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"Teamwork Done to a Tee": A Golf Caddie's Perspective on Their Perceived Role and Associated Skills

Laura M Carey[1], Joseph A Stone[1], David Lavallee[2]

[1] Sport and Physical Activity Research Centre, Sheffield Hallam University, [2] School of Applied Sciences, Abertay University; Department of Physical Education and Sport Sciences, University of Limerick; School of Health Sciences, University of Canterbury

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Objectives

This study explored what caddies perceive as their role and the associated skills required to support golfers.

Method

Semi-structured interviews were completed with seven Professional male caddies from the United Kingdom (3 Caddies) and USA (4 Caddies). Interviews were audio recorded, transcribed and reflexive thematic analysis performed.

Results

Thematic analysis generated twenty-one lower-order themes and six higher-order themes, which were organised into three dimensions; (i) the demands of being a caddie; (ii) caddie's expertise to do the role; and (iii), importance of support.

Conclusion

Caddies demonstrate expertise in a range of areas from perceptual to intrapersonal skills when developing and maintaining effective golfer-caddie partnerships. Our findings highlight the skills the caddies require are role dependent. The findings from this study have implications on understanding future training needs for caddies in relation to maintaining effective golfer-caddie relationships and best practices to support caddies.

A golf caddie is a person hired to carry clubs, rake bunkers, and provide other assistance, including on course support with shot selection and off course support with planning and preparation (Coate & Toomey, 2014). Lavallee, Bruce, and Gorely (2004) developed a four-component model detailing the role of a caddie which includes: a technical and psychological role (e.g., optimising the golfer's psychological state); supporting the golfer with his/her final decision on what stroke to play; friendly role with a sense of being familiar and close to one another; and helping the golfer focus on the present. Further research has found caddies help to optimise the golfer's psychological state through helping the golfer to maintain their focus, provide a distraction preventing the golfer from dwelling on past mistakes or ruminating, and for maintaining and maximising flow states (Swann et al., 2015). Importantly, an effective golfer-caddie partnership has been shown to help golfers to improve their performance by one stroke per round, after controlling for other conditions (e.g., skill level of the golfer, tournament round, weather and course changes) (Coate & Toomey, 2014). Therefore, a caddie has become an integral part of a golfer's pursuit of a successful performance (Coate & Toomey, 2014; Swann et al., 2015).

The partnership between a golfer and caddie is collaborative, although there is a power imbalance underlying the working partnership. The Tour golfer (professional golfer who travels internationally to compete in golf competitions) is enabled to make their decision on whom they seek to hire, the specifics of the agreement terms and if they want to terminate the contract (Mull, 2019). The employment contract between the golfer and caddie is unique and largely ungoverned as the PGA Tour does not interfere with the caddie/ golfer employment relationship (Mull, 2019). Typically, the Tour golfer and the caddie agree to the common arrangement of $1,000 to $2,000 base salary for the week and then a percentage of the overall winnings by the Tour golfer, ranging between 3-10% (Mull, 2019). One of the main challenges to the golfer-caddie relationships is that golfers only earn money when they win and often 90% of those playing on the Challenge Tour each year either make no money or lose money in their pursuit of a career in professional golf (Fry & Bloyce, 2017). Similarly, when caddies support golfers during their round at a golf clubs/resorts, it is not a given that the golfer will pay gratuity or in some cases the recommended fee for a caddie. Therefore, these conditions create an insecure environment for caddies which can lead to financial difficulties, effort-reward imbalance, and high job insecurity. Hence, it is relevant to explore why caddies continue to undertake such a role and what skills a caddie uses to develop and maintain a relationship with a golfer so they can tailor their specific instruction within a short time period to help achieve performance success and to preserve the longevity of the relationship.

In line with other sports (Stone et al., 2020), contemporary methods such as the constraints-led approach have started to emerge in golf to guide practice and performance (Renshaw et al., 2020). The constraints-led approach is underpinned by the theoretical framework of Ecological dynamics theory, which highlights the the importance of complex, dynamic interactions in person-environment relationships (Davids et al., 2015). What is notable in this specific case of caddies, is that they do not perform the movement (i.e., the golf shot). Therefore, to inform their decision-making caddies have to skilfully attune to both the relevant action capabilities of the golfer and how these action capabilities will interact with environmental properties (e.g., physical characteristics, psychological, emotional, and social processes) (Chow, 2013; Seifert et al., 2013). Therefore, it is essential that the caddie and golfer have the same intentions otherwise the information given to the golfer from the caddie might not be relevant (Cordovil et al., 2009; Seifert et al., 2014) or could be inaccurate leading to a decrease in performance. This is supported further, as familiarity (i.e., extent the golfer and caddie have worked together and know each other) has been found to be a moderator of the caddie-golfer relationship with increases of familiarity leading to more effective relationships (Lavallee et al., 2004) and a lack of familiarity leading to an ineffective relationship (Pilgrim et al., 2016). Likewise, research suggests golfers are reluctant to trust

an unfamiliar caddie and the lack of trust subsequently influences the role that the caddie can have, with reduced input in the decision-making process (Pilgrim et al., 2016).

To help develop trust and to increase familiarity, research has emphasised the importance of caddies being friendly and familiar with their golfer to improve the effectiveness of the relationship and subsequent performance (Jowett & Zhong, 2016; Pilgrim et al., 2016). More specifically, research has shown that caddies are required to have skills in interpersonal effectiveness to develop key relationship attributes including "getting to know one another", "reading the other as an open book", "viewing the world in similar ways", "understanding the same things", and "being on the same wavelength" (Jowett & Zhong, 2016, p. 109). The effectiveness and the quality of the relationship increases with time (Jowett & Zhong, 2016); however, it is not known what skills a caddie uses to develop and maintain an effective relationship.

In their role of supporting the golfer to make a final decision on shot selection, caddies are used as a source of support, often providing confidence and reassurance on their decision (Swann et al., 2015). Here, it is important to consider the role that the caddie plays (i.e., resort caddie or travelling caddie) as the specific roles potentially influence the interactions with the environment and the affordances (opportunities for action, Gibson, 1979) that are available to the caddie to help offer the golfer guidance. As Lavallee et al. (2004) highlights the type of information may vary depending on the golfer caddie relationships, with some caddies providing basic information on the distance to the flag whereas other caddies are far more involved in information gathering and decision-making processes including selecting the target and shot selection. The amount of advice and guidance in the decision-making process is likely affected by the skill level and experience of the caddie engaging in a specific environment (i.e., a specific golf course), which can influence an individual's *field of affordances* (defined as "the affordances that stand out as relevant for a particular individual in a particular situation"; Bruineberg & Rietveld, 2014, p. 2). The role of the caddie may also influence the landscape of affordances (*cf*. 'affordances available'; Bruineberg & Rietveld, 2014, p. 2). For example, an affordance landscape would be considered more limited in a situation whereby a caddie predominantly caddies in one place with one individual. The richness of the affordance landscape would increase when caddies are asked to caddie for multiple people or travel to caddie on a range of courses. However, previous studies have been exploratory in nature and as such there is relatively little information available concerning what skills the caddies use to obtain the information required and then adjust the information for each golfer (Pilgrim et al., 2016).

Understanding how the caddie is gathering information to guide the decision-making process is critical as, research has found if the caddie was perceived as competent, the golfer's trust in the caddie would subsequently be increased and this may negate the need for a pre-existing relationship and increase the effectiveness of the working relationship (Pilgrim et al., 2016).

Additionally, all caddies and the golfers in Jowett and Zhong (2016) study reported conflicts/disagreements between the golfer and caddie during the relationships with the majority of the disagreements centred around shot selection. It is therefore of interest to explore what skills a caddie uses in both familiar and potentially less familiar environments, especially in situations whereby caddies have limited time to get to know their golfer's action capabilities or the course.

The majority of previous studies have explored the relationship from the golfer's perspective, with little attention being paid to what skills the caddies use during the decision-making process from a perceptual point of view and the access and use of support. As a starting point, caddies' interviews using stimulated recall (Lyle, 2003; Patton, 2002) would help to provide rich data to encapsulate the variety of individual differences in caddie and golf partnerships and how caddies develop their expertise and any potential support they require. The present study therefore aimed to sample experiential knowledge of experienced caddies, firstly, exploring what caddies perceive as their role in supporting the golfer, and secondly, what skills they believe are required to develop and maintain an effective golfer-caddie relationship.

Method

Research design

This study was informed by relativist ontology and constructionist epistemology, which are underpinned by an interpretive paradigm (Smith & Sparkes, 2016). The study presents opportunities for interviewees to share their experiences to provide rich insights in describing events relevant to personal experiences, enabling an in-depth exploration of their current practice, how their expertise has developed and the current demands (e.g., Cooper & Allen, 2018; Jacobs et al., 2016).

Participants

To ensure the anonymity of caddies and their associated clubs (employers) details pertaining to club and caddie organisations are not outlined and pseudonym are used. However, for context, interviewees had worked within resort golf clubs and also have experience of caddying for International Juniors and Tour Professionals. A purposive sample comprised of seven Professional male caddies who worked at golf clubs and resorts in the UK (3 Caddies) and USA (4 Caddies) and who have all caddied at International Competitions. All caddies have experience of developing consistent partnerships with golfers, including caddying for the same golfer multiple times over the course of a year(s). The caddies had a mean age of 46.29 (±15.07) years old. The mean time spent caddying was 10.00 (±5.63) years. This study was approved by the host Institutional Research Ethics Committee and all interviewees provided informed consent prior to their participation.

Data Collection

Prior to beginning each interview with the participant, the aims of the research study were discussed, at the same time assuring confidentiality, anonymity, and the freedom to withdraw at any stage. All interviews were performed via video call at a convenient time for the participant. Each interview was recorded via the online video platform and there were no connection problems throughout the interviews. Interview lengths ranged between 40 minutes and 1 hour and 7 minutes (average interview time was 50 ± 10 minutes). A backup voice recording was made using an Olympus WS-853 digital voice recorder. Recordings were transcribed verbatim, and the subsequent transcript was sent to each caddie. All caddies confirmed the transcripts were an accurate and true reflection of the interview, prior to data analysis.

For the interview, a semi- structured interview guide was theoretically derived from literature (Lavallee et al., 2004; Pilgrim et al., 2016). The interview guide was piloted on two golf caddies to ensure that conversations in the interviews flowed naturally (Turner, 2010) and to check for timings of the interview. The interview guide was spilt into seven sections; (1) demographics; (2) caddie background; (3) new golfer partnership; (4) caddie role on course; (5) perceptual expertise and decision-making; (6) caddie role off course; (7) caddie support. Lasty, time was given for the interviewee to ask any questions or expand on any further comments before the interview finished. The guide ensured that participants were asked the same set of fundamental questions while allowing them to lead the conversation, elaborate, and discuss their unique experiences (Gill et al., 2008). Probe questions were used at appropriate times to encourage participants to articulate and expand on responses (Gill et al., 2008).

Data Analysis

A reflective thematic analysis was conducted due to its suitability in extracting rich descriptive accounts and for identifying common themes across interviewee cases (Braun et al., 2017). The original transcripts were imported into NVivo 11 (Qualitative Solutions and Research International, Victoria, Australia). Accepting that theory-free knowledge cannot be achieved (Guba & Lincoln, 2005), a pragmatic line was followed that included employing inductive and deductive approaches (Braun et al., 2017) to analyse the recorded data set as outlined below. In line with Braun and Clarke (2006) framework for thematic analysis procedures, the first coding stage was initially undertaken by the lead author to ascribe basic meaning to the data. For example, caddies in some cases expressed clear meaning without the application of a theoretical lens to interpret (e.g., the code being outdoors and active was labelled to the extract *"You know, it's being outdoors and the people you meet, that what keeps you going" (Adrian).* In contrast, other experiences caddies expressed were interpreted from a theoretical position, such as using the authors knowledge of ecological dynamics related to perceptual expertise *"Listen, when I step in and say I got 120 yards but I'm feeling wind into me, let's go with one more club" (Felipe).*

Codes from all transcripts were then organized into clusters and grouped into constructed themes. These themes were then evaluated against original data exacts to check they represented the titled theme. The second author then acted as a critical friend in developing and refining the themes by critiquing and questioning the structure and content of previously constructed themes and revising and renaming if appropriate.

Rigor and Trustworthiness

We endeavor to provide good practice in qualitative research and maintain trustworthiness, accepting the view that universal criteria are included in a socially-constructed list of characteristics (McGannon et al., 2019). First, purposive sampling was adopted to ensure that the most appropriate caddies were recruited to fully address the research question. Methodological rigor was facilitated by conducting two pilot interviews with experienced caddies to evaluate format flexibility and sequencing of interview questions in the context of the interviewee group. From a relativist perspective, the authors accept that subjectivity can influence data interpretation. To encourage reflexivity on the first author's presuppositions and how they may have impacted on the construction of knowledge, the second and third authors acted as "critical friends" (i.e., an evaluative process of critical dialogue between co-investigators to challenge interpretations made) to provide a sounding board for reflection and exploration of multiple and alternative explanations for emerging data (Smith & McGannon, 2018).

It is important to acknowledge that the personal biography of the research team was a motivation for undertaking the current study. Each author has worked within academic, practical and applied scientific contexts in the topic area of the research. Therefore, it was accepted that this prior knowledge would influence the findings. The authors have attempted to illustrate sincerity by being transparent about their biases and motivations, challenging whether they are well-suited to explore the topic of interest, and, how these factors may have played a role in the methods (Tracy, 2010). The final criteria that we would like this research to be judged on is credibility and, in particular, thick description of the data. By providing thick descriptions of the data that offer enough detail to enable readers to come to their own conclusions (Smith, 2017), we aim to demonstrate both the complexity, and the specificity of our interpretations of the caddies' experiences (Sparkes & Smith, 2014).

Results and Discussion

The aim of this exploratory study was to examine the role of a caddie in the golfer-caddie partnership with a particular focus on the expertise the caddies believe were critical in their associated role. Thematic analysis generated in 21 lower-order themes and six higher-order themes, which were organised into three dimensions (see Figure 1). The findings and discussion are presented in three sections, based on the dimensions constructed. First, we discuss the

Figure 1. Thematic map displaying the lower order, higher order and dimensions of the data set.

Lower Order	Higher Order	Dimension
Being outdoors and active	Great outdoors	The role and demands of being a caddie
Providing an experience	Providing an experience	
Caddie role		
Earning your keep	Money on the mind	
Instability		
Motivation		
Perception of fees		
Caddy experience	Perceptual expertise	Caddie's expertise to do the role
Experiential knowledge		
Perceptual Expertise - knowing the individual		
Perceptual expertise - unfamiliar situations		
Perceptual expertise - competition planning		
Preparation		
Training and qualifications		
Bond	Golfer-caddie partnership	
Dealing with mistakes (caddie)		
Managing the partnership		
Partnership		
Players needs and goals		
Repeat partnerships		
Support from others	Support	Importance of support

factors underpinning the role and demands of being a caddie. We then outline the caddies' skills and expertise. Finally, we explore the need for and importance of support.

The Role and Demands of Being a Caddie

Within the dimension, three higher-order themes were generated, *great outdoors*, *providing an experience,* and *money on the mind*. The higher-order theme of *great outdoors* consisted of one lower order theme. The higher- order theme of *providing an experience* consisted of two lower-order themes. The final higher-order theme of *money on the mind* consisted of four lower-order themes.

Great outdoors. All the caddies reported that they enjoyed the aspect of being in the outdoors and having an active job as Adrian[1] highlights:

> *"You know, it's being outdoors and the people you meet, that what keeps you going".* (Adrian)

1 All caddie names used in the results and discussion section are pseudonyms.

The outdoor aspect of the job was a motivator for the role; however, poor weather was a source of stress as Adrian continued:

> *"The worst day for us is anytime it rains. Because players are going to play no matter what. So, it's very miserable in the rain."* (Adrian)

This is consistent with previous research that demonstrated weather was a situational factor that influenced decision-making and acted as a moderator for the caddie-golfer relationship (Lavallee et al., 2004).

Providing an experience. Throughout the interviews it was evident the caddies felt a sense of responsibility to ensure their player had a good experience and were aware that their role was underpinned by providing a service to their player(s). All the caddies were motivated to help the golfers enjoy their golf and reflected when the golfer played well it also enhanced their experience as a caddie, as Craig outlines:

> *"The emotion that you get is just if you're helping him and he just sinks a 30-foot putt on your advice, I don't think your feet are touching the ground when you are walking to the next tee box* (Craig)."

Money on the mind. The caddies spoke about how performance accomplishments were linked to financial reward and longevity of the relationship consistent with Jowett and Zhong (2016) findings. Although the caddies also spoke about turning down work or the potential to turn down work if they did not feel they had a good relationship with the player as Felipe described:

> *"Listen, when I step in and say, "I got 120 yards but I'm feeling wind into me, let's go with one more club" and then they hit it long, I will own up to it. "Hey, I'm sorry, I made a mistake, that's my bad, I felt wind". But actually, on the tournament side, if they're good players they know it's their decision, I am just there for advice, they're the guy that grabs the club. If somebody gave me a hard time about that I probably, wouldn't caddie for them for very long* (Felipe)."

Some of the potential worries the caddies had with money were linked to when working as a resort caddie and how uncontrollable influences such as i) weather, ii) potential physical limits of an active job and iii) lack of clarity around what fee a caddie received) influenced potential wages as Mike expresses:

> "*The most stressful and frustrating thing for a caddie, is not being able to control, any, any factor about whether you actually are able to work* (Mike)."

From the caddies' perspective, good communication within management structures and maximising work during optimal weather conditions including travel could limit some of the immediate worry, as Mike concluded *"You make hay while sun shines as a caddie"* although the long-term implications of these working conditions would require future explorations. It was of note that all the caddies had supplementary paid work related to golf whether that be in management, media or caddying at club and for a travelling player.

Caddie's Expertise to Do the Role

Within the dimension, two higher-order themes of *perceptual expertise* and *the golfer-caddie partnership* were constructed. The higher-order theme of *perceptual expertise* consisted of seven lower-order themes. The higher-order theme of golfer-caddie partnership consistent of six lower-order themes.

Perceptual expertise. Consistent with other research outlining the role of the caddie (Lavallee et al., 2004) the caddies would spend time pre, during and post a round with a player providing technical, physical, and psychological support to their player. What is evident from the interviews is that caddies have invested a considerable amount of time to become knowledgeable and prepared about the course(s) they work/travel too. As *Jack outlines* this included *formal learning*:

> *"We get a PCA certificate so once they've completed their training, you get, it's a Professional Caddie Association* (Jack)."

As well as on the course preparation:

> *"You need to give them the facts, so that's preparation really. Before you start your first round on a golf course, I think you should know for each hole where your ideal landing spot is, where you want to hit it, then how far it is to the green from there. So, when you are on the tee, you can tell these people, if it's their 1st time or if it's their 100th time. Then when you get onto the green, it's always a bit different with different reads, you've got to have the information ready if they would like it, if they don't that's fine, but as long as you've got it ready then you know what the story is, and you can be prepared if they do catch you off guard* (Jack)."

The course preparation seemed to form two main functions. Firstly, being prepared was something the caddies relied on to form the main source of self-efficacy in their role. This is consistent with coaches who cited being prepared was one of their main sources of self-efficacy (Chase et al., 2005). Secondly, this preparation helped the caddie to support their player to make appropriate decisions on shots and strategy as Jack continued:

> *"So, to me it's kinda, provide them with your best plan is, what you think they should do, maybe like the best line off the tee box, or a slightly safer line, then where you would like them to position it, with what club, how far they want to hit it* (Jack)."

The caddies then adapted this information based on the player, the weather, and pin position to provide specific on course guidance. Often and especially when the caddie is working with a new player or on an unfamiliar course (representative of a situation whereby there is an increase in the richness of the affordance landscape and decrease in skilled intentionality; Bruineberg & Rietveld, 2014), the caddie will move on to the next spot to gather information to plan ahead of time. By moving ahead, the caddie is gathering information (e.g., parameters of the shot, such as the distance, wind, direction, or line of a putt) fundamental to informing the player's decision making on shot strategy (Pilgrim et al., 2016). The extra time is giving the caddie a chance to 'perceive affordances' and gain information on functional properties of the environment so they can consider this relative to the action capabilities of the individual and set the task goal. This approach is similar to that reported in a study by Seifert, Cordier, Orth, Courtine, and Croft (2017) who found skilled climbers who did not have prior experience of the specific route used 'preview time' to become aware of functional properties of the environment and to become perceptually attuned to affordances. The information caddies gather when preparing is consistent with trying to achieve task goals. Behaviour emerges from a range of personal and environmental constraints under the boundary condition of a particular task or goal (Araújo & Davids, 2004; Davids et al., 2007). Craig discussed how he would start to gather information to guide decision making from the first interactions with the golfers:

> *"...when they are warming up, I observe them so I get a feeling for what they can do and what they can't do. I will watch them hit tee shots, see which way the ball moves. I will watch him hit his iron shots. I will be making mental notes on how far he's hitting his irons.... Then we will wait until we get called to the 1st tee. At that particular time, I already have him pinpointed to where he's going to play from, for the day* (Craig)."

The caddies use the personal information, such as an individual's functional and action capacities to help guide decisions:

> "*Myself and everybody I deal with we talk about numbers, yardage versus clubs, because I don't know how far somebody hits each of their clubs. So that, right there, saves me, as the caddie, from making any big error* (Adrian)."

Furthermore, Adrian also highlighted the importance of being perpetually attuned to environmental information (e.g., weather and specific task demands):

> *"Yes, you always have to be aware if things play uphill or downhill and then even the wind, whether it's into the wind or downwind. I will tell you the hardest thing for people to comprehend is when you are in the wooded areas and you are trying to just pitch the*

> *ball back into the fairway, and you tell the player you need to hit it 70 yards to get it out, to get back to the fairway, they will grab their sand wedge and not realise they can't hit the ball as high as their head, they got to hit something knee high. You got to explain to them 'you can't hit this club out the treeline, you got to hit something lower. So, you get a disadvantage, because they don't comprehend what you are trying to make them do* (Adrian)."

As the round goes on the caddie use their experience and learning from the player's responses as part of the attunement process to functionally achieve a task goal, notably the expectation to achieve the best score for each player (Araújo et al., 2009). It was apparent that familiarity between a golfer and a caddie did improve the caddie perception of the effectiveness of the decision making and also the bond the caddie had with the golfer:

> *"If you happen to know the player from previous experiences, that gives you a massive advantage, because they know you are good at what you do. You know the golf course and they can trust you, because you know their game. If you are out with someone you have never seen before, it's very tricky to then give them advice on what club to hit, because you don't know exactly how far they hit each club, and equally some players don't like to be told what to do* (Jack)".

Familiarity has been reported to be central in maximizing the functions of the caddie (Bruce, 1999) and a moderator in the golfer-caddie relationship (Lavallee et al., 2004). All the caddies were also aware of the need for and importance of becoming familiar with a golfer's game quickly in order to develop trust and for the golfer to give them a continued or increased role in the decision-making process moving forwards for the rest of that round and subsequent rounds (Lavallee et al., 2004). All of the caddies described the processes of becoming familiar with a golfer's playing needs through using observation throughout but with a particular emphasis on learning the golfer's capabilities, tendencies and preferences on the driving range pre-competition and the first four holes.

As highlighted by Mike it could be considered that the caddie's observational skills, and their ability to understand how a golfer learns and the attunement process including how to adapt their guidance is central to the success of working partnership (Butler, 2014; Moy et al., 2015).

> *"Teamwork done to a tee, movement on the green, green reading you are there ahead, and you are looking from both sides* (Mike)".

> *"Being a caddie is like having a 10-speed bicycle, you gotta figure out what speed your player is, what he wants, what's going to be the best for him* (Tristan)"

Some caddies use their guidance to provide players with information that allows players to adapt their movement behaviours appropriately to achieve the task goal (Rothwell et al., 2019). Alternatively, other caddies chose to provide direct instruction on clubs and yardage. The caddies also reported observing other caddies or watching what happens on the greens to gain further knowledge to support their decision making.

It was also of note that the caddies felt it took them several months to a year (after receiving on course training) to become familiar with adapting their knowledge of the course to suit specific golfers as Leon outlines:

> "*Well, I would say even now that we are still learning and still understanding lots of different aspects of caddying* (Leon)."

Furthermore, all caddies mentioned putting as one of the most difficult areas to learn, for example,

> *"Putt reading you know, that's always stressful. That's what it all comes down to, a guy that's making putts. When somebody looks at you and says "what's this going to do...and it doesn't do what it's supposed to do, that reflects badly on you, and nobody wants to look bad. I always try to make sure I am exactly right with my reads and I usually am pretty good at it, I don't want to sound like I am some conceited guy here, but after doing something for 10 years on that same course all the time, on my course I am very confident but when they go to the [name] hole or they need some extra help, I been there a little bit more now, I get a little more confident there, or going down to [name] Course or [names] courses, it definitely is a little more stressful, you know* (Tristan)"

These quotes reflect how developing course knowledge is on-going and how course knowledge is central to helping the caddie increase their confidence and support they give to players. Tristan's quote in particular highlights how his experience of engaging in a specific environment influences his confidence in decision-making. In the case of Tristan, his confidence was highest when the affordance landscape (Bruineberg & Rietveld, 2014) was limited (one course he has caddied at for ten years) in comparison to when the affordance landscape (Bruineberg & Rietveld, 2014) was richer (caddying at a range of courses he had much less caddie experiences at). Taken together, these quotes highlight how the role of the caddie, in particularly a travelling caddie, influences the on-going training and support needs of the caddie, with more support and training required relative to an increase in richness in the affordance landscape (Bruineberg & Rietveld, 2014).

Golfer-Caddie Partnership. The foundation of the working relationship is developed through building rapport and getting a 'sense' of the player and their potential needs. The caddies did refer to the key attributes reported by Jowett and Zhong (2016), including "getting to know one another", "reading the other as an open book" and "being on the same wavelength". Similarly,

the caddies discussed the importance of trust being developed early into the relationship due to the fact trust is integral to the partnership and decision-making in high pressure situations. As exemplified by Felipe, the trust is built from the caddie providing information that the player uses to hit a good outcome.

> *"You try not to give them something that they are not even 50% chance of making, everything you try to have them do, early on, you want them to have an 85-90% chance of success, so this way they will listen to you for the next 4½ hours* (Felipe)."

When there is trust golfers and caddie do work as a unit (Pilgrim et al., 2016), however, you can see how a golfer could become over reliant on the caddie (Lavallee et al., 2004) as the golfer is probably not aware quite how much the caddie is managing for them (both from a technical and psychological standpoint) during the round and the caddie is motivated to provide help and support to the player.

> *"At my best I always feel like you are almost seen and not heard, popping up at the right times, but I feel like when I'm doing a good job, giving them all the correct information, plotting my way round in terms of the best shots that I know they can hit, because at the end of the day not everyone are professional golfers so not everyone can hit the best drive. Making them feel good about what they've done and what they can do. Tend not to focus on the negatives, when I am caddying. So, focus on the positives, keep their mind on the golf for 50% of the time and 50% chatting about school or work, kids, whatever it may be, and then when it comes to the golf, try not to let them focus on anyone else, I always think they just focus on themselves and what they can achieve and only what they can control* (Jack)."

The most positive caddie experiences were associated with having a bond with the golfer and often the golfer would demonstrate in their actions mutual trust and respect, outside of the boundaries of the professional on course relationship. The bond described is consistent with Jowett and Zhong (2016) findings whereby caddies compared the bond similar to a that of a friendship and family relations whereby there is mutual respect, shared interests and like spending time together.

The caddies demonstrate skills in effective communication in order to meet the golfer's needs and manage expectations. Many of the strategies described by the caddies are underpinned by the caddie having good preparation (e.g., of their golfer's needs, course conditions, suggesting appropriate tees) combining their tournament mapping skills and experiential knowledge. For example, as Tristan highlights, caddies speak to the golfer to understand their needs before playing and they ensure the golfer has all the necessarily equipment/ food before going onto the course:

> *"There are a lot of decisions have to be made right away and if you don't know what somebody is about, you don't want any player to start the day off bad, that's the worst thing to start off poorly, then it's hard to get somebody back after early failure cos then they just get into negative mode and there's not much you can do then* (Tristan)".

Also, the caddies talked about gaining feedback from their golfer post round to continuing make sure they were meet the golfers needs.

> *"When it comes to competition golf it is more about asking the player what he wants from me. What is his expectation of me and then pretty much at the end of the round, was there anything I did today that you don't want me to do or anything that you'd like me to do?* (Felipe)".

Another fundamental area when maintaining the working partnership is dealing with mistakes (golfer's perception of inaccurate information or a genuine mistake). There were differences in the approaches taken by the caddies, but all strategies used minimised any potential confrontation, provided support and emphasised moving on from any mistake. The caddies often reporting speaking to other caddies and using strategies (such as not dwelling on it) to maintain their own confidence after a mistake.

> *"If you are fortunate to be in a group with other caddies, you can work ahead and then with them see if it is you who has done something wrong* (Adrian)."

Importance of Support

Within the dimension, there was one higher-order theme of *Support* and two lower-order theme - supporting others and support from others. What was evident in the interviews was the role support played in enabling the caddies to continue to prosper in their role and indirectly help other fellow colleagues to be effective in their role. When talking about support, the emphasis was placed on the perception of knowing support was available rather than the actual support they received *per se*.

> *"We have a got a good group of lads around then it doesn't really matter where you if you have the right people around, then that can make all the difference. But support, our management team are very competent, and they are always available, and their confidentiality is pretty strong. If I ever had an issue, I'd feel more than happy going to our management team and being able to get any support I needed* (Leon)."

The perception that support is accessible if needed is a key component of Lakey and Cohen (2000) concept of perceived functional social support. Functional social support consists of support in terms of material aid,

emotional support, companionship or information (Lakey & Cohen, 2000) and for an example of the type of functional social support received by the caddies please see quote 14. The distinction between the *structural features* of social networks (e.g., frequency of social contact), and the *function* of providing support to an individual is important when assessing the impact of the social support (Gallo et al., 2015). In particular, as evidence suggests the functional dimension of support is a better predictor of good health than structural dimension (Ozbay et al., 2007). It can be argued that functional social support act as a buffer to stress. This is in accord with the stress-buffering hypothesis (Cohen & Wills, 1985) that postulates social support reduces stress appraisals which in terms reduces negative health. In this case, social support (the perception of) becomes a resource factor, that positively influences the cognitive appraisal of stressful encounter and subsequent coping (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984).

> "*You would say that the support really is among peers, with the caddies being in the same book, and telling them different stories about what happened the day before, and say that you have had a bad experience, it is quite good to get it off your chest and chat about it, with the other boys* (Marc)."

The social support demonstrated by the caddies was related to altruism, a sense of obligation, and the perception of reciprocity (Schwarzer & Leppin, 1991). If the perception of need for support from other caddies is not reciprocated, then this could be problematic (quote 15). Therefore, taken together the findings reinforce how important the perception of being able to 'give and take' social support is to maintain the stress reduction function of social support.

> *"I would say in the beginnings, it was just going out with the veteran caddies, and as long as they saw you working hard, they would do anything they could to help you. Give your ideas on what tendencies on certain greens, that kind of stuff. Nowadays when we have newer caddies, they get on the page of they are entitled to be here because they are at [club name], they feel like they don't need to learn anything from anybody else. They are already here, so they already know everything and it kind of puts a little bit of a bad taste, in the veteran caddies* (Adrian)".

Conclusion

The exploratory investigation into the role of a caddie in the golfer-caddie partnership revealed the caddie is required to develop a range of expertise, to be effective and thrive in their role. The caddie develops expertise through a mixture of training, experiential knowledge and support from fellow caddies/ management. This expertise enables the caddies to form working partnerships quicky, to help use their skills to best support the golfer to meet their needs and develop '*skilled intentionality*' (Bruineberg & Rietveld, 2014). Central

to the maintenance of the caddie's role is the perception of social support from management and other caddies. Further research is required into the moderator of familiarity; exploring how caddies develop familiarity at the beginning of a partnership and when on a new course, including the development of intrapersonal skills and perceptual expertise (from ecological dynamics perspective). Moreover, it is also important to explore if increases in familiarity are linked to an over-reliance on the caddie by the golfer through the use of longitudinal research. The findings from this study have implications on understanding future training needs for caddies in relation to maintaining effective golfer-caddie relationships and best practices to support caddies.

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