. Such findings offer a vivid illustration of the importance of understanding SMSs

5   experiences of major organizational change in elite sport – especially because of the potentially

6   negative impact on team performance caused by SMSs departures and the potential disruption

7   to continuity of good SM&SS practices, as well as the consequences for individual SMSs

8   careers.

9   Change can be studied from a range of perspectives allied to differences in terms of unit

10   of analysis; at the macro level, the organizational and environmental factors that induce change

11   are usually the research focus. These tend to be associated more with 'prescribed' forms of

12   change with the organization often having little choice but to change with the prescription often

13   extending to which choices of direction and response are viable. Alternatively, change can be

14   generated within the organization by – for example – pursuing an innovative idea, with internal

15   actors having the potential for greater involvement in the direction of travel (Beech &

16   Macintosh, 2012). This has led to researchers adopting micro or a meso level approaches in

17   order to focus on more change processes, including how employees respond to change. Within

18   this line of inquiry, it is the understanding of the psychological and behavioral roots of

19   individuals' reactions to change that is considered pivotal to better management and support of

20   employees at such times (Stuart, 1995). Further, researchers have postulated that the roots of

21   understanding employees' affective reactions to, ability to cope with, and tendency to resist

22   change lie with those who experience it and how they make sense of it (Armenakis & Bedeian,

23   1999; Fineman, 2003; Judge, Thoresen, Pucik, & Welbourne, 1999; Klarner, By, & Diefenbach,

24   2011; Oreg, 2003; Weick, Sutcliffe, & Obstfeld, 2005).

25   Much of this recent focus on change experiences is based on process models of change

26   that also incorporate how the phenomenon affects organizational members during its

implementation and how they make sense of the change over time (e.g., Isabella, 1990; Jaffe,

Scott, & Tobe, 1994). Isabella's model consists of four stages describing experiences with

change and suggests that organizational members interpret key events related to a change as it

unfolds. The first stage is anticipation, which reflects individuals compiling information relating

to change into a realistic perspective. The second stage is confirmation, during which

assumptions are established and become ingrained. The third stage is culmination, in which

leaders compare pre-change and post-change conditions. The fourth stage is aftermath, which

reflects a review and evaluation of change consequences. In line with the view of change as a

process, it is likely the moving events during change will present different stimuli for different

appraisal and response. Thus, a phase analysis of organizational change that is inductively

derived from the experiences of those that traverse it may allow for the identification of

different patterns of experience, sense-making and sense-giving that characterizes change as a

single event could not (Klarner et al., 2011).

Jaffe et al. (1994) proposed a similar stage-based model of how individuals construe

change over time. Their model uses the labels of denial (i.e., refusal that change is necessary or

will occur), resistance (i.e., withholding participation, attempting to delay implementation, or

challenging change ideas), exploration (i.e., experimentation with new behaviors to test the

change), and commitment (i.e., embracing the change). This approach resonates with that of

Buchanan and Badham (2008) which highlights the political skills required when leading and

engaging in change, highlighting the need to understand issues of power as well as the

emotional and social costs (as well as the benefits) of more politicised, Machiavellian change

management methods.

As noted by Day et al. (2012), for those interested in studying management and

organizational behavior, sports organizations offer an interesting and relevant context to

examine change because they arguably simplify many of the complexities of organizational life

with clear rules and quick, unambiguous results. However, although the ability to study

organizational life in a simplified manner is alluring, it is still unclear as to what has been

learned so far about behavior in organizations from studying teams in sport contexts. Questions

remain about what can be learned from those studying relevant issues through different

theoretical and methodological lenses collected under the broad heading of sport science (and

especially sport psychology). And perhaps of greatest interest for researchers across disciplines

is identifying where the potential for future contributions might lie.

Despite recent calls for the exploration of organizational change in sport (see Wagstaff,

Fletcher, & Hanton, 2012a) and a growing body of literature showing sport organizations to

place numerous demands on athletes (Fletcher & Hanton, 2003), coaches (Thelwell, Weston,

Greenlees, & Hutchings, 2008) and parents (Harwood & Knight, 2009), research on employees'

(e.g., SMSs) experiences of such phenomena remains an area for further development. The

value of such development also lies in the acknowledgment of tensions within SM&SS practice.

That is, debates continue and as the professionalization of SM&SS continues social closure

(Larson, 1977) still eludes many sports science disciplines. Such social closure within SM&SS

would restrict admission or practice to 'ineligibles' who do not possess the requisite, accredited

skills and knowledge. It is pertinent to note the work of Malcolm and Scott (2011), who argue

that the development of sports medicine in the UK has been hampered by continual resistance

from the medical establishment (see also Reynolds & Tansey, 2009). Therberge (2009) also

argued that within professional sport, performance 'role' demands are likely to result in the

blurring of professional boundaries typically experienced in medical settings. However,

Nancarrow and Borthwick (2005) note that the everyday lived experiences of professional

boundaries are often less conflict- ridden than assumed.

It is also pertinent to note that the legacy of amateurism has been hard to jettison.

Waddington, Roderick, and Naik (2001) highlighted how many doctors in professional football

clubs were GPs with limited or no sports medicine training or prior experience. Such findings

were echoed by Malcolm (2006) concerning rugby union club doctors who lacked sport-specific

expertise. However, Malcolm contrasted this picture with the existence of specialist

physiotherapy capabilities servicing the sport and highlighted the improvements in medical help

that attended the professionalization of the sport as well as the willingness of players to make

use of it.

Given these observations the salience of findings from such research endeavors lies in

the holistic training, support, wellbeing, and performance of SMSs, whilst also being aware of

the wider agendas their careers are caught up in. Moreover, the exploration of SMSs

experiences of change might raise awareness of the duty of care sport organizations have to

their employees, support and better prepare practitioners (e.g., neophytes, trainees) for

employment within such domains, and facilitate opportunities for job role enhancement during

change through organizational development, learning and intervention. Therefore, this study

aimed to better understand the experiences of SMSs during organizational change. Specifically,

we examined SMSs experiences of organizational change and sought to elucidate SMSs

emotional, behavioral and attitudinal responses to change over time and how this impacted their

performance.

Materials and Methods

Participants

Data was collected over three phases between March 2011 and May 2013 via 49 semi-

structured interviews with 20 (19 male, 1 female) SM&SS employees located in three elite sport

organizations. All of the organizations were competing in the top domestic leagues within

England for their respective sports; football and cricket. That is, participants were SMSs from

two Premier League football teams (n = 7 and n = 7) and a County Championship Division I

cricket club (n = 6). Although these teams were, and remain, in the top divisions of their sports,

they are not the richest, most powerful or most successful clubs within their leagues – although

they have clearly been successful in terms of their presence in the elite domestic league

1 competition in their sport. In many ways these organizations were representative of the majority

2 of teams within their leagues in that they have mixed historical success, are resource

3 constrained in comparison to the elite teams in their division, and as such, they consistently

4 perform above expectations. All of the participants were paid employees of their respective

5 organization, operated within a SM&SS department, and fulfilled roles as medical practitioners

6 (e.g., doctor, physiotherapist), sport scientists (e.g., psychologist, performance analyst), or

7 coaches whose work was densely infused by sport science activities (e.g., strength and

8 conditioning).

9   The organizations included in the sample were selected due to the research team having

10 pre-change working relationships as applied sport and exercise psychologists and change

11 management specialists. This pre-change relationship is important given the difficulties

12 academic researchers often face when securing access to elite sports teams and allied

13 professional staffs for an extended period of time. These contacts and associations facilitated

14 access to these rare research sites. Participants were fully informed of the research question,

15 requirements of participation, and provided voluntary written informed consent prior to data

16 collection. The research received ethics approval from the authors' institution.

17   **Football organization 1.** Despite limited financial resources, the club aspired to be the

18 best sport science and medicine team in the EPL. In the preceding 12 months substantial

19 financial investment had been made in the SM&SS Department, with a new Head of

20 Department coordinating innovation and driving cutting-edge practices and interacting with the

21 manager. The Department included physiotherapists, doctors, performance analysts, strength

22 and conditioning coaches, and a sport and exercise psychologist. For the previous three seasons,

23 the club had consistently finished in the top half the English Premier League and had secured a

24 place in the UEFA Cup (one of the most prestigious pan-European Cup competitions).

25 However, the club had also encountered substantial change due to managerial turnover. This

26 began with one manager voluntarily leaving the organization 10 months before data collection

began. The replacement manager had been in position for 8 months at the beginning of data

collection and left post in month 4 of data collection (June 2011), and was replaced a few days

later by the club's third manager in 13 months.

Football organization 2. The club had experienced a turbulent recent history. Data

collection started almost two years after the club had been relegated to the third tier league of

football for the first time. This was just six years after being FA Cup runners-up, UEFA Cup

participants and the eighth placed team in the EPL. The team's fortunes were largely influenced

by the parent company of the football club going into administration and thus triggering point

penalties for the organization. However, with a new consortium in control, two managers were

hired and fired in the two year period prior to data collection with one decision described by the

Club Chairman as "part of a wider strategic plan being implemented to improve all aspects of

the club's operations, both on and off the field". Data collection began approximately 12 months

later amid a period of success for the club, who were in the process of achieving successive

promotions to the Championship (the 2nd highest league in England) and Premier League 5

months before and 7 months after immersion within the organization commenced. Despite

successive promotions, the manager was sacked amid controversy and immediately replaced

halfway through the organization's EPL return campaign. Participants from this organization

were eight full time SM&SS employees and included: the head of medicine, physiotherapist,

medical doctor, strength and conditioning coach, assistant strength and conditioning coach,

performance analyst, and assistant analyst.

Cricket organization. Due to the limited financial resources available within top flight

cricket, the SMSs within the cricket organization often held duel specialist coaching roles (e.g.,

bowling coach). However, the Department comprised full time physiotherapists, strength and

conditioning coaches, a welfare and lifestyle coach, and part time performance analysts, and a

sport and exercise psychologist. In the previous three seasons the club had experienced a

decline in performance and largely mixed results. As a result of these mixed fortunes, during

1   the 2011 off-season, shortly after data collection began, a major change initiative began. This

2   entailed appointing a new Director of Cricket, Head Coach, Captain, Assistant Coach and

3   Specialist Bowling Coach and trading several senior players.

4   **Procedure**

5   The first author was granted access by the Head of SM&SS at the respective

6   organizations. These individuals were key actors within the change process and acted as

7   gatekeepers to participants as change was instigated and implemented. Semi-structured

8   interviews were conducted in three phases, although contact with the participants was ongoing.

9   Phase 1 was at the time of or planning and initiation of managerial change and focused on

10   participants' understanding of and immediate reactions to the organizational changes. Phase 2

11   occurred 2-3 months after the onset of change and focused on participants' emotional,

12   behavioral and attitudinal responses to the change process as it progressed. Phase 3 focused on

13   participants' reactions to the change process and occurred between 6-9 months after the onset of

14   change (see Figure 1 for data collection timeline). Each participant was sent a copy of the

15   interview guide (see below) 1 week prior to each interview.

16   All participants provided interviews during at least two data collection phases, with nine

17   being interviewed at all three phases. Specifically, 5 participants were only interviewed at phase

18   1 and 2 (not phase 3), and 6 participants were only interviewed at phases 2 and 3 (not phase 1).

19   This lack of completeness was due to participants leaving the organization (n = 6) and being

20   unavailable for interview (n = 5). All interviews were conducted face-to-face by the same

21   researcher who was trained in qualitative techniques. Each interview lasted between 48 and 108

22   min (M = 70.35, SD = 10.37). All interviews were recorded in their entirety and transcribed

23   verbatim.

24   **Interview guide.** A semi-structured interview guide was used to facilitate the interview

25   process. This guide was adapted and refined at each phase of data collection. The guide

26   provided a consistent structure for interviews whilst allowing for a point of deviation when

1   salient topics arose. The structure of the guide emanated from a review of extant theory and

2   change management literature. For example, the interview guide used in similar change

3   research (e.g., Isabella, 1990; see also, Jaffe al., 1994) provided the rationale for many basic,

4   open-ended questions (e.g., "help me understand what it is like to be in the organization at this

5   time?"). The guide was piloted with 3 sport scientists working in elite sport but not employed

6   by the organizations or included in the present sample. Feedback led to minor structural and

7   content refinements to enhance the clarity and comprehensiveness of the guide.

8   The guide consisted of four sections. Section 1 intended to build rapport and set context

9   and asked participants to discuss the thoughts and feelings that they associated with anticipated/

10   current/ previous organizational change. This section was intended to highlight any pre-

11   conceptions and beliefs about or understanding of change initiatives. Section 2 invited

12   participants to discuss the perceived impact of change on scientific support practitioners'

13   emotions, behaviors, attitudes, and performance. This section was intended to understand the

14   participants' current evaluations of and responses to change. Section 3 requested participants to

15   describe which of these issues are most amenable to change by the organizations or educators.

16   The fourth section of the guide provided participants with the opportunity to suggest practical

17   recommendations for others when attempting to regulate their own or others' emotions in sport

18   organizations. This section intended to glean information relating to what interventions SM&SS

19   providers or training and development bodies might provide to best prepare and support SMSs

20   for applied practice. Where necessary, the interviewer departed from the guide to gain more in-

21   depth descriptions of the participants' attitudes and experience. When this occurred, the

22   interviewer attempted to avoid biasing or subtly directing the athlete's responses by using

23   neutral non-directional probes.

24   **Data Analysis**

25   We adopted a content analysis procedure to analyze and represent participants'

26   responses in a coherent form (see Miles & Huberman, 1994; Tesch, 2013). The goal of content

1   analysis is to provide knowledge and understanding of the phenomena under study by

2   representing participants' responses in a coherent form (Tesch, 2013). The advantage of

3   traditional content analysis lies in gaining direct information from participants without

4   imposing preconceived theoretical perspectives. Content analysis has also been employed in

5   similar research exploring organizational psychology in sport (e.g., Fletcher, Hanton, &

6   Wagstaff, 2012; Hanton, Wagstaff, & Fletcher, 2012; Wagstaff, Fletcher & Hanton, 2012b).

7   The analysis process began with the researchers independently reading all data on several

8   occasions to achieve immersion and obtain a sense of the whole (Tesch, 2013). Immersion

9   within the data was facilitated by adopting a reflexive "indwelling" stance: listening to the

10   interview tapes, reading transcripts several times, jotting notes and thoughts. In line with the

11   procedure reported by Wagstaff, Fletcher and Hanton (2012c), the researchers read through

12   transcripts and attached memos to each segment of narrative, indicating preliminary, tentative

13   connections. Extracted segments of potential importance allowed a number of initial themes and

14   meanings to emerge regarding participants' experiences at each phase of data collection.

15   Subsequent comparison of initial themes and debate between the research team gave rise to a

16   range of concepts and was, in part, inevitably influenced by extant organizational change theory

17   and literature. A process of social validation was also undertaken via the presentation of themes

18   to participants and where feedback assisted the co-construction and interpretation of findings.

19   Tracy (2010) proposed eight criteria for judging the quality of qualitative research; (a)

20   worthy topic, (b) rich rigor, (c) sincerity, (d) credibility, (e) resonance, (f) significant

21   contribution, (g) ethics, and (h) meaningful coherence. Attempts to satisfy many of these

22   criteria have been made in the preceding sections (i.e., the worthiness of topic, rich

23   rigorousness, sincerity, and ethicality), leaving four criteria for further attention; credibility,

24   resonance, significant contribution, and meaningful coherence. Attempts to establish credibility

25   were made through the use of a reflexive diary, "critical friends," member checking, and

26   multivocality of participant quotations. Content analysis procedures also provide emergent

1   themes that can be logically traced back to raw data. In an attempt to promote resonance data

2   are presented using rich quotations in the hope of allowing participants' complex experiences to

3   vividly emerge. It is for the reader to decide the extent to which the content overlaps with their

4   own experiences. In evaluating the significance of contribution of the research, one might

5   consider the theoretical (e.g., implications for conceptual understanding), heuristic (e.g.,

6   stimulation of curiosity, discourse, and further exploration), and practical (e.g., utility of

7   knowledge for practitioners) significance of the findings (Wagstaff et al., 2012c). In attempt to

8   achieve a meaningful coherence, we feel that the study achieved its stated purpose, used

9   methods and representation practices that matched the domain and research paradigm, and

10   attentively interconnected extant literature with research foci, methods, and findings.

Results

12   The results derived from the data analysis procedures represent the collated interview

13   responses from all 20 participants. They are presented as a narrative using rich quotations to

14   illustrate themes. Specifically, the findings are divided into four distinct stages of change

15   derived from our analysis and interpretation of the data: anticipation and uncertainty, upheaval

16   and realization, integration and experimentation, normalization and learning. Anticipation and

17   uncertainty can be defined as the process of attempting to gather information to understand the

18   change and was characterized here by a climate of sensitivity, rumor, speculation and gossip.

19   Upheaval and realization can be defined as the process of confirming assumptions and gaining

20   perspective regarding the implications of change for extant practice and was characterized here

21   by a focus on past practices varyingly resulted in resistance to new practices, opportunism, and

22   protective behaviors. Integration and experimentation can be defined as the process by which

23   assumptions regarding change were challenged and new practices developed, and was

24   characterized here by a focus on assimilating previous and current practices. Normalization and

25   learning can be defined as the process of establishing norms that align with emerging practices

26   and reflecting on the change as a past event and was characterized by a focus on translating

1   one's knowledge, skills, and abilities to relevant others. It is worth noting that participants'

2   occasionally included reference to experiences that transcended time periods (i.e., past and

3   present); we feel that such transcendence adds to the ecological validity of participants' lived

4   experiences and learning and contributes to the presentation of more holistic stories, unlikely to

5   be gleaned via snapshot retrospective interview. Pseudonyms have been used throughout.

6   **Phase one: anticipation and uncertainty**

7   At the onset of change, participants reported a climate of gossip, rumor and speculation as

8   individuals attempted to gather information to understand about the change. One participant stated,

9   "there is a really heightened sensitivity and suspicion in people", with another adding, "there is loads

10   of gossip right now… recently it is like everyone is talking quietly in corridors, in the changing rooms,

11   over coffee. It's really escalated during this period". The foci of speculation were the individual and

12   organizational consequences of change, as the following quotation indicates:

13   There had been rumors that [last manager] was on his way and a camera crew had been

14   outside the gate all week. Things were quiet from the management, but everyone in the

15   SM&SS department was talking and considering the consequences of a change of

16   manager. There was a lot of uncertainty about how SM&SS practices would be

17   impacted and who'd leave. Then, the manager leaving was confirmed on Sky Sports

18   News. To be honest, by the time it actually happened I'd chosen my course of action.

19   Participants reported a range of cognitive and affective reactions during this period, the

20   assembly of which largely influenced each individual's short-term behavior. The following

21   quotation reflects one participant's uncertainty during the initial period of change and due to a

22   perceived need for consistency within the SM&SS department:

23   Our consistency is important, and if the change is substantial it can be quite detrimental.

24   It depends if there is great upheaval; we have three different managers in three years, but

25   we have had a consistent department so it allows for consistent player support and,

26   ultimately, selection. That has had a massive impact. The last manager was able to

1   maintain consistency in the team he picked because we were able to keep players fit and

2   relatively injury-free; as a result the team learned to play together and had great success.

3 The following quotation reflects another participant's uncertainty and concern shortly after the

4 previous manager had left the organization:

5   I had a two year relationship with the last manager. He's moved on and there is massive

6   uncertainty; a lot of people don't realize that if a manager leaves the medical and fitness staff's

7   jobs are probably over. So, there is a worry that you don't know the new guy or his backroom

8   staff. Will he bring in his own team and push you out the door or to the side, leaving you

9   twiddling your thumbs? After so much time spent educating players on medical and scientific

10   recovery - all the things the players know off the top of their head - will it all get wiped?

11 Feelings of disappointment and uncertainty were also common where a perceived lack of information

12 sharing or consultation regarding the change process existed. The following quotation illustrates one

13 participant's disappointment with poor change planning and consultation:

14   My experiences of the changes are quite negative and I'm disappointed how it has been

15   managed, but I am not surprised… I don't believe people think about it. The regime

16   change has been driven by egos and their response to us is "just toughen up and get on

17   with it". There is no security. It has been five weeks and I would have liked to have been

18   spoken to; I think a lot of the SM&SS staff have the feeling that they are not a priority.

19 Where communication about change was perceived to be infrequent or uninformative, SMSs reported

20 being confused and unprepared, which led to a reduction in proactive and innovative practice:

21   It is hard for us to engage in something when we don't know what we are trying to do. At this

22   moment in time I couldn't tell you what our goals are, what our philosophy looks like and how

23   we are going about business differently to get there. It is quiet de-motivating and we are just

24   going with the flow… a lot of the guys have gone into a survival mentality and we've found

25   ourselves sitting around more; we are just hanging in there until things settle, making sure we

26   don't stick our heads too far above the parapet… it's more like our heads are 'in the sand'.

Several participants also reported experiencing heightened emotional responses to their feelings of job insecurity, with one stating:

> I've found the last few weeks very stressful. I have no idea whether I'll have a job next week as I half expect to either be taken with [old manager] to his new club or get moved on by [new manager] if he wants his own team. All together, it's worrying, distracting, unsettling.

Phase two: upheaval and realization

Participants' reactions and responses to change differed substantially over the early course of the change process. These responses appeared to be influenced, in part, by participant's assumptions about change in light of previous experiences of change and length of employment at the sport organization. For example, the following quotation illustrates a senior physiotherapist's views of colleagues' responses a month after the onset of change, "there are different attitudes at the moment. Certain people are quite happy to stay the same; some have gone for more control and have climbed the ladder, those that don't get more power will eventually look to leave". Other participants stated clear expectations for the change process:

> It'll take around six months for people from SM&SS to really buy in… last time it started in August and it took until Christmas for everyone to take to it and really drive it forward and now I see change happening again it will be the same.

Another participant suggested that the process would be shorter, but alluded to the dangers of slow or ineffective change management and indicated that coping strategies were beneficial:

> I would say it would normally take around three months to settle and feel acclimatized in any normal working environment. But in football you don't get three months to fit in; you get a matter of weeks whether you are a player or backroom staff. You get weeks to fit in… Fortunately over time I have managed to find coping strategies for dealing with that.

This phase of change appeared to be where resistance was most common with participants deciding whether they would align with or resist new practices and be proponents or opponents of the change. One participant made reference to individuals who had acted as obstacles to change, "there are the

1 cynics; those who say "yes but that will never work, we tried that before". Throughout the transition,

2 they've acted like terrorists, blocking and sabotaging new ideas from within, but secretly so the new

3 management doesn't notice". Another participant summed, "it is so hard getting people to buy into the

4 new environment… people say that they are buying in but they don't". Similarly, the following

5 quotation highlights the implications for SM&SS department relationships and role performance

6 associated with not "buying in" to change:

7   You only need one person resisting the changes and it can break down the [SM&SS]

8   practices; it takes years and years and years to build up and as soon as there is instability

9   when a new manager comes, it takes just days to destroy.

10   Another pertinent response during this phase that appeared intertwined with resistance to

11 change related to a perceived unfairness regarding new employees being hired ("brought in") and

12 others being fired ("moved on"), with one stating, "The new manager has brought in his own

13 backroom staff and coaches, but they're approach is so old school. The new guys have got the players

14 doing Cooper runs. Unbelievable! I don't know if I can work with that".

15   Although many participants reported a largely negative experience of initial change due to

16 uncertainty, several participants, particularly SMSs who had previously encountered similar change,

17 accepted the process as an inherent characteristic of working in elite sport:

18   I have seen three managers in as many years and the coaches, backroom, and SM&SS staff

19   change each time. I have started to get used to the initial period of uncertainty… The change

20   has been there but in a positive sense. Yes there have been a few hiccups but we have a new

21   way of doing things. I think it's the nature of the sport industry; you have got to be prepared

22   for the changes and the personalities you will have to manage. To have that positive reaction to

23   change, you have got to monitor and understand these things and how they evolve.

24   Indeed, it would appear that SMSs who had experienced repeated cycles of change, had

25 become more resilient in their response to change. Here, SMSs still experienced an

26 overwhelmingly negative emotional reaction to change but with some demonstrating emotional

1   resilience with regards to job attitudes and what one participant termed "emotional bounce-

2   back". However, despite these resilient responses to change regarding job attitudes, many

3   participants indicated their attitudes towards the employer did not return to their previous levels.

4   The following quotation provides an illustration of a sport psychologist's changing attitudes in

5   the later phases of the change process:

6   I've found myself becoming more battle-hardened with each change of manager. Every

7   time it happens you get a little bit tougher – there's a quicker emotional bounce-back. It

8   still sucks initially, but your attitude towards the job just becomes better informed – you

9   'get' the job. Although, to be honest, I can't say my attitude towards the club has

10   remained the same. Each time it happens, it takes a chip out of your trust in those

11   running the organization, and a big chunk out of your loyalty and willingness to invest

12   your efforts again. And that's why you get some more experienced people leaving; they

13   love the job, but don't love the club, because they feel let down. When you're in your

14   first job you don't know that you'll get another, so you don't take that risk of leaving;

15   the more experienced guys have a network they can mobilize if they want out.

16   Given the above, it would appear that the emergence of a more brittle, less trusting

17   psychological contract between SMSs and their employers occurred over repeated cycles of

18   organizational change.

19   At this stage, the reality of the change process became apparent and individuals coped in

20   various ways with their emotional, attitudinal, and behavioral responses to the change, with some

21   seeking voluntary turnover and others being opportunistic in line with their varying emotional and

22   attitudinal responses:

23   Since the last manager left we have lost about six staff. [The previous manager] has taken a

24   couple with him and for others it has been a rat race to get more control. I would say of twenty

25   other people in the [SM&SS] department, two or three won't be here at the end of season; ten

1   per cent isn't too bad. That isn't the wholesale change that people normally expect in football

2   where the manager brings in new heads of each department and moves the current heads on.

3   **Phase three: integration and experimentation**

4   During this phase previous assumptions regarding change were challenged and

5   participants developed new norms and practices. These experiences often required an

6   assimilation of previous and current practices often in light of a realization that old practices

7   must be changed to align with the new regime. Such processes often impacted heavily on the

8   SM&SS staff, as one participant explained:

9   This has been the hardest transition because we have a different structure altogether. It

10   hasn't been very positive; it has taken about eight to nine weeks of pure negotiation with

11   the coaching staff and finding out where they are at, their different methods and

12   different ideas. It has impacted on the performance of our specific department

13   enormously. Crazy really. For a while it ended up with us barely having a role. [the

14   previous manager] would be meeting us twice a week, but this is different.

15   Later, the same participant indicated that their previous confusion and frustration had given way

16   to greater clarity and realization:

17   What you have got to is reassess. Change takes time. You have just got to go with it.

18   The gaffer is the number one man apart from the CEO; regardless of whether you like or

19   dislike him or don't approve of his methods you have got to sing from the same hymn

20   sheet. We have to be as consistent as possible; we don't like the changes but we have

21   had to portray a positive outlook to the players and try the new ways of doing things.

22   For some participants these changes were unsatisfactory and their comparisons with pre-change

23   practices were unfavorable. One stated, "I feel real disappointment because we [the SM&SS

24   Department] were given a good opportunity by the last manager and things were going quite

25   well. But then it stops and you have to start all over again". Participants also reflected on the

26   consequences of such ineffective or inefficient change:

1   It's taken a long time and a lot of persuasion and there is still an element of fallout from

2   the change. People aren't happy. People's petty jealousies and defensiveness have meant

3   that the new regime's way of doing things still isn't fully supported by the SMSs.

4 Other participants illustrated felt that the process of integration had occurred:

5   After the early resistance, turnover of staff and people putting their head in the sand, we

6   have reached a point where we are building. Some of the new ways have become the

7   norm, people feel less threatened and are therefore being more innovative and vocal

8   about best practice with coaches. I think some people have had their eyes opened.

9 Interestingly, there was variation in the cognitions and emotions of SMSs during this phase of

10 change, which appeared to be influenced by experience as one neophyte practitioner indicated:

11   Typically, after that initial uncertainty it has been the more experienced [SM&SS]

12   people who have been more vocal in terms of contributing to the new changes. Most of

13   us who are going through this for the first time have stayed silent, and to be honest, I

14   think that has been my best move during the whole process – just staying quiet. I can't

15   say it's been easy, but at least I haven't lost my job by voicing my opinions too loudly.

16 A reflection on the considerable negative impact of organizational change on SM&SS practices

17 was articulated by a physiotherapist:

18   One person came in and put everyone's noses out of joint. It dragged on for months and

19   we were on a losing streak, people weren't getting on, there was backstabbing and it

20   destroyed the team's morale. It is only now - 6 months on - that we are back to being as

21   effective as we were before the change of manager.

22 Other participants were eager to illustrate the need for SM&SS patience when integrating old

23 and new regimes due to managerial change:

24   I think it is a slow burner; I think it takes time for a new managerial or coaching group

25   to understand what you do, its value, and what you are trying to achieve.

26 **Phase 4: normalization and learning**

1   In the final phase of change, typically characteristic of the third phase of data collection,

2   participants were able to view the change as a past event and reflect on the process. SMSs

3   evaluations of the consequences of change were heavily influenced by the perceived challenges

4   allied with building new professional relationships associated with the need to "educate",

5   "justify", or "prove your value and necessity" to each manager:

6   Every time a new manager comes to the club you have to reassert the value of your

7   position and you convince them of what you do and depending on the outcome, you will

8   know if you have a future or not. That is the way it is; you explain what your role is and

9   see what they want to do. That process is never easy or good for morale.

10   Similarly, a consequence of change was the frequent need to "scrap all the previous practices" and

11   develop new ways of integrating SM&SS into coaching, rehabilitation and recovery procedures:

12   [the previous manager] left and all the consistency and education that we spent twelve months

13   developing, the rapport, relationships and trust, the whole lot was just gone. I don't know [the

14   new manager] and that is quite fatiguing; it is hard work as medical staff building new

15   relationships every year and then it is gone. Players need people looking after their fitness,

16   mental preparation and rehab they can trust.

17   In an attempt to prevent disruption to performer support during change, a psychologist argued:

18   There is no reason why sports medicine, physios, analysts, fitness coaches etc., can't remain

19   stable, then just hire a manager to coach the players. Because of the staff turnover, cultural

20   upheaval and tearing apart of SM&SS that occurs every time a new manager comes in, it

21   means that you are forever taking three steps forward and two steps back.

22   Following the change integration, participants' evaluations of the change also provided advice

23   for optimizing the change process:

24   You have got to be very open-minded and adaptable to change and you can't have

25   preconceptions of what you think the environment is going to be like. You can't become

1   rigid in your routines. What you should say is "I am willing to try this, I am willing to

2   try that" and in time you build trust and get clarity on how your expertise will be used.

3 A participant whose role required the translation of complex information to coaches advised:

4   I think communication is really important. Communicate and try to integrate all the

5   ideas about coaching and rehab as soon as possible. Be willing to think about or do

6   things in a different way. I think the coaches have to do that as well; the coaches have to

7   be on board with what you are doing; there is no point disagreeing with what you want;

8   I think that is more infectious and poisonous to the team.

9 A physiotherapist also highlighted the importance of incoming managers and coaches being

10 receptive to SS&SM expertise and facilitation of autonomous working practices:

11   The process of educating the new manager or coaches about your role – well the whole

12   change process in fact - is so much smoother when they create a transparent, "open-

13   door" culture, but allow you to work autonomously and seek your input on new changes.

14 Another participant emphasized the salience of communication and SM&SS team relationships:

15   With so many staff in contact with the players, communication is the most important

16   thing. It doesn't take much for staff to see things differently and cause issues with the

17   players. When the cracks start to appear, it is often down to communication. If staff

18   don't communicate the same practices or philosophy it will be picked up straight away

19   by the players and it makes any meaningful change very difficult. The relationships in

20   our team off the pitch are really important and the success of our team is mirrored by the

21   success of the team on the pitch.

22 In echoing these sentiments, another participant stated the importance of progressive but

23 measured change initiation due to the negative impact of SM&SS change on SMS role and on-

24 field performance:

25   No one likes and no one can cope with complete change; the players couldn't cope with

26   it. Players are very detailed and rigid and suddenly changing their routines will upset

1   them. You need an understanding of how you can change your input progressively and

2   delicately by carefully diluting things with ideas from the new regime. If you change

3   SM&SS practices quickly; ultimately it affects performance and the players.

4 Despite the commonality of evaluations regarding stability, some participants warned against a

5 generic solution to the change process for SM&SS:

6   People want an opportunity to be heard; if it's a democratic process where your input

7   counts and is valued great, you can then mould it to what will work for you. An off-the-

8   shelf, top down change to how SM&SS integrates with coaching is not going to work.

9   **Discussion**

10   This study explored organizational change in three professional sport organizations

11 throughout a managerial change. In light of the findings, we present an inductively-derived

12 model of change that provides a pragmatic yet transient insight into how SM&SS construe

13 events over time and how these experiences relate to the process of change. The salience of

14 such information lies in its value for practicing and prospective SMSs, those responsible for

15 managing and leading SM&SS departments, professional bodies responsible for the training,

16 development and preparation of SMSs for work in elite performance environments.

17 Additionally, our model offers an insight to managers and management teams in elite sport as to

18 the likely responses to change by their new staffs.

19 **Phases of change**

20   The findings of the present study indicate that the change process in sport organizations

21 occurs over four distinct stages; anticipation and uncertainty, upheaval and realization,

22 integration and experimentation, normalization and learning. The transition from one stage to

23 another appeared to be dependent on appraisals of a number of factors including, information

24 sharing, sense-making, educating and asserting the value of SM&SS practices, practitioner

25 resilience and experience, management openness, and commitment to and integration of old and

26 new approaches to create new ways of working. Moreover, the stages of change and factors

1   impacting progression between them appeared to be consistent at a professional level across

2   multiple sports (i.e., football and cricket).

3   These findings support and extend previous non-sport change research (e.g., Isabella,

4   1990; Jaffe et al., 1994) in highlighting the importance of cognition and affect during the

5   change process. Indeed, these findings help understand how affective experiences and

6   appraisals of events evolve as organizational change evolves and how these factors influence

7   the change process, and ultimately, SMS 'role' and 'on-field' performance in elite sport

8   environments. Although there is resonance with the cited process models of organizational

9   change, our findings are located firmly within the elite sport domain and as such highlight the

10   specific responses to change coming from within this field. Much of this affective side of

11   change has hitherto been overlooked within the sports science literatures and offers a potentially

12   fruitful avenue for future research and extension of extant change process models within the

13   sports management domain.

14   **The impact of change**

15   The findings highlight the potentially negative impact of organizational change on

16   SM&SS practice and both 'role' and 'on-field' performance regarding the upheaval of

17   previously institutionalized practices during managerial change. Specifically, given the

18   perceived importance of consistency of SM&SS practice reported by participants, it would

19   appear that organizational change might indirectly impact on-field performance via disruption

20   to medical, recovery, rehabilitation, fitness, psychological, and performance analysis support.

21   Given these outcomes, the findings have important implications for those leading change in

22   elite sport organizations. CEOs and Performance Directors must be aware that the change

23   initiatives they instigate and implement via managerial change have a direct impact on

24   productivity, creativity, engagement, and turnover in SM&SS staff. Indeed, these data indicate

25   that although repeated cycles of change may provide opportunities for a more resilient SM&SS

26   department, we would expect a parallel development of a more brittle and less trusting

1   psychological contract between SMSs and their organization. For some, particularly neophytes,

2   silence was perceived to be an effective coping mechanism, but for others, particularly

3   experienced practitioners, vocalization, mobilization of support networks, and turnover, were

4   common.

5   Further, the ripple effect of this change often indirectly influences on-field performance

6   through changes to personnel, practices, and philosophies. These findings support the value of

7   research and interventions that include individuals from multiple levels of governance in sport

8   organizations. That is, in accordance with the findings presented here, if the executive board of

9   a sport organization sacks their manager, the ripple effect from that change will have direct

10   (e.g., training, coaching) and indirect (e.g., SM&SS practices, personnel, and philosophies)

11   implications for performance. These findings highlight limitations in recent claims by sport

12   scientists that "the performance department is a discrete and autonomous system" (Cruickshank

13   & Collins, 2013, p. 13).

14   **Study limitations**

15   Despite these promising findings, several potential limitations should be noted. First, the

16   incompleteness of the data due to unavailability and turnover of SMSs may have biased the

17   findings toward those who remained within the organizations for the entirety of data collection.

18   However, it should be noted that the lines and depth of questioning was comparable irrespective

19   of the participants' mortality or turnover, and attempts were made to provide a balanced

20   portrayal of participants' narratives. Moreover, given the data collection period lasted over two

21   years in elite sport organizations, it is perhaps not surprising that participant mortality occurred

22   or that some participants were stretched in terms of their availability.

23   A second potential limitation of the present research relates to issues of gender. It would

24   be highly informative to examine both the data and engage in detailed processes of researcher

25   reflexivity regarding our engagement with the organizational settings to examine how

26   representations of gender are constituted/constitutive within these settings and our own

enactments of gender here.

Conceptual advancement

The findings and stage-based model presented here advance current organizational psychology knowledge regarding change for individuals, professions and workplaces in high performance domains. Specifically, during phase 1 (anticipation and uncertainty) the experiences reported by participants reflect threats to ontological and professional security in two ways; by threatening employees' security of self as a professional within an insecure environment and the security of professional status and practices. Further, employees' responses to anxiety experienced during this phase arguably exacerbate this insecurity and are seemingly pivotal to the resilient responses reported by those who have navigated the change process over time. It is likely that the provision of effective communication and the development of psychosocial capital (cf., Wagstaff et al., 2012b) by relevant managerial staff will determine whether a generally adaptive response to change occurs or a more brittle psychological contract is embedded and institutionalized. Necessarily, such responses and support would have longer-term implications. Phase 2 (upheaval and realization) offers a very interesting change process and may be more significant than the present data indicate. Employees' decisions to" block" or "buy-in" to change made during this phase and may be mediated by effective change communication. Indeed, we would argue that organizations are less likely to encounter wholesale deinstitutionalization of SM&SS practices if other employees within the organizational hierarchy have a clear understanding of such work and its outcomes. What appears to be occurring during this phase of organizational change in sport is a "fight" to maintain the SM&SS institutions at individual, disciplinary, and departmental levels, which is influenced by practitioner's professional identity. The result of such "fights" is a more brittle psychological contract, which might be ameliorated or avoided by smoother phase transitions.

Phase 3 (integration and experimentation) presents a pivotal process by which alignment between the changing environment and employee is required. This alignment places demands

on employees to engage with change, make concessions, and try new ways of working in order to keep the organization stable. A unfortunate likely consequence of such acts is an increase in emotional labour and burnout in employees. Phase 4 (normalization and learning) offers individuals and organizations a pivotal process for learning via constructive, information sharing, whereby reflections can be aired. This learning opportunity is essential for promoting resilience among employees and for developing a sense of self and professional identity having undergone a process of personal and professional change. Certainly, there is potential for such change experiences to lead to more or less effective outcomes for SMSs; where these experiences of change are less effective and nuanced, one might still see employees become more resilient to change, but with a more brittle psychological contract, thus increasing the likelihood of turnover. However, where change is led by incoming managers and their staff together with individuals already placed within an organizational hierarchy there is the potential to promote the likelihood of greater engagement and more effective individual and change outcomes.

The implications of findings for practice

From an applied perspective, a number of implications might be conferred given the present findings. First, practicing and prospective SMSs must be aware of the prevalence of organizational change and staff turnover in elite sport environments. Perhaps of greater salience are the stage-defined connotations for the culture and climate in which SMSs operate. There is a likelihood of instability and deinstitutionalization of previously embedded SM&SS practices, uncertainty, considerations and turnover of colleagues, resistance to change, and power struggles when a new managerial regime begins. In response, practitioners are likely to have to "educate", "manage upwards" and "sell" their practice to the incoming manager and any backroom staff they may bring with them. Moreover, there may be a need to overcome perceptions of nepotism in employment practices during such periods through the installation of transparent, fair and appropriate recruitment and selection practices. Additionally the use of a

1 shared rhetoric between SM&SSs may assist in preventing the deinstitutionalization of extant

2 SM&SS regimes through the clear articulation of SM&SS philosophies and practices to the

3 incoming manager and any associated staff. As the stages of the change progress, the promotion

4 of reflexivity on readiness to change, the integration of new practices, the development of

5 norms, and avoidance of comparison with pre-change practices might facilitate alacrity and

6 expedite successful integration of change.

7   Second, in addition to the applied considerations for current and future SMSs are those

8 that might benefit sport organizations. The professional sport organizations sampled here did

9 not appear to understand the debilitating implications managerial change had for other

10 employees (e.g., SMSs) and therefore failed to provide adequate support during this process.

11 Where employees are starved of good quality and quantity of change communication, they are

12 likely to respond with cynicism, resistance, and apathy which, in the present study, suppressed

13 engagement, commitment, and innovation - all of which are vital to performance. Moreover, as

14 employers, sport organizations must be cognizant of their legal duty of care to protect SMSs

15 from workplace health and safety risks (e.g., stress and stress-related illnesses, as well as

16 employee burnout). Hence, organizations should work hard to ensure adequate and valuable

17 change consultation and communication is provided to all employees at all stages of the change

18 process. Additionally, organizations must be cognizant of the interrelationships between SMSs

19 role performance and on-field sport performance; the effectiveness of the individuals in SMS

20 roles have substantial consequences for on-field settings. In order to limit disruption to

21 performers, change leaders and incoming managers should be proactive in integrating SM&SS

22 and coaching structures, practices and philosophies early in the change process.

23   Given the potentially negative consequences of organizational change, those responsible

24 for managing and leading sport organizations (e.g., CEO) or their operations (e.g., Performance

25 Director, Director of Sport) might also consider developing stable structures and enduring

26 SM&SS departments that are less vulnerable to managerial change. That is, sport organizations

might seek to embed SM&SS practices into coaching, recovery, and physical development

systems, which should be the sole remit of the Head of SM&SS and remain outside the remit of

managers with a matrix reporting relationship to the club's management structures as well as

those of the sport department. In turn, the retention of SM&SS staff should be a greater priority

given the reliance of performers on these individuals for their day-to-day routines. Such an

approach might see SM&SS and Performance Directors institutionalizing practices which

reflect the "organizational DNA" (Head of Medicine, this study) and philosophy of the

backroom staff. In this vein, managers could be hired to fit the organizational culture, ethos and

performance strategy as coaches, rather than managers (cf. Gilmore & Sillince, 2014). This

might limit incoming managers with little formal managerial or leadership experience making

sweeping changes to the culture, climate, ethos, philosophy and medical and scientific practices

during what is typically a short term period of employment before vacating the position. Such

changes are likely to limit SM&SS and performance upheaval during and following managerial

or organizational change reported here.

If SM&SS departments are able to work independent of performance departments (i.e.,

athletes and coaches), SM&SS staff could focus on retaining familiar practices, norms and

routines, whilst fostering innovative medical and scientific performance optimization initiatives,

rather than being preoccupied with job insecurity and concerns regarding threats to the

previously embedded nature of their expertise. Of course, all incoming managers will vary in

their practice and integration of SM&SS, but with an embedded department and practices,

organizations can retain control over such key support systems and leave less to the vacillating

behaviors of differing managers. Indeed, such endeavors will be challenging and may lead to a

broader culture change in elite sport.

Third, there are important implications for the professional bodies responsible for the

training, development and preparation of SMSs for work in elite sport environments.

Specifically, it could be argued that such bodies have an ethical obligation to better prepare

1   SMSs for the volatile environments in which they aspire to operate, the likelihood of job

2   insecurity, and the common affective experiences they may have during periods of change.

3   Currently, little career guidance and employment advice is offered by professional bodies

4   within this domain to assist prospective and current practitioners during change or turnover.

5   This arguably places the onus for such provision onto the shoulders of University

6   SM&SS providers given that these overwhelmingly produce the SM&SS staff interviewed here.

7   The findings address calls for more systematic collection of medical practitioners'

8   experiences of employment practices to generate an empirically grounded literature

9   (Waddington et al., 2001). However, given the organizations here were studied under the lens of

10   change, future research efforts should systematically examine SM&SS employment practices

11   and experiences across the breadth of professions. Future research efforts might also examine

12   factors that promote progression through stages of the change process identified here and act as

13   mediators of change. For example, research is required to ascertain the respective impact of

14   commitment to and readiness for change on change success and other associated outcomes such

15   as intention to leave, SM&SS turnover, job satisfaction, stress, and SM&SS and performance

16   department outcomes.

17   In 2001, Waddington et al. highlighted a catalogue of poor employment practice of club

18   doctors and physiotherapists in English professional football. Over a decade later, the

19   substantial advances in SM&SS have led to the creation of SM&SS departments, yet those

20   employed within such teams who seek the institutionalization and longevity of their work are

21   highly vulnerable to the volatile climate of professional sport. Indeed, we would echo

22   Waddington et al.'s sentiment that many of the practices associated with SM&SS need careful

23   re-examination; currently, these processes appear to demonstrate evidence of poor employment

24   practice. Moreover, the experiences of SMSs appear to have salient implications for

25   performance and the success of organizational change following managerial turnover. Although

26   substantial improvements have been made regarding qualifications and experience of SMSs

1   through the development of accrediting and regulatory governance bodies, poor employment

2   practices remain and levels of job insecurity and turnover are seemingly high. These concerning

3   issues are exacerbated during change and are seemingly low-level priorities for sport

4   organizations or SM&SS accrediting and regulatory bodies. Thus, whilst some of the quality

5   assurance issues highlighted by Waddington et al. appear to have been partially addressed, yet a

6   duty of care toward SMSs appears to have become a major concern.

7   **Perspective**

8   The longitudinal design employed here allowed the researchers to capture SMSs

9   experiences of the change process as it occurred and influenced their thoughts, behaviors and

10   practice over time. The rich findings highlight that the poor employment practices identified in

11   professional football over a decade ago by Waddington et al. (2001) arguably still remain.

12   Moreover, sport medics and a range of new sport science professionals appear to be vulnerable

13   to the continual change processes within professional sport. Specifically, the findings indicate

14   that SMSs responses to organizational change vary across four distinct phases of change

15   following managerial change (e.g., anticipation and uncertainty, upheaval and realization,

16   integration and experimentation, normalization and learning). These findings have implications

17   for SMSs, sport organizations, and those responsible for training and developing neophyte

18   practitioners for employment in the volatile environments that characterize professional sport.

19   Indeed, the high level of SM&SS turnover, employment procedures and practices, and stress

20   demands imposed by change require immediate consideration by researchers and organizations.

21   It is hoped that the findings will inform service providers (e.g., sport organizations, national

22   institutes of sport) or training and development bodies (e.g., American College of Sports

23   Medicine, European College of Sport Scientists, British Association of Sport and Exercise

24   Sciences) support and prepare SMSs for the realities of applied practice in the volatile domain

25   of contemporary sport.

26

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1 **Figure 1**. Data collection timeline

2

Event	Football club 1 and Cricket club immersion begins			Football club 1 sack manager			Football club 2 immersion begins	Cricket club make managerial and coaching change		
Data collection			Football club 1 Phase 1				Football club 1 Phase 2	Cricket club Phase 1		
Month	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10

3
4
5

Event									Football club 2 sack manager	
Data collection	Cricket club Phase 2		Football club 1 Phase 3			Cricket club Phase 3			Football club 2 phase 1	
Month	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20

6
7
8
9
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Event						
Data collection		Football club 2 phase 2			Football club 2 phase 3	Data collection for all clubs ends
Month	21	22	23	24	25	26

11

1 **Figure 2**. A stage-based process model of organization change experiences in professional sport

2   medicine and science departments.

3

Stage of change experiences	Characteristic responses
Anticipation and uncertainty	A focus on emotional responses to change such as disappointment and uncertainty. This might lead to a climate of sensitivity, rumor, speculation and gossip.
Upheaval and realization	A focus on past practices and how things were compared to how they appear to be going. This might lead to resistance to new practices, opportunism, and protective behaviors.
Integration and experimentation	A focus on assimilating previous and current practices. This might lead to challenging initial attitudinal, emotional, and behavioral responses creating resistance to change and development of new norms.
Normalization and learning	A focus on reflection and learning. This might lead to an acknowledgement of change as a common facet of elite performance environments and a need for translating one's knowledge, skills, and abilities to relevant others.

4