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CARDIFF METROPOLITAN UNIVERSITY
Prifysgol Fetropolitan Caerdydd

CARDIFF SCHOOL OF SPORT

DEGREE OF BACHELOR OF SCIENCE (HONOURS)

SPORT AND EXERCISE SCIENCE

**STRESS AS A PROCESS NOT A PRODUCT IN NON-
ELITE GOLFERS DURING COMPETITION**

**(Dissertation submitted under the discipline of
Psychology)**

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STRESS AS A PROCESS NOT A PRODUCT IN NON-ELITE GOLFERS
DURING COMPETITION

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ABSTRACT

Informed by Lazarus and Folkmans transactional model of stress and coping (1984) and Lazarus's cognitive-motivational-relational-theory (1991), the investigation holistically explored the stress process of five non- elite golfers during competition. An ecologically valid method involved mini-booklets being completed during competition and the completion of diaries post performance. The performance related data gained from these two instruments formed the basis for semi-structured interviews to be conducted upon. Following content analysis, the findings showed that non-elite golfers encountered both performance (expectations, opponents, preparation and technical) and organisational stressors (organisation and environment). Participants found the difficult weather conditions to be the most stressful. In response to these many stressors, positive (challenge and benefit) and negative appraisals (harm/loss and threat) were reported with the majority of appraisals being interpreted as negative. Surprisingly however, the most cited appraisal was in fact positive, as participants often used the evaluation of plenty more holes left. Both positive and negative (thoughts and feelings) emotions were generated throughout the game as a result of these stress appraisals. The participants experienced a greater amount of negative emotions with the most frequent emotion cited being anger. Coping strategies to stressors were classified as problem-focused, emotion-focused and avoidance. Participants adopted equal amounts of problem-focused and emotion-focused strategies, with self-talk being the most frequently used coping strategy by non-elite golfers. The findings suggest that stress is an on-going process within non-elite golfers during competition. Practical implications for non-elite players include raising awareness of the variety of stressors that can influence their competitive games and the need to consider self-talk as an effective strategies. Coaches need to support and help develop practical interventions based upon positive stress appraisals and self-talk coping strategies to educate and optimize positive experiences for the non-elite golfer in competitive games.

CHAPTER I:
INTRODUCTION

"Golf is a game played on a six inch course - the space between your ears"

(Kirschenbaum and Bale, 1980).

Regardless of sport, gender or participation level, athletes train and compete in physically, psychologically and emotionally stressful situations (Hardy *et al.*, 1996). At all standards, competition is an inherent aspect of sport which has been defined by Scanlan and Lewthwaite (1984) as a process of social evaluation used to purposefully determine a winner. Since competitive sport involves the demonstration of motor ability and the social evaluation of this valued competency (Scanlan, 1982), many participants view the competitive environment as an opportunity to validate personal achievement. Conversely, participating in competitive sport also has the potential to be extremely stressful and increased stress associated with the unpredictable competitive environment can cause athletes to react negatively, both mentally and physically. Because of the contrasting duality of effect on psychological well-being, this is a topic which has become of popular interest in the sport and exercise literature. Consequently, a considerable amount of research has highlighted the need to study the psychological mechanism of stress in much greater depth and its powerful influence upon performance (Lazarus, 1966, 1991, 1999). This will ensure that the positive qualities of competitive sport can be promoted and the negative ones minimalized and justify the current trend of research investigating the complex nature of stress within the competitive environment. Therefore, the focus of the current study was the stress process which non-elite golfers experience during competition. This study was underpinned by two theoretical models; Lazarus and Folkman's transactional model for stress and coping (1984) and Lazarus's cognitive-motivational-relational theory (1991).

CHAPTER II:
REVIEW OF LITERATURE

The literature critically reviewed in this section provides an overview of the stress process within sport psychology. Competitive stress is addressed which then subsequently allows each stage of the stress process to be reviewed in greater depth. These stages include stress, appraisal, emotion and coping; all of which relate to the theoretical models (Lazarus and Folkman, 1984; Lazarus, 1991) which are used to justify the rationale of this study whilst considering the sample group.

Competitive Stress

To this day, the conceptualisation of the stress experience remains unclear, due in part to the subjectivity of individual perception, interpretation and manifestation of stress on physical and mental well-being. According to Lazarus and Folkman's (1984) transactional framework, stress is an on-going process that involves individuals transacting with their environments, making appraisals of the situation and endeavouring to cope with any issues that arise (Fletcher *et al.*, 2006). This definition indicates that stress is not a description of specific constructs, but instead a complicated process which incorporates stressors, appraisals and coping responses. This stress is triggered when the participant perceives that they are not capable of meeting competitive demands successfully and therefore anticipate negative consequences (Scanlan and Lewthwaite, 1984). Therefore, an individual failing to meet the demands of a competitive environment is likely to develop negative psychological, physiological and behaviour responses which can ultimately have a detrimental influence on sporting performance and overall experience.

Stress

There has been a rising demand to understand the role of competitive stress in sport; particularly the relationship between psychological stress responses and competitive performance (McKay, 1995). This research is widespread as a vast amount of studies endeavoured to understand sources of stress within the broad sport environment (Gould *et al.*, 1983, 1993; Scanlan *et al.*, 1991; Woodman and Hardy, 2001; Noblet and Gifford, 2002; Fletcher and Hanton, 2003; Heller *et al.*, 2005; Hanton *et al.*, 2005; Fletcher *et al.*, 2006; Thelwell *et al.*, 2007, 2008; McKay *et al.*, 2008; Mellalieu *et al.*, 2009; Nicholls *et al.*, 2009a, 2009b;). The findings from this

body of research identified the consensus that the demands faced by athletes can be either competitive or organisational. The demands which were directly linked to competitive performance (e.g. opponents, preparation) are deemed to be performance stressors (Heller *et al.*, 2005; Hanton *et al.*, 2005; Thelwell *et al.*, 2007). This is supported by Heller *et al.* (2005) who examined the sources of stress experienced in six National Collegiate Athletic Association Division 1 female ice hockey players. In doing so, Heller *et al.* (2005) revealed that the hockey specific performance stressors included worries and concerns about training were the primary sources of stress emanating from the competitive environment. These findings concur with the work of Thelwell *et al.* (2007) suggesting the notion that athletes deem performance stressors to be pertinent with performance.

In contrast to work of Heller *et al.* (2005) and Thelwell *et al.* (2007), specific studies have also discovered sources of stress which are not normally related to sporting performance (Woodman and Hardy, 2001; Fletcher and Hanton, 2003; Fletcher *et al.*, 2006). These issues that are not entirely related to sport performance are therefore classified as organisational stressors (Hanton *et al.*, 2005). Indeed, one of the few published investigations to specifically address these organisational stressors was Woodman and Hardy (2001). This qualitative study interviewed 15 elite performers to potentially identify organisational sources of stress during competitive preparation. As a result, this study found a diverse range of organisational demands such as finances, nutrition, selection and communication which were consequently categorised under environmental issues, personal issues, leadership issues and team issues. Although advancing psychologists' understanding of the factors involved in organisational stress, this research is limited by the singular sport sample group used. In light of this, Fletcher and Hanton (2003) aimed to complement and extend the findings of Woodman and Hardy (2001). Unsurprisingly, the organisational stressors reported were similar to that of preceding literature (Gould *et al.*, 1993; Scanlan *et al.*, 1991) and placed under the four main categories originally proposed by Woodman and Hardy (2001). This extensive amount of research implies that it is necessary to consider both the performance and organisational demands which exist within sporting competition. Such insights have undoubtedly contributed to understanding the nature of stress since knowledge of these demands has not differentiated between these two specific origins.

Drawing upon this implication, four studies have considered these two origins of stress together within the competitive environment (Hanton *et al.*, 2005; Thelwell *et al.*, 2008; McKay *et al.*, 2008). One of which was Hanton *et al.* (2005) who discovered that elite athletes recalled more demands affiliated with sport organisation than to performance. However, it was thought that this occurrence was essentially due to organisational demands being more widely distributed compared to performance stressors which are inherent and endemic to elite sport competition (Hanton *et al.*, 2005). This argument was supported by the findings of McKay *et al.* (2008) and Thelwell *et al.* (2008) which found that elite track athletes and coaches encounter a similar amount of performance to organisational demands.

Whilst benefiting from the progressions that this research has made (Woodman and Hardy, 2001; Fletcher and Hanton, 2003; Fletcher *et al.*, 2006), recent research deemed these studies to be limited because they prioritised elite sample groups. In doing so, Mellalieu *et al.* (2009) used a mixture of non-elite and elite performers in an attempt to identify the demands experienced prior to performance. This work by Mellalieu *et al.* (2009) found performance demands to be greater than organisational demands in non-elite and elite performers. This seems to suggest that organisational demands become less recognisable than performance demands prior to performance. However, as many studies have failed to conceptualise the demands within the competitive environment, this statement is susceptible to criticism.

Despite the advancement in knowledge that this body of research provides, recent studies (Hanton *et al.*, 2005; Fletcher *et al.*, 2006) have criticized the narrow and fixed research models by arguing that theorists and researchers should adopt a more transactional outlook on the stress process. They suggest it is important for studies to consider the relational meaning of stress construed by an individual operating in a particular environment. For example, instead of identifying and exploring the stressors encountered by athletes, research should strive to explore the appraisals, responses and subsequently coping strategies used amongst competing sportsmen and women in the competitive environment. Hanton *et al.* (2005) supported this criticism by adding that although this transaction has been considered by research, due to the designs adopted, the transaction itself has not been entirely investigated. This transactional perspective was theorised by Lazarus and Folkman (1984).

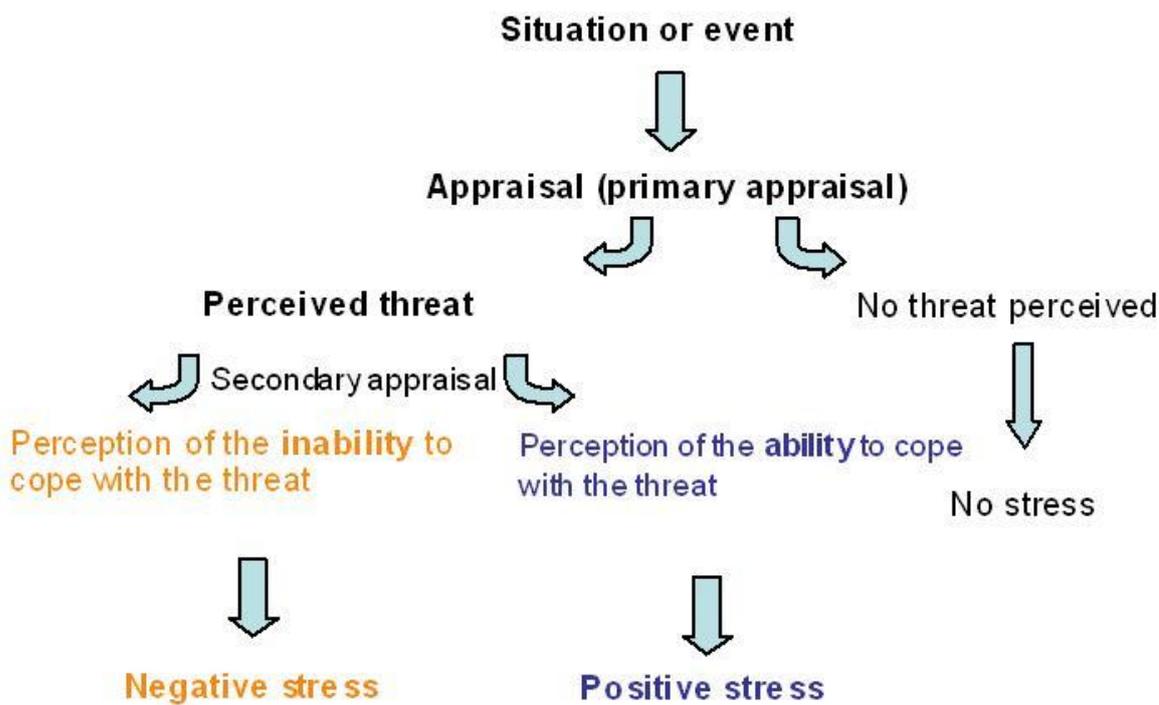
Appraisal

Lazarus and Folkman's (1984) Transactional Perspective of Stress and Coping

Lazarus and Folkman's (1984) transactional model of stress and coping provides a useful framework to better understanding the relationship between stress, appraisal and coping (Lazarus and Folkman, 1984). The framework proposed that an individual will appraise a stressor in relation to the environment they are in, resulting in an emotional and behavioural response. Due to this, contemporary research has begun to understand stress not as a factor that resides in an individual or environment, but rather a dynamic relationship between the two (Lazarus, 1966, 1999). Regardless of the way stress is perceived, the common ideology is that an individual will appraise stress in a certain way, based on how that particular individual interprets the stressor (White, 2008). This is reinforced by Thomas *et al.* (2009) who stated that the way in which the athlete evaluates the stressor or stressors for that matter, determines if they will subsequently experience any form of stress or strain as a result (Thomas *et al.*, 2009). This act of making an evaluation is more commonly known as appraisal which can be simply defined "as the act of making an evaluation" (Nicholls *et al.*, 2010, p. 346). From its definition, Lazarus and Folkman (1984) proceeded to identify two different kinds of appraisal which are known as primary and secondary appraisal.

Primary appraisal refers to evaluation of the significance of an event in relation to the individual. Thus, a primary appraisal is when the person and their environment are appraised "as taxing or exceeding his or her resources and endangering his or her wellbeing" (Lazarus and Folkman, 1984, p.21). Initially, Krantz (1983) distinguished these appraisals as being either positive or negative. Due to its simplicity, Krantz (1983) argued that this framework provides an accurate recall of cognitive appraisal following stressful events. Taking this into consideration, research has adapted this framework by classing positive appraisals as either challenging or beneficial and negative appraisals as either harmful or threatening (Lazarus and Folkman, 1984; Compas, 1987; Lazarus, 1999; Anshel *et al.*, 2001; Dugdale *et al.*, 2002). Consequently, it was thought that appraisals can create harm-loss, threat, challenge or benefit. Harm-loss means that the damage that has already occurred (e.g., hooked shot), threat refers to the potential for harm in the future (e.g., hooking a

shot), challenge is the appraisal of a difficult but anticipated gain (e.g., chance to get back in the match) and benefit when a gain has occurred (e.g., levelling the match) (Lazarus, 1999; Anshel *et al.*, 2001; Dudgeon *et al.*, 2002). Once an individual makes a stress appraisal like these examples above, the model states that they will then attempt to manage the situation by engaging in secondary appraisal. This stage is essentially the coping strategies being adopted, as it involves how individuals deal with this threatening situation to make the environment more comfortable. This represents the cognitive underpinning of coping. The interaction between primary and secondary appraisal help to form the emotion produced, which then guides behaviour and is seen in figure 1.



Lazarus, S. Folkman, 1984

Figure 1. Lazarus and Folkman's (1984) Transactional Perspective of Stress and Coping

Lazarus's Cognitive-Motivational-Relational Theory (1991)

Although it is seen as the foundation for concurrent research in stress and coping (Anshel and Delany, 2001; Anshel *et al.*, 2001; Nicholls *et al.*, 2005a; Thelwell *et al.*, 2007; Nicholls and Polman, 2008; Abedalhafiz *et al.*, 2010), Lazarus (1991) became conscious of an emotional absence in the stress and coping process. In an attempt to resolve this issue, Lazarus (1991) argued that the three constructs of appraisal, emotion and coping should be considered with one another. This approach essentially founded the creation of the cognitive-motivational-relational theory (Lazarus, 1991) which was based on the original Lazarus and Folkman's (1984) transactional perspective. Regardless of its complex title, the significance of this theory is relatively simple. Firstly, Lazarus (1991) states that emotions are always a response to appraisal and secondly that appraisal alludes to both cognitive and motivational processes; hence the theory's title. For example, a golfer may evaluate a physical error as stressful and therefore become angry and annoyed which results in the athlete throwing their club onto the floor. Lazarus (1991) believed that stress should be viewed as an "on-going transaction between the environmental demands and a person's resources, with negative emotions being one form of strain that results from an imbalance between demands and resources" (Neil *et al.*, 2011, p. 4). This sequential process is considered within current research as according to Fletcher *et al.* (2006), environmental demands are appraised and then associated with a variety of emotions which in turn influences behavioural response (coping). Therefore, the initial appraisals made by individuals have the capability to shape the concomitant emotions and coping strategies which follow. Not only does this again support the notion that stress is indeed a process, but it highlights the symbolic relationship between appraisals, emotion and coping share.

Emotion

Emotion can be defined as... "an organised psychological reaction to on-going relationships with the environment, most often, but not always, interpersonal or social" (Nicholls *et al.*, 2010, p. 347). Research generally agrees that these organised psychological reactions can cause facial expressions, cognitive processing and physiological changes which are either unconscious or conscious

responses to a situation (Fredrickson, 2001). The management of such emotions have been prioritised within sport psychology literature, particularly the impact they have on competitive performance (Hanin, 2000). This prioritisation has begun to implicate that emotions distinguished as being either positive or negative during a stressful situation (Moskowitz *et al.*, 1996; Folkman, 1997; Lazarus, 1999; Ong *et al.*, 2004). Folkman and Moskowitz (2004) suggested that not only do these positive emotions protect and guard individuals from the consequences of negative emotions, but they promote adaptive coping. Lazarus (1999) has previously proposed that more or less 15 core emotions exist within sport which can be categorised into 9 roughly negative emotions (fright, anxiety, anger, guilt, shame, jealousy, sadness and envy) and roughly 6 positive emotions (happiness, pride, relief, love, hope, gratitude and compassion). However, this array of emotions is rather controversial as there are many emotions that research has unwillingly chosen not to study (Lazarus, 1999). Irrespective of this controversy, Lazarus's Cognitive-Motivational-Relational Theory (1991) has helped to highlight the importance of emotions in sport which has resulted in emotions becoming a main focus within sport psychology literature (Moskowitz *et al.*, 1996; Hanin, 2000; Ong *et al.*, 2004; Nicholls *et al.*, 2009, 2010).

In accordance with Lazarus's Cognitive-Motivational-Relational Theory (1991), emotion has in fact been studied in conjunction with stress and coping with Folkman and colleagues forming the foundations of the research (Folkman *et al.*, 1986, 1997). The first signs of this indication came from Folkman *et al.*, (1986, 1997) who used community based residing sample groups in the endeavour to explore the stressors, appraisals and coping responses in day-to-day living. The concluding thoughts from these investigations led to the claim that people experience different emotions in response to a stressful encounter. However, due to the sample groups utilised in these studies, this emotion generalisation was only applicable to the public. Based on these limitations, Nicholls and colleagues used these arguably dated studies as a template for expanding the knowledge of stressors, appraisals and coping responses within the sporting context. Nicholls and colleagues used rugby players in the first study (Nicholls *et al.*, 2009a) and golfers in the following study (Nicholls *et al.*, 2010) in an attempt to gain insight into the stress appraisals, emotions and coping strategies during both matches and performance. In doing so, Nicholls *et al.* (2009a) found that professional rugby players most frequently reported

negative emotions compared to positive emotions in both training and match situations. Whilst supplying an informative insight into how sports performers distinguish emotions, this study also found the emotions of anxiety and anger to be extremely prominent. The prominence of these two emotions parallel those of Nicholls *et al.* (2010) where international golfers similarly conveyed emotions of anxiety and anger during or as a consequence of appraisal. This evidence collectively presents the notion that the stress appraisals made by athletes from a variety of sports generate more than one emotion during competition (Folkman *et al.*, 1986, 1996) which highlights the importance of coping with such negative emotions.

Coping

Coping represents "...a process of constantly changing cognitive and behavioural efforts to manage specific external and internal demands or conflicts appraised as taxing or exceeding the resources of person" (Lazarus and Folkman, 1984. p.141). When individuals encounter stressful situations in competitive sport, stress, and its subsequent effect upon performance, will be influenced by the individual's ability to manage the external or internal demands perceived (Lazarus, 1999). This suggests that the ability to cope with stressful situations is critical for successful performance. Thus, it is therefore imperative for athletes to be able to access and employ coping strategies which manage the stressors associated with competitive sport.

Lazarus and Folkman's (1984) definition of coping means that it can be seen as a process. As such, it was argued that this process should be examined in a specific context allowing the relationship between coping and the demands placed on the individual to become evident. Subsequently, Lazarus (1999) began to explore stress experiences and develop frameworks which identified the components of coping strategies employed by athletes in a variety of different sports. The conceptual framework of problem and emotion focused coping (Lazarus, 1999) proposes that coping strategies can be categorised into either problem or emotion focused strategies. Problem-focused coping refers to strategies that are employed to manage the environment (planning, problem-solving) whereas emotion-focused coping refers to the strategies directed at managing the emotional responses to stress (wishful thinking, relaxation). Elaborating upon this, research has begun to support a third factor which adds to the density when describing the coping possibilities at a

individuals disposal (Kowalski and Crocker, 2001). This is the notion of avoidance coping which involves an individual's efforts to remove themselves physically (walking off) or cognitively (blocking) from a stressful situation (Krohne, 1993).

Several studies have confirmed these three broad dimensions (Nicholls and Polman, 2007b) which provided the foundations for contemporary research to investigate the demands experienced by performers and the coping strategies in a variety of sports (Dudgale *et al.*, 2002; McKay *et al.*, 2008; Nicholls and Polman, 2008; Nicholls *et al.*, 2006; Reeves *et al.*, 2009; Thelwell *et al.*, 2007). Thelwell *et al.* (2007) aimed to do just that by examining the sources of stress and the associated coping strategies reported by nine professional cricket batsmen. This, among similar research (Dale, 2000; Spriddle, 2004; Nicholls *et al.*, 2009b) found that self-talk and cognitive reminders were appropriate strategies for dealing with the fear of failure and for reinforcing belief in ability. The batsman also revealed that problem-focused coping strategies were the most frequently used strategies to help alleviate environmental stressors and self-induced pressure during performance. These findings concur with other research which has used different sample groups. For example, Reeves *et al.* (2009) found problem-focused coping to be the most frequent coping strategy reported by adolescent Premier League academy players when encountering performance mistakes, contractual demands and team performance and contractual demands. Furthermore, Crocker and Graham (1995) also found such problem-focused strategies as planning, active coping and increased effort as a means for coping with performance stressors.

From these studies, and numerous others (Dudgale *et al.*, 2002; Nicholls *et al.*, 2005a), it is tempting to conclude that certain coping strategies (problem-focused) may be more applicable or emotion-focused may be less valued by athletes in the competitive environment. However, caution is needed when making these taxonomic assumptions to describe data as the purpose for employing a particular strategy can vary depending upon the sport, stressor or situation (Gould *et al.*, 1993). This highlights the need for sport specific investigation which will help both athletes and coaches to understand the demands, appraisals, emotions and coping strategies of the sport they are associated with.

Golf

Therefore, it is imperative that golfers understand the stress process in its entirety and the subsequent effect it may have on performance. Golf is a unique sport to study from this perspective as there is a substantial amount of time in between shots for stress appraisals, emotions and the subsequent development of coping responses (Nicholls *et al.*, 2005a). As a result, this sport has received a considerable amount of attention with the intention of exploring the relationship between stress and golf (McCaffrey and Orlick, 1989; Gaudreau *et al.*, 2001; Gaudreau *et al.*, 2002; Nicholls *et al.*, 2005a, 2005b; Nicholls and Polman, 2008; Nicholls *et al.*, 2010; Neil *et al.*, 2013). Despite this resounding interest, this accumulative research is deceptively narrow as there has been strong tendency to utilise elite sample groups when investigating these relationships (McCaffrey and Orlick, 1989; Nicholls *et al.*, 2005a, 2005b; Nicholls and Polman, 2008; Nicholls *et al.*, 2010). This is justified though as research that specifically focuses on the nature of the competition environment is carried out to better understand the complexity of elite athletes (Mellalieu *et al.*, 2009). However, as golf is a popular recreational sport which is played by a large number of people at different participation levels (Mckay *et al.*, 1995), future research should go beyond the analysis of elite golfers and explore the stress process associated with golfers performing at a lower level.

Summery and Research Question

From the accumulative literature which has explored a variety of sports, it is clearly evident that stress has a vast effect upon sporting performance. Whether it provides motivation for those who thrive under it or causes cognitive consequences, previous literature has helped to form the consensus that stress is an undoubtedly complex phenomenon. Accordingly, Lazarus and Folkman's (1984) transactional model of stress and coping and Lazarus's Cognitive-Motivational-Relational Theory (1991) attempted to organise this complexity by suggesting stress to be a process. These theories have helped to identify the different stages residing within the dynamic process including stress, appraisal, emotion and coping. However, rather than considering these stages in conjunction with one another, previous research has isolated the demands (Hanton *et al.*, 2005; Thelwell *et al.*, 2007; Nicholls and Polman, 2008; Nicholls *et al.*, 2010), appraisals (Nicholls *et al.*, 2009; Nicholls *et al.*,

2010; Neil *et al.*, 2013), emotional responses (Moskowitz *et al.*, 1996; Folkman, 1997; Lazarus, 1999; Ong *et al.*, 2004) and the coping strategies (McCaffrey and Orlick, 1989; Gaudreau *et al.*, 2001; Gaudreau *et al.*, 2002; McKay *et al.*, 2008; Reeves *et al.*, 2009) within the sporting environment. Although contributing vastly to sport psychology, there is a dearth of research which explores the effects of stress in non-elite individuals (Giacobbi *et al.*, 2004). Therefore, this present study will add to the body of knowledge by providing further evidence on the stress process within non-elite golfers during competition. This approach will help coaches and athletes to gain a greater understanding into the demands, appraisals, emotions experienced by non-professional golf players and the coping strategies which are applied during competitive situations.

SECTION III:
METHODOLOGY

In an attempt to better understand the performance and experience for the non-elite golf player, the research has adopted a largely qualitative approach to collecting data from the written and verbal reporting of stressors, appraisals, emotions and coping strategies in competitive performance. However, in an attempt to also identify any commonalities in responses for this group, content analysis of the data provided quantitative data to quantify the contents of the text and allowed 'a fuller description and /or more complete explanation of the phenomenon being studied by providing more than one perspective on it' (Denscombe, 2010, p. 150). The data collection and analysis was largely deductive, in that the questions in the booklet and semi-structured interviews were based on a set of given premises identified by Lazarus and Folkman's (1984) Transactional Perspective of Stress and Coping and Lazarus's Cognitive-Motivational-Relational Theory (1991) and the data was then analysed to come to logical conclusions, (Smith 1998). However, the data was also explored inductively, using content analysis, to see if there were commonalities and generalization in the stressors, appraisals and coping responses of non-elite golfers during competition. This chapter will give information on the research design and the participants as well as how the research was carried out and how the data was analysed

Participants

Based upon the recommendations of Patton (2002), participants were sampled with the intention of providing results which reflected the research question under investigation. Six male golf players from the Cardiff Metropolitan University Golf Club volunteered in this current study (*age: M = 21 years, SD = 1.22*). The sport of golf was selected for this study as it is an individual sport that provides numerous and ever-changing stressors that performers need to cope with (Nicholls *et al.*, 2005a). The participants' experience of playing competitive golf ranged from 8 to 16 years (*M = 10 years, SD = 3.34*) and competed with a handicap between 0.1 and 12.4 (*M = 4.6, SD = 1.81*) To be deemed eligible for the non-elite categorisation used in this study, all participants were required to be a representative of Cardiff Metropolitan University golf club and currently hold a non-academic golf membership elsewhere. The sample group was chosen for this

current study as it represents a non-elite golf sample which regularly participates in the competitive environment.

Instruments

Mini Booklet

Objective performance variables were recorded using an adapted mini booklet (Appendix A) which was created / informed from the research findings of Neil *et al.* 2011. Golfers were given a mini-booklet to record four variables of performance following the completion of a hole. This adapted booklet consisted of variables which predicted success in the 2004 PGA season including, the number of successful fairway drives (amount of first drives landing on the fairway), number of greens in regulation (amount of greens hit when a birdie putt was achievable), number of putts to finish the hole and the score achieved. An addition to the work of Neil *et al.* (2011), these booklets also allowed the participants to provide a brief narrative on the critical incident, demands experienced, initial cognitions and the coping strategies adopted throughout the competition. This booklet was carried on their person throughout the competitive situation and as used to assist the remaining instruments used for data collection.

Competitive Stress-Coping Examination Diary (CSCED)

The Competitive Stress-Coping Examination Diary (Appendix B) is an adapted instrument based on the work of Nicholls *et al.* (2005a). The diary consisted of three discrete sections including a summery section, an open-ended stressor section and an open-ended coping responses section. All golfers were encouraged to use the mini-booklet whilst completing the diaries to facilitate reliable and accurate narratives. The CSCED was designed to identify and record stress and coping related cognitions immediately after competing in the golf environment. Based on feedback, from the research supervisor, changes were made to the structure of the diary until it was deemed as an appropriate instrument to measure the research question. These changes involved changing the structure

and in some cases the terminologies used as they were classed as inappropriate for the sample being measured. The resultant diary consisted of three sections. The first section required golfers to summarise their performance whilst considering how they felt during performance expressing their overall opinions in the box available. This led into the open-ended stressor section where participants were required to describe any critical incidences they experienced during the round. Here information related to the demands associated with the incident and the subsequent thoughts and feelings which occurred at this time. These open-ended stressor boxes enabled the participants to then identify any coping strategies used to manage each of these stressors in the open-ended coping responses section.

Interview Guide

The completed mini booklets and CSCEDs were useful sources of information to inform the interview process. Most qualitative studies examining stress in sport have favoured using open-ended semi-structured interviews as a method for electing data (Noblet and Gifford, 2002). Based on this justification, an interview guide was adapted and designed based on the transactional framework of stress and coping (Lazarus and Folkman, 1984). Similar to all instruments utilised in this study, feedback was provided by experienced researchers throughout the development of the interview guide. Using this assistance, alterations were made to the structure of the interview and the question narrative in preparation for the pilot interview. The interview guide was piloted with a non-elite golfer ensuring that the terminologies and questions were suitable for all participants. Pilot interviews are a necessity in current studies (Nicholls *et al.*, 2005a; Nicholls *et al.*, 2010) to establish that there are no ambiguous questions and to allow the interviewer to refine and practice interview techniques (Mellalieu *et al.*, 2009).

The interview guide (Appendix C) comprised of five subject areas which the interviewer explored, probed and ask questions that elucidated and illuminated critical incidents, stressors and coping strategies highlighted in the mini-booklet and the diary (Patton, 2002). The first section was designed to build rapport and to comfortably ease the participants into the interview whilst exploring their

background information by including introductory questions such as how they originally got into playing golf and the reasons for doing so (Gratton and Jones, 2004). At this point, a brief interview protocol was explained to the participants before the remaining sections were initiated. The subsequent three sections allowed participants to elaborate on each of the critical incidents/demands faced, appraisal and cognitions, coping strategies adopted and the behavioural responses experienced during two 18 hole rounds. Once the participants had finished answering the main body of questions, the concluding section gave the golfers an opportunity to provide any feedback from the interview and supply any other relevant information.

Procedure

Once institutional ethical consent was granted, the Cardiff Metropolitan University Golf Club captain was contacted. At this point, the rationale of the study was explained alongside the expectations of the participants. With the permission from the captain, the participants were approached at the beginning of a training session in the month of November. In this training session, participants were given a brief overview of the study, participatory requirements and information of the data collection procedure including verbal instructions as to how to complete both the mini-booklet and the Competitive Stress-Coping examination Diary. Following the briefing, informed consent forms were distributed and participant information was collected from the golfers who chose to volunteer in the study. Once all the preparatory paperwork was finished, each participant was provided with an introductory package which would assist the monitoring phase. The package included instructions on how to correctly complete the mini-booklet and CSCED with exemplars of both. The purpose of these materials was to familiarise the golfers with the data collection process. Additionally, the researcher was available on location throughout this monitoring phase to answer any procedural questions and provide any feedback during the rounds of golf.

When performing a round of golf, participants were asked to fill one entry in the mini-booklet (consisting of a maximum of 6 entries) *only* when (if) a critical incident occurred during performance. The golfers were asked to record objective

performance variables, a brief interpretation of the critical incident, the demands faced and their thoughts and feelings when experiencing this demand during performance. For instance, participants provided this brief interpretation whilst walking in between shots throughout the round. This was then followed by a brief narrative of the coping strategies used to overcome this negative psychological response. Post-performance, where narratives were provided at specific holes, the mini-booklet acted as cues to assist the completion of the CSCED (one diary per experience). For example, if three critical incidents were identified during the round, abbreviations and narratives would have been recorded on the relevant pages thus, enabling three CSCEDs to be written in greater depth post round. In line with the work of Neil *et al.* (2011) and Nicholls and Polman (2008), CSCED data was collected on-location post performance. The participants completed these diaries in a time ranging from 20 – 120 minutes following competition (M = 68 minutes). This procedure encouraged ecologically valid data which was then explored further in the semi-structured interviews taking place the following day. At this point, all completed instrumentation was collected and preparatory interview guides were handed out allowing the golfers to familiarise themselves with the topics being discussed. This successive time frame was chosen to facilitate participant memory and thus improve the accuracy of answers given during the interviews. All one-on-one interviews lasted approximately 40 minutes or longer and were recorded using an Apple ipod touch for the purpose of data analysis. This technical equipment was not chosen, but rather forced upon due to the unavailability of a Dictaphone.

Data Analysis

The recordings from the ipod were then transcribed verbatim allowing the researcher to get a feel for the cumulative data as a whole and experience a process which generates emergent insights (Patton, 2002). During transcription, verbatim techniques were used to exclude irrelevant expressions whilst the rest of the dialogue was transcribed exactly as spoken. No attempt was made to transcribe or analyse the data until all the interviews had been conducted. This ensured that earlier interviews did not influence the latter. Firstly, inductive analysis was performed allowing for patterns, themes and categories to emerge

from the analyst's interaction with the data (Patton, 2002). As this population had not been studied previously, new information which is not shown within other populations may have appeared. Following this, deductive analysis was then used to identify information according to both Lazarus and Folkman's transactional model of stress and coping (1984), Lazarus's Cognitive-Motivational-Relational Theory (1991) and findings from previous research (Nicholls and Polman, 2008; Noblet and Gifford, 2002; Mellalieu *et al*, 2009). Deductive analysis was used as a tool to confirm 'authenticity and appropriateness' of inductive analysis (Patton, 2002, p.454). Similar data from the transcripts (Appendix D) were coded into raw data themes using quotations. The content analysis is presented within a table. Content analysis was used during this stage of the research as it is an appropriate approach when dealing with aspects of communication that provides a means for quantifying data (Denscombe, 2010).

Firstly, for every participant, each critical incident that was experienced during competition was analysed to form a primary raw data themed table (see Appendix E). This generated a raw data theme table for each participant which summarised their whole stress experience during two rounds of golf. These tables included four categories based on Lazarus and Folkman's transactional model of stress and coping (1984) and Lazarus's cognitive-motivational-relational theory (1991) and represented each stage of the stress process. Specifically, these were stressors, appraisals, emotions and coping strategies. In order to examine the relationships between participants, all five raw data theme tables were then collated into one single table (Table 1). Although at this point content analysis was used for the formation of qualitative data, the variables which were then reported more than once in the table were collated to create frequencies within the table. This resulted in rich quantitative data. This allowed for certain variables to become more obvious and thus generalisations to be made about the sample.

In the second stage of analysis, the collated raw data themes were collapsed under higher order themes. For example, stressors pertinent to performance were collapsed under the higher order theme of performance. These higher order themes were the collapsed further into general order themes. For instance,

common performance themes which related to the opponent were collapsed under opponent.

Higher Order Themes and General Themes

All higher order themes and general themes presented in the table were selected in accordance with previous literature as a means for representing the data as a simple and understandable stress process (Lazarus, 1999; Hanton *et al.*, 2005; Thelwell *et al.*, 2008; McKay *et al.*, 2008; Mellalieu *et al.*, 2009). Stressors were identified as being either competitive or organisational and placed accordingly under these two origins. Specifically, demands relating to *expectations*, *opponents*, *preparation* and *technical* aspects were collated under the higher order theme of performance, whereas demands associated with *organisation* and the *environment* were categorised under organisational. When referring to appraisals, the general themes of harmful and threatening appraisals were combined to form the higher order negative theme, whereas challenging and beneficial appraisals were combined to create a higher order positive. These higher order themes were chosen due to the complexity of categorising appraisals. (Compas, 1987). Similarly, all emotions were categorised under the two higher order themes titled positive and negative. Both these higher order themes were broken down into general themes titled thoughts and feelings. Finally, the coping strategies applied by the participants during performance were classified as problem-focused, emotion-focused or avoidance. The strategies that were employed to manage the environment were broken down into general themes named *cognitive technique*, *behavioural technique* and *behavioural*. The methods adopted for dealing with the emotion formed from stress were dichotomised into six general themes including *psychological skills*, *concentration*, *acceptance*, *relaxation*, *social* and *other*. The behavioural and psychological efforts to disengage from a stressful situation (avoidance) were simply placed under the two general themes named *cognitive avoidance* and *behavioural avoidance*.

Verification of Data and Trustworthiness

In order to ensure that the clarifications made by the principal researcher actually reflected what the participants originally stated, member checking was employed following the construction of the transcripts (Granton and Jones, 2004). This involved the participants verifying the confirming that the collected account was acceptable and credible.

CHAPTER IV:

RESULTS

Participants reported 23 critical incidents whilst competing in two rounds of golf during the month of December 2012. On average, 2.6 critical incidents were experienced per person. The following narrative summarises the data presented in Table 1 and includes findings reported largely in the form of thick and descriptive quotes taken from the completed transcripts. This approach was adopted to facilitate the understanding of the golfers' stress process for the reader (Patton, 2002). Additionally, it is beyond the scope of this study to elaborate on all the most commonly cited results in each stage of the stress process.

Stressors

From the 23 diaries received and the five interview transcripts, participants reported a total of 62 different stressors. Across the five non-elite golfers, data analysis reported that the participants encountered a greater amount of performance stressors ($\Sigma=49$ or 79% of total stressors) compared to organisational stressors ($\Sigma=13$, 21%). The most commonly cited raw data theme was *difficult weather conditions* (N=10) which included rain and wind, followed by *not performing to potential* (N=7) and *competing against good opposition* (N=6). Factors relating to the weather conditions and the organisation of that environment in which golfers compete provided constant stressors for these athletes (Mellalieu *et al.*, 2009). Indeed, the following quote from participant 1 emphasizes this generalisation.

'Basically, I was just on the fifth tee, my opponent had just hit a shot, then all of a sudden out of the blue it just started like properly...not heavily raining but just raining like noticeably and also the wind started picking up in my face. I was just there like this is annoying as he has got just light rain and not too

STRESSOR (Frequencies)	APPRAISAL (Frequencies)	EMOTIONS (Frequencies)	COPING STRATEGIES (Frequencies)
<p>PERFORMANCE</p> <p><i>Expectations</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Important/wanted to start well (2) - Not wanting to repeat the same mistake (6) - Pressure on own performance (4) - Performance ambiguity - Not in a good position to make a good score - Wanting consistency in performance - Not performing to potential (7) - Holding the lead - Wanted consistency in performance (2) - Wanted to show ability - Consecutive mistakes <p><i>Opponents</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Competing against good opposition (6) - Tough league so high standard of opponents (3) - Pressure applied by opponent (4) - Opponent in a good position (3) - Recognising the opponents presence (3) - Distracting behaviour by opponent - Competing against someone I dislike - Wanted to place pressure on opponent - Playing a weaker opponent <p><i>Preparation</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Thinking about opponent tactics - Wanting to win the hole - Incorrect course management - Thinking too much about the shot - Watching other competitors - Too much focus on routine - Visualising a poor start - Swing wasn't feeling too great - Not enough match practice/training (2) - Not enough time to complete a warm up (2) - Not enough physical preparation (2) - Thinking about the consequences of winning - Thinking about the consequences of losing (2) <p><i>Technical</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Thinking of a previous mistake (4) - Three putt (4) - Duffed chip - Hooked shot (5) - Thinned shot (2) - Missed putt (2) - Performing correct skill/technique (2) - Fatted ball 	<p>POSITIVE</p> <p><i>Benefit</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Positive thoughts/feelings helped performance (2) - Wasn't too much pressure - A common mistake to make (3) - Erase experience from memory - Wasn't much more I could do - Did your best - No reaction - It just happens - Didn't have a vast effect (2) - Wasn't too fussed <p><i>Challenge</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Still plenty of holes to play (4) - Chance to get back in the game (3) <p>NEGATIVE</p> <p><i>Harm/Loss</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - It shouldn't really be happening - Such an easy skill - Made the situation/score worse - Should be in a winning position - It shouldn't happen - Rushed and made a mistake (2) - Gave the hole away - Should have won the hole - Didn't even give yourself a chance - Lost a comfortable lead - Needed help (2) - Forced the issue - Could have been evaded - No excuse <p><i>Threat</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Thinking about lose hole - Gave him a way back into the match - Won't use a driver anymore 	<p>POSITIVE</p> <p><i>Thoughts</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Optimistic - Comfortable - Calm - Cushioned - Play the simple shot - High expectations of self - Knew could perform better - Hope (2) - Just get on with it - Positive mind-set (3) - Less rash <p><i>Feelings</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Relaxed (3) - Relief - Belief - Reassured (2) - Calm (2) - Collected - Psyched up - Happy - Geed up (2) - Satisfied - Loose <p>NEGATIVE</p> <p><i>Thoughts</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Outraged - Pathetic - Annoyed (10) - Vexed - Disappointed (4) - Complacent - Stupid (2) - Pessimistic - Missed opportunity - Unfair advantage - Day ruined - Loss of confidence (5) - Could not be bothered - Tipped over the edge - Angry (16) - No consistency - Worry (2) - Pointless (2) - What do I do? 	<p>PROBLEM-FOCUSED</p> <p><i>Cognitive Technique</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - One shot at a time (2) - Swing thoughts <p><i>Behavioural Technique</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Technical adjustments (4) - New shots <p><i>Behavioural</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Normal preparation routine - Pre-shot routine - Shot management - Changed clubs - Weather protection - Pre-match routine - Removed clothing - Performed a thorough warm-up <p>EMOTION-FOCUSED</p> <p><i>Psychological Skills</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Imagery (4) - Self-talk (8) <p><i>Concentration</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Increased concentration (4) <p><i>Acceptance</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Accepted mistakes (3) - Accepted defeat <p><i>Relaxation</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Breathing techniques (5) - Relaxed <p><i>Social</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Social support (7)

Table 1: Collapsed Incidents of participants 1-5

- Carved shot
- Pushed shot
- Incorrect club choice
- Poor course management
- Performing correct skill/technique
- Ball out of bounds (2)
- Infringed a rule
- Lost ball

ORGANISATIONAL

Organisation

- Wasn't feeling too great
- Insufficient funding (2)
- Insufficient coaching
- Insufficient equipment/facilities
- Another match behind
- Little practice area

Environment

- **Difficult weather conditions (10)**
- Bad lie in trees
- Bad lie in rough
- Winter greens
- Compact bunkers
- Bunkers not cut (2)
- Quality of greens (2)

- Unfair
- Not in a good mood
- Looking up for an answer
- Not acceptable
- Disgusted
- Scared
- Hard done by
- It's just not my day (4)
- Doubt
- What are you doing?
- What a waste of time
- Why did I hit a driver
- Pathetic
- Why are you there?
- Why me?

Feelings

- Nervous (4)
- Anxious (2)
- **Frustrated (7)**
- Exasperated
- Felt unjust
- Riled
- Despondent
- Uncomfortable (3)
- Disheartened
- Hard done by
- Aggrieved
- Deflated
- Felt like walking off
- Unhappy
- Rushed
- Dejected
- Unconfident
- Tense (3)
- Tight
- Gritted my teeth
- Shaky hands
- Weak legs
- Cold (4)
- Hot headed
- Slumped shoulders
- Raised heart rate
- Stiff (3)

Other

- **Aggressive language (6)**
- Kicked the tee (2)
- Slammed club (5)
- Didn't want to show emotion (5)

AVOIDANCE

Cognitive Avoidance

- Blocking (6)
- Occupy thoughts

Behavioural Avoidance

- Walk off on my own
- Avoiding opponent (2)
- Take some time to myself
- Keeping myself to myself

much wind and he has just hit a good shot down the middle. So, because I have got a pretty tricky shot head on into the wind and it was raining...I was like...I was just worried about sort of how...the wind will affect my swing, how it will affect the ball and everything like that'.

Appraisals

The non-elite golfers also assessed these demands either positively or negatively resulting in a total of 29 individual appraisals. The consistent trend evident in these results is that participants appraised the demands more negatively ($\Sigma=17$ or 58.6% of total appraisals) than positively ($\Sigma=12$, 41.4%). The most generally shared appraisals amongst the participants included *chance to get back in the game* (N=3), and *a common mistake to make* (N=3). Interestingly however, the most frequent appraisal highlighted by participants was the positive appraisal *still plenty of holes to play* (N=4). When referring to this appraisal, two participants evaluated the situation as challenging by thinking that there are still plenty of holes to play following the technical demand of hooking a shot. This specific appraisal helped both participants to facilitate a positive mind-set following the onset of this stressful demand. This implication is reinforced by the following quotes from participant 2:

'Bad tee shots don't stick around in my head too much. So yeah, no I don't think effected my round too bad but again it could be to do with the thought that there are still plenty more holes to go so don't...there wasn't too much pressure on me at this time so I forgot the shot fairly quickly because it was so early in the round I knew that there were still plenty of holes for me to...for me to recover from my mistakes; This allowed me to...like...well...to... remain fairly positive when approaching my next shot really'.

Emotions

A total of 83 emotions were reported. Participants identified a greater amount of negative ($\Sigma=61$, 73.5% of total emotions) compared to positive ($\Sigma=22$, 26.5%) emotions. Emotions identified by participants included *annoyance* (N=10) *frustration* (N=7) and *disappointment* (N=4). However, the emotion of *anger* (N=14) was the most common. Thoughts of anger were identified immediately following incorrect skill

execution during performance which led to a harmful appraisal by all of the golfers interviewed in this study (quote from participant 3):

'In this case after a bad shot I didn't even listen to a word they were saying because I am just so angry with what I have just done...it is not relevant... I would just rather...I'd rather mull on what I have just done than...than take my mind off it because I am just so pissed off with myself.'

Additionally, thoughts of both annoyance and anger were often reported simultaneously by athletes following harm/loss appraisal. Specifically, one participant indicated that these emotions were particularly prominent following a missed putt which was subsequently appraised as threatening by giving his opponent a way back into the match. This is advocated by participant 2:

'It is just...so annoying missing such a short putt because it then gave him a way back into the match. In practice you will make these every time pretty much. Well...not every time but nine out of ten you will make. I mean...you just...it just angers you because you should be making them really.'

Coping strategies

In an attempt to manage with the demands associated with competitive golf performance, the participants identified a total of 30 coping strategies. In accordance with (Lazarus, 1999), the coping strategies applied by the participants during performance were classified as problem-focused, emotion-focused or avoidance. The strategies that were employed to manage the environment were broken down into general themes named *cognitive technique*, *behavioural technique* and *behavioural*. The methods adopted for dealing with the emotion formed from stress were dichotomised into six general themes including *psychological skills*, *concentration*, *acceptance*, *relaxation*, *social* and *other*. Finally the behavioural and psychological efforts to disengage from a stressful situation (avoidance) were simply placed under the two general themes named *cognitive avoidance* and *behavioural avoidance*. In terms of coping function, problem-focused coping ($\Sigma=12$ or 40% of total strategies) and emotion-focused ($\Sigma= 12$, 40%) were reported equally. Avoidance coping was used the least (N=6, 20%). The psychological skill of *self-talk* was the most frequently cited coping strategy (N=8), followed by *social support*

(N=7) and *blocking* (N=6). Although regarded as an 'interesting and underrated concept' by certain performers (participant 1), the use of self-talk was fundamental to all golfers and best indicated in the following quote from participant 1:

'I sort of recognised that I was thinking negatively...and then I just thought shut up, what you are thinking about...your still in the match here, you could still win this match. So I was like...that's...it just happened automatically...like I think...if I think negatively, I would always tell myself oh come on think positive and I would say throughout the round I would always sort of talk to myself anyway...like...like as you said self-talk and sort of think...always thinking about what you can do like...right, I'm going to get...approach this ball, I'm going to do this do that'.

As represented in the table, the accumulation from each of the participants results showed each stage of stress, thus further advocating stress to be a process. The participants reported 62 different stressors which contained mostly performance related stressors (N=49) compared to organisational demands (N=13). Out of 29 appraisals, the golfers reported more negative (N=17) than positive appraisals (N=12). This generated a large variety of emotions (N=83) with the majority of these being negative (N=62) instead of positive (N=21). In order to cope with the large frequency of emotions, the participants equally adopted problem-focused (N=12) and emotion-focused (N=12) strategies whilst rarely using avoidance (N=6).

CHAPTER V:
DISCUSSION

Despite the progressive advancements that competitive stress literature continues to make, a transactional outlook of the stress process has not been entirely investigated. This is due to preventative designs being previously adopted (Fletcher and Hanton, 2003; Hanton *et al.*, 2005). In light of this, the current study was based upon Lazarus and Folkman's transactional model of stress and coping (1984) and Lazarus's Cognitive-Motivational-Relational Theory (1991) with the intention of exploring the stress process experienced by non-elite golfers during competition. Thus, the demands, appraisals, emotions and coping strategies are all discussed and compared to the previous literature outlined in the review.

Stressors

By employing a purposeful sample of golfers, widespread results are provided, which emphasize the variety of stressors (N=63) that exist in the competitive environment. This indicates that non-elite athletes encounter a large range of demands during competition. Concurring with previous research (Gould *et al.*, 1993, 1983; Hanton *et al.*, 2005; Mellalieu *et al.*, 2009; Nicholls *et al.*, 2009; Noblet and Gifford, 2002; Scanlan *et al.*, 1991; Thelwell *et al.*, 2007), the participants in this study not only encountered demands relating to competitive performance (competing against good opposition, not performing to potential), but also experienced demands associated with the organisation of the competitive environment (insufficient funding, bad quality greens). This supports the work of Mellalieu *et al.* (2009) and recognises that similar to athletes playing at a higher standard, non-elite athletes also class both competitive and organisational stressors as salient features of competition. However, after conducting content analysis, it became apparent that performance stressors were far more prominent as they encompassed 79.4% of the stressor total.

Aside from the findings within the work of Mellalieu *et al.* (2009), this result is practically non-existent as previous literature has either found organisational demands to be superior (Hanton *et al.*, 2005) or found the two origins to be equally dispersed (McKay *et al.*, 2008; Thelwell *et al.*, 2008). Rather than opposing these studies (Hanton *et al.*, 2008; McKay *et al.*, 2008; Thelwell *et al.*, 2008), it should be considered that the greater amount of competitive stressors identified in this investigation and perhaps the inconsistency of preceding findings for that matter, may be indicative of the temporal period examined. In simpler terms, these reports

focused on the career of elite participants rather than contextualising the demands into a specific time period. For example, unlike the vast amount of studies considering the stressors faced by performers throughout careers (Dudgale *et al.*, 2002; Gould *et al.*, 1983, 1993; Hanton *et al.*, 2005; Noblet and Gifford, 2002; Thelwell *et al.*, 2008), this study and others previously (Mellalieu *et al.*, 2009) aimed to identify the demands faced by athletes solely inside the competitive environment. The research findings suggest the notion that non-elite golfers face more organisational demands in their day-to-day lives and outside of actual competition (Hanton *et al.*, 2005), however during competition, athletes deem competitive demands are deemed to be more pertinent and threatening (Mellalieu *et al.*, 2009). For this to become a trustworthy statement, future research needs to adopt a similar methodical approach to that of Mellalieu *et al.* (2009) and this present study. This will therefore avoid the propensity of measuring macro level across participants and prioritise contextualising the demands experienced by athletes in the time period of actual performance.

Another major finding to be interpreted from these results is that the *difficult weather conditions* was the most commonly cited source of stress amongst the five non-elite golfers. This indicates that non-elite golfers are generally conscious of the environmental demands which become especially prominent during competition. Since golf is as much a game against the elements as it is against opposition, it is unsurprising that this finding regularly occurs within previous golf literature. Specifically, Nicholls *et al.* (2005a) found *difficult weather conditions* to be the third most commonly shared demand among international adolescent golfers. Moreover, Nicholls and Polman (2008) also formed evidence to suggest that a similar sample group of golfers became stressed by windy conditions during six rounds of golf. Therefore, the similarities shared between this elite research and the present study propose that *difficult weather conditions* are deemed as demanding regardless of competition level. However, it is worth considering that this stressor may also relate to the season in which the data was collected leaving the interesting concept of different demands throughout particular golf seasons.

Appraisals

As Lazarus' transactional perspective of stress and his cognitive-motivational-relational theory (Lazarus and Folkman, 1984; Lazarus, 1991, 1999) shows, once a demand or stressor is encountered, an individual will appraise it in a particular manner. All five participants showed evidence of this (N=32) in response to a variety of both organisational and performance demands throughout competition. In agreement with both theoretical concepts and qualitative studies (Lazarus and Folkman, 1984; Lazarus, 1991, 1999, 2000; Anshel and Delany, 2001; Dudgeon *et al.*, 2002) the results shown in the table (Table 1) indicate that the golfers appraised stressors either positively (challenge, benefit) or negatively (harm/loss, threat). The results also showed that the demands were appraised more negatively (N=17) than positively (N=12). From this, it is therefore logical to state that on average, the demands appraised by the five golfers were more harmful and threatening than challenging or beneficial. This negative superiority is supported by the previous, albeit rather limited literature which explored appraisals and their consequential effect on performance. One of which was a study performed by Anshel and Delany (2001) who, in an attempt to describe the cognitive appraisals and coping strategies following stress within 52 youth competitors in a variety of sports, Anshel and Delany (2001) found appraisals to be more negative than positive. These research results therefore advocate the perception that during competition, athletes evaluate stress to be very intense and possibly harmful to self-esteem which more often than not results in negative appraisal over positive appraisal.

Regardless of the negative superiority which resides within the appraisals made by the non-elite golfers, the results also show evidence of positive appraisal. Surprisingly, the most commonly cited appraisal was in fact positive. However, due to the context surrounding performance and the circumstance in which the demand was appraised, this result could be also considered as predictable. For instance, not only was this appraisal always made at an early stage during competition, but the participants who made these evaluations were part of a team which was already relegated at this point. The context of which appraisals are made may perhaps be a consideration for future research. Nonetheless, participant 2 and participant 4 both commonly evaluated technical mistakes and demands revolving around incorrect

skill execution as challenging. This then led them to summarising that there are *still plenty of holes to play*. Equally, these appraisals also assisted the formation of a positive mind-set in preparation for the next shot. For instance, after a hooked shot off the first tee, on multiple occasions, the golfers simply evaluated that there were plenty of holes remaining and thus walked on with a positive mind set. This result proposes that golfers performing at a lower skill level often have the capacity to appraise a demand positively. However, due the difficulties in which appraisals were categorised (Compas, 1987) and the non-existent research in regards to this result, the generalisation of this finding should be avoided but not disregarded.

Emotions

Folkman *et al.* (1986) suggested that individuals experience diverse emotions throughout the stress process. The findings from this study concur with this statement as the golfers in the present study recalled a mixture of emotions which emerged from the competitive environment (N=83). In accordance with previous literature (Moskowitz *et al.*, 1996; Folkman, 1997; Ong *et al.*, 2004; Nicholls *et al.*, 2010), all five participants similarly reported a variety of both positive and negative emotions. Alike both the public and sport specific samples implemented in these studies, this result extends sport psychology literature with the indication that non-elite golfers generate both positive and negative thoughts and feelings during competitive performance. Such a finding may also propose that athletes performing at a lower standard are more exposed to emotions due to their inexperience. This may leave them to be susceptible to generating a greater range of emotion.

Aside from this matter, the golfers generated a noticeably greater amount of negative emotions (N=62) compared to positive emotions (N=21). This result replicates those found in Nicholls *et al.* (2009) which similarly found negative emotions to be far more favourable amongst rugby players. Thus, whilst taking into the consideration the evidence from this preceding study, it is perhaps sensible to propose that athletes more often than not generate negative emotions to deal with the stressors which emanate from competition. However, this negative propensity may be due to the greater amount of negative appraisals discussed previously.

Alongside the construction of Lazarus's cognitive-motivational-relational theory (1991), Lazarus proposed that 15 emotions exist within the stress process. In the present study, the golfers reported five out of the possible 15 emotions including anxiety, anger, happiness, relief and hope. The emotions which arose in this paper were similarly cited in Nicholls *et al.* (2010). Endeavouring to explore the cognitive emotions generated or as a consequence of stress appraisals in international golfers, Nicholls *et al.* (2010) found that international golfers identified seven (anxiety, anger, happiness, sadness, hope and relief) out of the 15 emotions previously identified by Lazarus (1999). From this comparison, one could presume that golfers generate similar types of emotion within the competitive environment which are irrespective of skill level.

It is also clearly represented in the table that non-professional golfers frequently generate the negative emotion of *anger*. With this being cited on a regular occasion throughout the two rounds of golf, it is clear to suggest that lower level golfers generate the emotion of anger during performance more than any other type of thought or feeling. This finding is not irregular amongst previous literature linked with the subject of emotion. For instance, whilst investigating into the stress, coping and emotions formed from both training and matches in the sport of rugby, Nicholls *et al.* (2009) found the emotions of anxiety and anger to be most frequently cited. Whilst certifying the research that has found multiple emotions that occur within individuals as a result of appraisal (Folkman *et al.*, 1986, 1996), this also shows that the emotion of anger is evident and often prominent in other sports apart from golf. Upon closer examination, Nicholls *et al.* (2009) went one step further by comparing the frequency and type of emotions between training and match performance. This resulted in the emotion of anger being far more favourable in a match scenario. Therefore, it is sensible to also propose that the competitive environment may perhaps be responsible for elevated level of anger within the no-elite participants.

Coping

As well demonstrating the previous three stages of the stress process, the five non-elite golfers reported a widespread use of coping strategies during performance (N=30). This concurs with the previous studies executed to better understand the

coping responses within golf (McCaffrey and Orlick, 1989; Gaudreau *et al.*, 2001; Gaudreau *et al.*, 2002; Nicholls *et al.*, 2005a, 2005b; Nicholls and Polman, 2008) and a variety of other sports such as football, cricket, figure skating and swimming (Gould *et al.*, 1993; Dudgeon *et al.*, 2002; Reeves *et al.*, 2007; Thelwell *et al.*, 2007; McKay *et al.*, 2008). This initially demonstrates that regardless of sporting status coping strategies are a commonly used method for making the environment feel more comfortable and relieving the stress which coincides within the competitive environment.

As previously mentioned, Lazarus (1999) began to classify and separate the types of coping strategies into two categories named problem-focused and emotion-focused. These two classifications were then adapted with the proposition of a third category of coping, named avoidance (Kowalski and Crocker, 2001). The golfers helped to verify this by reporting demands which were classified as such. In relation to the type of coping most frequently cited, the findings are dissimilar to earlier studies (Crocker and Graham, 1995; 2009 Gaudreau *et al.*, 2002; Gaudreau *et al.*, 2001; Nicholls *et al.*, 2005a; Thelwell *et al.*, 2007; Nicholls and Polman, 2008; Reeves *et al.*, 2009). For instance, this broad range of research reported the primary use of problem-focused strategies, whereas this study concurs by showing an equal amount of problem-focused (N=12) to emotion-focused strategies (N=12). This is particularly interesting when comparing these findings to that of earlier research within the sport of golf (Nicholls *et al.*, 2005; Nicholls and Polman, 2008) as findings from Nicholls *et al.* (2005a) and Nicholls and Polman (2008) suggest that golfers tend to use problem-focused strategies more than any type of coping. This therefore makes this result rather controversial upon comparison as the results from this study suggest that non-elite golf players employ strategies to manage the environment just as much as they would use strategies to manage the emotional responses to stress. From this, it is tempting to conclude that from this frequency provoked suggestion, that non-elite participants may class emotion-focused strategies (self-talk, social support and aggressive language) more, if not just as adaptive and relevant than problem-focused strategies during performance (technical adjustments, pre-shot routine and pre-match routine).

Helping to advocate this suggestion is the emotion-focused strategy of self-talk being the most frequently cited strategy coping response. This reflects that non-elite golfers commonly share a preference for using this strategy when dealing with an array of stressors which are pertinent to both performance and organisation. As well as the non-elite participants from this study providing some evidence as to the implementation of self-talk within the competitive environment, Nicholls *et al.* (2005) and Spriddle (2004) similarly found this psychological skill to be effective in the sport of golf. For instance, when measuring the coping effectiveness of 18 male Irish golfers, Nicholls *et al.* (2005b) found self-talk to be a strategy associated with effective coping. This complimented the work of Spriddle (2004) who similarly found self-talk as a coping behaviour used for relinquishing the stress during a competitive round of golf. Although this current investigation failed to consider the coping effectiveness of the strategies used, this does not deter the fact that the psychological skill of self-talk is valued between both elite and non-elite golfers. Not only does this appear to be regarded as useful within the non-elite golf setting, but similar research which has explored the coping strategies outside the sport of golf has also indicated its eminence within credited elite research. One notable study in particular found the psychological skill of self-talk and cognitive reminders were employed by professional cricket players as a means for dealing with the performance related stressors associated with cricket (Thelwell *et al.*, 2007). With Thelwell *et al.* (2007) helping to clarify its existence within the sporting environment, it could be recommended that a variety of players from both different sports and skill level implement the psychological skill of self-talk with the intention of reducing the consequences of stress.

To summarise, the present study portrays the stress process experienced by non-elite golfers during competition. The players experienced a variety of both performance and organisational demands during competition. Specifically, the golfers reported a greater amount of performance demands compared to organisational demands. The most frequently cited demand which the performers faced was the *difficult weather conditions*. Consequently, this resulted in positive and negative appraisals with the latter being greater than the former. Participants mentioned the appraisal *still plenty of holes to play* most often. In response to these

evaluations, the participants generated a mixture of positive and negative emotions with negative emotions being more prominent, and the emotion of *anger* being most frequently cited. In an effort to reduce the emotions to make the environment more comfortable, the sample group adopted a number of coping strategies throughout competition. Although *self-talk* was regarded as the most used strategy, the total amount of problem-focused strategies was equal to that of emotion-focused strategies.

CHAPTER VI:
CONCLUSION

Practical Implications

Results found from this exploration highlight some important practical implications for athletes, practitioners and Lazarus's transactional perspective of stress and his cognitive motivational-relational theory of emotions (Lazarus and Folkman 1984, Lazarus, 1991). From an athlete perspective, non-elite golfers will experience an array of demands appear to be associated with the competitive environment. These include demands relating to performance, the environment and even the organisation of the competition. It is therefore important for practitioners to enlighten non-elite athletes of the types of stress which have the capability for impeding performance (Mellalieu *et al.*, 2009). This will help athletes to establish what demands can be controlled and the demands which participants have no influence over. This is particularly important when a range of stressors can occur during performance.

Furthermore, practitioners need to focus upon the interventions which help to facilitate positive stress appraisals within non-elite competition. These interventions could therefore aid in reducing the potential for negative evaluations and consequently the negative emotions during competition. To cope with these negative effects and emotions, the players used an array of coping techniques. However, participants often indicated that the deployment of such strategies were either a "natural reaction" or automatic. This demonstrates a lack of understanding for such methods for coping within non-elite sport. For instance, on numerous occasions, participants were unaware of social support and self-talk being coping strategies despite being utilised. Following a conversation based on that particular topic, the participant then came to terms with the concept of how it can be used to reduce stress. This example portrays how non-elite athletes may be uneducated as the array of coping strategies at their disposal. Therefore, this study helps to educate athletes as to the methods which can be applied within the competitive setting. Such enlightenments will help to highlight the array of coping strategies that non-elite athletes have at their disposal within the competitive environment.

Strengths and Weaknesses

Regardless of the findings that are presented in this study, the strengths and weaknesses should be considered. When referring to the strengths, firstly, the

procedure and data collection methods used in this study helped to improve the ecological validity of the results. This allowed for an accurate representation of the stress process during competition compared to macro level studies representing similar findings (Hanton *et al.*, 2008; McKay *et al.*, 2008; Thelwell *et al.*, 2008). This is because the mini-booklets were completed throughout competition and the diary was completed post performance. Although the researcher initially predicted that these methods would interfere with performance, participants expressed opinions otherwise during the interviews. Secondly, the utilisation of such data collection methods as the mini booklet (Appendix A) and diaries (Appendix B) helped to aid the participants' competitive recall during the interview process. The third and final strength of this study involves the way in which data was represented. Following within case analysis (Appendix D), the quotations were collated in a unique table (Table 1) which uniquely represents a summary of the stress process within non-elite golfers. This allowed for generalisations to be made for non-elite golfers.

Irrespective of this study's ecologically strong procedure, one weakness of this study relates to the sample used. Male non-elite golfers were selected for this study to primarily explore a rather ignored sample group within the sports psychology literature. However, this small and homogenous sample group limits the generalisations made across different sports difficult. The main weakness of this study however was that the interviews were not conducted immediately after the initial two stages of the data collection process. Although the researcher anticipated this due to the study commitments of the participants, the interviews were conducted a week after which places the reliability of the results under scrutiny. However, the researcher believes that the data collection methods were appropriate for amending this retrospective limitation. Therefore, if this research was to be repeated, the interviews would be conducted immediately following performance and diary entries.

Further Research

From the findings in this study, one can suggest many directions as to where future research should go from here. Primarily, research needs to continue focusing upon stress as a process rather than replicate the studies which have previously isolated the stages of stress. (Moskowitz *et al.*, 1996; Folkman, 1997; Gaudreau *et al.*, 2001; Hanton *et al.*, 2005; Thelwell *et al.*, 2007; Nicholls and Polman, 2008; McKay *et al.*,

2008; Reeves *et al.*, 2009) However, whilst doing so, future research needs to consider the exploration of coping effectiveness, gender differences and most importantly non-elite sample groups. Not only will this form a greater comparative base for non-elite studies, but this will evidently increase the depth and variation of research in relation to stress within sport. Additionally, due to the difficulty of classifying and obtaining information related to appraisals, future studies need to focus upon improved methods for gaining such information. Such information regarding appraisals would then provide a better understanding of how athletes view and, potentially, highlight the causes of their stress (Neil *et al.*, 2013) and is an approach which would help to further understand appraisal itself.

To summarise, during competition, the non-elite golfers encountered both performance and completion stressors which then prompted both negative and positive appraisal. These appraisal resulted in a variety of positive and negative emotions when the ultimately required the participants to deploy a number of strategies in order to cope. These findings therefore illustrate the stress as a process not a product in non-elite golfers during competition.

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APPENDECIES

APPENDIX A - MINI-BOOKLET (FIRST PAGE)

Critical Incident:.....

Hole:..... Score Achieved:....

GIR  FIR  Putts:....

Demand(s) experienced:

.....

.....

.....

What were you thinking when experiencing that demand?

.....

.....

.....

What were you feeling when experiencing that demand?

.....

.....

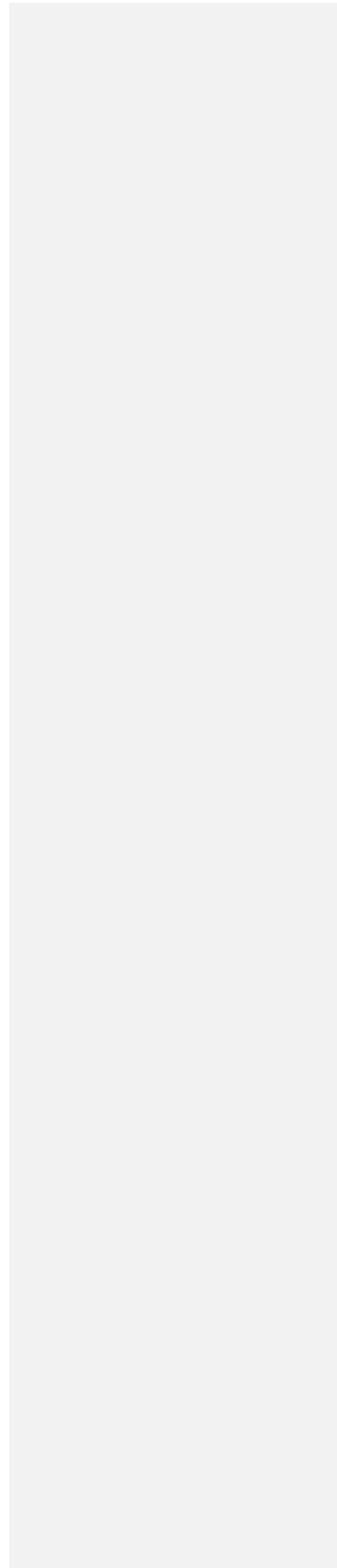
.....

What did you do to try and cope with the situation?

.....

.....

.....



APPENDIX B – COMPETITIVE STRESS-COPING EXAMINATION DIARY (EXAMPLE)

Name: **Joe Bloggs**

Event/Competition: **BUCS league game**

Date: **26/11/12**

Course: *Whitchurch*

Following performance, when did you complete this diary? **10 minutes after**

Summarise your performance

What went well? I felt that my putting was particularly good today. I rescued a lot of bad scores with this area of my play and also placed my opponent under pressure with my accuracy on the greens.

What didn't go so well? My driving was particular wayward this morning with several drives resulting in either the rough or in a couple of cases out of bounds.

How did you feel during the event?

I felt extremely confident this morning whilst warming up and excited as I haven't played for a couple of weeks due to the weather. However, due to a very hesitant start to the event, I felt very on edge throughout. This made me conscious of all the mistakes in the day. My blushes were saved though as I felt I putted very well today.

Why do you think you felt this way?

I believe I felt this way because of the critical incident on the first hole. This mistake made me feel very nervous of repeating the mistake and conscious as to how I would perform for the rest of the round. This made my driving very conservative as I dwelled too much on one mistake as my confidence was initially shot.

Using the narrative provided after specific holes in the mini-booklet, please complete the following pages that are relevant to your performance. For instance, if four experiences were identified during the round, complete four sheets this booklet. Please elaborate and specify as much as you can whilst completing this booklet.

Critical Incident: **Shanked the ball out of bounds**

Hole Number: **1**

Describe the critical incident

I shanked the first drive of the day out of bounds which led to a two shot penalty. The wind was wild at this point but that does mean my shot choice was not to blame. When I performed this shot again I over compensated and ended up in the rough on the other side of the fairway.

What demand(s) did you encounter before/during/just after the critical incident (using the booklet for cues)?

Just after the critical incident I felt as though my opponent was judging my ability. This made me feel pressurised as I repeated the shot as I didn't want to look weak in front of someone I did not know. I was also aware of the bad weather conditions when my opponent teed off before me.

What were you thinking around that time?

I was thinking, would I do it again and shank the ball into the rough? Could this situation possibly get worse than it already was? Very negative thoughts as I had got off to a negative start. Maybe it's just not going to be my day. However, I was also thinking that my play can only improve and I will do what I can to reprimand this mistake.

Why do you think you thought in that way?

I felt this way purely due to the situation and the timing of the critical incident. Because it was my first shot of the day it wasn't a very promising start. This made me doubt my ability and how I was going to perform the rest of the round.

What were you feeling around that time?

I felt nervous as to the outcome of my second drive. I also felt pressured and worried as to what my opponent thought of my ability and how I was going to perform. Physically, I felt tense and I believe I was not as relaxed as I normally am.

Why do you think you felt that way?

I may have been too excited before tee off as I haven't played a competitive round in a couple of weeks now so I may have rushed the shot now I think about it. I felt the need to impress and get off to a good start as my opponent successfully hit the fairway.

How did you attempt to cope with this critical incident(s)?

I attempted to cope with the incident by breathing a lot slower and taking deeper my controlled breaths. I also imagined the ball in my head lading in the middle of the fairway.

Was that coping strategy effective?

Not really as ultimately I don't think I was relaxed as I normally am when I tee off. This was appropriate for ignoring the bad weather conditions as I completely to compensate for the wind.

On reflection, could you have done anything differently to better cope with the critical incident?

I would have been a little more tentative instead of being so excited and rushed to get play under way. Maybe I could have extended my routine to relax more and become familiar with the environment. I would also have tried to forget about my opponent being present so I could just concentrate on my own performance.

APPENDIX A – COMPETITIVE STRESS-COPING EXAMINATION SHEET

Name:

Event/Competition:

Date:

Course:

Summarise your performance

What went well?

What didn't go so well?

How did you feel during the event?

Why do you think you felt this way?

Using the narrative provided after specific holes in the mini-booklet, please complete the following pages that are relevant to your performance. For instance, if four experiences were identified during the round, complete four sheets in this booklet. Please elaborate and specify as much as you can whilst completing this booklet.

Critical Incident 1:

Hole Number:

Describe the critical incident

What demand(s) did you encounter before/during/just after the critical incident (using the booklet for cues)?

What were you thinking around that time?

Why do you think you thought in that way?

What were you feeling around that time?

Why do you think you felt that way?

How did you attempt to cope with this critical incident(s)?

Was that coping strategy effective?

On reflection, could you have done anything differently to better cope with the critical incident

Critical Incident 2:

Hole Number:

Describe the critical incident

What demand(s) did you encounter before/during/just after the critical incident (using the booklet for cues)?

What were you thinking around that time?

Why do you think you thought in that way?

What were you feeling around that time?

Why do you think you felt that way?

How did you attempt to cope with this critical incident(s)?

Was that coping strategy effective?

On reflection, could you have done anything differently to better cope with the critical incident?

Critical Incident 3:

Hole Number:

Describe the critical incident

What demand(s) did you encounter before/during/just after the critical incident (using the booklet for cues)?

What were you thinking around that time?

Why do you think you thought in that way?

What were you feeling around that time?

Why do you think you felt that way?

How did you attempt to cope with this critical incident(s)?

Was that coping strategy effective?

On reflection, could you have done anything differently to better cope with the critical incident?

Critical Incident 4:

Hole Number:

Describe the critical incident

What demand(s) did you encounter before/during/just after the critical incident (using the booklet for cues)?

What were you thinking around that time?

Why do you think you thought in that way?

What were you feeling around that time?

Why do you think you felt that way?

How did you attempt to cope with this critical incident(s)?

Was that coping strategy effective?

On reflection, could you have done anything differently to better cope with the critical incident?

Critical Incident 5:

Hole Number:

Describe the critical incident

What demand(s) did you encounter before/during/just after the critical incident (using the booklet for cues)?

What were you thinking around that time?

Why do you think you thought in that way?

What were you feeling around that time?

Why do you think you felt that way?

How did you attempt to cope with this critical incident(s)?

Was that coping strategy effective?

On reflection, could you have done anything differently to better cope with the critical incident?

Critical Incident 6:

Hole Number:

Describe the critical incident

What demand(s) did you encounter before/during/just after the critical incident (using the booklet for cues)?

What were you thinking around that time?

Why do you think you thought in that way?

What were you feeling around that time?

Why do you think you felt that way?

How did you attempt to cope with this critical incident(s)?

Was that coping strategy effective?

On reflection, could you have done anything differently to better cope with the critical incident?

APPENDIX C – INTERVIEW GUIDE

Semi Structured Interview Guide

Introductory Questions (Build rapport and make them feel comfortable)

1. Thanks again for coming to meet me (name). How are you?
 - How was your week?
2. Initially, how did you get into the sport of golf?
 - What age did you start playing? Why did you start playing?
 - What do you like most about the sport?
 - In your opinion, what is your best achievement in this sport?
3. How is your university season going so far?
 - How do you feel you are performing individually? As a team?

Explain the protocol to the interviewee whilst clarifying any terms which are not understood.

Demands encountered during performance

4. At this point of competition (mention specific time), you indicated (...) as being a critical incident. Can you please elaborate more upon this demand/incident you faced during this moment? (Use of diary entries)
 - Have you encountered this demand or a similar demand before?
 - What was your initial reaction to this demand/incident?
5. What were you thinking at this stage of the competition?
 - Thoughts?
6. Did these thoughts have an effect on you?
 - Confidence? Motivation?
 - Why do you think they have this effect?
7. How did this demand make you feel?
 - Physical feelings?
 - Why do you think they have this effect?
8. Did this demand affect your performance in any way?
 - Positively or negatively?

- How did this demand affect your performance?
- Why do you think it did/not?

Coping Strategies

9. When the demand/critical incident occurred, did you make attempt to cope with it?
 - Did you adopt any strategies or actions in order to cope with the demand?
 - Were these strategies effective?
 - Why did they work/why not?
10. What was the outcome of this demand or stage in the event?
 - Did this have any influence on any other stage of the event (e.g another hole)?
 - How? Why?
11. In hindsight, could you have done anything differently or anything else to cope with this critical incident/demand?

Repeat questions 5 to 13 for each critical incident/demand recorded in the diary entries

12. The first critical incident/demand occurred during your round, did this affect the rest of your performance?
 - How? Why? When?
13. At these particular points of the event (...), you faced critical incidents or demands which were uncontrollable. Did these demands have any impact upon what you were thinking?
 - Did these demands have any impact upon what you were feeling?
14. During your round, you employed several coping strategies such as (...). Were you aware of these during performance?
 - Have you ever practiced these coping strategies before in training?
 - Do you have any reason for using a particular strategy in on situation and another for a completely different situation?
15. Finally, during your round, did you regard each demand you faced as separate or did they repeat themselves or relate to each other as the round progressed?
 - What is your reason for this?

Conclusion

16. How do you feel that interview went?

- Feedback?

17. Do you feel as though you were able to express yourself effectively?

18. Is there anything you would like to add?

Thank the participant for their time and cooperation in the study

APPENDIX D – TRANSCRIPT EXAMPLE

Int: Thanks again for coming to meet me Toby, How are you?

Part: Yeah, I am good thank you very much.

Int: How is your week going so far, alright?

Part: Yeah, it's been busy but alright.

Int: Ok, we are going to go straight into it really, obviously you understand why you are here and I am going to explain the procedure later on when necessary However, we are probably just going to straight into it as its probably best if I try and ask you how you got into golf, what it's all about and what your reason for doing so was.

Part: Alright.

Int: Ok, so initially how did you get into the sport of golf?

Part: When I was younger I used to go and visit my dad in London and as a general activity for us to do, he used to take us to play golf.

Int: Ok.

Part: Like, although he was absolutely appalling at it, he loved it so I used to get into it, so sort of got into it from there really.

Int: Okey doke, so must been relatively young so at what age did you sort of strat playing?

Part: Must have been about 11, 12, along those lines at round about secondary school.

Int: Good, ok. Obviously started young, well your still playing now obviously so what did you like most about the sport when you took it up?

Part: Just, it's a very interesting sport as some days it can be the most relaxining sport in the world and your having a great time on a beautiful course, and another time it could be the most infuriating sport in the world where you know you could do better and its raining or something.

Int: Ok.

Part: Its just a great sport to be a part of.

Int: Ok, so you mentioned there beautiful curses and stuff so you must be playing at a relatively good standard, what did you say your handicap was?

Part: My handicap is 4

Int: Ok, wicked. Ok, so you mentioned that your handicap is 4 and playing beautiful courses, brilliant so, what would you say your best achievement was in the sport?

Part: Best achievement in my own courses junior open I actually won that and I thought that was a pretty good achievement.

Int: Yeah.

Part: Got a pretty decent prize and stuff so that's probably my best achievement in the sport. Cant think of oh wait I represented the county.

Int: Yeah

Part: In the national cup and came third.

Int: Good.

Part: Yeah it was good.

Int: Ok, obviously you play for the university team.

Part: Yeah

Int: How do you reckon the season is going personally for you and I know the team is not playing amazingly well at the moment?

Part: Well, we have been playing some pretty tough opponents lately so it hasn't been going great as in results but I feel like I am playing well. Generally, I don't think I am out of nick or anything. It's just the fact that we are playing against top quality players, so as all my matches have been close, I feel like, well I know it might be like in terms of results but I feel like it's going alright in terms of my performances.

Comment [T1]: Competing against quality performers

Int: So you don't feel maybe the team performing as a team essentially has not been ideal, you don't feel it's down to individual performances?

Part: Well, we didn't expect to win any matches really this year because it is such a tough league

Comment [T2]: Opposition: Tough league pessimism

Int: Yeah

Part: So like we have taken that pressure off us.

Int: Ok

Part: And it's more to with like individual performances and just having a good laugh with the lads really.

Int: Ok, fair enough. Ok, I'm just going to take you through the protocol just before we get started I'm going to briefly outline how the interview is going to go today. Ok, it's going to be recorded on an ipod today because I couldn't get hold of a Dictaphone sadly. This will ensure an accurate account of the interview to be collected allowing me to transcribe it at a later date ok. In terms of data analysis, I am going to need your informed consent of allowing me to transcribe it so I can accurately represent your information....

Part: Yeah

Int: Reliably

Part: That's fine

Int: And as well as that, well obviously you know your rights but I will explain them again to you. You are more than capable to stop the interview at any time if you feel that any inappropriate questions arise, or you feel like you are uncomfortable you are also free to stop this interview....

Part: Yeah

Int: and to refuse participation as obviously this is a voluntary study so you are here on a voluntary basis and I am not making you.

Part: Alright

Int: Ok and If you don't understand anything, any questions, feel free to ask and I will elaborate on them in the best of detail.

Part: That's fine.

Int: Ok, so basically the core data was collected through diaries and the mini-booklets. Do you feel as though these instruments affected your performance in any way?

Part: No really like, just you played the shot as you would and then you would remember to fill it out so not at all really.

Int: Ok brilliant so we are going to go into the raw data now and start talking about stressors you noted down in your mini-booklet and in the first one, you identified on the first hole that you identified that with the first shot you played

Part: Yeah

Int: You mentioned that you played a poor shot on the first tee ok would you like to, you know, describe that critical incident in how you were feeling?

Part: Well basically, got to the first hole, wasn't feeling too great to be fair but had a few practice swings which felt ok, then just doing my usual routine as I usually would for the first hole, sort of line it up, see where I want the ball to go and then just hit a poor shot, just felt it straight away from bad connection, bad swing and just shanked it right a little bit and it just sort of ended up quite deep into the rough from the right hand side of the fairway...

Comment [T3]: Illness

Comment [T4]: Warmed up

Comment [T5]: Too much focus on routine

Int: Yeah, ok have you encountered this demand before?

Part: Yeah

Int: Yeah, you must have done it loads of times as it happens

Part: You tend to hit like, like on the occasional shot you tend to hit a pretty shot...

Int: Yeah

Part: So yeah I have encountered those sort of...

Int: As I said, it must be pretty common anyway in regards to...I have played a bit of golf myself and if a shot goes wayward then it's pretty common so what was your initial reaction to this sort of critical incident?

Part: Sort of like, like gritted my teeth like and like, because I was the person who shot first and then it was the three players. So like I didn't really have time to like react in terms of talking to myself or anything about it, I sort of gritted my teeth and turned away from the ball before I had even seen it land...

Int: Ok

Part: And then like just walked away like and yeah sort of I could tell I was just disappointed with myself because its not the way you want to start a round really.

Int: Ok, so do you sort of say you whipped from your memory straight away; you tried to forget about it?

Part: No really like...I had...I sort of had like a ten second period just contemplating on what I should have done...

Comment [T6]: Visualising a poor start

Int: Ok

Part: Rather than like contemplating on what I am going to do.

Int: So sort of reflection on what's just happened?

Part: Yeah like, sort of why did the ball go right, what...like what was the aspects of my swing sort of thing.

Comment [T7]: Visualising a poor start

Int: Ok, obviously you mentioned you reflected on it, why did the ball go right and going into quite good detail in the downtime after the shot.

Part: Yeah

Int: Did these thoughts you know, did they have an effect on you in any way when you...later went on in that sort of hole or round?

Part: I wouldn't say so. I played pretty well for the rest of the round...

Int: Ok

Part: And the hole I managed to scrape a par, so it wasn't too bad in the end probably just because the next two shots I played were good...

Int: Yeah

Part: So like...but I feel like if I had a really bad hole, and double bogeyed it, then that would have affected it, if not massively.

Int: Ok

Part: But it was more of the fact that on the second tee I was thinking about it a little bit like...am I going to shank it again...

Comment [T8]: Mental uncertainty / performance ambiguity

Int: Ok

Part: Am I going to hit it into the rough.

Int: Ok, so obviously you previously mentioned there, is it going to happen again...

Part: Yeah

Int: Is obviously a little bit sort of...you know...tentative and maybe the way your approaching the next shot ok which is fair enough as that is obviously natural. Why do you think this had an effect on you know...your next shot? Why do you think this had that affect...thinking about it in the back of your mind.

Part: Just because it was such a poor shot, it's not like, admittedly sometimes you miss the fairway like by a couple yards here and there, and like you might do ten yards too short of what you thought then it's not that bigger issue but, when you hit a ball like ten yards into the rough or like fifteen yards...I think it was something like that, then because it's a bad shot you just sort of...because it was so bad, that's why I was worried about it.

Comment [T9]: Worried about repeating the shot again

Int: Ok, so, do you think it affected your performance negatively or positively from then on? I know, maybe...just maybe think about the rest of the hole. Don't think of the rest of the round. Just try and think about the rest of the hole in terms of your performance.

Part: In terms of the hole obviously it's not put me in a good position to make a good score but from where I was I managed to hack it out to well...like 70 yards from the pin and then I have hit a really good approach shot in, which has left me about five foot. So like, it's put me in a position where I...I have to hit good shots to make the score.

Comment [T10]: Not starting well

Int: Yeah

Part: So like, it sort of had a positive effect on like...my approach to the shout because I know I need to hit a good shot. Whereas if I had hit like...safe in the middle of the fairway...

Int: Yeah

Part: I would know...I know...I know I want to hit it on the green, but I don't have to make a par. Whereas because I have hit a bad shot, it means I can't afford to hit another bad shot in that hole.

Comment [T11]: Worried about repeating that shot again

Int: Ok, that's fair enough.

Part: It just makes me concentrate a little bit more.

Comment [T12]: Increased concentration

Int: So yeah you have mentioned just now that obviously the negative shot before the process you maybe thought well there is a little bit of pressure on me here, so now I have to play a good shot, that's out of the way, account no excuses for the next shot. Why do you think it made you feel like that? Are you generally a positive person when you play?

Part: Yeah, I am generally quite a positive person; it's just like, just...it's just like the thought of I can't have another bad shot like that on this hole because it would ruin my whole round, so you put that added concentration in and then got a decent lie to be honest in the rough so it wasn't too bad like. So as I said, get it out, make par...

Comment [T13]: Increased concentration

Int: Yeah

Part: Then sort of after...after the second shot, that was a pretty like...positive shot so I was quite happy with it sort of...sort of that eased my mind.

Int: Yeah ok

Part: And then like, it sort...that was when the bad shot sort of almost had gone from my mind.

Comment [T14]: Blocking

Int: Ok

Part: Especially on that hole.

Int: Ideal. So moving on to the next stage of this critical incident we talked about. So we have highlighted that it was you who had shanked the ball right...

Part: Yeah

Int: On the first tee shot and like I say, we are going to talk about the little coping strategies which is just how you coped with it really. Ok so, going back to the critical incident occurred, try and remember as vividly as you can, did you initially have any coping...did you attempt to cope with it initially?

Part: As I said like I was gritting my teeth, didn't want to like react...like...too emotionally as in I didn't want to show my opponent that I was annoyed at myself, so I sort of like turned away from him and

Comment [T15]: Physical coping

Comment [T16]: Behavioural avoidance

gritted my teeth. I could feel myself gritting my teeth, and the like just walked off and like sort of acted normal. In my head I was going through like the processes of what had just happened...

Int: Yeah, ok

Part: So like, I was like looking back...like trying to replay the image in my head.

Comment [T17]: Imagery

Int: Yeah

Part: And then seeing what went wrong in the swing and then just trying to make sure I wouldn't do that again for the next shot.

Comment [T18]: Imagery

Int: Ok, that's understandable. You mentioned the opponent there...

Part: Yeah

Int: Did you...did you effectively notice his presence whilst playing the shot maybe?

Part: Because it was a competitive situation, you're always going to...you always know that a bad shot is going to like...is like...what's the word...like it...you know that a bad shot is going to affect your round, where as if your just practicing, with that bad shot you're not too bothered obviously your annoyed a little bit but...

Comment [T19]: Opponent recognition

Int: Doesn't have as much consequence?

Part: Yeah, because it's not competitive, you're not that bothered, like because I could feel him there but usually it would affect me but just...today it was just a bad shot and that's when was I was like shit, don't let him see that the your angry because he will thrive on that himself...

Comment [T20]: Avoidance coping

Int: Ok

Part: Because I know that's what I do if you see the player you're playing against like annoyed at himself, then you know you're in a positive position to win.

Comment [T21]: Distracting behaviour

Int: Ok, When you were talking about...you know... your initially trying to cope with it quickly, gritting your teeth, going through your head how you're not going to do it again and trying to get the confidence to play on and hopefully play better.

Part: Yeah

Int: Do you think this strategy was effective? Do you reckon it worked?

Part: Probably yeah because...as I said before like, I ended up getting par on the hole...like...so the main cause of that was just the second shot, so it put that added like emphasis on that second shot, try and be as positive as I can, and then as soon as I hit that good second shot and I know it's a good clean strike and I have done pretty well to get it out, then that's when all thoughts of the first shot...

Comment [T22]: New shots

Int: Were irrelevant

Part: Because that's...that's not the latest shot so you're thinking of the positive one.

Int: So...a very shot to shot...coping idea you are coming up with. A proposition that you go form shot to shot, just thinking about the shot at the time and not necessarily daunting on the past. What was the sort of outcome of this sort of coping strategy? Did it affect your whole round or was it just sort hole played and then as you said...you don't seem to daunt on it a lot.

Part: Well...probably wouldn't have affected my whole round, probably affected my second tee shot just a little bit, just because...like...when I was on the tee, you sort of get flashbacks of the being on the tee on the first...

Comment [T23]: Imagery

Int: Yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah

Part: But I ended up hitting a good shot on the second tee, actually, and that sort of reinforced the fact that like, I am probably not going to do it again in the round so...like...it didn't, that's when it sort of completely and utterly erased from my mind and on the third tee I was like...wasn't even thinking about it, I was thinking about like...what I was going to do, where I was going to hit it, the type of shot I needed to hit and stuff.

Comment [T24]: Technical adjustments

Int: Ok, so the second sort of tee shot, that's maybe when you would have thought...nah I don't want to do it again.

Part: It was just sort of like a tiny little feeling in the back of my mind. I was just standing over the ball, I was just like...don't do it again sort of thing...I was just like saying, sort of telling myself don't do it again, don't do it again.

Comment [T25]: Self-talk

Int: OK, that's fair enough and completely understandable. In hindsight, put yourself in the situation again...

Part: Yeah

Int: Shank the ball right, you have got a couple of people watching you, whether they be peers or competitors, shank the ball right...would you have done anything to cope with it differently? Or would you say that was the perfect way to go about it?

Part: Probably not dwelled on it as much as I did like...like I know a few golfers just take like ten steps and then that's all they use in their mind and then like all they are thinking about now is the second shot.

Comment [T26]: Acceptance

Int: Yeah

Part: I sort of, it took me like a good...it took me a good one hundred yards to sort of get it out of my mind for that second shot. So maybe not dwell on it as much as I could of but to be fair I hit a decent, positive sort of second shot so maybe the way I coped with it was alright I suppose.

Int: Ok, Ok, obviously you mentioned employing those coping strategies

Part: Yeah

Int: Ok, so you're not really dwelling on the shot anymore and obviously you mentioned sort of shot to shot rationale basis for approaching the play, were you aware you were using these coping strategies? Or were they just completely...

Part: Just sort of natural.

Int: Yeah?

Part: Yeah like, if I hit a bad shot I would always go through in my head what I had just hit, so I would almost...always like visualise the swing again...

Comment [T27]: Visualise swing technique

Int: Yeah

Part: How I had done that bad shot so that for the next shot, I am not doing the same swing.

Int: Yeah

Part: So, it's sort of natural for me to do that.

Int: So with it being natural, have you had a chance to practice these in training, these coping strategies or do you reckon it's just more or the way you react at the time?

Part: More of a way of reacting at the time I think, just sort of, I fell like that's the way it's sort of...like...just a sort of response of my...

Int: Do you have any reason for using a particular strategy in a situation, so we will use this strategy that you used to sort of...do you have any particular reason for using this strategy or would you use it also do you reckon in a completely different situation? Or is it just...

Part: Well...like say the use of like imagery sort of visualisation...the only reason why I use that is just so I don't repeat the same mistake. So like, I try and image myself doing that bad swing, just so I know what's gone wrong.

Int: Yeah

Part: So like, as I said I hit it right, and that is down to sort of swing mechanics.

Int: Yeah

Part: So like, I'll see my swing and be like right don't do that next time and then so for the next shot...it will just be like right...concentrate on not shanking it...because of like the skills and technical aspects to do that...then I will just do that.

Int: Would you...you mentioned imagery there, would you...will it be from your eyes or somebody else's eyes when that's happening?

Part: Its just sort of like the feel of it so...sort of like looking down at my hands.

Int: Yeah

Part: Like getting the grip of the club and then just...the feel of like the swing because you know if it is a good shot or not from the swing.

Int: Ok yeah that is fair enough. Ok...thank you for elaborating so clearly on the first critical incident. Ok, if we move swiftly on through your mini-booklet you also mentioned...going back to the fifth hole that weather conditions aren't going your way at all and it started raining...you have mentioned here raining and wind picked up

Part: Yeah

Int: Ok, so would you like to you know...can please elaborate on this demand you know what were you thinking at the time sort of thing when it happened?

Part: Basically, I was just on the fifth tee, my opponent had just hit a shot, then all of a sudden out of the blue it just started like properly...not heavily raining but just raining like noticeably and also the wind started picking up in my face...

Int: Ok

Part: And I was just there like this is annoying, he has got just light rain and not too much wind and he has just hit a good shot down the middle and then I have got a pretty tricky shot head on into the wind on a par five as well so it's like a pretty long hole.

Int: Yeah, ok

Part: and then it was raining as well so I was like...I was just worried about sort of how...the wind will affect my swing, how it will affect the ball and everything like that.

Int: Okey doke, so obviously you have played a lot of golf, with your experience, have you encountered this before? Bad rain?

Part: Yes, you encounter it all the time, we live in England so.

Int: That's fair enough ok. So what was your initial reaction to this demand? Obviously the wind is picking up, it's in your face.

Part: I was just a bit annoyed really because my opponent sort of...not got a free pass because he still has to hit it down the middle but he didn't experience these conditions on this hole or on the first tee shot so I was like why has this happened to me and why couldn't it happen to him and not me...

Int: So you sort of relating it to your competitor sort of thing?

Part: Yeah, like a little bit...like...I was just annoyed at the fact that because he has put me under pressure by putting it down the middle...

Int: Yeah

Part: I have got these extra added conditions to think about.

Int: Ok, ideal, so obviously it's raining, hitting your face quite hard you mentioned, relatively not raining that hard but you sort of feel a little bit undone because he has had quite you know...clear weather whilst he has played the shot and he hasn't had it as bad.

Part: Yeah

Int: So quite unjust how that's happened that's fair enough. Is that what you were thinking when this critical incident occurred like why...

Part: Yeah like why has it happened to me? Sort of almost like...like you get that feeling like its not going to be my day today.

Int: Ok

Part: That sort of feeling.

Int: Yeah, that's fair enough so, obviously these thoughts of why...did they have an effect on you in any way do you reckon?

Part: I would say probably yes because I hit the shot and it just sort of went into the semi rough so it wasn't the ideal shot but I wasn't like a terrible shot...but I was like sort of a good twenty yards back from him when usually I was like out driving him...

Int: Yeah

Part: On that day. So like, you can tell obviously that the wind was having a big effect on the shot and then that means...that means that I had the next shot.

Int: Ok so, I know I am asking a lot of questions which delve into the whys but why do you think it had this affect? Because obviously it had affected you in some way.

Part: Just because it's sort of...you get in that negative thought process aren't you like...just before your taking the shot you're not thinking about...like...how good the shot can be or what you need to do to make that shot good as all I was thinking about was oh god this is...this is a bit unfair as he has just hit a great shot and now it is absolutely pissing it down and there is wind smashing in my face so its...just sort of frustrating.

Int: Ok so, you have obviously tapped into the thoughts at this time sort of...physically how were you feeling when this was coming down?

Part: I was alright to be fair as I had my waterproofs on but in terms of...like...the club...the club was a little bit wetter as I could feel it and it was just like...could have done with like a caddy there to like be my umbrella...

Int: Yeah

Part: But obviously I couldn't use that.

Int: So were you feeling the sort of...you know...this sort of...this wetness as you said and the slippery on the golf club or were you conscious of that a little bit?

Part: On the grip just a little bit but then went over to my bag, gave it a little wipe and then sort of...after that you sort of get into the zone and...do it...take the swing.

Int: Ok so, why were you feeling like that do you reckon?

Part: Feeling...what like annoyed?

Int: Yeah as you said you sort of tapped into the fact that it was a little bit unjust, your thoughts were like this is unjust and it's not really going my way today...

Part: Just because...

Int: Why did you feel like that?

Part: I think just because a couple of holes before I like... had a horrible put as well like missed it and then like, as I say got onto the fifth and he hit a great shot down the middle with relatively no wind...

Int: Yeah

Part: And then, that's when it starts to happen like...I just thought...oh god it's not going to be my day sort of...I think I was two down at that point or maybe one down I don't know.

Int: Yeah

Part: And then so I was like one down, he has hit a great shot and put the pressure on me and now...add this to the wind in your face on a big par five...

Int: Yeah

Part: And I was like...her we go again sort of thing.

Int: So would you say this critical incident affected your performance in any way?

Part: Well...on that particular hole...we ended up levelling it...drawing it so, I would probably say no because as I said like he hit that relatively good shot, I went in the semi-rough and I was pretty happy with the shot so sort of after that had happened, after me feeling unjust and stuff...

Int: Yeah

Part: I just picked up my game...not picked up my game, just played normally again.

Int: Ok so obviously it is an uncontrollable factor or incident and you mentioned that it didn't really affect your performance, why didn't it do you think?

Part: Probably because it wasn't anything to do with me or him, so like...it wasn't anything to do with me hitting a bad shot like...the first incident...I didn't like feel anything wrong with me...it was just like the feeling of like...as I said, it is not going to be my day. Just felt a little bit frustrated at the fact that he was getting an easy ride on that hole.

Int: Yeah

Part: And the like I was getting the like sort of wrong end of it and I wouldn't say it had sort of any impact upon my performance. Obviously it shortened my drive off by about 30 yards because of the wind but that's just what you sort of have to put up with.

Int: Ok so, initially when this critical incident occurred, how did you sort of initially try to cope with it?

Part: Sort of just try and maintain...like stay in my routine.

Int: Ok

Part: So like almost...at first you get that sort of like for fuck sake what is going on...

Int: Yeah

Part: This is not going to be my day and then it was sort of like...as soon as I felt that I said to myself right stop thinking about that, stop thinking about the wind, like how are you going to play, how are you going to play the shot. Right I'm going to hit a low like draw...

Int: Ok

Part: To like...to like counter the wind.

Int: So would you say you were blocking yourself off maybe from...

Part: Yeah like...

Int: Were you conscious of the elements?

Part: Yeah you are conscious of the elements obviously because you have got to be in golf but it was just that sort of...oh it's not going to be my day and then as soon as I thought that then I just thought to myself shut up, stop being an idiot in like my head. Obviously I wouldn't say this out loud, I was like oh just shut up...

Int: Yeah

Part: Just get on with it sort of thing, play your routine like you normally would, you hit good shots in the past when it has been windy so just hit another one...turned out to be like...a pretty decent shot.

Int: Ok, so a little bit of self-talk going into there...

Part: Yeah

Int: A little bit of reassurance sort of thing which is good. Do you reckon this strategy was effective?

Part: Yeah because I said like it was a good shot...

Int: Yeah

Part: And it sort of like just told me like what are you doing, why are you thinking these negative things like...thinking you know its not going to be your day is not going to have any positive effect on any shot that you are going to do for the rest of the day.

Int: Ok

Part: So that's why I was just like telling myself to stop being stupid. Like srt of shut up, don't think that, think how you are going to perform a more positive shot.

Int: So do you believe that's why you thought it worked because...

Part: Yeah, I think it's because...because I told myself to shut up...

Int: Yeah

Part: Like...that's when I was like...it sort of snapped me into like concentrating...into like concentration mode. So like, you've got yourself into that frame of mind when you're going to hit a good shot and all that so it's sort of...puts you in that positive frame of mind.

Int: Okey doke, so what was the outcome of this sort of critical incident on your...your...we will say...your round yeah this time...this time we'll say round.

Part: I wouldn't say it had that big of an outcome to be fair because...because I ended up drawing that hole. So like it would depend on the hole like...say if I hit three bad shots on that hole then due to that the wind and then lost the hole pretty badly, then that's when it would have an effect on my round. Whereas if it was one bad shot but I managed to level the hole or draw the hole, then that's when it wouldn't affect my round as much. It might affect the hole but it would affect the round.

Int: Ok, so obviously with it being rain and wind, say hypothetically you know the rain will soak in your clothes...sort of talking about the physical aspects, would you say that had an influence on the rest of your round maybe?

Part: Yeah, like it was a bit colder than it usually was because I was wearing my waterproofs it wasn't too bad and also I was just thinking it was the same conditions for him.

Int: Yeah

Part: So, like because...I didn't really mind. Obviously I would rather it be sunny and stuff but sometimes you just can't...it's not my...it's not down to me whether it rains or not so.

Int: Okey doke, ideal. So we briefly tapped upon coping strategies with the uncontrollable element of this and this situation of wind and rain.

Part: Yeah

Int: You used maybe a bit of self-talk, reassurance to get yourself through it and maybe compared yourself to the opponent which is ideally what I am looking for but, in hindsight, do you reckon you would have done anything differently? So try and...again, put yourself in the situation like you had done with the previous incident...your there, you know it starts raining. You mentioned it was...you know...relatively effective it term of the outcome because you levelled off so that's fair enough but would you do anything differently if it were to happen again? Say now, try and put yourself in your shoes.

Part: Because I was trying to hit a low draw to counter the wind, like I sort of over shot it so that's why it went into like the semi-rough a little bit...

Int: Yeah

Part: So I think that might have been because I was probably like a little bit too hyped up to hit a good shot.

Int: Ok

Part: A little bit too like...alright I need to hit a good shot now, I need to hit a good shot. So, like if I just sort of relaxed a little bit more like I would do if it wasn't as important, if I was like I don't know just...just deep breathing and stuff like that...I could have done something like that just before I take the shot.

Int: Ok, ideal. So, you mentioned obviously the rain. Did it rain for long?

Part: I think I rained for like that hole a bit hard and then just sort of drizzled a little bit for a couple of holes.

Int: Okey doke, did this affect the rest of your performance so we speak on a whole round basis now.

Part: No...I would say not really...what the rain? Not really like, probably affected my performance a little bit...probably also affected his performance. It's like...wasn't that but...because it was the same for both of us...like...you just sort of get on with and deal with it.

Int: Ok, so at this particular point you are facing the rain and the wind which is obviously an uncontrollable demand, there is nothing you can do about it so it happens...it happens in golf. You would prefer it to be sunny but obviously it wasn't. Did this have any influence on the way you were thinking?

Part: In terms of like the technique of my shot like then yeah because the wind was in my face and a little bit off to the left....I was trying to hit a...that type of shot.

Int: Ok

Part: So like...so like I would change my technique almost and change the way I stand...and stuff like that.

Int: Ok, so a little bit of alteration to maybe your technique...

Part: Yeah

Int: That a bit...yeah that's understandable. What about to the way you were feeling? Did this change any sort of perceptions you had on the situation or the way you are going to approach the shot?

Part: Not...well yeah a little bit just because...because it is raining it is going to be a harder shot so...you almost sort of... because you know it's going to be a harder shot so you almost think to yourself right, concentrate now. It's not just that simple bob's your uncle tee shot where there is just going to be no wind, sunny and go straight down the middle...

Int: Yeah

Part: And role twenty yards, it was going to be a difficult tee shot so you sort of almost concentrating a little bit more

Int: Ok, go back to the...referring back to the coping strategies you employed on this particular hole, were you aware of these or like the other one, was it just...you know...automatic and just happened...you didn't even realise it and it wouldn't even come across your mind, you just did it at that point.

Part: I think it was just doing it at the point because...because of the way I was thinking like so negatively, and like I sort of recognised that I was thinking negatively.

Int: Yeah

Part: And then I just thought shut up, what are you thinking about...your still in the match here, you could still win this match.

Int: Yeah because it was only hole five so...

Part: Exactly so I was like...that's...it just happened automatically...like I think...if I think negatively, I would always tell myself oh come on think positive.

Int: Yeah

Part: And I would say throughout the round I would always sort of talk to myself anyway...like...like as you said self-talk and sort of think...always thinking about what you can do like right, I'm going to get...approach this ball, I'm going to do this do that.

Int: Would you say you used that alongside your imagery maybe you mentioned in the first incident. Would you use it together?

Part: Yeah, I would always talk to myself through so, say in that first critical incident I was like imaging like how that swing went.

Int: Yeah

Part: So I would be talking to myself like...as in...like oh I have overshot it there or something like that...I need to readjust this.

Int: Yeah

Part: So like, your sort of trying to make clear, concise thoughts in your mind.

Int: Ok, and obviously you're trying to help those thoughts with you talking alongside them.

Part: Yeah

Int: Ok, that's brilliant and understandable. Ok, have you practiced this before in training? Do you use self-talk in training maybe?

Part: Probably a little bit in like...say if you hit a bad shot, you just...you just sort of...it's just automatic as you would just say to yourself ah don't worry about it...

Int: Ok

Part: Like you just hit another shot because on the range it's not that big of an issue so...

Int: Ok so would you say you any reason for using or implementing this self-talk or concentration to that particular situation through the rain and the bad weather?

Part: Just because I know that thinking negatively wouldn't help my performance so like telling myself to stop...

Int: Yeah

Part: Like that's why...like I know that you're not going to hit a good shot if you're constantly thinking about like why it is raining and stuff, that's got nothing...it's got no like...it's got no reason or no like...like element to my swing or anything like that. So, I probably...I like thought it was good to be fair to use...to think positively and to tell myself to stop thinking negatively.

Int: Ideal yeah...yeah ok. You have only jotted down three critical incidences ok so we are just going to move finally onto the last one.

Part: Yeah

Int: Which as you wrote in both the diary and the notebook that was at the eleventh hole and that it says here abbreviated two shots to get out of the bunker.

Part: Yeah

Int: Ok so, would you like to elaborate more on that a bit for me? I know you have in the diary but...

Part: Well basically...at this point I was about three down...

Int: Yeah

Part: And I had just gone into...a...I think it was the right hand side of the green bunker, and he was on the green with like a pretty safe two putt as I think it might have been a 25 foot/30 foot putt so he had a chance of holing it as well but it would have been a pretty good putt I he had of holed it. So like, I was in the bunker, feeling the pressure to get up and down.

Int: Yeah

Part: Like knock it stiff and basically it was my shot first obviously and just got in the bunker, wasn't feeling great about it and then just...basically, massively fatted it in the bunker and hit the sand first...

Int: Yeah

Part: and it just...it just sort of hit the lip of the bunker and came crashing back down and I was like thinking oh for fuck sake sort of that's this hole lost, that is four down and with like seven to play or six to play I think it was.

Int: Ok

Part: So I was just...just annoyed basically.

Int: Have you encountered this before?

Part: Which...like what...as in the state of...

Int: Maybe the bunker...the incident we are talking about now. So obviously have you sort of...

Part: Yeah you would hit like a bad bunker shot from time to time, but it was more the fact that I knew I had lost the hole from that shot.

Int: Ok

Part: So like...

Int: So your initial thought sort of after this initial incident was?

Part: I have lost the hole now unless he does something really bad which is three putt, then I have lost the hole, that's me four down with seven to play which is pretty...pretty difficult. Obviously I could still do it...

Int: Yeah

Part: But, because it was one of those points in the round where I needed to sort of...needed to sort of start making birdies and stuff.

Int: Yeah. Ok, so did these thoughts have an effect on you in any way...following this incident?

Part: Yeah, I would say...like probably...probably would...you would just think negatively for the rest of the round. Like I just didn't really...have any...I don't know...like confidence in my own ability to then like perform shots because I knew I was down then and like after...it was such a poor shot as well, such a poor swing. I just didn't...sort of...I just lost confidence in the rest of the round.

Int: Okey doke, so you mentioned briefly on confidence you know...it was one shot. Did you obviously get it out of the bunker?

Part: Yeah the second shot I got out of the bunker but it wasn't a great shot again...it was like...I should have really knocked it stiff as it was about twelve foot, fourteen foot so I still had a pretty difficult put to even...to make bogey. And then he would...he then just tapped his put right next to the hole and then that's the hole over sort of thing.

Int: So, why do you think it had this effect on you as you briefly mentioned confidence?

Part: Just because I knew I had probably lost the match.

Int: Yeah

Part: So like, say if that had happened on the first hole...

Int: Yeah

Part: I know I am on...I have got seventeen holes left...

Int: Yeah

Part: So, I would probably erase that hole from my memory. I am one down now, and now I have seventeen holes to sort of erect that problem sort of thing. But because I was four down with like seven to play, I knew it was almost irreversible with the way he was playing and the way I was playing and it sort of just went oh right well I have lost all confidence in myself to win.

Int: So would you say it was sort of reverting back to its just not really going my way today and you sort of just...nipped it in the bud from there or?

Part: Yeah like...it was like it's ahhh not going to be my day but it was also like sort of my own fault because I was playing like a poor shot.

Int: Ok, so how did this...poor bunker shot, how did this make you sort of feel initially?

Part: Just...just shit like. No one likes losing...sort of it was like almost a concession of defeat right there.

Int: Yeah

Part: After that shot.

Int: Ok, sort of declaration of defeat sort of thing?

Part: Yeah

Int: Yeah I see. Ok, so...you haven't come across as relatively negative throughout this interview, so why do you reckon at this point you felt like that?

Part: Just because as I said like I am playing a better player...so I know I needed to be on the top of my game, and by not hitting shots out of the bunker, I am not playing to the best of my ability which is sort of...just pissed me off the fact that I know I can play better and I know I could on my day sort of match him and even beat him...

Int: Yeah

Part: And it was just the fact that I sort of said conceded defeat on that hole with four down and seven to play, the way he is playing, the way I am playing...it is pretty difficult to come back.

Int: So, you would say that this demand did you know...affect your performance in some way.

Part: Yeah for the rest of the round defiantly because I think we only played another three holes I think, it was just as I said lost confidence so every shot was a little bit more difficult...

Int: Yeah

Part: And I was sort of hacking it around then, making the odd par and then the game was over. I just thought that was the...as I said the main incident to why I lost the round.

Int: Ok so, being as bigger incident as it was, which you know you admitted defeat, you say you thought relatively negatively from then on and throughout the round, would you have made an attempt to cope with it do you think?

Part: Well like I should have looked at it completely different to the way I did. As I said before like, I sort of almost conceded defeat.

Int: Yeah

Part: Whereas that was not the right attitude to take what so ever...I should have just been like...right, erase that from your memory, what do I do now, what do I need to do, I need to knock this stiff...sort of, sort of make myself regain that confidence somehow for hitting good shots and because I was thinking negatively, it doesn't...it is not going to make me hit good shots.

Int: Yeah ok I understand that. So, strategy...do you reckon this was relatively effective or not at all?

Part: Well...I didn't really sort of...didn't really have a strategy for that hole, it was just like...it was just negative thinking.

Int: Ok

Part: and like, the concession of defeat made me lose confidence on that...

Int: Ok, that is fair enough. So, would the negative defeat in confidence, did you act in any particular way after it happened? Were you sort of acting which maybe showed signs of coping with it or?

Part: Well, you try your best to erase it from your memory and stuff but, like its difficult. It's difficult because...I was just so annoyed at myself and like it's always going to be in the back of your mind. I was like shouting and swearing at myself like to why I have just hit that shit shot.

Int: Ok

Part: It was just so frustrating to like...I wouldn't usually do that...to be fair like I am not a bad golfer as I play off four so...

Int: Yeah

Part: It's not something I usually do and to do it in a competitive situation where I am playing against a better opponent it's like the last place I would want it to happen.

Int: Ok so, obviously you previously mentioned that it affected the rest of your round...

Part: Yeah

Int: Ok So, you know that's seven...seven more holes to play so that's quite a substantial amount of time you know playing whilst this incident has affected you so, why do you reckon that happened?

Part: Just because as I said like...it was just such a critical incident...as in I am three down...I have only got seven holes...six sorry. Six holes to play after the eleventh and then...

Int: So sort of, hypothetically on the edge and then and that just tipped you over sort of thing?

Part: Yeah it was just frustrating.

Int: Ok, was the outcome of this incident? You mentioned briefly that you lost...

Part: Lost the hole...

Int: Lost the hole. Would you say you lost the round on that incident alone?

Part: Yeah, I lost my head a little bit after that. As I said, I hacked it around a bit for the remaining three holes because it is match play so we didn't play the whole eighteen as I lost. Yeah, I hacked it around for the next three holes, just had a sort of negative mind process and thought process as well throughout the next three holes as well like thinking, why have I just hit that awful shot.

Int: Ok, yeah, yeah I understand, I understand. So, in hindsight, would you have done anything differently? You previously mentioned that you would and it was the wrong way to go about it. What would you have adopted instead?

Part: Just sort of...take that approach of...take a step back and view the incident...so like...as I said, I have hit a bad shot like still in the bunker...I should of just stepped out of the bunker and like completely erased it from my mind.

Int: Yeah

Part: And then just thought what do I do now...be positive...like almost regain my confidence like...just sort of erase it like...because on the golf course you have not time to like...you have got to hit another shot.

Part: Yeah

Int: So there is no time to like ponder or like be annoyed at yourself to...you need to be in that positive frame of mind to hit that shot to the best of your ability but as I said like, I hit that second shot out of the bunker like about twelve feet, which probably put no pressure on him whatsoever with the putt. Whereas if I had stiffed it, then he might have had pressure on that so may have three putted it.

Part: Ideal. Ok, I completely understand. So you sort of...if you take yourself back, a couple of deep breaths you know...well maybe not deep breaths at all but if you take yourself back to the situation just take more time with it?

Part: Yeah

Int: It sounds a bit like you rushed it.

Part: Yeah

Int: Maybe

Part: Rushed the second shot just because I was so annoyed at myself. I wanted to erect the problem as soon as I could. Whereas I should have just taken a step back...just sort of took a massive deep breath or just a sigh...

Int: Yeah

Part: And then should have been like right, what can I do from here to play the next shot as best as I can sort of thing.

Int: Yeah ok, just to summarise, obviously that coping strategy and you know this interview as well in general, at this point in the event you know at this demand you were thinking when you were sort of swearing and you were coping with it sort of in that way. Were you, you know...what is the word I was looking for...did you know you were doing it? When you were sort of demanding shouting?

Part: Yeah, I knew for a fact that I was thinking negatively because...like I think at the time the correct term I used was actually oh for fuck sake.

Int: Yeah

Part: Like in the bunker, my opponent could hear this. So like, obviously I know I am doing it if I am like shouting those words so like in my head even like sort of...more obscene words were going on in my head. Sort of, why the hell am I doing this blah blah blah. You just sort of shouting at yourself in your head like.

Int: With the whole...with that hole in respect of sort of searing, did you regret it and think oh, I shouldn't of said that or do you think of your opponent or?

Part: Nah it is just like golf etiquette and you're not supposed to...you're not supposed to just swear on the golf course or shout out loud or like sort of make...as I said before I reckon it made the opponent feel like he has won the game.

Int: Yeah

Part: So that annoyed me at the time like, me just sort of that swearing...me swearing out loud sort of conceded defeat in my eyes and admitting victory sort of thing.

Int: Ok

Part: So it just annoyed me.

Int: Ok, would you have any reason for using that strategy in that situation?

Part: What like swearing? Well, just because it got to me so much...

Int: The circumstance or maybe the stage in the round as well.

Part: Yeah the stage of the round defiantly because it was so...I was three down at the eleventh hole.

Int: Ok

Part: And then I knew I needed to start making a comeback but because I had not made the comeback at all, like messed it up even more.

Int: Ok

Part: Like, that's why it annoyed me so much and that is why I sort of started shouting and ranting at myself.

Int: Brilliant. Ok that is perfect so, finally just to summarise the whole of this interview, during the round you mentioned several demands. Ok so, take into aspect the bad weather...

Part: Yeah

Int: The bunker shot and also the poor tee shot all together, did you regard each demand as separate or as they repeat themselves and relate themselves to each other in any way do you reckon?

Part: I would say they are completely separate to be honest because...because like after the first hole I said after that sort of critical incident of like playing that bad shot, it had almost gone from my mind by the second hole so I wasn't thinking of the first hole whatsoever when I got to the fifth.

Int: Yeah

Part: And then, because I coped with the rain pretty well as in I have hit a good shot and pared that hole, drewed the hole, I wasn't thinking of that even on the sixth hole, let alone the eleventh.

Int: Ok so, what is your reason for doing this sort of process?

Part: I don't know, it is just sort of as I said before it is just that shot by shot approach. Sort of almost trying to erase the memory of the previous shot so that you can just concentrate straight on the next shot you have got.

Int: Ok

Part: Because there is nothing you can about the fifth hole when you are standing on the sixth.

Int: Ok brilliant. Well, firstly I would like to thank you for your participation.

Part: No worries.

Int: And just a quick conclusion of the interview. How do you reckon it went?

Part: Yeah, I was pretty happy with it.

Int: Yeah?

Part: Yeah

Int: Good, good, good. Any feedback you would like to give me at this point to maybe help my interview mannerisms used or the structure of it?

Part: No, it was good. I was happy with the way it went to be fair.

Int: Ok, would you say it was a bit repetitive in the way you were sort of going back to the same sort of questions in respect to the coping strategies?

Part: Yeah it was probably a bit like repetitive in terms of the three strategies but you have to get as much detail as you can so.

Int: Ok, ok. Do you feel you were able to express yourself effectively throughout that? Yeah?

Part: Yeah, I pretty much said all I needed to say about each incident I think.

Int: And is there anything you would like to add at this particular point?

Part: No not really.

Int: No? Well as I said, thank you very much for your participation.

Part: Thank you. No worries.

Int: And I will be speaking to you soon.

Part: Ok

Int: Alright

APPENDIX E – RAW DATA EXAMPLE

STRESSOR	APPRAISAL	EMOTION	COPING STRATEGIES
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Performance ambiguity - Pressure on own performance - Repeating the same mistake - Not in a good position to make a good score - Competing against top quality performers - Tough league so high standard of opponents - Recognising the opponents presence - Distracting behaviour by opponent - Pressure applied by opponent - Too much focus on routine - Visualising a poor start - Swing wasn't feeling too great - Hooked ball - Fatted ball - Thinking of a previous mistake - Wasn't feeling too great - Wind - Rain 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Positive thoughts/feelings helped performance - Erase experience from memory - Rushed and made a mistake - Needed help 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Relief - Belief - Worry - Hoping - High expectations of self - Knew could perform better - Unfair advantage - Day ruined - Accepted defeat - Loss of confidence (2) - Could not be bothered - Tipped over the edge - Annoyed - Anger (2) - Frustrated - Cold - Felt unjust - Gritted my teeth 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - One shot at a time - Technical adjustments (2) - New shots - Normal preparation routine - Weather protection - Imagery (2) - Self-talk (2) - Increased concentration - Accepted mistakes - Breathing techniques - Aggressive language - Avoiding opponent - Blocking