

**Cardiff School of Sport**  
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Comments	Section
	<p><b>Title and Abstract</b></p> <p>Title to include: A concise indication of the research question/problem.            Abstract to include: A concise summary of the empirical study undertaken.</p>
	<p><b>Introduction and literature review</b></p> <p>To include: outline of context (theoretical/conceptual/applied) for the question; analysis of findings of previous related research including gaps in the literature and relevant contributions; logical flow to, and clear presentation of the research problem/ question; an indication of any research expectations, (i.e., hypotheses if applicable).</p>
	<p><b>Methods and Research Design</b></p> <p>To include: details of the research design and justification for the methods applied; participant details; comprehensive replicable protocol.</p>
	<p><b>Results and Analysis <sup>2</sup></b></p> <p>To include: description and justification of data treatment/ data analysis procedures; appropriate presentation of analysed data within text and in tables or figures; description of critical findings.</p>
	<p><b>Discussion and Conclusions <sup>2</sup></b></p> <p>To include: collation of information and ideas and evaluation of those ideas relative to the extant literature/concept/theory and research question/problem; adoption of a personal position on the study by linking and combining different elements of the data reported; discussion of the real-life impact of your research findings for coaches and/or practitioners (i.e. practical implications); discussion of the limitations and a critical reflection of the approach/process adopted; and indication of potential improvements and future developments building on the study; and a conclusion which summarises the relationship between the research question and the major findings.</p>
	<p><b>Presentation</b></p> <p>To include: academic writing style; depth, scope and accuracy of referencing in the text and final reference list; clarity in organisation, formatting and visual presentation</p>

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**Prifysgol Fetropolitan Caerdydd**

**CARDIFF SCHOOL OF SPORT**

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**(Dissertation submitted under the discipline of Sport  
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AN EXAMINATION OF THE IMPACT OF REFLECTIVE  
PRACTICE ON FIELD HOCKEY UMPIRES

# Cardiff Metropolitan University

## Prifysgol Fetropolitan Caerdydd

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## **Abstract**

Reflective practice is a concept which affords a host of benefits to those who engage with it, including: improved confidence, self-awareness, and the development of professional knowledge (Cropley, Miles, Hanton, and Niven, 2007). However, practitioners have previously encountered problems with the time commitment required, together with how best to engage with the process (Cropley, Miles, and Peel, 2012). Consequently, this study aimed to explore the potential impact of reflective practice on field hockey umpires, and move toward recommendations as to whether to include reflection as part of their training and development programmes. Two participants were recruited using purposive sampling, each reflected on six consecutive umpiring performances, and were practically assessed before and after engaging with the process. On the second assessment, each participant showed visual signs of improvement in their umpiring after engaging with reflective practice. Following this each participant was interviewed using a semi-structured interview guide, and the resulting data was subject to inductive and deductive content analysis. Whilst both participants could clearly see the merit in engaging with reflective practice, only one reaped the benefits in the ways expected following the literature review. Time constraints and a close-minded approach to reflective practice were cited as the main reasons for the indifferent experience reported by the second participant. Furthermore, both participants expressed a desire for an increased level of support whilst engaging in a study of this type. Following this study, it is feasible to suggest that reflective practice should be implemented into an umpire's training; however it is important to consider the lifestyles of participants, together with the support needs before commencing a study of this type.

## **CHAPTER ONE**

### **INTRODUCTION**

## **1.0 Introduction**

It is widely accepted that sports officiating is an extremely challenging role, the specific demands of which may change according to the type of official (MacMahon and Mildenhall, 2012). Regardless of these varying demands, a common challenge remains; the requirement to process incomplete, intentionally deceptive information under extreme time constraints. Over recent years, an ever-growing amount of research has allowed us to understand how officials perform their role so effectively. Furthermore, this research has also yielded evidence identifying factors which influence decision making, with these factors often discussed as negatives (Plessner and Haar, 2006). Whilst this literature is useful for those who wish to understand the decision making process sports officials go through, it does little to aid those officials who wish to improve their practice. Indeed, researchers have often highlighted that the perceptual – cognitive tasks in officiating results in demands that surpass human information processing limits (Ste-Marie, 2003; MacMahon, Starkes, and Deakin, 2007).

Despite the incredible difficulties continually faced by sports officials, there is precious little current research focussing on how to improve their training, and consequently their performance. The work of Titlebaum, Haberlin and Titlebaum (2009) commented on a 2001 report by the Canadian National Association of Sports Officials (NASO), which found that soccer and field hockey were struggling to find officials, and that there is likely to be a shortage in near future. Despite this, the literature primarily focussed on how to recruit and retain officials, rather than improving their training, which may have a more positive impact on retention. Given that field hockey officiating is an extremely challenging role (International Hockey

Federation, 2005), which is vulnerable to the problems highlighted by Ste-Marie (2003) and MacMahon *et al.* (2007), it was deemed appropriate to explore ways in which support and training can be offered to officials in this sport, given the lack of available literature on the topic.

Reflective practice is one such way which support can be given to help improve oneself (Cropley, Hanton, Miles and Niven, 2010). This is a concept which has gained increased credence in recent literature, reporting benefits such as increased confidence, self-awareness, and an increase in overall professionalism (Cropley *et al.*, 2010; Cropley and Hanton, 2011). However, it is important to remember that there are barriers to reflective practice, which include how to actually “do” reflection, what we should reflect on, together with finding the time to engage with the concept in a meaningful manner (Anderson, Knowles, and Gilbourne, 2004). It is suggested that by engaging with reflective practice we are able to extract knowledge embedded within our experiences, allowing us analyse it, maintain our strengths, and improve our weaknesses (Anderson *et al.*, 2004). As a result of the potential value that reflective practice has on performance, and the need for field hockey umpires to learn how to better cope with the demands of their position, research needs to consider the context specific value of reflective practice in action. Specifically, an examination of whether reflection can impact on the performance of field hockey umpires would give a valuable insight into how they may be better trained and developed. Indeed, such research has the potential to yield an in-depth understanding of (a) how reflective practice can be used to improve the effectiveness of field hockey umpires; (b) whether reflective practice should be introduced as part

of an umpire's continual learning process; and (c) how best to manage a reflective intervention program of this type.

## **CHAPTER TWO**

### **A REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE**

## **2.0 A Review of the Literature**

Since its inception, reflective practice is a concept which has encountered a lengthy, disputed history in academic literature. Knowles and Gilbourne (2010) suggested the literature has promoted a thorough understanding of what reflective practice is, however the vast majority of available literature indicates a more ambiguous field. Despite having its roots in ancient Greece; it was not until the turn of the twentieth century that any real efforts were made to understand it. It was at this time that reflective practice was introduced to psychology and pedagogy (Dewey, 1933), which “set the wheels in motion” for its eventual introduction to sport. There is a vast amount of literature discussing the role reflective practice plays in sport and sport coaching, however it is also an important part of several other fields. These include (but are not limited to) nursing, medicine, and education, each of which now place incredibly high value on reflective practice (Cloes and Mouton, 2012). As Schon (1983); and Boud, Keogh and Walker (1985) noted, reflective practice was first introduced to the general education literature, and is now also considered an essential attribute of health care professionals who wish to continually develop themselves. The field of education is one which has reaped the rewards of reflective practice in recent years. Beyer (1971) noted that teacher training courses which were traditionally based on “regular knowledge” were insufficient, and devoid of turning teachers into independent and high quality professionals. This led Wallace (1991) to suggest incorporating reflective practice into their training programme to discover the trainee’s insights and what they bring to the development process. Reflective practice in this field should not just be undertaken by educators, students can also reap the benefits. As Gagatsis and Patronis (1990) noted, mathematics students require engagement in conscious reflection on their own mental processes

and structures. The high level of importance of this conscious reflection was later recognised by Krulik and Rudnick (1994) who suggested that a structured, written, and verbal means of reflection should be used to aid problem solving and decision making, both key weapons in the mathematical armoury.

Given that education is a highly complex field which is driven by decision making (Thorburn and Collins, 2003), the need for reflective practice to play a significant role in this field is highly apparent. The field of sport coaching is also highly complex and driven by decision making, and so researchers in recent years have acknowledged that reflective practice can also play a vital role in developing sport coaches (for example, Knowles, Gilbourne, Borrie and Nevill, 2001; Carson, 2008; Nash and Sproule, 2011). The reflective practice literature strongly emphasizes the development of learning from experience (Hanton, Cropley and Lee, 2009). In doing so, Ghaye and Ghaye (1998) suggested it empowers individuals to become more self-aware and implement change. Indeed, Knowles, Borrie and Telfer (2005) noted that becoming more self-aware is at the heart of sport coaching. This requires a high cognitive skill level, which in turn poses the question of how coaches are supposed to develop such a skill. Fortunately, as Knowles *et al.* (2005) stated, the literature provides an answer to this problem. Coaching is a “learned trade” which is a notion supported in a vast amount of studies. However, Salmela (1995) suggested that coaching expertise cannot be created solely by completing formal coach education courses, instead requiring coaches to cognitively engage with their own practice in order to learn and develop. This links nicely with the requirements of reflective practice, given that practitioners are required to engage with the same cognitive process in order to reap the benefits of engaging with the process.

Nash and Sproule (2011) acknowledged the need for the way in which sport coaches develop through the coaching continuum and progress from novice to expert level to be studied in more detail. Previous literature suggests that coaching knowledge is accumulated in a linear fashion; however there is no guarantee that novice coaches sufficiently develop their coaching ability simply through gaining practical experience. Similarly, attending coach education courses will rarely improve the overall effectiveness of a coach (Abraham and Collins, 1998; Trudel and Gilbert, 2006; Ollis and Sproule, 2007 Nash and Sproule, 2009). The United Kingdom Coaching Certificate (UKCC) is currently being endorsed across a wide range of sports, and it is anticipated this will become a mandatory requirement for anyone wishing to coach in the United Kingdom. Claims have been made that attending these courses have improved coaching efficacy, however these were based on coaches' subjective belief in their own ability, rather than objective criteria (Malete and Feltz, 2000). This placebo effect may be enhanced by the fact that all coaches are completing the same course and therefore may believe they are improving their effectiveness as a coach; however there is precious little within this course to encourage coaches to improve their self-awareness, and enhance their understanding of the relationship with their players. Given that Collins, Brown, and Holum (1991) argued that expert practice relies on the integration of cognitive strategies it is apparent that knowledge gained through either through experience or from external sources, is not enough to develop as a coach.

A study by Cropley, Neil, Wilson, and Faull (2011) involved a reflective practice intervention with two male coaches, which aimed to encourage the coaches to improve their self-awareness and improve their understanding of the coach-athlete relationship. Through participating in this study, it was found that both the coaches and athletes recognised that the coaching environment changed in an extremely positive manner, with the coaches becoming more approachable and the players feeling more responsible for their actions, therefore enhancing team cohesion. It is important to note that these findings are not unique, as Cropley *et al.* (2010) suggested, reflective practice has the capacity to generate knowledge about ourselves which wouldn't necessarily be available through more traditional methods. Reflective practice can be a tool for solving a problem in the aforementioned UKCC coach education courses; that it can prove difficult to apply theory to practice. Anderson *et al.* (2004) proposed that reflective practice can aid practitioners (in this context the sport coaches) in making sense of complex situations by creating a link between theory and practice, thus raising knowledge in action into consciousness. This is particularly important to sport coaches as attempting to simply apply theory to practice is unlikely to achieve successful results (Anderson, 2005). A second example of a successful reflective practice intervention comes from Carson (2008). Nineteen coaches were filmed during practice, in order for them to watch it back upon completion and complete a written report detailing his / her observations and reflections. It is important to highlight the importance of the reflections being written down, as they are more powerful when committed to paper (Cropley *et al.*, 2011). The coaches reported that this type of intervention helped them to improve their performance. A key finding of this study, which is shared by Cropley *et al.* (2010), is that further understanding of how to engage in reflective practice is needed for a

more detailed analysis to be achieved. Before asking coaches to engage in the process, it is important to educate them on how best to do so. Failure to do so reduces the likelihood of reflection having a beneficial impact.

Given that reflective practice plays such a key role in numerous fields, another common issue is how one should engage in the process. The most commonly cited influence in this matter derives from the work of Schon (1983; 1987), which continues to have a significant impact in education and related fields to this day (Erlandson, 2005; Kinsella, 2007). Since the initial publication of the work by Schon (1983), a vast number of reflective models have been published in an attempt to provide clarity to this “important human activity” (Boud *et al.*, 1985, p.19). These include models by Kolb (1984), Boud *et al.* (1985) and Gibbs (1988). Despite the vast amount of existing literature on reflective practice, educators and researchers alike have continually found it difficult to agree on a definition for reflective practice. Russell (2005) noted that when the term reflective practice is used, the initial thought is one of simply thinking back over past events. While this may be a valuable starting point, it does not offer any understanding of how one should attempt to do this, which may present difficulty for the neophyte reflective practitioner. The models of reflection mentioned above are incredibly useful for assisting how one would undertake reflection, however it is also argued that it is insufficient for practitioners to simply learn one of these and apply it to practice (Anderson, *et al.*, 2004). To get the most out of reflection, practitioners should instead draw on a knowledge-in-action approach, which Schon (1987) argued is both spontaneous and tacit. This rings true with the earlier work of Schon (1983), where he described reflection in action, which occurs when a surprise appears upon attempting a task. This would then provoke a

spontaneous response, drawing on our tacit knowledge to immediately make sense of the situation. As noted by Gilbert and Trudel (2001), this style of reflection isn't completely straightforward as reflection in action is confined by the temporal limits of the dilemma. In contrast to this approach, Schon also proposed reflection-on-action, which is focussed on reflecting following completion of a task, rather than during it (Jung, 2012). This may suit neophyte practitioners as they may be able to benefit from the additional time yielded from this method, improving the quality and quantity of the information recalled.

Whilst reflective practice has indeed become more prominent over recent years, it is important to remember that barriers still remain to implementing it successfully. It is often implemented without due care and attention being given to a range of factors, including how to engage with the process; what we should actually be reflecting on; and the time it takes to engage in a meaningful manner (Cropley and Hanton, 2011). As a result, the benefits reported in other fields may not be gained within the sporting domain due to a lack of understanding of the process. Andrews, Gidman, and Humphreys (1998) noted that reflective practice is recognised as a highly skilled activity, and these skills may at times be taken for granted, with participants assuming they are engaging with reflective practice simply by thinking over past events. Indeed, Cropley *et al.* (2012) noted that a common misconception of reflective practice is simply contemplating a past event. In order to fully reap the benefits of reflective practice, a participant must engage in a process which results in the release of knowledge embedded within the experience itself (Hanton, Cropley, Neil, Mellaliu and Miles, 2007). Once it has been established how one should engage with reflective practice, a further key area to understand is what we should

be reflecting on. Traditionally, reflective practice is deemed to be initiated when one experiences a poor experience, or a problem associated with their practice (Dewey, 1933; Boyd and Fales, 1983). However, this view implies that learning only occurs when we experience something which we consider to be negative. More recent research strongly disputes this, it is now deemed more beneficial for reflective practice to be instigated no matter whether the experience was a positive or negative one (Shephard, 2006; Ghaye, Melander-Wikman, Kisare, Chambers, Bergmark, Kostenius, and Lillyman, 2008). The reason for this is that neophytes and experienced reflective practitioners alike must learn from all events, both positive and negative. This allows the aspects contributing the positive events to be maintained and built upon, and the aspects contributing to negative events to be understood and changed in the future (Cropley *et al.*, 2010).

A further barrier which exists to engaging effectively with reflective practice is the time it takes to do so. Given that asking the right reflective questions at the right time is a highly skilled activity (Ghaye, 2009), and that a great deal of value is held in recording events and experiences in written form (Knowles and Telfer, 2009), temporal concerns are raised. As a result of the large amount of time it takes to effectively reflect on our practice, it is noted that we may be in danger of referring to reflective practice as something which needs to be done, rather than someone which we actively want to do (Cropley and Hanton, 2011). Therefore, it is possible that a lack of motivation may ensue, if the participant engaging with reflective practice does not have the time available to fully reap the widely reported benefits. This is not a particularly new concept, for example Driscoll and Teh (2001) noted that nurses tended to reflect more superficially (that is “ponder and contemplate” their

experiences), as a result of the temporal constraints placed on them by the nature of their role. Unfortunately this was not an independent problem, research with probation officers found that due to the amount of professional practice required of them, the time available to engage with reflective practice was limited (Goldhill, 2010).

Gilbert and Trudel (2001) described the sport coaching environment as one which places a high priority on flexible procedures, differentiated responses, and a qualitative appreciation of complex processes. Given that the work of Schon (1983; 1987) argued that reflection is most likely to be found in an environment with these characteristics, it is unsurprising that researchers continually advocate the use of reflective practice in sport coaching. As Galvan, Fyall and Culpan (2012) found, coaches are seeing a need to increase their coaching knowledge base, and to do this, they need to move beyond the traditional coach education models which emphasize technical and tactical skill development. This is not a major revelation given that the field of coaching is widely regarded as complex and ambiguous, and one which rationalistic coaching education programmes are insufficient as a sole means of learning (Knowles *et al.*, 2001; Carson, 2008; Nash and Sproule, 2011). These studies also highlight that sport coaching is a field driven by decision making, often in a split second and with biased information, thus creating the need for reflective practice. These characteristics are shared by sports officiating, together with the need to develop a positive relationship with players being officiated. It can therefore be suggested that officials learn by doing, which therefore provides a rationale for the use of reflective practice within this field. It is important to note that literature does exist on the subject of officiating in sport, however these tend to

centre around the challenging nature of the role, and reflecting on how and why errors are made from an extrinsic point of view (Anderson and Pierce, 2009; Berman, 2011; MacMahon and Mildenhall, 2012). Given that a key factor in determining whether an official will be successful is their level of tacit knowledge, (MacMahon and Mildenhall, 2012), which ties in with Schon's (1983) views on reflection, it would be viable to investigate whether reflective practice can be used effectively to benefit this challenging role.

Field hockey officiating is undoubtedly a highly challenging role (International Hockey Federation, 2005). Recent rule changes have transformed the sport into one of increasing pace and incredible skill (International Hockey Federation 2005; Tromp and Holmes, 2011). As a result, physical and mental demands on players and umpires alike have increased, and it is essential that umpires adopt the same thorough preparation as the players, as in a game of such pace and skill; mistakes are easy to make (International Hockey Federation, 2005). A previous study has been conducted on field hockey umpires (Sunderland, Taylor, Pearce and Spice, 2011), however this focused entirely on the activity profile of male international umpires. The results of this study found that the work rate did not differ between the first and second half of matches, and neither did the perceived performance, however the study did conclude that training and testing procedures should be updated to reflect the specific role of the field hockey umpire. Whilst it has been established that fitness programmes should be used to ensure that officials are physically capable of undertaking their role, to date no research has been undertaken with the view of supporting an umpire's tactical and technical ability. As a

result, the purpose of this study is to engage a group of active field hockey umpires in reflective practice, and evaluate the impact in order to ascertain whether reflective practice should be introduced as part of an umpire's training.

The overall aims of this study were therefore three fold; (a) to explore the positive and negative effects reflective practice could have on field hockey umpires; (b) to explore whether these effects are consistent with the current state of knowledge; and (c) to move toward a recommendation as to whether reflective practice should be introduced into the training of sports officials, specifically field hockey umpires.

## **CHAPTER THREE**

### **METHODOLOGY**

### **3.0 Methodology**

Patton (2002) recommended that the methodology should be dictated by the aims of the study, which resulted in a qualitative approach being adopted, and three types of data being collected. These were interviews, to yield in-depth responses about the participants' experiences; observations of the participants' umpiring performances; and documents, specifically, reflective documents to be completed by the participants. The interviews formed a key component of the study as Patton (2002) noted that the qualitative researcher talks with people about their experiences and perceptions.

### **3.1 Participants**

This study involved two participants [ $n = 2$ ], each of whom had to have possessed a minimum of two years umpiring experience at the beginning of the process. The reason for this criterion was an attempt to reduce the risk of the results being invalidated by a lack of experience. Each of two participants were active members of the West of England umpiring panel, in order to ensure ease of access when meetings were required. There were no criteria relating to age, sex or race, as active membership of the West of England umpiring panel was considered adequate qualification for participation in this study. The two participants were randomly selected using purposive sampling (Patton, 2002) to ensure they met the pre-defined criteria. A number generator was used to select two participants at random from the active members of the West of England umpiring panel. This random selection also ensured there could be no bias when selecting participants for the study.

### **3.2 Procedure**

Upon obtaining School Ethical Approval, the two participants were contacted by e-mail to ascertain whether they were interested in the nature of the study and would like to take part. Two participants were considered adequate due to the nature of the study, and the temporal issues anticipated in the case of more participants being recruited. Also included in this initial e-mail was a participant information sheet (Appendix A), which gave further information about the study, including the aims of the research, their role as a participant, and the benefits of partaking in this study. This was necessary in order to allow the participants to make an informed decision on whether they would like to take part. After they had agreed to their participation, they were then requested to complete an informed consent form (Appendix B), which outlined their rights whilst partaking in the study. Perhaps the most important point, and one which was stressed to each of the participants at every stage of this study, was the voluntary nature of their participation, and that they were free to withdraw at any time, without giving a reason.

Once all the necessary paperwork was complete, the participants were observed during a randomly selected league fixture. It was stressed that this was not an assessment, rather an opportunity to gain an understanding of their current capabilities. The researcher's three years' experience of officiating junior international fixtures was considered sufficient qualification to allow these observations to take place. Handwritten notes were made at the point of observation, which were then transcribed and securely stored, to provide a means of comparison for the second observation. In order to ensure the validity of this data, the transcribed notes were made available to the participant to whom they related to, and both confirmed they were an accurate representation of their performance.

The two participants then began a six week period of reflective practice. They were asked to umpire their league games as they normally would, and following each game they engaged in the reflective cycle created by Gibbs (1988) (see Appendix C). This model was chosen on the assumption that the participants would be neophytes in terms of reflective practice, as each stage is very easy to understand, the participants were simply requested to answer each of the six questions upon completion of their match. The reflective data was collected on a weekly basis by e-mail, and was only made available to the researcher and the research supervisor. Following the recommendations of Lee, Matthews, Cucina, and Tritschler (2011), care was taken to ensure the reflective documents were not over complicated, to ensure consistent data collection. These were securely stored along with the transcribed notes from earlier in the study for analysis at a later date. Following the six week period of reflection, the participants were then observed for a second time. The reason for this was to ascertain whether any visible improvements could be noticed as a result of participating in this study.

The final stage of this study was to interview the participants. Interviews were chosen as the method of extracting information from the participants as the study was based on their own personal experiences, interviewing them face-to-face resulted in a higher data yield than one would expect from questionnaires or a focus group. A further reason this method was chosen, as noted by Klien (2012) is that interviews are the foundation of research which seeks to explore people's experience and self-understanding, which ties in perfectly with reflective practice. They are deliberate, informed conversations in which the researcher attempts to understand how the participants create meaning from their own experiences (Patton, 2002). In

context, this was used to understand how the reflective process impacted on their umpiring from an intrinsic point of view. The interviews with the participants were each conducted by the same researcher using a Digital Voice Recorder and transcribed verbatim, (see Appendix E for an example) each interview lasting between 35 and 39 minutes. The transcripts were comprehensively read by the researcher on multiple occasions to ensure complete cohesion with the data.

### **3.3 Interview Guide**

An interview guide (see Appendix D) was developed to allow the researcher to fully explore the participants' experiences throughout the course of the study, and to focus on the issues arising when implementing reflective practice with field hockey umpires. In line with the recommendations of Patton (2002), the interviews were semi-structured, and contained a standard set of questions, but ones which allowed the interviewer to probe further into certain areas where necessary. The interviewer therefore remained free to build a conversation within a particular subject area of interest (Patton, 2002). Also noted by Patton (2002), the reason we interview participants is to find out things that we cannot directly observe; that is thoughts, feelings and intentions.

The interviews consisted of six sections. The first section contained questions about the pre-intervention stage, which was designed to explore any previous experience the participant may have had with reflective practice, and their thoughts and feelings after they had consented to take part, for example: "*What were your initial thoughts and feelings after you had consented to take part in this study on reflective practice?*". Section two contained questions which related to the participants'

experience as they moved through the six week reflective block, for example: *“Did the fact you knew you were engaging with reflective practice alter your preparations for the games in any way?”*. This section sought to explore the changing thoughts and feelings of the participants as they moved through the process. The third section was concerned with the effect reflective practice had on the participants as an umpire, and contained questions such as *“Has engaging with reflective practice had any negative effects on your umpiring?”*. The aim of this section was to build an understanding of how reflective practice had effected their umpiring; regardless of whether this was a positive or negative impact. Section four contained questions relating to the participants’ post intervention experience, such as: *“Now you have completed your six week reflective cycle, what are your feelings about reflective practice?”*. This section sought to gain an understanding of what engaging in this process had done for their opinions of reflective practice, as well as whether they believe it is something worth continuing with. The penultimate section contained questions on reflective practice as a whole concept, and sought to explore how the participants’ felt the process had been managed, and whether they would change anything about the process if they were to do it again, for example: *“If you were to undertake this study again, what would you change about the process?”*. The final section concluded the interview and contained questions which encouraged the participants to express their thoughts and feelings relating to the interview, and also to indicate any interviewer bias.

### **3.4 Data Analysis**

The analysis of qualitative data can prove to be quite an ambiguous field, as fairly often researchers do not make clear how they have undertaken the process, a point also noted by Gratton and Jones (2010). Whilst this may be the case, qualitative data analysis often produces more detailed findings, together with the possibility for discovering the unexpected (Gratton and Jones, 2010). A key difference from quantitative data analysis is that it does not assume real life is able to be measured by facts and figures, rather by gaining an understanding of personal experience. Given the largely exploratory nature of the research, a combination of inductive and deductive content analysis procedures were adopted to analyse the data. The interviews were conducted by the same researcher, and the transcripts comprehensively read on multiple occasions to ensure complete cohesion with the data. Following this, the data was deductively analysed, using existing themes in the literature, allowing the data to be categorised. Any data which could not be categorised in this way was highlighted for inductive analysis, and placed in meaningful clusters (Patton, 2002). Finally, the transcripts were comprehensively analysed again using both deductive and inductive themes, to ensure that key information had not been overlooked.

### **3.5 Trustworthiness**

The work of Lincoln and Guba (1985) noted that the quality of qualitative research depends on its trustworthiness, which is judged on four set criteria. These are credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability. In order to meet these criteria throughout the process, a number of requirements were put in place. To ensure credibility, member checking was used, asking the participants to check the transcript which related to them, ensuring they were a valid representation of their thoughts and feelings. Secondly, in an attempt to ensure transferability, raw quotes taken directly from the interviews were used in the results and discussion chapters. For consistency of findings (dependability) to be achieved, a semi-structured interview was devised, and both interviews were conducted, and transcribed by the same researcher, thus reducing operator bias. Finally, in order to ensure confirmability, all findings from this study can be specifically traced back to the raw data.

## **CHAPTER FOUR**

### **RESULTS**

## **4.0 Results**

### **4.1 Introduction to Results**

In terms of benefits of engaging with reflective practice, several key themes emerged from the data analysis procedures adopted in this study. These were: (a) differing levels of motivation to engage fully in the process; (b) an appreciation of using a structured approach to facilitate reflection; and (c) the need to prepare consistently for umpiring appointments. Themes associated with negative effects were: (a) the time consuming nature of the process; (b) the requirement to commit everything to paper; and (c) the need to be completely honest with oneself. This section utilizes raw quotes from the participants in order to help the reader empathise with the participants' experiences (cf. Cropley *et al.*, 2010).

### **4.2 Motives to Engage in Reflective Practice**

Participant 1 continually lavished praise on the process he had gone through, and what it had done for his umpiring. On the other hand, participant 2 did not enjoy the process as much, and consequently did not reap the benefits of reflective practice in the same way as participant 1. This seemed to stem from a dislike of reflective practice, as she had previously undertaken a taught module as part of her degree pathway, which had a negative effect on her feelings towards the study from the outset – “no, I think it gave me a negative look on reflection” (her previous experience with reflective practice). Participant 1, however, had no previous knowledge or experience of reflective practice, allowing him to come into the process with an open-mind. Indeed, he acknowledged that this lack of experience benefitted him throughout the process. In acknowledging her previous experience with reflective practice, participant 2 stated that this had resulted in a fairly close-minded

approach to the study, which impacted on her overall experience – “I don’t think it’s helped that we’ve been doing about reflective practice in uni as well”.

Once the participants had agreed to take part in this study, a difference in reaction was found. Participant 1 reported an increase in nervousness, and increased cognitive activity regarding what the results would be. However, he did not see this as a problem, stating, “before every game I had nerves, which I think is not a bad thing.” This is important as had he considered this a negative effect; it could have had a disastrous effect on his umpiring. In addition, he also felt that engaging with this study would challenge him by forcing him to confront his weaknesses, “it made you address them rather than push them away.” Contrastingly, even though participant 2 admitted she likes to be challenged, she did not feel that reflective practice would have this effect. She suggested, “I just thought it (reflective practice) would be time consuming.” This suggests that she viewed the process as something she had to do, rather than something she actively wanted to do, which differed from participant 1’s motives.

#### **4.3 The Value of a Structured Approach to Reflective Practice**

Neither participant reported any serious concerns with taking part in the process, nor with the reflective document they completed following each performance. Participant 1 felt that some areas overlapped on the document, however to help himself overcome this he kept the nature of his reflections consistent throughout the six weeks. He stated, “yeah, I did feel that some areas overlapped, but what I did was over the six weeks I kept it the same (the reflections).” Both participants acknowledged that the simplicity of the reflective document had a positive effect on

their willingness to complete the study, allowing them to fully concentrate on their umpiring. Participant 1 was happy to an extent he wouldn't hesitate to engage in a similar process in the future, "I'd have no concerns about doing it (reflective practice) again."

#### **4.4 Impact of Reflective Practice on Umpire Preparation**

A key aim of the interview was to explore the effect reflective practice had on each participant's preparations for matches. Participant 1 credited reflective practice with transforming the way he prepared, however, participant 2 outlined no change in her preparations in spite of engaging in reflective practice. Participant 1 commented how reflective practice has taught him how important it is to prepare, and the consequences of not doing so, for example, "It (reflective practice) highlighted the fact that you have to prepare. A few occasions, which I mentioned in my reports I didn't prepare, and I suffered for it. I may not have been totally aware of the fact it was down to preparation had I not engaged in reflection." In summarising, he commented that by reflecting on his preparations, it raised this problem out of his sub-conscious, allowing him to deal with it properly. He also highlighted an increased confidence level from being consistently well prepared, indicating that, "Reflecting gave me a bit more confidence because when I did prepare well...then you start off on a good level." Participant 2 commented on the fact the standard of games fluctuated wildly during the six week block, from a school level game to a national league fixture. As a result, her preparations were not consistent, "It's essentially the same process that I go through before each game, just miss out the steps I don't need to do." It therefore proved difficult for her to complete consistent reflections on this area.

#### **4.5 Developing Psychological Aspects of Performance**

As each participant umpired their six games, reflective practice as a concept did not enter their thought process at any point, which they both reported being pleased with. If this had not been the case, it would have interrupted their concentration, “yeah, because if I’d have been thinking about it during the games then I wasn’t thinking about (umpiring) the game.” Participant 1 reported thinking about his concentration levels, an area of weakness that had come to light through his reflections, “It didn’t do any harm (thinking about this during the game), in fact it may well have focussed me on the lapses in concentration.” Neither participant reported changing anything about their performance during a fixture; this was taken care of through the reflections, and in preparing for the following fixture. Participant 2 felt more motivated to effect change in her umpiring due to the fact she was highlighting weaknesses about herself, rather than an umpire coach doing so, “It’s one thing being told it by a coach, but then it’s another thing to recognise it yourself when you’re writing it up”, the first sign that reflective practice was having a positive effect on her.

A key area of reflective practice is to create an action plan to help improve oneself. Whilst both participants saw the merit in doing so, only participant 1 had confidence that the points raised in these action plans would have a positive effect. A lack of motivation to read over the action plans before the following fixture hindered the benefits participant 2 could take from this area, “after I’d written them, I kind of didn’t really look back at them”. She tentatively suggested she would have gained more from this process had she have paid more attention to her action plans, “I’d like to think so, but it’s hard to say without actually doing it”.

#### **4.6 Visual Improvements**

One of the methods employed in this study was an observation of the participants' umpiring, both before and after engaging with reflective practice. It is important to remember that the observations are the researchers' personal opinions, and may not have been shared by an independent observer. The umpires were assessed on three key areas; positioning; body language; and management. Participant 2 showed no visual change between the observations; however, participant 1 appeared much more relaxed throughout his second observation. Furthermore, he also appeared more confident in dealing with players who occasionally disagreed with his decisions, which were correct throughout.

## **CHAPTER FIVE**

### **DISCUSSION**

## **5.0 Discussion**

This study aimed to: (a) explore the positive and negative effects reflective practice could have on field hockey umpires; (b) explore whether these effects are consistent with the current state of knowledge; and (c) move towards recommendations regarding whether reflective practice should be introduced into the training of sports officials, specifically field hockey umpires. Following a period of six weeks of reflection and follow up interviews participants reported both positive and negative experiences with their engagement in reflective practice. Positive aspects included: (a) an increase in confidence; (b) and increase in self-awareness; and (c) an improvement in preparation for matches. Negative aspects included: (a) the time consuming nature of the process; (b) the requirement to commit everything to paper; and (c) the need to be completely honest with oneself. As a result, this discussion will be split into five sections; the first of which will explore the impact of previous reflective practices on the participants' experiences. The following two sections will discuss the impact of structuring reflective practice, and the timing of reflective practice. The final two sections will contain discussion on understanding the benefits and barriers of engaging in reflective practice, and the strengths and limitations of the study, together with guidance on future research directions.

## **5.1 The Impact of Previous Reflective Practices on Participants' Experience**

Whilst exploring participants' previous experience of reflective practice, together with their thoughts and feelings towards the process was not a specific aim of this study, it was thought that knowledge of this personal background would help to contextualise their responses to more in-depth questioning. When questioned on this subject, both participants were found to be aware of what reflective practice is, but only one had engaged with it before. This participant had been required to engage with reflective practice whilst on a Higher Education degree course, and had found the concept much to her dislike. This is perhaps unsurprising as excluding the work of Cropley, Hanton, Miles and Niven (2011), there is little guidance on offer on how reflective practice skills should be taught. Indeed, there is evidence to support the notion that traditional approaches to learning and teaching do not often help people to develop the skills they need to engage in reflective practice effectively, thus leading to negative perceptions of the concept (Cropley and Hanton, 2011). Conversely, the participant who had no prior experience with reflective practice felt this benefitted him, as it allowed him to come into the study with an open mind, enhancing his level of intrinsic motivation towards the study. There is support for this from Cropley and Hanton (2011) who noted that one of the characteristics required for effective reflection is open-mindedness, which could explain his increased level of intrinsic motivation. It was clear that he was extremely keen for his participation to have a positive effect on his umpiring, as he noted that once he had consented to take part in the study, he became nervously excited about what the results would be. This increased cognitive activity could be a result of the Hawthorne effect (Wickstrom, 2000), which triggers behavioural change due to an awareness of being observed. Whilst this did not have a detrimental impact on this study, it is important

to consider the implications of this effect for future studies. The difference in feelings between the two participants goes some way to explaining the different outcomes reported, as for reflective practice to be effective, the process must be purposeful, and result in a change to beliefs and values (Anderson *et al.*, 2004). Whilst engaging in this process was certainly deliberate, a requirement noted by Dewey (1933), the engagement of participant 2 did not result in a change to her beliefs, thus limiting the potential benefits of reflective practice.

## **5.2 The Impact of Structuring Reflective Practice**

A crucial element of the reflective process adopted in this study involved the use of a structured reflective document following each fixture (umpiring experience), which was adapted from Gibbs's (1988) model. Participant 1 initially felt that some areas overlapped, however he commented that by keeping his reflections consistent over the six weeks, he was able to remove this confusion by adapting the process to suit his needs. Nevertheless, both participants found the document simple to understand, acknowledging that had this not been the case, it would have had a negative impact on their feelings towards the study. There is support in the literature supporting the use of a structured guide to facilitate reflection, specifically from (Knowles *et al.*, 2001), who noted that without such structure, there may be a tendency to "mull over" what happened, rather than systematically reflect. This is supported by the words of a participant in the study, who expressed the desire for clear headings and categories to improve their reflective development. In addition, Cropley *et al.* (2012) noted that by using a structured approach to reflection, a more valid examination is able to take place. There are however limitations to a structured approach, as noted by Knowles *et al.* (2001), and Knowles, Gilbourne, Tomlinson, and Anderson (2007).

These studies suggested that engaging in structured approaches to reflection was time consuming, something which is supported by the participants in Cropley *et al.* (2010; 2011) studies, who recognised the extensive time and effort required to engage in reflective practice. It is therefore feasible to suggest that a structured reflective pro-forma is crucial for maximising the benefits of reflective practice.

### **5.3 The Timing of Reflective Practice**

There is scope for further discussion around the requirement of the study to leave a clear 24 hours between a fixture and engaging with reflective practice. This requirement derived from the work of Boud (2001) who suggested that in order for reflective practice to be effective, the experience must be evaluated from an emotionally removed position, but whilst waiting for that position it must not be after a period of time where memory decay has occurred. After all, reflective practice is a process that is reliant on memory (Wallace, 1996; Cropley *et al.*, 2010). Following the recommendations of Cropley, Miles, Hanton, and Niven (2007) and Woodcock, Richards and Mugford (2008) for reflective practice to occur within 48 hours of the event, 24 hours was considered a perfect timeframe, given that the majority of the fixtures were on a Saturday, and the participants were employed from Monday to Friday. Indeed, participant 1 was happy with the requirement to wait for 24 hours, as this relatively short timeframe allowed him to record his reflections and begin to focus immediately on his next fixture. It is important to note for future research that this timeframe may not always be realistic, and there will be certain scenarios where it will take longer to understand the emotions associated with our experiences (Cropley and Hanton, 2011).

### **5.4 Understanding the Benefits and Barriers of Engaging in Reflective Practice**

The participants' views on the effect reflective practice has had on their preparations for matches are interesting, in particular participant 1. He reported that previously, he was not fully aware that poor preparation was the reason he didn't perform as well as he would have liked, raising this issue from his sub-conscious to his conscious thinking, allowing him to better deal with the issue. This discovery is in agreement with the literature, which suggests that in order for learning to be achieved through reflective practice, participants must engage in a process which results in the release of knowledge embedded within the experience itself (Hanton *et al.*, 2007). Indeed, it is possible that prior to the study the participant believed he was "reflecting" on why his performance was poor by simply thinking over and contemplating events, a common misconception of reflective practice (Cropley *et al.*, 2012). Participant 2 felt that reflective practice did not have any impact on her preparations; however a limitation of this study may have contributed to this. There was no requirement for the fixtures in the six week block to be of the same standard, therefore as a result she found herself reflecting on games of a vastly different standard, from school level right up to a national league fixture. As a result, her preparations were not consistent as there were certain things she felt she could miss out when it came to preparing for lower level games. If her preparations were more consistent, the literature suggests her level of self-awareness would have increased, as it is argued that consistent, structured reflection improves ones self-awareness.

The use of action plans within reflective practice provides further scope for discussion, with both participants able to see the merit in using them, but only

participant 1 having the confidence that they would have a positive effect on his umpiring. The model formulated by Gibbs (1988) incorporates an action plan as the final stage of the process, which is primarily concerned with what the participant would do if their experience were to repeat itself. By not putting the learning into action, participant 2 therefore did not complete the reflective loop which is imperative for this process. It can be suggested that the reason participant 2 did not reap the purported benefits of reflective practice due to her failure to complete the reflective loop by utilizing her action plans.

Given the importance of the effective utilization of action plans, it is important to attempt to understand why participant 2 did not feel they benefitted her in the same way as participant 1. The literature suggests that Gibbs' model of reflection is more suited to those who have experience of reflective practice (Anderson *et al.*, 2004), however this can be strongly contested by this study, as the participant who had no prior experience of the process benefitted much more, albeit following a settling in period. It is therefore naïve to suggest that inexperience may have suggested in the poor use of actions plans, instead a distinct lack of motivation appears to be the cause. Indeed, Cropley *et al.* (2012) found that the motivation to reflect is a key issue within the field of sport coaching, and that lack of motivation can result in a reduced commitment to engage with the process, together with negative feelings regarding the whole process. This supports the feelings reported by participant 2, who commented on both a lack of motivation to engage fully with reflective practice, and negative feelings towards the process from the start. As Antonsen, Thunberg and Tiller (2009) agreed, if motivation is low then real learning cannot occur from real-life experiences. Indeed, participant 2 admitted during the interview that once she had

completed her reflections containing her action plan she did not read over them before her next fixture, adding that this would have been more beneficial had she done so.

A further area of interest which became apparent during the interview was the participants reporting the same negative aspects of performance whilst completing their reflections. Whilst this creates the assumption of increased motivation to deal with the problem area, it actually had the opposite effect, with participant 2 commenting how she didn't see the benefit of writing the same things repeatedly. Ghaye and Lillyman (2000) noted that reflective practice is characterised by cognitive, skilled, complex processes that involve the whole person. When this is combined with the work of Hanton *et al.* (2007), it is plausible to suggest that the participants were not engaging in a thorough cognitive process, in order to release the knowledge required to have a positive effect. In light of this, it would be prudent, given the nature of the study, to examine the way in which the intervention was managed for the participants, to see if anything further could have been done to maximise their learning. When questioned on this, both participants were happy with the way the study was managed, however both raised concerns about the length of the study, and the amount of contact time with the researcher. A period longer than six weeks was desired by each participant, with participant 1 suggesting half a season would have sufficed (around three to four months). There is literature to support needing a longer period for reflective practice to take effect; Farrell (1998) noted that the reflective period should be correspondingly long rather than short, otherwise it will be time wasted. Each participant also expressed a wish for an increased level of support throughout the process, with a meeting and assessment of

their umpiring after the third week a common theme. This is also prevalent in the literature, with Johns (1994) suggesting that a supervisor could provide a supportive environment which will encourage reflective practitioners to develop their skills. Furthermore, Ghaye and Lillyman (2000) place a high level of importance on the researcher or supervisor providing support throughout the intervention, something which was not possible due to the nature of this study and lack of formal qualifications possessed by the researcher. Building on this, they noted that “more and different things can be learned when reflection on performance is done with others” (p. 2). Furthermore, Mann, Gordon and Macleod (2009) noted that mentoring is one of the most crucial elements required to be present in order to develop reflective skills. It is therefore important for practitioners to be aware of the support needs of those undertaking studies such as this.

Despite the participants’ concerns about the process, there were benefits gained from participating in this study, as expected following the literature review. In agreement with the literature, participant 1 reported an increase in confidence and self-awareness, together with the improved preparation techniques mentioned earlier. Underpinning these benefits is an increase in professionalism reported by participant 1, which included everything from his umpiring right through to his training. Given that confidence is crucial to sport officiating, it is understandable why this participant was pleased with the effect this study has had on him (Myers, Feltz, Guillen, and Dithurbide, 2012). Participant 2 reported a high level of confidence in her umpiring before the commencement of this study, and was much less forthcoming when questioned on the benefits reflective practice has afforded her. She did however offer the following, “If you don’t think about what went well and

what didn't, then you can't really hope to improve". This acknowledgement suggests that participant 2 analysed the strengths of her performances ahead of the weaknesses. As Ghaye and Lillyman (2010) noted, not everyone agrees with this approach, however it is the strengths of one's performances that need to be replicated and amplified, not the weaknesses. This gains further credence when attention is paid to other disciplines, which tell us how important positive cognition is, and how affirmative effective states are linked to mental, emotional and physical well-being (Ghaye and Lillyman, 2000).

Upon being asked to summarise the benefits reflective practice, participant 1 was unsurprisingly generous in his praise for the process, whilst participant 2 struggled to find an answer for a while, before concluding that by committing reflections to paper, even though she did not enjoy doing so, transformed these reflections into a reference document for use at a later date. This is in agreement with the work of Cropley *et al.* (2011), who noted that reflections are more powerful when committed to paper. The benefits reported by participant 1 are also in agreement with the literature, namely an increase in confidence, self-awareness and professionalism. This question was then reversed, asking the participants to summarise any negative aspects of reflective practice. Participant 2 once again highlighted her temporal constraints, in addition to her already low opinion on the concept. The work of Ghaye (2009) suggested a closer link between these than previously thought. He notes how "asking the right reflective questions at the right moment is a skilled activity" (p.327), following the argument of Johns (1994) that reflective practice is an extremely difficult thing to do. Therefore reflective practice may be better suited to those who

are free from extreme temporal constraints, and have the time and freedom to fully explore their experiences, and extract the knowledge embedded within them.

In order to address the lack of intrinsic motivation reported by participant 2, there is perhaps value in considering utilizing reflective diaries or journals, should this process be repeated with a similar participant. Existing literature suggests that using these promotes the qualities, skills, and the motivation required for engaging in a formal reflective process (Anderson *et al.*, 2004; Cropley *et al.*, 2011). A reflective guide such as Gibbs (1988) would still be used to structure the reflections, adapted to suit the needs of the participant.

### **5.5 Summary of Key Practical and Theoretical Implications**

A key practical implication of a study of this type is the considerable amount of time required in order to fully engage with reflective practice. When researchers are planning a similar study, they should perhaps be more selective with their participants, ensuring they have the time available to fully reap the benefits of reflective practice. A further implication to consider is the amount of support and guidance required by participants when engaging in reflective practice. It is crucial they receive all the necessary support they require, which can help to keep them motivated, and also to provide reassurance that they are doing the right thing. A key theoretical implication to consider is the Hawthorne effect. Whilst it did not have a negative impact on this study, it is possible that the effects this could have on different participants could result in a detrimental impact on the study.

### **5.6 Strengths and Limitations**

A key strength of this study was that it delved into an area which had previously remained largely untouched. Whilst there is a large amount of research available on reflective practice in sport, there was little existing literature exploring the relationship between reflective practice and sports officiating, specifically field hockey umpiring. As a result, it was possible to enter this study with an open mind, and uncertainly surrounding whether the results would match what is already known about reflective practice. As the research progressed it became clear that this would indeed be the case, bringing with it the ability to tentatively advocate the use of reflective practice for field hockey umpires. It is, however, important to consider the participants' lifestyle before approaching them for the study, as the amount of time they have available to commit to a study of this type has a direct effect on what they are able to gain from the process.

A major limitation of this study is the amount of participants recruited. Whilst it was considered suitable for the context of the research, it would have yielded stronger implications on the field had the sample size been larger. In addition, officials from only one sport were invited to take part in the research. In order to truly understand the effect of reflective practice on sports officials, it would have been beneficial to include a variety of sports, each with their own demands and challenges, to come to a more accurate conclusion. A further limitation of the study was the lack of requirement for the fixtures reflected on to be of the same standard. In the case of one of the participants, this created inconsistency within the reflections, and certainly a higher quality data yield could have been obtained were the fixtures consistently of the same standard.

## **5.7 Future Research Directions**

For this study to have a positive impact on the field, it is important to consider how it can be taken utilized to inform future research. It is therefore recommended that future studies of this type should seek to include a variety of sports and sports officials, in order to gain a true understanding of whether reflective practice can be beneficial to sports officials outside field hockey. Furthermore, an extended timeframe would also prove beneficial, allowing the participants much longer to work on, and enhance their reflections. In turn, this will further improve their reflective skills, resulting in a higher quality data yield. Finally, it is important to ensure that all games which are subject to reflection are of the same standard, ensuring consistent data collection, and that the participants are fully exposed to the potential benefits of reflective practice. The potential implications of taking part in research similar to this study depend on the participants recruited. If they do not have copious amounts of spare time available to them, they may not be able to take full advantage of the opportunity to engage in reflective practice. In terms of supervising a study such as this, it is important to consider that the participants will require support and guidance throughout the process, and should not be left to engage in reflective practice alone.

## **CHAPTER SIX**

## **CONCLUSION**

## **6.0 Conclusion**

The purpose of this study was to explore the effect engaging with reflective practice could have on field hockey umpires. By affording two field hockey umpires the opportunity to engage in a structured reflective process over a six week period, a host of contrasting benefits and issues have been unveiled. In order to make sense of these, the participants were interviewed separately, followed by a coded data analysis of the transcripts. Through this analysis, five major themes emanated from the data; (a) an increase in confidence; (b) an increase in self-awareness; (c) an increase in professionalism; (d) a disagreement between the participants in the value of committing reflections to paper; and (e) further disagreement over the amount of time required to be invested in order to fully engage with reflective practice.

The experiences of each participant throughout this study were incredibly different, with one participant thoroughly pleased with what the process has done for his umpiring, whilst the second umpire did not reap the benefits of reflective practice in the same way. This was due in part to her inherent dislike for reflective practice, due to her past experiences with the concept. In addition, she found she had very little spare time available, therefore her ability to engage fully with the process was compromised. In contrast, the other participant did not have any previous experience with reflective practice, allowing him to come in to the process with an open mind, something which proved extremely beneficial. No problems were reported with the requirement for the reflections to be committed to paper by this participant; indeed he felt it was a crucial part of the process.

A fundamental issue with this study in particular, which was shared by both of the participants, was the length of the study; each participant would have preferred the process to have been extended, with one participant expressing a desire to reflect less frequently during that time. Whilst contextual constraints prevented this study from moving beyond six weeks, it carries a profound recommendation for future research.

Despite the limitations of this study however, the aims have been met. These were (a) to explore the positive and negative effects reflective practice could have on field hockey umpires; (b) to explore whether these effects are consistent with the current state of knowledge; and (c) to move toward a recommendation as to whether reflective practice should be introduced into the training of sports officials, specifically field hockey umpires. Whilst there was a difference in opinion between the two participants in this study, it would certainly prove beneficial for field hockey umpires to engage with reflective practice, provided it is done in the appropriate manner. As a result of meeting the aims, there are positive implications of the field of field hockey umpiring. There is potential for the training of field hockey umpires to be improved through the use of reflective practice, which in turn will lead to more effective umpires, with higher levels of confidence and self-awareness. This can only be viewed in a positive light for field hockey umpires, and the game of field hockey as a whole.

## **CHAPTER SEVEN**

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## **CHAPTER EIGHT**

### **APPENDICES**

## **Appendix A – Participant Information Sheet**

### **Cardiff School of Sport Ethics Committee Research Participant Information Sheet**

01/05/12

**Project Title:** An evaluation of the impact of reflective practice on field hockey umpires

This document provides a run through of:

- 1) the background and aim of the research,
- 2) my role as the researcher,
- 3) your role as a participant,
- 4) benefits of taking part,
- 5) how data will be collected, and
- 6) how the data / research will be used.

The purpose of this document is to assist you in making an *informed* decision about whether you wish to be included in the project, and to promote transparency in the research process.

#### **1) Background and aims of the research**

To date, there has been no research into whether reflective practice would be beneficial for field hockey umpires. A multitude of recent literature advocates the use of reflective practice in other fields, which include nursing, education, sport coaching and sport psychology. Each of these concludes that reflective practice is an extremely important and beneficial activity, which provides a rationale for this study.

#### **2) My role as the researcher:**

The project involves me (Kevin Roberts), the researcher, initially watching you as you undertake a random field hockey game. You will then be asked to umpire for the following six weeks, as you normally would. Following each week, you will be asked to complete a short reflective log, which is based on Gibbs (1988) reflective cycle. These will be e-mailed to me on a weekly basis and stored securely, ensuring confidentiality and anonymity. The study will culminate in a second watching, followed by a short interview to evaluate the impact engaging reflective practice has had on you as a field hockey umpire.

#### **3) Your role as a participant:**

Your role is to umpire as you normally would for the six weeks in question, and complete the weekly reflective logs as honestly and accurately as possible. The completion of the reflective log is not compulsory, and you do not have to respond to every question should you wish not to.

#### **4) Benefits of taking part:**

The information obtained from this study will allow better insight into the potential impact of reflective practice on field hockey umpires. Through taking part in this project a wealth of knowledge and self – awareness will be generated, specifically related to your umpiring. As a result, you will be able to gain a detailed understanding of where your strengths and weakness lie. Although your anonymity is guaranteed, the information generated through this project will greatly benefit field hockey umpiring in the years ahead.

#### **5) How data will be collected:**

As alluded to above, data will be collected from the two occasions you are watched by myself, and the weekly reflective logs which will be emailed to me. Any data collected will only be viewed by myself and my supervisor; it will not be made available to any other participant or third party.

#### **6) How the data / research will be used:**

In agreeing to become a voluntary participant, you will be allowing me to use your weekly reflective logs and include the responses within a larger data set that includes the data of other participants. Your personal data will be anonymous and will not be reported alone, but within the total sample of participants.

### **Your rights**

Your right as a voluntary participant is that you are free to enter or withdraw from the study at any time. This simply means that you are in full control of the part you play in informing the research, and what anonymous information is used in its final reporting.

### **Protection to privacy**

Concerted efforts will be made to hide your identity in any written transcripts, notes, and associated documentation that inform the research and its findings. Furthermore, any personal information about you will remain confidential according to the guidelines of the Data Protection Act (1998).

### **Contact**

If you require any further details, or have any outstanding queries, feel free to contact my supervisor on the details printed below.

#### **Dr. Brendan Cropley Ph.D.**

BASES Accredited Sport & Exercise Scientist

FHEA

Lecturer in Coaching Science

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**Appendix B – Informed Consent Form**

**CARDIFF METROPOLITAN  
INFORMED CONSENT FORM**

CSS Reference No:

Title of Project: An evaluation of the impact of reflective practice on field hockey umpires

Name of Researcher: Kevin Roberts

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Participant to complete this section: Please initial each box.

1. I confirm that I have read and understood the information sheet dated 01/05/12 for this evaluation study. I have had the opportunity to consider the information, ask questions and have had these answered satisfactorily.
2. I understand that my participation is voluntary and that it is possible to stop taking part at any time, without giving a reason.
3. I also understand that if this happens, our relationships with the Cardiff Metropolitan University, or our legal rights will not be affected
4. I understand that information from the study may be used for reporting purposes, but I will not be identified.
5. I agree to take part in this study on reflective practice for field hockey umpires


\_\_\_\_\_  
Name of Participant

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of Participant

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Name of person taking consent

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of person taking consent

\* When completed, one copy for participant and one copy for researcher's files.

## **Appendix C – Reflective Document**

Description:

What Happened?

What essential factors contributed to this experience?

Feelings:

What were you thinking and feeling before, during and after?

What impact did these have on your competition / behaviour (e.g., decision making, behaviour)?

Evaluation:

What was good about the game as a whole? What do you feel went well?

What areas do you feel require the most attention following this game?

Analysis:

Why did certain situations happen as they did? Why did the good and bad things happen?  
Why did you umpire / behave as you did? What influenced your decision making?

Conclusion:

1. What have you learnt from this game?
1. What potential implications does this experience have for the field of umpiring?
2. What other options did you have in attempting to improve your performance in this game?
2. What would the consequences of those options be?

**Action Plan:**

What will you do next time to maintain the strengths and improve the limitations of this experience? Why  
What further learning is required in order to do these things?

## **Appendix D – Interview Guide**

### **Section 1 – Pre intervention**

*Firstly I would like to talk about any existing knowledge or experience you had before the commencement of this study, be this in a sporting or professional context.*

- 1) What was your understanding of reflective practice before you were approached for this study? Had you ever engaged with it before?

**PROBE:** a) Had you ever considered using reflective practice before?  
b) When and where was your previous experience with reflective practice?  
c) Did this previous experience benefit you in any way?

- 2) What were your initial thoughts and feelings after you had consented to take part in this study on reflective practice?

**PROBE:** a) Did you feel engaging in this process would challenge you?  
b) Were you excited about the potential benefits this study could have on your umpiring?  
c) Did you have any concerns about engaging in this process?

- 3) Did you understand the reflective document you were given to fill in?

**PROBE:** a) Do you feel the researcher went through it in enough detail?  
b) Did you find the document easy to understand?  
c) (Based on answer to probe b) what impact did this have on your feelings towards this study?

*That completes the questions related to your experience prior to this study, is there anything further you would like to add at this stage?*

*Thank you for that information, we can now move on to talking about your experience as you began to engage in the reflective process.*

## Section 2 – During intervention

*The following questions relate to your experience during the six game block in which you engaged with reflective practice after each performance. Please remember to be completely honest at all times.*

- 1) Did the fact you knew you were engaging with this process alter your preparations for the games in any way?

**PROBE:** a) This doesn't necessarily mean on a conscious level, maybe something came to light at a later date, perhaps as you completed your reflections?  
b) What effect do you feel this had on your performance?  
c) Did this change as you went through the six game block, or were your preparations consistent?

- 2) In terms of your preparations for matches, what effect has reflective practice had on this?

**PROBE:** a) Are you pleased with what reflective practice has done for your preparations?  
b) Still in terms of your preparation, will you use what you have learnt through reflective practice in your future games?

*Moving on to your experience during performance if I may...*

- 3) During your six matches, were you consciously thinking about reflective practice as a concept at any point?

**PROBE:** a) Do you think this is a good thing? (regardless of yes or no)

- 4) Were you consciously thinking about any aspects of your performance that had come to light through reflective practice, or was this covered in your preparation?

**PROBE:** a) Did you find yourself changing anything about your performance during a fixture?

- b) What effect did this have on your overall performance?

- 5) In terms of the action plan you created following each performance, were you confident that the points you made would improve your performance?

**PROBE:** a) Did you ensure that the action plan was adhered to closely during each performance?

b) How successful were you at meeting each point on your action plan during the following fixture?

c) Is there anything further you could have done to make greater use of your action plans?

6) Did your reflections change as you moved through the six week block?

**PROBE:** a) Consider the change in your knowledge, and any change in your understanding of the reflective process?

b) Consider your thoughts, feelings, emotions, and perceptions of reflective practice?

c) Why do you think these changes occurred?

7) How did the focus of your reflections change as you progressed through the six week block?

**PROBE:** a) Content of your reflections?

b) Depth of your reflections?

c) Why did this focus change?

d) What influence did this change in focus have on your outcomes of reflective practice?

*That concludes the questions relating to your experiences during the game, many thanks for this information! The next set of questions relates to the effect reflective practice has had on you as an umpire. Again, please be as honest as you can with your answers.*

### **Section 3 – The effect on you as an umpire**

1) What has engaging with reflective practice taught you?

**PROBE:** a) as an umpire?

b) as a person?

2) How has reflective practice benefitted you as an umpire?

**PROBE:** a) What has reflective practice had the most influence on?

b) Is there an aspect you thought reflective practice would influence more than it actually did?

c) Why do you think this is?

d) Do you anything further could have been done to increase your learning and self – awareness throughout this process?

3) In terms of confidence now, how has reflective practice affected this?

**PROBE:** a) Generally speaking, how was your confidence level going into matches before you engaged with this process?

b) Do you feel by reflecting on your performances your confidence level has increased?

c) Why do you think this is? (action plan, committing it to paper?)

d) Part of the reflective process was to highlight areas you need to improve on, so by addressing these directly through your action plan, has this helped your confidence level?

4) Has engaging with reflective practice had any negative effects on your umpiring?

**PROBE:** a) Did you experience any problems during this process that affecting your umpiring?

b) Why do you think these problems occurred?  
c) Could you or the researcher have done anything more to prevent these problems occurring?

5) So just to recap, how have things changed in terms of your umpiring as a direct result of reflecting on your performance for six consecutive weeks?

**PROBE:** a) Do you think you have become a more effective umpire? Why?

b) Were you better able to analyse what was good/successful about your performance? How?

c) Are you now able to understand how to improve your practice through the implementation of reflective practice? How?

d) Have you changed any of your traditions / ways in which you approach matches?

6) Within the reflective practice context, what would you say has had the biggest influence on you as an umpire?

**PROBE:** a) Why would you say this?

*Is there anything else you would like to add in terms of the effect engaging with reflective practice has had on your umpiring?*

*Okay, we've spoken about your experiences before and during this intervention, and the effect it has had on your umpiring. I would now like us to focus on the post intervention period.*

#### **Section 4 – Post intervention**

1) Now you have completed your six week reflective cycle, what are your feelings about reflective practice?

**PROBE:** a) Do you feel it's a worthwhile experience?

b) Has this process helped you in the ways you anticipated it would?

c) Has reflective practice helped you in ways you weren't expecting?

d) Has reflected practice hindered you at all over the last six weeks?

- 2) To what extent has developing your reflective skills had on your ability as an umpire?

**PROBE:** a) Have you noticed a link between an improvement in your reflective skills and the effectiveness of you as an umpire?

b) What has led you to believe this?

c) Why do you think this link has occurred?

- 3) Do you feel reflective practice is worth continuing with following this study?

**PROBE:** a) Have you enjoyed the process?

b) Are you pleased with the benefits afforded by engaging with reflective practice?

c) Are you likely to continue to engage with reflective practice in some form in the future?

## **Section 5 – Reflective practice as a whole**

- 1) How beneficial did you find:

- The introduction to reflective practice offered by the researcher?
- The requirement for your reflections to be committed to paper?
- Having multiple opportunities to reflect and act on these reflections?

**PROBE (each aspect):** a) What influence did it have on your reflections?

b) How influential was it on your knowledge of reflective practice and your ability to reflect?

c) Why do you think this is?

- 2) What would you say are the main benefits of reflective practice?

**PROBE:** a) Were there sections of this process that benefitted you more than others?

b) Why do you feel this was the case?

c) If you were attempting to “sell” reflective practice to somebody else, what is the first benefit that comes to mind?

- 3) If you were to undertake this study again, what would you change about the process?

**PROBE:** a) Would you have liked more information about anything in particular?

b) Do you feel the timeframe you were given was appropriate?

## **Section 6 – Reliability and validity of the interview**

*That just about completes the interview, however, before we finish, let me ask you some final questions:*

- 1) How satisfied were you with this reflective practice intervention, and the support you received from the researcher? Why?
- 2) Do you consider changes in your umpiring to be a direct consequence of participating in this study?
- 3) During the study itself, were you coerced at any time in terms of your practice and behaviours, beyond the scope of the study?
- 4) How would you rate your experience as a participant?
- 5) How do you feel the interview went?
- 6) Did you feel you could tell your story in full?
- 7) Did I lead or influence your responses in any way?
- 8) Do you think we failed to discuss any important factors?
- 9) Have you any comments or suggestions about the interview itself?

***Many thanks for your time and effort whilst participating in this entire study!***

## **Appendix E – Example Interview Transcript**

R: Firstly just to talk about any existing knowledge or experience you had before we started the study, in either a sporting or professional context. So the first question, what was your understanding of reflective practice before you were approached for the study?

P: Well I've not really experienced anything like that before, reflecting was considered as afterwards really, you reflect on something, the limited amount of exams I've had to do in my sport is purely restricted to my umpiring, level 1 and level 2 which are quite menial, and there's not much to it really apart from the examination on level 2. That is about it when it comes to reflective stuff.

R: Had you ever considered using it before?

P: No, but having looked at this now I think it's a good idea, because you do focus, I identified very early areas I need for improvement, and through doing this I was continually focussed on it, it's very easy to get sidetracked and convince yourself everything's wonderful, but when you're actually analysing yourself, and like myself I am quite critical of myself. My wife said that as well, my wife's a cognitive therapist, and she said you're probably one of the most self-analysing and self-critical people she's ever known, you know, so it comes from quite a good professional qualification there, so it was probably, well very very good.

R: Yeah that probably works well with this sort of study?

P: Yeah it does yeah.

R: Did the fact you hadn't engaged in reflective practice benefit you in any way do you think?

P: Well yeah purely to focus on areas a) that were good and b) that were not very good.

R: After you had consented to take part in the study, and you had signed informed consent, what were your initial thoughts and feelings building up to taking part?

P: I found an increase in nervousness, before every game I had nerves, which I think is not a bad thing. But when you're aware (of that) a) you've got to be honest with what happens otherwise there's no point doing it, and I was just wondering what was going to come out, so there was an increase in nervousness basically.

R: Okay, did you feel engaging in the process would challenge you?

P: Yes, definitely.

R: In what sort of ways?

P: Well confronting my bad points.