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“Worthwhile Aims?”

A Qualitative Study into Experiences of Funding  
within Elite Sport

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## Abstract

Since the awarding of the London 2012 Olympic Games in 2005, elite sport has enjoyed an increasing amount of public support and interest, yet the origins of this go far further back than most appreciate. As the level of British sporting achievement increases, so does the cost; with the Tokyo 2020 Olympic cycle costing £245million (UK Sport, 2016). Numerous studies have examined elite sport and the financial cost as a burden on an individual nation, but few studies directly address the financial impact elite sport has on the individual athlete. Using both qualitative interviews and findings from my own personal reflection, this study seeks to explore how individual athletes within a single Olympic sport experience funding: the financial and emotional pressures, along with explanations of why and how athletes manage this situation, utilising the theories of Pierre Bourdieu. Key research questions address UK Sport's current remit and sustainability, and the burden placed on individual athletes. The findings from both elements of the research corresponded with each other: athletes felt large amounts of pressure, relating to both present and future sporting performance due to funding issues, and explanations of why athletes accepted this level of pressure are explained using the theory of capital.

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## Introduction

The UK's sporting landscape has undergone a radical transformation since the embarrassment at the 1996 Atlanta Olympic Games. With Great Britain finishing behind Kazakhstan in the medal table, it "represented the rock bottom for British sport", with stories circulating throughout the media at the time of British athletes selling their sportswear kit on the streets to raise money (Gibson, 2012), provoking outrage from the British public. Since the embarrassment of Atlanta and these 'dark days' in UK elite sport, sports policy that prioritised and focused on elite sport led to increased success at Sydney (2000), Athens (2004) and Beijing (2008), with Great Britain finishing 10<sup>th</sup>, 10<sup>th</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> respectively. The 4<sup>th</sup> placing at Beijing was believed, at the time, to be the pinnacle of British sporting success – until a 3<sup>rd</sup> place finish at the London 2012 home games was achieved, and a 2<sup>nd</sup> place finish at the Rio 2016 games, defying expectations.

With funding from the London to Rio games increased by 11% to a record £347million (BBC Sport, 2012) however, it is clear that international sporting success entails an increasingly large financial burden. Whilst elite sport success is now celebrated through a wide variety of sports (not simply the traditionally popular sports such as rugby, cricket and football) the major institutions of British sport such as the football Premier League, still attract more viewers and revenue than the minority sports which feature in the Olympics; £2.4bn was paid in taxes to the Exchequer from the Premier League in the 2013/14 season alone (Ernst and Young, 2015), emphasising how much one sport can benefit the economy, and similar benefits across a wider range of sports has been found by Sport England (2013). In contrast to this income, high performance at the quadrennial Olympic Games exists as an expenditure and a cost: and an increasingly large one.

Throughout all sports, preparation events, training camps, international competition, sport-specific support programmes and day to day training needs all culminate to require a vast amount of funding to ensure performance at the highest level is possible. As an organisation, UK Sport receives over £540million to invest and administer into sport; this pays for running major international events, partner investment, administration and staffing costs (UK Sport, 2017[c]; Brebners, 2016). UK

Sport's total expenditure on the World Class Programme for the Tokyo 2020 funding cycle is around £345million (UK Sport, 2016), split between the individual sport's NGB (National Governing Body) and APA's (Athlete Performance Award), with sports receiving often radically different amounts of funding depending on previous and predicted levels of medal success; UK Athletics, for example, will receive £26,824,206 for the Tokyo cycle versus £3,950,888 for British Shooting (UK Sport, 2017[b]).

With such vast amounts of money being invested, it is sometimes easy to forget to focus on the individuals within these systems. Most coverage on mainstream media channels given to the individual athletes inevitably focuses on injury, achievement, failure or retirement. The impact of funding, or more simply *money*, on individual athletes is very rarely the focus. Recently though, many news outlets reported the outrage caused by the most recent UK Sport funding cycle decisions and the decision to stop funding seven Olympic sports, with particular focus on Badminton (BBC Sport, 2017; Slater, 2017; Bartlett, 2017) that lost all UK Sport funding despite over-achieving on its Rio 2016 target of 0-1 Olympic medals (UK Sport, 2016[b]). The creation of the *Every Sport Matters* group occurred from these funding decisions, a group of sports lobbying for a change to UK Sport's *no compromise* ideology; where sports would win and lose funding purely depending on their performance at the Olympic Games. This rejection of the current mandate was also evidenced following the very recent conclusion of a public consultation into UK Sport's remit, and changes that are to be made to allow all sports some baseline level of funding (UK Sport, 2019).

This research project seeks to bring the focus firmly back on to the individual athletes residing within these gigantic sporting programmes. In particular, this project seeks to explore and expand on a substantial gap in the current literature regarding the personal and individual impact funding decisions can have on an individual's sporting life, and impact that the financial burden of elite sport has on individual athletes. The primary focus of this project is the individual's experience within the multi-billion pound industry that British elite sport has become in the past twenty years, with a secondary aim to explore how the work of Pierre Bourdieu can help provide explanations for why athletes experience elite sport in the way they do, in particular the works *Distinction* (1984) and *Outline of a Theory of Practice* (1977).

In summary, the project will explore the individual impact that government-based and NGB-led funding decisions have on individual sporting careers – both in terms of performance levels, and actual financial feasibility to compete in the sport at an elite level. This will be achieved through focusing on three key research questions guiding the project:

1. Does UK Sport's relentless drive for Olympic medal success encourage or discourage the athletes involved?
2. Is the current UK model of funding sustainable given the ever-increasing costs associated with elite success?
3. How much of burden is elite sport to those athletes participating in it?

The project also has an intense personal element evident throughout the research. As an archer myself I have represented Great Britain internationally three times, at the World University Championships, the European Championships and the 2017 World Cup Stage 4. I have represented England twice, at the Commonwealth Euronations in both 2017 and 2018. I have been a member of the GB Elite Squad for two years, and regularly compete at the National Tournament series, including National Championships and National Tour events; in 2017 I won four out of the six National Tour events, the highest level of domestic competition in GB – more than any woman before me. Yet this success has come at a cost, both literally and metaphorically. My sport costs roughly £6,000 to £10,000 to do at an elite level, and the pressure of meeting this cost had begun to affect me in several ways; these are explored in an autoethnography section within the research. Alongside my own experiences during the 2016-2018 was the experience of my archery squad mates; defunded post-Rio and left by UK Sport to pick up the pieces of a programme bereft of any funding and future. This personal experience was to form a key part of this project.

The project is structured as follows. A comprehensive literature review of the area was undertaken. Incorporated into this literature review was also a section exploring the relevance of Bourdieu's theory, and its previous applications to past research. Following this literature review, a section detailing the researcher's own

personal involvement and reflections on their own experience with sport is presented. This is intended to be used as a guide for readers to familiarise themselves with the topics and issues raised within the research, as well as being a worthwhile piece of self-research in its own right. The personal reflection section was intended to be a section during which the author could take a proverbial 'step back' from the sport and lived experience, and was also an attempt to change the researcher positionality to benefit the research. The section was not a general reflection and was a much focused deep dive into the specifics of the world of elite sport which provided foundations for the later analysis within the project.

A methodology chapter follows this, explaining in much more detail the reasoning behind the specific method chosen. Research was conducted using purely qualitative methods. Semi-structured interviews were arranged with participants recruited to the study through networks and prior relationships; all participants were known to the researcher before the research started. The interviews were planned to last around one hour; every interview ran over time, at participants' request. Interviews were then transcribed, producing a wealth of rich data. Over 65,000 words were transcribed from six interviews, far surpassing the expected amount of data. Data was then coded using thematic analysis; the most dominant codes then formed headings in the results sections, with the lesser codes forming separate sub-sections within that heading. The results provide a rich and uncensored insight into the mindset and experience of competitive elite sportspeople; quotes presented are left in their full form to reduce misinterpretation and to allow the voice of the participant to be clear. Following the presentation of results, the research then moves into discussing the findings of the research within the framework established by the earlier literature review, breaking the findings into three main sub-sections: the UK Sport system, the financial cost to athletes, the other cost to athletes and the relevance and application of Bourdieu's theory to the findings. Finally, the project is drawn to a conclusion, in which final thoughts and explanations are presented, along with another call for further research.

### Literature Review:

Having addressed the aims and objectives of this research project in the previous section, the pre-existing body of literature and policy documents surrounding the topic of elite sport must be reviewed in order to ground the current project.

It is worth remembering the sheer lack of research undertaken on the actual financial pressures elite sport places on individual sportspeople. A large body of work does exist on the expenditure of certain states and countries on their national sporting programmes, but this project seeks to explore the micro-level implications of policy. As such, this literature review cannot present what does not yet exist; the lack of literature directly relating to the research questions is not a mistake or oversight on the part of the researcher. Far from it, it only stands as a greater call for further research before the fieldwork has even occurred.

The literature review presented below is therefore broken into several key sections. The first such section addresses a comprehensive overview of sport policy from the Wolfenden Report's publication in the 1960's up to the present day. This overview is key to understanding how the UK has arrived at its current policy position, and the potential future direction. The review then moves on to explore previous literature on several athlete-centric topics such as retirement, stress, employment, performance, wellbeing and dual-careers; this section is important as some of the research in this project draws on these areas in its unique exploration of the financial pressures elite athletes face; these areas have been included as the impact that funding and finances has on individual athletes is a key part of this research project, and as such a solid understanding of the breadth of the issue is not only desired, but required. A final section is dedicated to the theoretical underpinnings by Pierre Bourdieu, a theorist whose work has previously been used many times by authors writing on the topic of elite sport. His theory of forms of capital is drawn upon throughout the later discussion and conclusion, and therefore outlining its previous uses in past research is important.

### Historical Development of Sports Policy:

In order to ground the research in the most appropriate framework, a deeper understanding of the UK policy surrounding elite sport must be explored. The long-lasting and wide ranging effects that decisions made over two decades ago are making must be detailed in order to understand exactly where the UK has come from, the reasons for its aggressive and explosive improvement in world-class performance, and where the UK currently sits in terms of its own performance comparative to other major sporting super states.

Government policy surrounding sport was virtually non-existent until the development and growth of the welfare state following World War II. Sport was increasingly seen as beneficial not only to society as a whole, but also to the individual participant in terms of physical benefits. The Wolfenden Report (1960) is often seen as a seminal moment for UK sport policy; at the time it was seen as “the most comprehensive policy document concerning the organisation and administration of sport that had been seen in Britain until that time” (Bloyce and Smith, 2009: 31). The report was also critical of the current system of administration of sport within the UK, and its impact led to the eventual creation of the Sports Council in 1975, which was in turn eventually replaced by Sport England in 1996. The 1950’s and 1960’s, and the general post-war period, is often seen as a “period of optimism about the capacity of government to intervene and improve the quality of life” (Houlihan and White, 2002: 13), and given the links between sport and perceived individual and societal benefits, Houlihan and White argue that “it is hardly surprising that the evolution of the welfare state from the early 1950’s to the present day should have strongly influenced the parallel evolution of sports development” (2002: 9) due to the social cohesion that could be achieved in the post-war society through sport (Keech, 2003: 15). An early iteration of what became UK Sport existed during the 1970’s and 1980’s as The Sport Council, whose main role was to promote sport for all, with a great level of emphasis placed on opening leisure centres and public sports facilities, indicative of its heavy focus on widening participation and youth sport at the time (Green, 2006). This is evidenced through the rapid growth in the sport and leisure sector at the time, as “the Council helped to achieve the

construction of over 500 new swimming pools and almost 450 new indoor sports centres between 1971 and 1981” (Houlihan and White, 2002: 21). Whilst the remit of this work is not to explore the work and development of public participation rates in sport, the increased interest on a government level is an important consideration: sport and leisure was being considered as a key part of government social policy for the first time.

The 1980’s heralded a more troubled period of sports policy. With the election of Margaret Thatcher in 1979, sport was “pushed to the margins of policy” (Houlihan and Green, 2010: 93), with more pressing issues throughout the decade garnering greater levels of political attention. Thatcher regarded sport as a negative social force and “government intervention was also prompted by Thatcher’s recognition of sport, and in particular football, as a site for social deviance” (Houlihan and Lindsey, 2013: 28), reversing how sport had been seen in previous decades as an agent of social cohesion through society. The reputational damage done to the entire sports and leisure industry due to events such as the Hillsborough disaster of 1989 and the Bradford stadium fire of 1985 led to football in particular as being seen as an overwhelmingly negative societal force (Taylor, 1987), with the various incidents and disasters leading to a “reinvention of the game itself...it focused ideas for a breakaway league and contributed to a chain of events that led to the Premier League, a lucrative deal with Sky television and the current fashionableness and wealth that pervades the upper echelons of football...” (Johnes, 2004: 144) emphasising how an entire sport and industry had to reinvent itself because of the poor representation by politicians. The impact of a single sport – football – on the wider sports policy landscape cannot be overstated; Thatcher’s own personal views of football, the class-based nature of football and the wider government view of sport allowed sport to fall out of favour with politicians given the overwhelmingly negative coverage. It is also worth remembering that Thatcher introduced Regulation 909 – the right for local councils to sell off school playing fields for commercial gains in 1981 (McDougall, 2014: 297). This policy continued through the 1990s and into the 2000s – the current poor state of school sport provision can arguably be traced back to this policy (Houlihan and Lindsey, 2013). Another indicator of Thatcher’s opinion on sport was her attempt to politicise the 1980 Moscow Olympic Games and her

demand to the British Olympic Association (BOA) to boycott the 1980 Moscow Olympic Games. Athletes and National Governing Bodies (NGB's) refused this request, with the vast majority of NGB's and athletes refusing to join the boycott (Jeffreys, 2012). Thatcher's resignation and the change to John Major as Prime Minister heralded a new belief in sports policy. With Major's own personal interest in sport, it proved a contrast to Thatcher's previous negative attitude towards sport. Major's era brought the policy surrounding sport, and in particular elite sport, closer to something that we recognise today.

The foundations of the modern UK elite sport system was established with the restructuring of the Sports Councils; as UK Sport was not established until later – the seven year period between Major's election and the establishment of this key player in the sporting landscape of the UK was filled with preparation, background tasks and foundation work on the UK's modern elite sport system; as such, little change was realised in purely performance terms during this time. During this period, the core policy document *Sport: Raising the Game* was published in 1995 and was an "important landmark in the growing involvement of the state and governmental interest in sport" (Bloyce and Smith, 2009: 46), outlining a future direction for sport and placing the remit for sport firmly within government hands. Youth sport was placed within the remit of the educational sector, reducing the need for a single organisation to attempt to cover multiple forms of sport (Phillpots, 2013: 196), allowing for elite sport to be addressed separately.

Major's first step that led to the landscape of elite sport changing was the establishment of a National Lottery, first drawn in 1994. The proceeds from the lottery were split into a range of different groups, such as heritage, sport, the arts and charitable purposes, and the National Lottery has successfully raised over £39bn since 1994 (Lottery Good Causes, 2018). The National Lottery continues to be one of the most important sources of revenue to UK Sport, and thus elite sport in general; this is emphasised through the frequent messages from athletes thanking players for playing, and also special one-off sports related draws such as the 2012 and 2016 Olympic specials (UK Sport, 2016; Camelot, 2014). Recent challenges to the lottery include a drop in the level of sales since the introduction of the £2 standard ticket, and also a lower level of lottery purchases in general, with revenues in 2013 less than



half of the levels in 1995 (Forrest and Gulley, 2017), indicating a serious downward trend in lottery revenue, and a potential gap in funding for UK Sport in future years. The potential impact this could have on future UK Sport income should be of key concern.

Running alongside the successive governments plans for wider societal interest in sport and leisure was the ever-present key measurement of the UK's success at the very pinnacle of sporting excellence: the Olympic Games. The performance of Great Britain followed as such (overall rank reported): 1968 Mexico City, 10<sup>th</sup>; 1972 Munich, 12<sup>th</sup>; 1976 Montreal, 13<sup>th</sup>; 1980 Moscow, 9<sup>th</sup>; 1984, Los Angeles, 11<sup>th</sup>, 1988, Seoul, 12<sup>th</sup>; 1992, Barcelona, 13<sup>th</sup>; 1996, Atlanta, 36<sup>th</sup>. Olympic achievement has always conferred a level of international prestige; the cold war between the USA and the USSR continued throughout this time period, with the Olympic games seen as a key way for each nation to "beat" the other (Guttman, 1988), emphasising this concept. This foreign policy direction from both nations saw exponential growth in both expenditure on sport from both nations, but also a radical change in performance achievements for sport, despite a supposed difference in perspective on how sport was viewed by both the allied powers and the Soviet union (Bolz, 2015). This ulterior motive for success in sporting events led to dramatic expenditure by both nations on its sport programmes. Increasing evidence also points to extremely high levels of doping by USSR athletes during this cold war on sport, proving victory by any means necessary was still acceptable to the administration of the time (Beamish and Ritchie, 2006; Hunt et al., 2012; Kalinski, 2003), emphasising the importance at a national level to achieve victory in sporting mega-events, likely through a pursuit of international prestige.

Referring back to home performance, the Atlanta games were (and still are) regarded as the biggest embarrassment in British sport, with the 36<sup>th</sup> place finish widely regarded as "dismal" (The Guardian, 2016), and the home team of GB athletes referred to as "the team of shame" (Wigmore, 2016). A single gold medal was won by Matthew Pinsent and Steve Redgrave in rowing; the Atlanta Games performance was noted as being "the worst in post-war history with just one gold medal and 36<sup>th</sup> position in the medals' table" (Shibli et al., 2012: 275), drawing shame instead of prestige from Great Britain's sporting performance. The Atlanta Olympic Games were

too soon for any meaningful policy change introduced by Major to show results, however, the disastrous performance helped secure public opinion and justification for the immense development that elite sport (not grassroots sport) was about to receive; it was regarded as “the launch pad for continuous improvement in performance in the next three Olympic games” (ibid.).

The cumulative effects of Thatcherite sporting policy, lower expenditure on sport and the general feeling of unease towards sport during the difficult period of the 1980s, with the associated hooliganism and violence present at football games led to the disaster at Atlanta; a lack of investment, public disinterest, lack of elite sport facilities and a lack of funding for elite sport to enable various sports to compete at international world-class tournaments in preparation for major events such as the Olympics all became apparent. Beginning with Thatcher’s departure from government in 1990, sport was “a political sub-sector which was under-resourced, lacking in strategic leadership and on the margins of the government’s agenda” (Houlihan and Lindsey, 2013: 2).

UK Sport (officially called The United Kingdom Sports Council) succeeded the Sports Council of Great Britain and was established by Royal Charter on 19<sup>th</sup> September 1996, and became fully operational on the 1<sup>st</sup> January 1997 (DCMS, 2015). The origins of UK Sport can be found in 1994 under John Major’s Conservative government, in particular by the then-Sports Minister, Iain Sproat. In one speech, Sproat realigned the entire British sports policy at the time, stating:

“[the Sports Council will]...withdraw from the promotion of mass participation, informal recreation and leisure pursuits and from health promotion, [which are] laudable aims, they are secondary to the pursuit of high standards of sporting achievement...In due course, those changes will allow us to give much greater help to our most important national sports” - (Sproat; quoted in Pickup, 1996: 205)

Key to the functioning of UK Sport is that it is a non-departmental public body (NDPB), “an NDPB has traditionally been referred to as an organisation which supports the government but is not a government department, and which operates at arm’s length from ministers...what they all have in common is the financial support they

receive from the government...they all utilise Exchequer funding and money from the National Lottery but none of the organisations are fully accountable to the government” (Trimble et al., 2010: 77), making UK Sport accountable to taxpayers.

With the election of Tony Blair’s New Labour government in the dramatic 1997 landslide general election, the entire shift in social policy regarding sport and the developments brought in by Major’s government could have been reversed – but Tony Blair kept the legacy and progress made very much alive with a somewhat slow yet stable rise in profile for sport. Again, major focus was placed on school sport, in particular curriculum time dedicated to PE (Houlihan and Green, 2006), perhaps unsurprising given his dedication to the rhetoric of “education, education, education” (Giddens, 1998: 109). Two key policy documents from the early New Labour period included *A Sporting Future For All* (2000) and *Game Plan* (2002). With the immense majorities that Blair commanded in both the 1997 and 2001 elections, changes to sports policy was very easily passed through parliament. Alongside this fact was the continuation (albeit tweaked) of Major’s initial sporting policy; Labour would have found little opposition to enacting what the Conservative Prime Minister Major had started years previous with the publication in 1995 of *Raising the Game*, and the establishment of an elite sport-specific organisation. Despite these seemingly good intentions by the Conservative and Labour governments of the 1990’s and 2000’s, Houlihan and Green (2009) summarised the dominant themes in sport policy discussions as “the fragmentation, fractiousness and perceived ineffectiveness of organisations within the sport policy area” and places a particular analytical focus on the efforts of numerous governments to pursue a modernization agenda (2009: 678-679), detailing the need for refinement of the sports policy that was introduced during this era of change.

Almost immediately following the landslide victory that followed years of Conservative voter fatigue (Pattie and Johnston, 2001), the New Labour government replaced the Department for National Heritage with the still-current Department for Media, Culture and Sport (DCMS). What followed this rebrand was a continual willingness for New Labour to develop the impact and reach sport and leisure had, owing a large part to the development of policy aimed towards reducing and alleviating social exclusion – a key focus of the Blair Labour government. As Houlihan

and White (2003: 81) emphasise, addressing social exclusion, and promoting “moral, urban and economic regeneration” was a key driver in why the incoming Labour government placed so much emphasis and attention on the issues raised by sporting provision in the UK, again echoing perceived benefits to social cohesion that sport could have (Wankel and Berger, 1990). Houlihan and Lindsey’s review of the Labour government of the time focused on this keen use sporting mega-events, improving school sport provision through increased PE curriculum time and a drive to use sport as a vehicle for reducing social exclusion and promoting greater inclusion, both on an individual and community level (Houlihan and Lindsey, 2013).

Also pivotal to Blair’s sporting vision was the desire to host sporting mega-events such as the Olympics, IAAF World Championships, UEFA European Championships and FIFA World Cup; these were a key element of the policy document *Game Plan* (2002), and despite major political differences, these bids and desires to host mega-events have been carried on to the later Coalition and Conservative governments. The awarding of the 2012 Games to London in 2005 is a perfect example of cross-party political support for hosting a mega-event; this win ensured a seven-year long drive in increasing provision and support for elite sport in the time period before the major home games event.

The impact of these various historical funding policies and decisions still has a great effect on the current landscape of British elite sport. The Rio games (2016) secured the best Olympic medal finish – with an outstanding 2<sup>nd</sup> place in the medal table. The impact of the time period from Thatcher departure from government in 1990, the Major premiership and the New Labour government (up until the successful bid for the 2012 Olympic games) heralded a period of change for sports policy that dragged the level of performance for Britain from a dismal 36<sup>th</sup> in the 1996 Atlanta games up to an incredible 2<sup>nd</sup> place finish in Rio – beating the likes of sporting superpowers like China and Russia – shows the incredible determination of the athletes, staff, coaches, programme managers, policy-makers and indeed politicians to maintain the levels of funding given to the elite programmes.

Despite repeated criticism that UK Sport prioritise only sports likely to medal, to the detriment of non-Olympic sports or sports that under-achieve according to UK Sport’s strict targets, UK Sport maintains that it is still successfully delivering against

its government and public-led remit; “supporting athletes and sports to compete and win medals at the Olympics...since UK Sport was founded by Royal Charter in 1997 we have taken GB from 36<sup>th</sup> in the Olympic medal table at Atlanta to second in the Olympic and Paralympic medal table at Rio 2016” (UK Sport, 2018). Despite this, support for the current approach is still not universal. In 2017, before Dame Katherine Grainger took up her post of Chief Executive, eleven sports joined together to try and change the current approach that UK Sport takes with regards to performance-related funding, emphasising how criticism of UK Sport is evident even within elite sports themselves.

Critical of the current approach being taken by UK Sport, the eleven sports (Archery GB, Baseball, Softball UK, British Basketball, British Fencing, British Handball, British Volleyball, British Weightlifting, Badminton England, GB Wheelchair Rugby and Table Tennis England) joined together and have called for “all sports to receive baseline funding to underpin their elite programmes and give their athletes a fair chance to represent GB at the Olympics or Paralympics” (Table Tennis England, 2017). UK Sport has held its current goal – Olympic success - since its inception by the Conservative Government from the time John Major was Prime Minister. The recent pushback against the purely medal based performance targets has been a recent development as an increasing number of sports failed to meet medal targets, particularly at the 2016 Rio games. It should be noted that the home games of London 2012 allowed all Olympic sports to receive some level of UK Sport funding for their elite programmes to ensure – what was referred to before the games – as “the best Olympic Games ever” (DCMS, 2008); this led to all sports, some of them for the first time in their history, receiving a level of funding directly driven towards an exceptional level of performance for the home games (UK Sport, 2010).

It is for this very reason this research project is sorely needed – the impact that policy direction has had on sport within the UK in the past 25 years is immeasurable. The direct impact that the policy detailed in this section has on the very athletes used as a sample in this project *cannot* be overstated. From the damaging impact of football hooliganism in the 1980s, to the nation-wide elation felt at the awarding of a home Olympic Games for 2012, and the achievements at not

only those games, but that of Rio 2016 – sport has endured an incredibly turbulent time in the past thirty years, with potential major change in the near future.

### Elite Athletes:

This section will address a wealth of previous research on elite sport by reviewing topics that share broad themes with this research project. There is, as said, a lack of literature directly addressing individual athlete's financial position and capability, whilst there is a plethora of literature on elite sport in wider areas. This section will address athlete identity, dual careers, performance pressure, injury, retirement and a final more substantial section on athletes as workers, as these themes are highly likely to emerge through discussions with participants in this project.

One element of previous research includes the concept of athlete identity, through both the duration of the athletes sporting career, and even in to the time following inevitable retirement. The media, along with the public “tends to glorify the professional sports career” (Allison and Meyer, 1988: 221), an idea important to the notion of athlete identity. Brewer et al. (1993: 237) wrote a brief, but useful, definition of athlete identity as “the degree to which an individual identifies with the athlete role”, emphasising how an athletes identity is wholly tied to their life as an *athlete*; their achievements outside the world of sport, their wider social spheres and other pursuits are generally cast aside in favour of this idea of athlete identity. The implications of this are immense. As Stephan and Brewer wrote, this narrow identity can become something of a danger, as “problems linked to a strong athletic identity arise when there is a commitment to the role of athlete at the expense of other aspects of life” (2007: 67). It is this sole dedication to one single element of an individual's entire social life and identity that causes the issue: once an individual fails to be an athlete, by these definitions they then fundamentally fail to have an identity. Failing to perform well athletically is also a danger; “elite athletes with strong and exclusively athletic identities risk the possibility of their self-worth and esteem becoming dependent on athletic performance” (Sabato et al., 2016: 103). The immense dedication athletes give to their sport clearly then comes at many costs:

physical; in the sense of their bodies through injury; social; in the damage done through this identity to other elements and parts of their identity that go undeveloped and lost; and finally; mentally; through the strain and pressure of years of practice, training and competing at the highest levels possible.

This level of dedication to sport has been studied by a number of previous researchers. The reality of being an elite athlete nowadays are such “that they need to dedicate themselves more and more to achieving excellence...the reality facing many elite athletes is that few are sufficiently financially rewarded to allow them to make a living out of their sport” (Aquilina, 2013: 374). Due to this, many elite athletes hold dual-careers, living as students (or in another profession) alongside their careers as an elite athlete. Aquilina goes on to write that “significant investment has been allocated to academic, national training centres and professional set-ups that accommodate student-athletes to put in place programmes that adopt a more tailored and integrated approach to enhance their academic and athletic development” (2013: 376), emphasising the holistic approach taken by governments to elite athletes pursuing dual-careers - support programmes have also been studied and suggested in academic research (Petipas et al., 1992). This is for good reason; there is a clear evidential link between student-athletes and Olympic teams; “over the past 20 years an incredible 61% of Team GB Olympic Games medallists and 65% of Team GB gold medallists have been to university” (Universities UK, 2012: 3). Despite this clear link between dual-career athletes and success, there is evidence that it is very difficult to adequately juggle both an elite sporting career and university-level study. Athletes themselves report following a dual-career as being difficult, with multiple barriers to both academic and sporting success evident (Cosh and Tully, 2014; Subijana et al., 2015), and Lupo et al. (2015) highlighted a specific issue in that “competition schedules spread over several months or packed periods could affect the student-athlete’s capability to successfully organise his/her athletic and educational commitments” - whilst training and practice is often the focus of an elite athletes life, it is important to remember that whilst those are generally flexible, the domestic and international competition structure will be set and totally inflexible around a student-athletes academic demands. Whilst studying during elite sport may, on the surface, appear to blend both worlds perfectly, the reality for many is

that elite sport and university level education combine and can cause a great deal more stress for an individual on top of high levels of sporting stress. Despite this increased stress *during* an elite athletes sporting career Torregrossa et al. (2015) found that athletes who followed dual careers found their retirement from sport easier, suggesting longer term benefits for those who can balance both high level sport and education.

A more specific term this section will focus on is burnout; the culmination of long-term stress and overtraining over a long period of time. Whilst a whole body of literature exists on athletes abilities to perform under stressful conditions, to produce a result when under extreme pressure, for example Savage and Torgler's study of footballers ability to successfully score penalties in World Cup matches (2012), the focus of this section is on the athletes mental health and the impact that long term stress has on the individual. Originating from wider literature on specific stressful occupations (Dale and Weinburg, 1989) and the long term effects these occupations have on individuals, burnout within sport is separate from the effects of overtraining, which refers to a purely physical phenomenon, often caused by physical overload without adequate rest periods (Gould and Dieffenbach, 2002: 25). Athletes suffering from burnout "typically experience chronic fatigue, poor sleep patterns, episodes of depression and helplessness...not surprisingly, their performance is considerably impaired" (Lemyre et al., 2007: 116), and a strong link has been discovered to exist between personal motivation, burnout and athletes pursuit of perfectionism (Smith, 1986; Gould, 1996[a]; Gould et al., 1996; Lemyre et al., 2007; Hall et al., 1998; Roberts and Treasure, 2012). Athletes who report feeling trapped within their sport often display higher levels of burnout versus athletes who are still actively want to be involved in their sport (Raedeke, 1997), and several models of burnout that identify early signs, consequences and athletes susceptibility to burnout have been developed over the past few decades (Gustafsson, 2009; Gustafsson et al., 2009). Burnout is characterised therefore by excessive levels of training, lack of appropriate recovery time and can frequently cause wider psychological symptoms. The importance of the concept of burnout to this project is immense, as so few elite archers are able to train full-time and fully-funded, and must balance their sporting



commitments with other major commitments such as full-time jobs or higher education, if they want to continue doing their sport at a high level.

Inevitably, all athletes must face the issue of retirement at some point in their career (Martin et al., 2013; Park et al., 2012; Knights et al., 2015; Baillie, 1993; Smith and McManus, 2008). One very recent survey distributed through a BBC investigation found that only 30% of athletes were actually able to choose when to retire (BBC, 2018) an important piece of research even if outside of the academic sphere. There is a wide range of reasons for retiring from sport, most commonly, these are due to injury or dropping performance levels but, as opposed to retiring from a job, athletes “are often forced to retire from a sport that they still very much love and enjoy participating in” (Ellis, 2015), making retirement a decision that athletes often do not often have autonomy in making. Whether through a drop in performance, or due to injury, many sportspeople are simply forced into retirement. A vast body of literature does exist however that studies the effects, impact and causes of athlete retirement, some of which is presented below due to the projects likelihood of encountering retirement issues.

Many studies focus on the negative aspects of retirement such as depression, addiction, identity crises and other overwhelmingly negative effects of withdrawing from elite sport (Martin et al., 2014; Park et al., 2012; Knights et al., 2015; Cosh et al., 2012), with the rapid change to lifestyle, meaning and structure often a struggle for many athletes. One text goes so far as to state that “retiring athletes require ongoing institutional support to maintain their feelings of self-worth as they transfer from an elite sporting career” (Smith and McManus, 2008: 48), emphasising the extent to which ex-athletes require ongoing and continual holistic support in order to successfully transition to post-athletic life. It is of little surprise that this occurs given the previous detail of athlete’s identity and the strength of which athletic performance and lifestyle creates and maintains an athlete’s social identity. With much of a sportspersons life played out in the public eye, it is unsurprising the impact that the media can have on retirement and an athlete’s post-sport life. Transitioning out of sport is a complicated event in itself; studies have generally stated that the period of time for transition out of high performance sport is around six months to a year (Stambulova; 1997, 2001). A point

of interest is the limited UK Sport “transitional APA funding” available for those leaving a World Class Programme (the highest level of UK Sport’s elite programme). This is set at a rate of one month of funding for each year spent at the Podium Potential Level (capped at four years), and is a standard stipulated rate throughout all UK Sport funded sports (British Weightlifting, 2014). This maximum four month post-sport funding period seemingly lacks any wider appreciation of just how traumatic retiring from elite sport can be for the athlete involved, and the lack of any other programme to help elite athletes transition out of sport after their inevitable retirement is a cause of concern given the potential for mental health issues (Jewett et al., 2018). Mental health and athlete welfare has been a key focus of academic studies (Kornbeck, 2017; Kerr and Stirling, 2017) and public organisations in the past few years (DCMS, 2018; UK Sport, 2018). A number of initiatives in recent years, with scandals regarding welfare having emerged from a range of sporting NGBs. During 2017 the NGBs of sailing, judo, archery, speed skating, athletics, swimming, cycling, rowing, canoeing, bobsleigh and taekwondo were embroiled in welfare related scandals which brought much public focus onto the mental health and wellbeing of athlete’s, and just how far NGBs were willing to go in the pursuit of medals.

Reiterating a point made in the earlier identity section, previous literature strongly correlates a traumatic retirement from sport with the strength of the athletic identity; this identity is reproduced to the exclusion of any other social identity (Cosh et al., 2015), and thus retiring the athlete (and the identity by default) will naturally result in a loss of direction and meaning for the athlete post-sport. The old athlete identity becomes “obsolete” and the adjustment can be lengthy (Barker-Ruchti and Schubring, 2016). From this concept and the literature above detailing how traumatic even a standard retirement from sport can be, it is very surprising to see a substantial gap in the literature regarding retirement from sport directly as a result of a personal financial situation, as the indications from previous literature are that finances play a major role in an athlete’s ability to continue sport at an elite level (Hogan and Norton, 2000; Committee of Public Accounts, 2006; Merkel, 2013).

Another aspect that is particularly relevant to this research project is the previous literature that emphasises how difficult accessing elite athletes as a

research population is. Of particular importance is the work of Katrina Douglas. Writing extensively on the work of female pro golf players, Douglas' work focuses on a range of themes including the reality of being an elite athlete, mental health issues and life phases as experienced by athletes (Douglas and Carless, 2014; Douglas and Carless, 2009[a]; Douglas and Carless, 2009[b]; Carless and Douglas, 2009 ). In addition to access issues, Douglas also emphasised how a multidisciplinary approach to research involving elite sportspeople was necessary "if we are to better understand the lives of elite and professional sportspeople" (Carless and Douglas, 2013: 702) further compounding the difficulties around this particular research area. As with any research into elite populations, gaining access is notoriously difficult (Hertz and Imber, 1995; Balague, 1999). More specific reasons and details have been explained by those researching this area; Roderick drew attention to how research into elite athletes "...has proven hard to achieve given the problem of accessibility to, and arranging extended interviews with, professional footballers, many of whom are cautious of 'outsiders' delving into their thoughts and feelings about their (often highly) public careers" (2013: 156). Stier emphasised how "contemporary elite sport is a highly internationalized, professionalized, commercialized and media-constructed phenomenon" (2007: 99); with very little of an elite sportspersons life left private. The need for the research participants in that project to control and limit what little part of their life they can restrict access to becomes apparent; performances by athletes are often promoted as huge public spectacles (such as the Olympics), lifestyles are followed by the press and social media exists to try and draw ever-increasing attention to an athletes profile by allowing glimpses into an athlete's private home life. It is perhaps reasonable that the athlete in question may simply want privacy and would not be willing to tolerate researchers prying into their private sphere, unless the participants see the benefit.

The next section will address the similarities between athletes within this study and the wider spheres of employment and work. Within the wider literature on employment and the sociology of work, there is an entire body of literature existing on the impact, nature and effect that the new economy of work (Neff et al., 2006: 309) is having on society and individuals residing within it. From Blair's exploration of the instability and uncertainty working in the UK film industry,

characterised by the “highly uncertain social context in which freelancers in film production operate” (2001: 690) to the experiences of creative professionals in New York City where the “normalization of risk serves as a model for how workers in other industries should behave under flexible employment conditions” (Neff et al., 2006: 307), similarities between industries characterised by typically fragile work arrangements do exist – sport specific studies have, however, been more limited in number. Athletes share many similarities with workers in other industries, particularly the creative industries. The fragility of an athlete’s position is due to the need for the athlete to *physically perform* in order to earn money – the detail of how athletes earn money in the UK through APA schemes has been discussed earlier. If an athlete stops performing for a length of time (not a simple one-off lacklustre performance) they risk having this financial provision withdrawn. Similarities could again be drawn between Marchant-Haycox and Wilson’s exploration of classical musicians, and attributing “high levels of stress to a competitive work environment, constant criticism from external sources, and unconventional working patterns” (1992), features of a workplace that sound decidedly similar to those in elite sport, or the “culture of competitiveness and back-stabbing” that exists in music college (Dobson, 2010 :252) – a structure somewhat similar to the entry-level elite sports squads.

Athletes do, however, differ from individuals in the creative industries in a few key areas. First and foremost, whilst musicians or artists bodies and abilities are their tools of the trade – athletes have a short time period in which their body can be used to its greatest potential. The variation between sports is immense, but generally speaking a musician or artist’s career will be far longer than that of a professional athlete. This adds a time critical element into the life of an athlete; if they fail to *make it*, or even fail to keep performing at a high enough level, their skill is suddenly worthless. A second key difference is that musicians or artists have an ability that is transferable between different companies or organisations: for example, a fashion designer could work for Dior one year, and Chanel the next. An athlete in a specific sport, especially a sport with only one performance route, cannot simply change organisations. A runner in the UK can only run for British Athletics at the Olympic Games. There is no alternative NGB. This is vitally important as not only

does the athlete become *locked* into a sport, they also become *locked* into an organisation. Another final consideration is the lack of as many lucrative opportunities in the sporting world. Federer, Hamilton, the Williams' sisters and McIlroy are all household names and play a range of sports; yet how many musicians earn a considerable wage from their skills, in a range of genres? Superstars in the music and creative industries can be found all across different genres and geographical locations, something that sport simply cannot do; we do not have different 'genres' of football or tennis. These above points highlight why the previous literature exploring creative industries, fragility of the new economy and insecure jobs cannot particularly help with regards to this study's focus. That being said, there has been previous research undertaken over the past two decades that addresses the unique challenges that athletes face when their sport becomes their livelihood such as the "pervasive insecurities which are a permanent feature" (Roderick, 2006: 255). Despite these gains in understanding, "in relation to issues of employment, examinations of 'sport as work' offer very little insight beyond established forms of sociological knowledge" (Roderick, 2014: 157), suggesting that sociological understanding of elite sport and individual athletes residing within it is still a relatively unexplored area.

These various sections above have briefly outlined some key areas of previous research that will be particularly relevant to this project. Having an awareness of wider literature that can be drawn upon is important given the projects exploration of a topic that has very little previous research.

## Theoretical Underpinnings of Pierre Bourdieu:

This section varies slightly from previous sections as it provides a comprehensive outline of Bourdieu's theory before emphasising the amount of previous literature on elite sport that has utilised the theory. As outlined by Power, "the main theoretical tools Bourdieu uses to explore his themes are *habitus*, *practice*, *field* and different forms of *capital*, such as *cultural*, *economic*, *social* and *symbolic*" (1999: 48). Habitus, in particular, is explained as one of Bourdieu's most ambiguous, yet widely used aspects of theory. Described by one author as being used like "intellectual hairspray" throughout academic circles (Hey, 2003), the theory of habitus is described as being "only an aspect of Bourdieu's conceptual tool-box" (Reay, 2004: 435) and a useful (and brief) explanation of an often convoluted and inherently woolly theory is below:

"Habitus is a way of explaining the regularities of behaviour that are associated with social structures, such as class, gender and ethnicity...habitus is a way of describing the embodiment of social structures and history in individuals...[it] both reflects external social structures and shapes how the individual perceives the world...although the social structures in habitus do not *determine* behaviour, the individual is predisposed to act in accordance with the social structures that have shaped her, because, in effect, she carries those social structures with her...the dispositions that constitute the habitus are also structured, inevitably reflecting the social conditions in which they were formed...habitus is not only the product of structures and producer of practices, but is also the *reproducer* of structures...in continuing to act in accordance with the structures that helped create their habitus, people reproduce these structures..." (Power, 1999: 48-49).

This explanation of habitus will be useful in later parts of the research project when addressing the reproduction of structures within the actual focus of the research. It is part of Bourdieu's supposed *tool kit* (beyond the more simplistic explanations of the various forms of capital) that has the most relevance to this project. In addition to this are the concepts of field and practice:

“Field denotes areas of production, circulation, and appropriation of goods, services, knowledge, or status, and the competitive positions held by actors in their struggle to accumulate and monopolize these different kinds of capital” (Swartz, 1997: 117)

“Bourdieu’s Theory of Practice (1972) comprises three main elements, namely *field*, *capital* and *habitus*. The interplay of these elements leads to *strategy* or *practice*, i.e. our unconscious behaviour that is in conformity with our interests and that aims at achieving our objectives by investing *capital* and fighting for *capital*...in this respect, Bourdieu understands *practice* as the result of social structures on a particular *field* (structure; macro) where certain rules apply and also of one’s *habitus* (agency; micro) i.e., the embodied history that is manifested in our system of thinking, perceiving and behaving” (Walther, 2014: 15)

Understanding and using Bourdieu’s theoretical concepts cannot be done so without a more comprehensive understanding of the interrelation between the various concepts. It is for this reason the above section outlines Bourdieu’s wider theoretical “toolbox” (Reay, 2004: 435), with the concepts of habitus, field and practice outlined briefly; the links these have to this project will be explored in the later discussion chapter. Having explored these wider concepts, the concept of different forms of capital can now be detailed below.

Economic capital is perhaps the most simplistic idea. It is “related to a person’s fortune and revenues...it is directly convertible into money and can be institutionalized in property rights...this form of capital can be more easily transformed into other types of capital than vice-versa [sic]” (Walther, 2014: 9). Cultural capital is “especially transferred by family and education and may be institutionalized in the forms of educational qualifications...cultural capital is the primary cause for status and relative positions within a social field...it can exist in three forms” (Walther, 2014: 10). Cultural capital exists in three forms; the embodied state “in the form of long-lasting dispositions of the mind and body”, in an objectified state “the form of cultural products” or the institutionalized state, “the objectification of cultural capital in the form of academic qualifications” (Bourdieu,

1986: 243). Along with these forms of cultural capital, another form of capital is generated through an individual's personal relationships; that of social capital. Bourdieu himself characterised this form of capital by describing it as:

“The aggregate of the actual or potential resources which are linked to possession of a durable network of more or less institutionalized relationships of mutual acquaintance and recognition – or in other words, to membership in a group – which provides each of its members with the backing of the collectivity-owned capital” (Bourdieu, 1986: 244)

A secondary type of variation on these forms of capital also exists; symbolic capital. Bourdieu describes symbolic capital as “the form that the various species of capital assume when they are perceived and recognized as legitimate” (1989: 17) leading to prestige and honour. This form of capital, which combines the previous types into a form of capital that has wider social prestige, is key to this project as sportspeople occupy a sphere in which this idea is particularly relevant.

One important element of Bourdieu's theory is the notion that different types of capital are “inconvertible...though Bourdieu recognizes that it is economic capital which is most easily converted into the other forms (e.g. money buys education and influence) and is the most straightforward to accumulate and transmit to other generations” (Power, 1999: 50). These theoretical underpinnings detail how the theory has been used prior to this project.

Bourdieu himself wrote on the impact that sport has on capital, one author notes how “his book *Distinction* (1984) pays considerable attention to sport as one of several mundane activities which reflect, in just the same way as would engagement with the arts, holdings of economic and cultural capital and thus help to constitute a symbolically distinguished lifestyle” and how “preferences for sport are part of the dispositions which constitute the *habitus* and thereby become elements of cultural capital” (Warde, 2006: 108-109). Warde continued to develop the link between Bourdieu's theory and sport further, explaining how he found that “there are certainly some hints that different sports carry connotations of social position, limitedly in relation to spectating, a little more in relation to participation...there is



some evidence that the most privileged people choose rare sports...” (2006: 119). Washington and Karen (2001:190) emphasised how “the dominant classes [engage] in sports activities that are played in exclusive clubs with little, if any, bodily contact between the competitors”. These few sections alone add weight to using Bourdieu’s theory to help explain why certain individuals choose the sport being researched in this project; the quotes combine to suggest that rarer sports with little physical contact between players tend to be occupied by the more upper – or dominant – social classes.

Individual athlete identities within sport have also previously been explored by sociologists utilising Bourdieu’s theory. Perdue and Howe (2015: 92) stated that “arguably...Paralympic athletes that can identify, and be perceived as others, as legitimate elite, high-performance sportsmen/women will receive the corresponding status and prestige (symbolic capital) that they are believed to warrant”, emphasising how Paralympians would supposedly receive a level of symbolic capital based on how ‘legitimate’ they are judged to be by others. Another study utilised Bourdieu’s theory when exploring athlete’s positions within an National Governing Body sanctioned pathway; Purdy et al. (2008) wrote about an individual’s journey within a rowing programme, and the ‘penalties’ of being an uncompliant athlete. They wrote how “while Sean’s physical capital was important for him to get in to the squad, it became intertwined with the symbolic capital of the program and those associated with it...” (Purdy et al., 2009: 335), emphasising how being a member of a national squad provides a level of symbolic capital and also social capital based on the development of relationships with others associated to the sports programme, again, an important consideration for this project. The article went further in its exploration of the so-called “uncompliant athlete” explaining how certain traits required in elite sportspeople perhaps were not best suited outside of sport; “studies employing Bourdieusian perspectives have demonstrated how such characteristics normalise athletes to suit the demands of their sporting contexts, which, however, are less productive and indeed desirable for lives outside of sport” (Purdy et al., 2009: 335), a rare mention that sport may not perhaps be universally beneficial to participants. A final example to use of authors utilizing Bourdieu’s theory on sport is through the below quote by Grenfell:

“Sport itself is of interest only to those with a certain amount of leisure on their hands – either as players or consumers – or at least until a sportsman or woman – goes professional...as such, sporting activity of any sort implies a break from an empirical imperative to work and live...sport is always in some ways ‘for sport’s sake’ to a certain degree...whether in the training of the individual body, or in the simple act of sporting entertainment...such makes it no less susceptible to social derivation in terms of choice of sport and it is pursued...active involvement in some form of regular sporting activity increases as we ascend the social hierarchy and the empirical imperative to simply live and work decreases...there is also a social distinction between ‘elite’ sports – bridge, polo, hunting – and mass sports such as football” (Grenfell, 2015: 67).

Although a lengthy quote this passage effectively highlights and re-emphasises a series of points made by earlier authors. Firstly, that sport inherently requires an amount of leisure time that a participant can dedicate towards it; for this reason, the upper classes (or those with less physical jobs) are likely to dominate actual *participation* in sport. This does not necessarily explain elite performers however. Secondly, players (elite or not) are simply pursuing a leisure activity, until they *go professional*; although the above quote does not explore this idea further it does imply that there is a level above where sport is no longer (as mentioned) *for sport’s sake*. Finally, a reference is again made to certain sports being classified as elite. It cannot be ignored that repeated references are made to this idea from both the writer of the theory and also authors subsequently interpreting his work.

#### Conclusion:

This literature review has covered three main topics that must be outlined and explored prior to commencing the research project. The first topic covers the changing policy direction found in the UK since the 1960’s, through successive governments and leadership changes, the establishment of UK Sport and its mission, along with the funding challenges and criticisms around the focus on purely elite

sport success by UK Sport. This historical section is key to understanding why sport in the UK is in its current state. The second section covers literature related to elite athletes, ranging from dual career issues through to the emotional stress performers have to endure, with a section addressing the differences between the athletes featured in this study and the previous body of literature that has explored creative professionals work-based experience. This section is vital as a wider appreciation of the stresses and situations that elite performers have to endure enables the project to delve deeper through the research itself, especially relevant due to the lack of literature on the specific research area in this project. The final section draws on the theory of Pierre Bourdieu, simplifying the somewhat complicated concepts that he presents, and the use of these concepts in previous literature. All three sections contribute an equal amount to framing the research when considering the lack of previous research on the exact subject area is taken into account.

## Methodology

The study comprised a collection of interviews undertaken with specific high-profile athletes within the sport of archery. Key to the study was the *level* at which the athletes had participated in their sport - individuals had to have attended a specific level of tournament to be eligible to participate within the study. The method chosen was a thematic analysis of primary data collected through the interviews with participants, with data coded to highlight similarities or differences between the various interviews, and authors own personal experiences as outlined in the personal reflection section.

### Research Questions and Foundations:

As the project developed a series of key research questions began to emerge. These were:

1. Does UK Sport's relentless drive for Olympic medal success encourage or discourage the athletes involved?
2. Is the current UK model of funding sustainable given the ever-increasing costs associated with elite success?
3. How much of burden is elite sport to those athletes participating in it?

The literature review undertaken for this project focused on the pre-existing research done into the field of elite sport. The lack of research into purely financial barriers to elite sport participation and performance became apparent very early on within the study; only one single article was discovered that explored financial limitations and barriers surrounding elite sport (Morley et al., 2018): the ramifications of this gap in the literature are discussed throughout the project. The literature review therefore took a more general and holistic view of the experience of elite sportspeople; topics such as the stress elite sports people experience, the pressing issue of modern athlete welfare, athlete's careers (and exit from sport) and finally, how the landscape of elite sport developed within Britain in the past two decades since the Atlanta

games of 1996. It was following the initial literature review that the use of thematic analysis was decided on; the levels of depth that could be reached by using the method was important given that the research would be exploring a topic that had little prior research, and would not be attempting to generate theory.

### Research Methods

The project used a purely qualitative approach; the study was never envisaged to feature quantitative methods. One concern during the development of the study was the potential friction between inductive and deductive methodologies (David and Sutton, 2011: 84) and that the researcher's own personal experience could generate friction between an intended inductive methodology that was to be used to research the topic, and inherent bias from said personal experience that would more than likely lead to a deductive methodology and approach being utilised. Generally, "inductive research is more often associated with interpretive qualitative studies...here, the pattern is to collect data, and analyse that data to develop a theory, model or explanation" whilst deductive research "is more generally associated with positivist and quantitative research...it involves the development of an idea, or hypothesis, from existing theory which can then be tested through the collection of data" (Gratton and Jones, 2010: 25-26). Given the lack of any substantial previous research into the area of financial capabilities impacting athlete's ability to continue elite sport, the project inevitably had to pursue an inductive approach as there simply was no previous theory from which to construct a project. Additionally, though not a major issue in terms of the feasibility of the project, care was taken that previous personal experience would not dominate the research and affect the projects overall reliability: a *critical eye* was used on all findings, and a certain level of detachment was necessary whilst completing the project. In order to distance themselves from the project, the researcher chose to participate in very few archery tournaments during the project to allow for more of an outside-in perspective.

The aim of the project was to explore a very under-researched topic and provide a form of basis for future research to be based upon. Owing to this, the aptly termed "thick description" (Geertz, 1976) that purely qualitative research can

provide was seen as vital; similarly, the rich description provided by qualitative studies (Gratton and Jones, 2010) as also seen as a key benefit. This belief was also reinforced by numerous previous studies into sport and performance psychology by several authors who used qualitative methods which at the time of their publication was a departure from the typically quantitative research undertaken (Gould et al., 1992; Jackson, 1992; Jones et al., 2007; Gould et al., 2002; Orlick and Partington, 1988) and an essential piece of work from the sphere of music study; Talbot-Honeck and Orlick's study into elite musicians and their high level performance (1998). Specific key examples of studies that changed the landscape of researching into elite performance include Scanlan et al.'s study of figure skaters experience of enjoyment and stress within their sport (1989) and Munroe-Chandler's detailed research into how several previous studies of athlete's personal experiences used quantitative research, explaining how "sport specific qualitative studies have provided in-depth analyses of athletes' and coaches' experiences that might have otherwise gone untapped" (2005: 67), and how "qualitative research is by no means the only legitimate way to do research but it is one in which you can fully understand what the person is experiencing which is not always achievable through the use of numbers" (2005: 75).

During the development of the project a mix of qualitative methods was initially going to be used; this was intended to include the use of focus groups, interviews and a self-completion qualitative survey. As the project advanced however, it became clear that hosting focus groups was not only going to be difficult in terms of gathering enough participants, but also potentially challenging due to the individual participants given geographical locations. Self-completion surveys were also not included in the final research design; this decision was based on the limitations of the sample size – it simply was not large enough to make the results from the survey viable in a quantitative way, and so the decision was made to incorporate elements of the survey initially planned into the interviews that were performed. **Interviews were left as the sole remaining research option, in addition to a chapter of personal reflection by the researcher.**

Interviews are the method "most commonly employed by qualitative researchers in sport and exercise sciences" (Randall and Phoenix, 2009: 125). Trying

to accurately portray the experiences, feelings and day-to-day life that comes with being an elite athlete would be near-impossible if not for the use of qualitative methods that allowed the participant space and time in which to express their own experiences, without the use of a standard 'tick box' survey. Interviews were therefore also the main selected method through which the participants' individuality could be respected and portrayed accurately. Each participant had a radically different story to tell that surveys simply would not have done justice to. The interview was initially going to be a virtually unstructured task where each interview was tailored around the individual participants' experience of archery; wisely, this was not the final direction taken. Gradually a list of questions was developed and written out that addressed a series of sub-sections that the research was to explore: these areas were grouped into questions on:

- Basic athlete profiling
- Employment
- Financial status
- Living expenses
- Performance levels
- Miscellaneous

The list of questions was transferred between interviews in an attempt to make a more standardised interview. The list of questions worked well with every participant bar one who required an additional list of questions: this interview lasted in excess of two and a half hours, as such the additional work was seen as beneficial. The question list contained just under one hundred questions, with over one hundred and twenty questions for the participant that required an additional question set. Roughly 95% of the questions were asked to each participant; some tailoring was required given each individuals unique situation, and the order of the questions varied with each interview.

The interviews were conducted using Skype or FaceTime. Given the participants geographical location, it was not viable to meet them face-to-face; the only time this would happen outside of a specific interview time would have been at

major competition which would have been the wrong time at which to conduct a series of in-depth and personal interviews with participants regarding their involvement and participation in their sport – it would be ethically questionable to interrupt an athlete’s preparation for a major event by asking them questions about their dedication, enjoyment and motivation for partaking in sport. Interviews were scheduled at a range of times that fit the demands of the individual athletes’ lifestyles; some were performed early in the morning before they started work, others late at night post-training (one such interview had to come to an early end given the late time at which we started). Flexibility was key in order to facilitate successful interviews, as was approaching the participants at the right time – a number of individuals interviewed had international tournament commitments and arranging interviews to go ahead *after* these, not interrupting preparations, was seen as vital. Participants were told that interviews would generally last around one hour; all but one came in at over the hour mark however. Several came in at well over the hour and a half mark, simply due to the richness of data collected.

The use of a personal reflection section within the project was drawn from several previous pieces of research whereby the author had themselves participated in elite sport and wrote about their own experiences, with key examples from Carless (2012), Drummond (2010), Purdy et al. (2008), Douglas (2014) and McParland (2012). In terms of timing, the reflection section was written *after* the qualitative interviews had been conducted. Conducting the research in this way was an attempt by the author to limit any potential bias that could have crept in to the pre-determined interview questions, or the interviews themselves.

The personal reflection section was utilised for two key reasons; to provide a background for readers into elite sport for those who do not have a lived experience (Ellis and Flaherty, 1992), and also to help corroborate with potential findings from the research, due to literature gaps. Care was taken to ensure the reader would be clearly informed of the authors own personal experiences which could have impacted on researcher positionality. It was believed that framing the research within a context of personal experience, relevant existing research and theoretical concepts would support the findings in terms of providing greater depth and lived experience, though not all writers are supportive of the reflective methods such as



these; some refer to the method as “self-indulgent” (Sparkes, 2002: 210). The inclusion of a personal reflection section to the project was approached as something similar to an experiment; would the findings from the researcher’s own personal and social world corroborate with a number of totally different individuals with radically different lived experiences and social worlds?

### Sampling Method

The research project was always intended to investigate and study elite sportspeople. Due to this, it was decided early on that using a non-probability method would be acceptable for the project due to the small size of the intended population; as the project contained no quantitative element there was no potential conflict between using a non-probability method with a type of research generally seen as requiring a random sample (Palinkas et al., 2015). As explained by Etikan et al. (2016: 1) “[purposive sampling] can also be used when the research does not aim to generate results that will be used to create generalizations pertaining to the entire population”, similarly, Patton (2002) made clear that participant selection for a purposive sample would generally be made with regards to how information rich that particular participant was, and how relevant their experiences would be to the project. Defining which method of sample was used throughout the project is in some ways difficult. Due to the researcher’s own perspective and position within the sport it was very easy to access a substantial and very unique sample of elite archers within the UK. Due to this, it could be said that the research was developed using a fairly basic convenience sample, but that convenience was only due to several years of elite competing by the author rather rejecting the idea of ‘convenience’. As Etikan et al. emphasise, “when subjects are chosen because of the close proximity to a researcher, that is, the ones that are easier for the researcher to access, the researcher is making a convenience sample...but for purposive sampling, a researcher has something in mind and participants that suit the purpose of the study are included” (2016: 1). The project then assumed an interesting position. The entire population in the country of elite archers numbers around fifteen (eight females and

seven males). Of that, five are under-18. That left a tiny population from which to recruit.

Selecting the individuals to be involved in the study was the next stage. As the project was intended to study elite sportspeople and the effects that financial pressures had on levels of performance, only a very small minority within the sport could be involved in the research. The criteria set for involvement within the study was very high; the participants had to have been attached to the GB squad in the year previous, be a well-known and current competitive target archer and have attended international competition. A number of participants had also attended the European Championships, World Championships and Olympic Games. Using this criteria a range of participants were identified.

One interesting study design point when constructing the sample was the fact that a substantial number of the current Great Britain team are aged under-18. It was decided very early on that these young sportspeople, despite their individual stories and experiences, would not be included in the research project: the reason for this was twofold. Firstly, being under-18, they would not be financing their own sporting career; that money would be coming from another source, likely the parents. It did not feel appropriate to therefore approach parents to discuss their difficulties in funding their child from an ethical *or* moral perspective. Secondly, involving under-18s creates a myriad of problems ethically, and given the major aforementioned difficulty it was simply deemed unviable to involve under-18s in the project, despite how many of the current GBR squad were under-18.

Having decided not to include the under-18 squad members, or their parents, it left a reasonable number of individuals to approach for interviews. Participants were invited to take part in the study via face-to-face requests at various tournaments in the UK or through private social media conversations. A standardised participant information sheet was sent to everyone invited to take part in the research, this outlined the research, the background to the research, the topics to be discussed, participants involvement, presented a case for informed consent and also provided contact details for the participant to get in touch with the researcher before or after the research. It became apparent that all of the participants were very eager

to discuss the topics that the project was to explore, and all individuals asked agreed to take part in the project.

### Ethical Issues

The project was constructed in accordance with the British Sociological Association's ethical guidelines (2017). These were used as a basis from which to construct an ethically sound research project. Once the research method and sampling procedure had been selected, the research needed to secure approval from the Durham University School of Applied Social Science's ethical approval board. This was achieved in March 2018.

Part of the ethical approval included submitting the participant information sheet that would be sent to prospective participants. This sheet informed participants of the aims and objectives of the study, how the research could help inform future research, the promise of confidentiality and anonymity with no references made throughout the research to identity, secure storage of data and information and the destruction of said data after the project was completed. Another key part of the participant information sheet was the explicit instruction that participants could withdraw from the research at any point, before, during or after, and also that in this eventuality their relevant data would be withdrawn from the project. This was repeated to all participants both before and after the interview was conducted to reiterate the participant's autonomy and freedom of choice regarding their participation.

Whilst constructing the project the researcher was very careful to create a study that was not only an example of ethical research, but also a project that demonstrated *good practice*. Harriss et al.'s 2018 update to standards for ethics in sport and exercise science was used as a secondary reference to ensure that the project was not only ethical, but also an example of good practice, especially considering the level of athlete that the project used as part of its research.

There were some ethical issues that occurred which were unforeseen. One participant asked to conduct a follow-up interview regarding sacrifices made to the sport, and the participant responded throughout with a series of distressing previous

events. Undertaking interviews via Skype or Facetime also meant that it was impossible to tell who was in the room with the participant; on two occasions it was revealed that a second person was in the room listening to the interview; an unexpected surprise. Discussing financial positions also meant that some participants directly discussed other participant's finances, sponsorships and grants; care was taken here to try and diffuse some hostility and negative attitudes towards the other athletes. A final major ethical issue involved the simple fact that the research was delving into people's private lives, both emotionally and financially; and these were people that the interviewer knew very close personally. All ethical issues were managed in a professional and respectful way.

### Undertaking the Research

Undertaking the research from both a participant and researcher perspective was a challenge. The process of researching my own topic and experience was something I had not experienced within academic research before, and there were challenges in doing so that I had not foreseen.

Using qualitative research inevitably means that conversation and contact with the research participants will be a major factor in the quality of research findings. The depth and usefulness of my findings have been dictated largely by how willing I have been to ask the hard questions to those who I would usually class as my friends and teammates; people who I share rooms with at international and domestic competitions. My similar age to most of the participants also likely affected my findings; instead of a fairly typical researcher-participant relationship, the interviews felt more like 'slightly-more-probing-than-normal' chats with people on a similar level as myself, but the data gathered was incredibly valuable from a sociological perspective. The ability to pry into relatively private details based on this level of trust was noticeable, and I undervalued my own ability to gather this level of data. Each participant clearly stated at the end of the interview, without prompting, how much they had actually *enjoyed* the interview; again an unexpected benefit.

On reflection, I do not think I appreciated exactly how much the research would affect my own relationship with my sport. The research was always intended

to provide participants a voice from which they could detail and explain their own position and experiences – it just so happened that my own position matched their own on several occasions. Before the research I tried to remove all personal bias and experience from constructing the research topic, but this left me feeling like an outsider to my own sport and social life for a long period of time. My drop in performance level in the 2018 season is in some ways a result of this; although other life events occurred during this period, so it is impossible to know to what extent this was purely due to the project.

During the research my own knowledge of the area of sport I was researching, along with my past experiences, helped to develop rapport quicker than usual between myself and the participants. Interviews became more conversational in tone than the expected formal interview due to these pre-existing relationships I had with participants. Each participant was very open and willing to discuss all the questions I asked. Only once was a response to a question refused, and that instance was simply due to the participant not actually wanting to let me know their opinion on a financial matter within an organisation. Replicating the research without my prior involvement would be impossible, but I do feel there was a lot to be gained from my own experiences being brought to this research project.

Whilst hesitant before starting the project I quickly found that utilising my own experiences, passion and interest within a topic could lead to a alternative type of research project that, surprisingly, generated very rich and unique data.

## **Personal Reflection:**

This chapter is an introduction to my own experiences with my sport, and a crash course for readers into what high performance in sport constitutes on a day-to-day basis.

The chapter covers the following themes: the financial cost of doing my sport, fluctuating performance levels and the personal demands of doing sport. These sections are further broken into sub-sections. This section is purely a reflective section that details my own experience with certain stressors and challenges.

### **The Financial Cost Of Doing The Sport: Equipment, Competing and Training:**

#### **Equipment:**

Starting archery coincided with me getting my first job; after one Christmas I had saved a sum of money which I decided to spend on buying my first bow. On top of this I needed to buy the various additional pieces that go on the bow, and buying these parts has taken me around six to seven years to reach the point I am at now where I do not need anything else in terms of equipment.

I remember the first time I was able to afford a good set of arrows; it felt like I could finally compete against the top tier of archers in the country. Of course, that was nonsense, but the mentality of people in the sport is that you simply *must* have the best quality gear in order to compete fully, and I still see this mentality to this day in fellow competitors. Spending £500 on a dozen arrows seemed a crazy amount at the time; now it seems like nothing, simply a requirement of the sport. Nowadays, I am fortunate enough to be sponsored by a range of manufacturers, and so the equipment cost is substantially reduced. I went from spending around £500-£1,000 a year on equipment (sometimes £2,000 if I needed another bow) to around my current spend of around £250 a year. At first I pursued sponsorship, I now believe, as a form of glory seeking and talent confirmation. After I was successfully awarded sponsorship, however, the reality of the savings it would make became apparent, and there was a bigger financial element to it that I previously thought. I would struggle

now to drop to a level of equipment below what I use now, simply because I am so used to having top-line gear. Another issue related to equipment is actually buying it; most shops are located hundreds of miles away and getting to them involves a day's travel, or frequent and expensive postage costs; there are only roughly ten major archery shops in the UK, spread over the whole of the country.

### Competing:

Competing forms a disproportionately large part of my expenditure on sport (around 90%). Due to my geographical location in the country (in the North-East), my expenditure on tournaments is likely double or even triple that of other archers who live more centrally. The travel costs are extreme; we had to buy a new car after putting over 100,000 miles on a previous car, and already I have put over 40,000 miles on my car and 50,000 miles on my partner's car in three years. Adding up the cost of services, tyres and running gear adds another amount of expenditure. As my partner competes and travels to 95% of all tournaments, the cost is also increased when compared against others who travel and compete alone.

Entry fees comprise the smallest part of this expenditure on competing, standing at roughly £15-£30 for single-day, or £30-£50 for two-day shoots. Higher level tournaments cost more: a national level tournament usually costs at the higher of these ranges. Added on top of this is the cost of accommodation, usually around £40-£60 per night, for two or three nights depending on distance; during my time as an elite athlete I have probably stopped at over fifty separate Premier Inn's around the country, from Edinburgh to Bristol. Food for these competitions is one of the only controllable spends, but still costs around £100-£150 for three meals for two people for three days. Fuel and more miscellaneous expenses is the final element to competition costs, and varies depending on location.

In total, each away tournament costs me and my partner roughly £500, and the limit is purely how many we can afford to do. The current National Tour forms the main domestic tournament circuit, with seven legs (and a cool cost of £3,500), and on top of this is the cost of regular weekly tournaments. A spend of around £4,000 to £4,500 is average for a 'normal' year.

International competitions cost more, despite being for only one person. Below are the World Cup attendance prices from 2017 that I was able to select from, taken from a squad communication:

*“Shanghai - £1,850 - 1,950pp - Prices based on the following: Arriving Sat 13 Departing Mon 22 ( Cheapest direct flight is with Virgin) Cheapest hotel option is the Tong Mao hotel. Price also includes Visa.*

*Salt Lake - £1,850pp - Prices based on the following: Arriving Sun 18 Departing Mon 26 ( 2 flight options similar current prices from London airports with either Air Canada via Toronto or Virgin via Vegas) Cheapest hotel option is the Fairfield suits at airport 7 min on bus from Venue. Also include Visa and vouchers for evening meal as not included in hotel costs.*

*Antalya - £1,250pp - Prices based on the following: Arriving Sun 4 and Departing Mon 12 (Birmingham Airport with Turkish Airlines via Istanbul) Cheapest Hotel Option - Sealife hotel.*

*Berlin - £1,250- £1,300pp - Prices based on the following: Arriving Sun 6 and Departing Mon 14 (Birmingham Airport direct with Flybe or could get £100 cheaper from Heathrow with BA) Cheapest Hotel Option – Park Inn Alexander Platz (14km from qualification venue 4km from finals).”*

The focus on driving down the costs can be seen from this email, references to lowest price and the cheapest way to do the event is clear. Despite these efforts, the cost of attending international tournaments is very high. Receiving this list was tough; I had the highest scores going into selection for these events, but I could only afford to do Berlin. I still regret not having done more.

#### Cost Of Training:

The associated training costs related to elite sport are often overlooked. Range fees to shoot indoors are around £3.50 per session. Doing three or four sessions a week,



for two people, adds up to £28 a week, and when done for five months of the indoor season the total cost is around £800. The outdoor season is different as the club fee covers year-round shooting with no additional cost (club fees are around £120 a year).

I am fortunate enough to have access to a whole range at home, both indoors and outdoors. Our indoor range is custom made and inside a double-length garage, reaching about half of the official indoor distance (nine metres); this comprises of a target and workbench with all necessary equipment. In total this cost around £1,750 to construct. In the garden we have a full outdoor target (£700) housed in a shed to disguise it (£300). Spending £3,000 on a home range means we can cut down on time and money by shooting in our own facilities, but obviously entailed a considerable financial outlay. On top of this is additional expenditure through personal services such as physiotherapy, sports psychology and my gym membership. Over the course of a year this adds up to around £400.

In addition to this, I would argue that all elite sportspeople need access to a car in order to train, compete and travel freely. I bought my first car in June 2015 for £4,500, and my insurance cost over £2,000 for the first and second years. As soon as I bought my car I was able to train more and compete more. My level jumped immensely, purely because of the freedom and ability to train more. Car ownership and running costs should be considered when thinking about how much elite athletes need to spend on their sport, and for me they contributed a large percentage of the overall financial cost of doing sport at an elite level.

## **Performance Levels:**

### **Going Up – 2013 To 2015:**

My performance level in this time period was on a direct upwards trajectory; I was hitting new personal bests every month, my national ranking was improving year-on-year and I was winning more competitions, and with more regularity. Buying my car also led to a dramatic improvement in performance as I was able to train more than before. I was shooting more on a national level in this period, and I felt good about my sport; I was relaxed, enjoyed my sport and felt I was still on an upwards pathway which was personally very satisfying.

### **GB – 2016 To 2017:**

This time period was the most critical in my athlete life. My scores shot in the 2015 season enabled me to be selected for my first GB event: shooting in Mongolia for the World University Championships. This first trip transformed my view of archery, driving me to want to shoot better and train more than ever. Being able to take my sport abroad and compete internationally was amazing. Whilst I was abroad at this trip I was also selected to shoot for England at the Commonwealth Euronations, to be held in the Republic of Ireland. This only added to my drive to improve: when I returned from Mongolia I told my partner and my closest mentor that I would be on the GB squad by the end of the year, such was my drive at the time. In the July time I shot a seemingly unimportant tournament that resulted in me shooting the highest score shot by a woman that year: 684/720. I was selected for the highest tier of squad based on this and previous scores. The thrill of achieving my goal after five years of shooting was incredible, and I still don't know if I'll ever experience this sense of satisfaction again in my sport.

Moving to the indoor season in October I set myself a goal of qualifying for the Indoor European Championships, to be held in Vittel, France in March 2017. I hit the required scores on the very last day possible, meaning I had qualified. Before this event I had to attend squad training events, held in Wales. I remember these as

awkward and overcrowded. My skill was the only thing I could rely on, so whilst I felt I belonged there in the performance sense, I felt as though I was a total outsider to the team. The weekend was a crash course in how international archery and the selection process worked, with attendance for the next years events arranged several months in advance.

After the squad training weekends came the European Championships; one of the best experiences of my archery career so far. I was filmed in the bronze team match which was subsequently uploaded to YouTube. I felt at this point that my archery had moved up another level. By this point I had:

- Represented GB at the World University Championships
- Represented England at a Senior level
- Represented GB at a Senior Indoor event (The European Indoor Championships)
- Was currently 1<sup>st</sup> pick for all Outdoor World Cup events

#### Making a Mess of it -2017 To 2018:

I really did make a mess of things from here on. My mind-set changed totally. I became 'something' instead of just a person who practices, enjoyed the sport and was driven to continually improve. I thought I had reached this performance level easily, and that maintaining this level would also be easy. In hindsight, this time period was where I undermined my own archery career. I became obsessed with getting as many sponsors as possible, each one giving me a boost in terms of ego and self-confidence. Granted, I was on a truly meteoric pathway, going from nobody to European-level sport within four months, but I thought I deserved everything, that suddenly I was good enough for anything.

The first part of 2017 was the best and worst part of my archery career. I started worrying about selection scores, worried about what other people would think of me, and tried to change equipment in an attempt to get higher scores. In 2017 I won four of the six National Series stages, more than any other woman in history. I was training more than ever and shooting more competitions than ever,

and I kept winning them, but something was going really wrong behind the scenes. I started focusing on wanting to beat other people around me, focused on what other people thought about me, how I presented myself and what tournaments would yield 'easier' wins. I started on a downwards trajectory, the first time in eight years that I went backwards instead of forwards. At the time I had no idea what I was doing wrong. To go back over, and see other people who had previously been far behind me in terms of performance and ability overtake me was crushing. I missed a huge goal I had set myself (of attending the World Championships in Mexico in October 2017) by a tiny fraction, five points out of 2500, and it left me feeling very bitter towards my sport, and my own ability. It shook my confidence in myself. From this point until mid-2018 everything seemed to have become a nightmare; shooting high level tournaments and posting terrible results. I lost the feel for shooting, the enjoyment and reason for shooting, along with my motivation, was gone. Only recently have I remembered how much I used to enjoy the sport, and only recently have I realised that to go forwards I had to go back: back to how I used to approach the sport – with the same determination and drive that I had years ago.

## **The Personal Demands of Elite Sport:**

### **Work-Life-Sport Balance:**

I started shooting at the age of 17, a few months after starting my first job. I was working in Newcastle on a zero hour contract, and in college near to my home for 3 days a week. At this point the work-life balance issue did not exist because I had so much free time to myself on a weekly basis. I was shooting two or three times per week indoors and roughly the same outdoors (more if I could get lifts from other people shooting). About a year later I moved shops and started working in Sunderland, doing twenty hours a week all whilst shooting more and more. Looking back, I am still amazed I was able to do A-Levels, work twenty hours per week and shoot as often as I did, and do quite well in all of them. It was a lesson in multitasking and juggling different aspects of life at an early age.

Going to University meant even more time to shoot, and I was also granted private access to the indoor training facility which meant I could shoot indoors five or six times per week. On top of this, the demands of university were much greater than college, and I also took on a second part-time job working in a college bar. I believed at this point I would simply stop doing my sport as my university life continued. I quit my first job in late-2012 because I simply could not spend the amount of money I was earning from two jobs, and the intense time pressures from all parts of my life left very little free time to myself. Throughout my first and second year I had a very different experience of university to that of my peers; I didn't live the full 'experience' in terms of partying, spending times with friends and living a student lifestyle for three years – I was either working on a Saturday in Sunderland, doing archery at weekends, working in the college bar or working hard on my degree. My priorities in life at this point went: my degree, my archery, my job and my social life (in that order). As I moved into my final undergraduate year I concentrated more on the degree than the archery, graduating with 67% and just missing out on a First. I know myself if I had of worked more on the degree I would have graduated with a First. The amount of work I put into my Master's degree was also impacted by the amount of archery I was doing at that point. I passed with a Merit, again knowing

that if I had of put more work into the degree I would have achieved a higher mark. The stress of having to constantly juggle high levels of achievement in totally different areas of life is difficult.

Another aspect of juggling that takes place is having to fit high levels of training into an already busy weekly schedule. Last year whilst working three jobs and doing a degree, I was shooting six or seven days a week. As a skill-based sport it is necessary to shoot this often. Unlike a power sport such as weightlifting the sport can be done at a high frequency without harming the body. For the outdoor season this would mean shooting outdoors in whatever weather six or seven times a week. Indoors I am able to use my home range, supplemented by visits to local clubs two or three times a week to practise at full distance (eighteen metres). I have found that it is not the dedication to this practice regime which makes it difficult, it is the consistency of this approach which is difficult. Practice must be six or seven times per week, every week, not a single week of intense practice here and there. On top of going to the gym two or three times per week and doing regular competitions, I know now how far I can push myself before burnout starts to crop up. Before I knew this limit, I thought I could simply keep going all-out; now I realise tapering training and cycles of competition periods are the best way to stay consistent through a long year, but only through experience did I learn this.

#### Financial Cost:

The financial cost of doing sport at an elite level has been very high. When part of the compound squad, we received no funding from UK Sport, and very little from Archery GB. Our recurve counterparts would be eligible to receive Athlete Personal Awards (APA's) depending on performance levels, and would also receive programme funding from UK Sport. Since early 2010, I would estimate that I have spent around £30,000 to £40,000 on archery. Of this, around £8,000-£10,000 is on equipment, and the rest on competition and training costs. My equipment is something I could sell on (forming a half-investment), whilst the money spent on events is simply spent.

Tournaments are now the biggest expenditure, forming roughly 90% of my expenditure. I do not need to spend on equipment as I have everything (and spares) of what I use. As mentioned earlier, each away tournament costs around £500 for me and my partner to attend; some months have two or three major tournaments whilst others have none. The bulk of this expense comes in the early summer months (May, June and July). When shooting internationally, decisions around which events I was attending had to be made 6-9 months before the event. It was a very difficult decision to pick between certain events, and try and take into account my household financial situation and not just my personal finances. Attending the World University Championships, European Indoor Championships and the Berlin World Cup costed over £4500 alone. Trying to save money on these proved to be difficult, and in one case nearly fatal: the Berlin trip involved departing from Stansted; we returned at 2AM and to try and save money I decided to drive back, exhausted, to Sunderland from Stansted through the night, instead of paying £75 for a hotel. This one of more ridiculous money-saving decisions, given that I nearly crashed about a dozen times on the five hour drive home.

#### Personal Strain:

Throughout my career as an athlete I have experienced considerable amounts of personal strain, both individually and in my relationships with others.

My personal strain has mainly emerged from having to juggle various different tasks and goals at once. Deciding whether to focus on working on my degree, my current employment, my archery, my general fitness, looking for a career or even whether the time was right to take a day off can become overwhelming. The feeling of not having enough hours in the day became a reality in 2017 when fitting all of the above into one day did not seem possible. My financial situation became a strain in 2018 when my partner was made redundant, meaning my archery career was essentially placed on pause. During this time I came to understand that my past approach to my sport was not always right; doing more tournaments and more events was not going to make me inherently *better*; practice and training is, and always should, be the main focus.

I have experienced several periods of burnout in the past three years, most notably whilst going into the National Series 2017 Final, held in September in Birmingham City Centre. Exhaustion, mental fatigue and a general malaise around my sport meant I had not shot for weeks before finally deciding to practice for the event. I was knocked out in the first round. Only during that time period immediately after the competition did I realise I had gone from October 2016 to September 2017 without any substantial break or time off; a choice I am unlikely to make again. Competing in elite sport itself is inherently stressful; the immense pressure to perform alone took its toll on me over several months often reducing me to tears when I started to go backwards in the sport instead of forwards.

I have also experienced immense strain within my personal life due to my sport, with both my partner and my friends and family. University is generally seen as a time where students have an active social life alongside their studies: my sport robbed me of this. Small decisions – when to go out or which nights to not go out – built into a much bigger impact. Close friends understood the dedication I had towards my sport and were wonderfully supportive, but the other 90% of friends could not, or did not want to, understand this dedication. Within my family network I have always received strong support, but inevitably I will end up missing the occasional birthday or family event because of my sport and the need to travel. I always feel as though I have let my family down because of this, and I can never have those moments or times again. On the other hand I know I would always make the same choices that I actually made, because the experiences I had were fantastic.

Within my relationship the stress and strain of doing elite sport perhaps has its biggest impact, both positive and negative. My partner is my main coach, and has coached me for several years, through several levels of performance. Having my partner as my coach, pointing me in the right direction, earnestly being there for me no matter what and always driving me forward is a wonderful thing. It has not been without arguments, and we have both learned a lot about each other and ourselves through the sport. We spend a great deal of time together doing the sport, but we both want different things out of our sport; I want to compete for GB, whilst my partner is happy to do the sport at a county level. This misalignment of priorities causes the most conflict; such as when my partner wants to go on holiday and I want



to attend an expensive tournament, or when my partner wants to spend quality time with me and not be doing archery seven days a week. The pressure of competing at such a high level can also introduce friction into the relationship, manifesting itself in arguments and confrontations, and also when small issues get blown out of proportion. Having said this, our relationship has a level of depth and understanding that other couples could never have. He has seen me at my absolute worst and my absolute best, my most selfish and selfless. He understands what drives me, and how far I am willing to go to achieve something – and has always stood with me no matter what.

## **Results and Discussion:**

### **Introduction:**

The results section includes data gathered from interviews with six participants, with a discussion following each section that explores links to the theoretical underpinnings introduced earlier, along with exploring the findings with an analytical framework. Combined alongside the author's personal experience within the sport, the study comprises a very in-depth and knowledgeable investigation into how elite athletes (in this example archers) handle the personal, financial and performance pressures of participating in sport.

The data was coded, and subsequent themes were developed. Some themes developed out of the data collected more easily than others. The following section is split into major themes with minor sub-themes as additional headings, which allows for the exploration of more in-depth responses. The major themes are as follows: The impact of the UK Sport programme, the talent pool of athletes, the emotional cost of doing sport, lifestyle, and the expense of doing the sport. Throughout this section quotations have been taken from the transcripts in their verbatim form. "I" refers to the interviewer, and "P" refers to the participant throughout this section.

Not all themes identified from the research gathered are present in this results section; the main reason for this was the lack of compelling and repeated claims from a range of participants. Some potential themes for the results section featured powerful discussion and personal experience, but only from single participants. As this could not be generalised to the wider group, these themes were excluded from the final results. Overall, the data gathered from the participant's correlates with personal experiences detailed in the previous section. This combination provides a strong base from which the research questions can be effectively addressed and answered.

### The Impact of the UK Sport Programme:

A major theme of the project was the current status of the UK Sport funded programme, and where it had been in the previous Olympic cycles; understanding this was key to the initial research questions. Participants were asked how they felt about the UK Sport system, as the specific goal of UK Sport funding is to achieve medal success:

*I: Do you think the way that UK Sport operates on its medal targets is right or do you think it's wrong*

*P: I don't like it, I think it's too ruthless...it's too unpredictable, and I know they don't, they want people to keep fighting to keep their money to keep winning medals but it seems a very cutthroat way of doing it...you train to cope with that [pressure] but that knowledge is there"*

This participant evidently believed the UK Sport approach was too "ruthless" stating that understood and knew that their individual performances could have major funding consequences. Another participant voiced their opinion that the current system could be better, yet they were not entirely sure how:

*"I: Do you think the way that UK Sport operates at the minute...do you feel that is a good system or do you think it could be better*

*P: It could be better, but I don't know how...it's like the sports that are already doing well just get more money like shovelled into them which then makes it harder for those that aren't doing well to do better"*

The participant seemed to be particularly frustrated with more successful sports repeatedly being granted more money, which in turn led to greater success and more funding – a dangerous cycle:

*"I: Do you think the UK Sport model has worked well in the past*

*P: I don't agree with no compromise and I don't agree with them cutting sports off, every sport matters and I think archery is a great example of why it's so hard...in running I know if I train and run 'x' amount of time per lap I know what my competitors time per lap are, you know if your person could win a medal...we also have a limited number of medal chances compared to a lot of sports, and a lot of countries take part..."*

*I: So do you think there's too much focus on the only the Olympics  
P: Well that's all [they] care about, it's not too much focus, UK Sport have made the statement that this money is to win Olympic medals, everything else is irrelevant"*

The above participant responded with a more specific concern; performance levels within the sport are very difficult to neatly compartmentalise and predict. Unlike other sports with very rigid performance measures, archery features many variables that make it difficult to predict success.

#### Limited Opportunities:

A lack of opportunity to medal was emphasised, with only four Olympic medals currently available to the sport (men's individual, women's individual and men's team and women's team), this is in contrast to the 42 rowing medals or 54 for cycling. As the participant explains, UK Sport have made it clear that Olympic medals are the sole focus. With only four opportunities to medal at the only event that UK Sport puts emphasis on, there is a serious lack of opportunity. This idea was found to impact on participant's mentality:

*"I: Do you feel the current UK Sport model benefits or hinders you as an athlete  
P: It hinders me to an extent, in that the model is quite prescriptive so you've got to win as a sport, you've got to win certain amounts of medals at world championships and things to be on top level funding and I'm never going to have access to that because there's not that many medals in the sport...especially if they only consider the Olympic sport disciplines...for individual funding again they'll consider like Olympic and world championships they are not too worried about stuff below that so again I can't get access to, I only have one full opportunity every couple of years to try and get full individual funding for myself*

*I: Does that play on your mind*

*P: Not too much at the moment...I think the programmes in a good place...we just got more funding from the aspiration fund which is like a nice gesture really, it's pretty small compared to the overall UK Sport budget, but it goes pretty far for us because like an extra 50% for the next couple of years I think, it's going to mean a bit more funding individually and it's going to mean more stuff for the programme...so, on what we have now, the ins are going to balance the outs, and that's enough for me to be comfortable with that...I'm happy at that position...I'm happy to stay at that equilibrium...[but] at what point do I actually start making some money and depleting the dent that I've made over the past couple of years...I'm not a hugely motivated by making lots of money...when people are*

*asking me like oh, do you feel like you're missing out because you could have gone and got a job and you could have been on this much by now...I don't feel like I've missed out in that sense because I'm enjoying what I'm doing much more, I get to essentially do my hobby for a job, and I really enjoy it...I'm personally really happy doing this... the fact that I'm not like making coin doesn't upset me...it's not a stable situation because we could not qualify next year and we could have all the funding taken away again, it could change very quickly year to year, because the sport is small we have a limited number of medals available"*

This participant raises several major points. Firstly, there is a mention of "full individual funding". This reference to APAs is clear. Secondly, the fragility of funding is emphasised again describing a previous situation where all programme funding was lost post-Olympics, as happened post-Rio in the sport of archery. The participant goes on to explain that:

*"And it's really hard for us to stay stable under the current UK Sport model, so yeah I think they, I think the flaw with it is that they treat every medal equal...so, an archery medal is equivalent to the eighth rowing medal or the athletics medal whereas actually one archery medal would mean a lot more for us than the difference between the eleventh and the twelfth rowing medal, to think that they would take away our funding to put a bit more into athletics or rowing it doesn't seem to me to have the same bang for buck so it does seem to be flawed in that sense"*

This was a pivotal idea to come out of the research. The point around UK Sport treating each Olympic medal as equal had not been raised in the research before this point; this is an important issue to consider. The participant follows this up by saying that for UK Sport to remove funding and allocate the entire programmes worth of funding to another sport already experiencing success would be fundamentally wrong. The participant continued further:

*"It's a kind of a zero sum game so what we lose another sport will the difference that money will make to them as an extra is not that big compared to the first bit of money you put into a sport you allow them to have a full time coach you allow them to have a training facility, you allow them to go to major competitions, you know, cycling already have that and more"*

The idea repeated here is that the first set of funding allocated to a sport has the greatest impact; the first block of money could be used to pay for major benefits such

as a full time coach, a training facility and the ability to attend major competitions. When these are already covered and paid for by the funding from UK Sport, the improvements past these are more gradual and incremental. This idea was also mentioned by other participants:

*“Giving an extra £4million to track cycling what when they have £60million then they hold four million back, well archery could run a more than successful programme on less than one million over the four years...you know they [could] trim one million off the people getting sixty and they could keep all the other sports alive well, we’d flourish”*

This participant makes it clear that funding archery less than one million pounds would allow it to be successful, commenting that giving a sport like cycling another substantial amount of funding on top of its already huge funding allocation of £60million would be an ineffective way to spend a limited funding budget. Whilst different sports undoubtedly have a different level of cost (equestrian versus archery, for example) the argument is against giving sports that already have a very high level of funding even more money. Instead, the participant believes more in giving sports a first initial block of funding (often mentioned throughout the interviews as the most important funding allocation) as a more productive and beneficial expenditure by UK Sport. These responses are fundamentally critical of the current UK Sport model, given that it operates on a system whereby the most successful sports receive the most money.

Whilst much discussion regarding UK Sport funding was on the present funding situation, the historical funding situation was also explored. Previously, Archery GB had been in receipt of several millions of pounds worth of funding following the bronze medal at the 2004 Athens games. One participant was asked their thoughts:

*“I: When Allison Williamson won one medal, and archery received the amount of funding it did, do you think that was proportionate  
P: It got us on the podium didn’t it, and they, they did count they counted a 9<sup>th</sup> place as a success still, so we had 3<sup>rd</sup> 4<sup>th</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup> in Athens”*

The participant is emphasising how in the past a 9<sup>th</sup> place finish was still counted as a result that would grant podium level funding; something not true today. Another participant was asked their opinion of funding and whether a base line funding model would be more productive, and whether past funding allocations seemed correct:

*I: So, do you think all sports [should receive] a base line level of funding*

*P: Yeah, that would be better...or...oh I don't know actually...*

*I: Then you have the situation where Allison Williamson won one bronze and she brought in what was nearly 6 or 7 million [pounds] over the next 2 Olympic cycles...which is the benefit one medal can have...do you think it's right, do you think it's wrong*

*P: It's hard to say...coming from the athletes point of view just give me money so I can train and I'll try and win you a medal...but if you see it from their point of view [UK Sport] they want to earn back what they are giving"*

Previous staff who were responsible for the past direction of the programme were also discussed:

*"P: I think there's other stresses like who's in charge...-you know that in four years after the next Olympics they can go and find another job in another sport...we can't do that, we can't go and shoot for another country this is our only option and to see the sport like go up and down in the different ways that it's been managed is quite difficult as well*

*I: Do you think the various [staff] have respected that and the athlete pool that they have*

*P: No I don't think that they have at all, nor some of the coaches*

*I: So do you think they come in to develop themselves, to develop their own careers*

*P: Some of them for sure, first sport they can work with as a stepping stone to get to a better sport, a more interesting sport...it does feel like that sometimes"*

The suggestion that leadership roles within the sport had previously compromised by individuals who simply did the role in order to progress their own career was a particularly worrying idea; regardless of how well the athletes performed and how much funding they could in turn bring in to the sport, the past leadership at the top of the sport could still cause serious long term damage to the sport. It was mentioned throughout the research that specific athletes quit after certain major international events, demonstrating that the talent pool was directly influenced by the leaders in charge of the sport; this theme continued further with other participants comments regarding how close UK Sport and Archery GB were:

*“I: Do you think UK Sport and AGB are tied together*

*P: Not really, I mean it’s all behind closed doors... I don’t trust their opinion, like do the coaches...like people in the past...do they really have my back, I don’t know...I’m pretty sure like after London [the] performance director at the time made an agreement that we would get rid of all the funded, the top funded athletes and we would start again to save [their] own job rather than admit it was [their] fault, with how we did in London [rather] than we should keep the same athletes and get another performance director”*

It is clear from this that there are several areas where the participant has a lack of trust in the overall system and questioned whether previous staff have truly held the athlete’s best interests at heart. Criticisms of UK Sport were typically made with referencing how controlling the organisation could be:

*“I: Is AGB inseparable from UK Sport influence*

*P: Yes because they are the paymasters they hold 95% of our budget, course they are”*

*“I: Do you think there’s downsides to UK Sport funding as an athlete*

*P: Absolutely, especially within the programme because the more money that UK sport give the programme the more expectations come with it, and the more control that they want of the programme...they don’t necessarily know what archery really needs, they have a nice generalised programme idea of what sports should be doing and if that works for archery or not they don’t really care...we should be doing what the scientists say for athletics...even if it doesn’t work for archery”*

The idea that there could actually be a downside to UK Sport funding was very interesting. Overall, the theme that generally came through from the interviews was that UK Sport had a wealth of influence over the pathway in the UK and held a controlling position, but that the funding provided proved a large motivating factor to both individuals and staff within the system.

#### APA’s:

Another issue that was repeatedly discussed was APA’s. Following on from the previous sections discussion of funding as a motivational factor:



*“I: Do you see APA’s as carrots on sticks to athletes*

*P: Well yeah it’s the dream isn’t it”*

With an APA directly referred to as a “dream” for athletes it is not hard to see why the discussions of funding and the powerful impact they can have on an athlete’s career becomes an emotive topic. The participant further developed the above comment:

*“When we first got APA’s and we got about six people on them, in 2004 or 2005...by 2007 both our teams were ranked 2<sup>nd</sup> in the world... but now the whole world is professional...back then we were and not everyone else was...it’s very good for a small group...when they first came out you got an APA, it was safe, you had it for 3 or 4 years minimum, you had consultation periods, and now they can just end so quickly...I don’t think the security is there that there was when we first got them”*

Another participant was asked about expectations and obviously felt the APA was a key part of their life as an athlete:

*“It’s just stressful you know, people have expectations on your training, on your results...there’s consequences to your results, so you know at the world champs if we don’t get a medal I won’t have an APA again so then ill end up having to work more and there’s always a circle”*

Another participant was asked if they would leave employment if they were awarded funding, showing a lack of knowledge concerning the varying levels of funding:

*“I: If you were awarded an APA, would you quit your job*

*P: I don’t know if it could support me, I’ve never been privy to the exact amount and how much it is, so if it could provide me enough to sort of, actually, live and survive instead of just barely scraping by then I probably would”*

Another referred to the professionalization of athletes worldwide that has occurred particularly in the past ten to fifteen years since the Athens Olympic Games, and how sport has entered a period of intense change:

*“P: Everyone was amateur before APAs though...now they’re not...that’s the difference*

*I: So do you feel that has changed the landscape of elite sport*

*P: Yes it has...now you can just be a professional, but that's across all sport...yeah, the thing is, Athens Olympics, half the athletes still had full-time jobs, and Rio...I don't think there was an athlete that had a job in archery, that's the best I can give you on that"*

From the discussion with participants it became clear that only those who had received APA's had any real idea of what the funding levels were. Athlete's that had previously received APA's saw them as different in many ways to the initial funding plans introduced in the late 90's and early 2000's. Others seemed to contribute to the myth of funding, discussing it with no real knowledge of the specifics. Endemic to the whole discussion of funding and UK Sport was the several references to being either 'on or off' funding, emphasising the fragility of funding over a longer term period:

*"Whenever I've had a high level of funding I've always tried to like save as much as I can for when I don't have funding in the future...I suppose it is difficult to come off funding, a little bit mentally...it feels like punishment almost...being on some funding, even if it was low level, felt better than when I was taken off funding altogether...the first time I came off funding all together that was really difficult because the programme was still going on and I felt like I wasn't allowed to be a part of the British team anymore"*

It was a powerful moment when the participant described how they felt they were no longer allowed to be a part of the British team simply because of a funding decision (not a performance decision). Another participant echoed this statement:

*"That was the hardest part, the parts where you know I've got some funding, that part made me feel like I've got a position, like I'm valued...that was important to me"*

Participants expressed a belief that losing funding was a form of punishment from UK Sport which was unsettling. Evidently the participants held a belief that funding equated some level of worth, supporting similar findings surrounding sponsorship explored earlier.

### Facing Professional Teams:

With funding emerging as a major part of all the participants' journeys through their sport, it felt natural to ask how they felt about competing against nations that are fully funded and professional. With the main goal of performance within any sport to be able to attend and win international competitions, it is inevitable that participants would come up against these fully funded nations in competitions. One participant summarised their opinion below:

*"I: How do you feel about having to compete on a world stage against nations that can train full-time*

*P: I obviously feel they have a bit more of an advantage*

*I: Does it give you an added challenge if you can beat a funded nation*

*P: It's definitely more of a challenge...it's like...yeah I've beat a fully funded nation... you got beat by someone who does this part-time*

*I: Do you wish that as a nation we were all funded*

*P: Yeah I wish we were funded...but I still enjoy it...it's just an extra challenge and it's like an extra drive...I can see the benefits if I was fully funded... [I could] spend more time and progress further"*

Beating the athletes from fully funded nations seems to provide more satisfaction, especially as the participant referred to themselves as a "part-time" athlete. Another supported this view:

*"I: How do you feel when you turn up to a world cup or a world champs and you're shooting against a fully funded professional team*

*P: Obviously there's little things, there's some things that you see like you turn up and I see the Korean team has six coaches for their eight recurve archers, or the American team has a physio with a portable bed, yeah so that does kind of knock it home in some ways, maybe we can scramble together the money for a second coach, to go to competitions so that does, yeah but then it just makes you want to beat them so...yeah...again it's that underdog mentality I like it, I guess I've spent a couple of years in the UK kind of being the underdog and I'd kind of build a nice little chip on my shoulder because I was told that I was too old and you know, I wouldn't be able to be involved with the national team and I was like...cool...lets prove some people wrong, so we get to play the same game now on an international level, I quite like that"*

The participant raises several interesting points. The idea of the GB team being seen as an underdog because of the lack of funding provided was a very interesting point,

and the idea that there was a greater incentive to beat athletes from fully funded nations was repeated. This participant also gave more tangible examples of the actual differences between nations that have access to more funding: more travelling coaches and a travelling physiotherapist were referenced as obvious examples, all whilst GB was struggling to scramble money together for a second coach to accompany teams often numbering over a dozen athletes. Another participant gave an alternative viewpoint on funded nations:

*I: How do you feel when you compete with nations that have a fully funded programme*

*P: Erm...ugh...it's, er...difficult...but then there's people on that field that are less well off than you as well so it does feel like you're not on the same playing field as everybody else...some people have an advantage because they've been full time since you know, whatever, so say your against Korea, and they have that perfect teaching of archery – and you know we haven't...then that's the nature of sport isn't it you do the best with what you have...*

*I: Then again you've mentioned lesser nations*

*P: Some countries don't have anything and yet they, they still take part because they love their sport and they, they can still be competitive"*

This response was quite different from the other participants and shows quite a level of empathy with other nations; other nations that do not enjoy as much support as Great Britain does. By discussing poorer and the perceived inequality on competition fields between nations, it is clear the funding issues discussed throughout this project would be a blessing for some unfunded nations to have, and demonstrated how Great Britain was perhaps not in particularly bad situation. Another participant emphasised what their experiences on this issue had been:

*I: Do you think elite performance is heavily reliant on funding and money throughout sport*

*P: Yeah, as I said, money enables people to train more, train better and compete better. Its, it's the sad reality, and the Korean archery team are so funded, it's unbelievable, they have a 20 target wide 70m indoor range for their recurves and one for their compounds, compete with that*

*I: How do you feel when you turn up to a world cup or a world champs, and your athletes have to compete with fully funded nations*

*P: I always believe we can win, and a lot of the time we do, we dig out results, and at the end of the day...Mexico are world leading at the moment, they are not the best funded nation in the world, but they are world leading, the Americans aren't*

*the best funded nation in the world, yeah, they, a lot of them have to self-fund, but they are very competitive”*

Again, the importance of money is emphasised in this section, with the facilities of one specific nation (Korea) discussed as an ideal example of what perfect facilities would look like for the sport. Also of note from this participant is the idea that despite not having access to levels of funding that more “world leading” nations have, GB is still able to “compete” and “dig out results”, suggesting that money is not, in fact, everything.

#### The Idea of Unlimited Money:

Given the emphasis placed on levels of funding, income and available money throughout the research project it was interesting to propose a situation to participants where money would simply be removed as an issue for participants. This was put forward as a hypothetical lottery-win situation:

*I: Do you think there’s a ceiling limit...a level of money you can spend and that is going to get you the most kind of benefits*  
*P: I don’t think there’s an infinite amount you could spend...you can’t keep spending money money money and keep getting better, there is a ceiling you reach and you can’t spend any more money to get any better*  
*I: If you won the lottery do you think you’d be a better athlete*  
*P: Yeah because then I could commit more time to actually doing the sport”*

The idea of money being used to ‘buy’ time was stated by a second participant:

*I: Do you wish you could just dedicate more time to training*  
*P: Yeah I mean id like more downtime but it’s what needs to be done at the moment*  
*I: Talking about performance...if you won the lottery would you be a better athlete*  
*P: Yes, because I wouldn’t work and I could train full time”*

Another participant had a slightly different approach:

*I: If you personally won the lottery tomorrow would you be a better archer, if money was no object*  
*P: That’s hard to say, I feel like the limitations are mainly time...not in terms of time I have available to me but just the time it’s going to take for me to finish learning...I*

*think I'm still a couple of years from still completing the process of learning technique and learning how to train properly...and then putting that time in and making the development that I need to physically and mentally [make], I think that's the limitation on me...so if I won the lottery tomorrow I think lots of little things would get easier, but, I don't think the kind of trajectory of my scores would change that much*

*I: Do you think you'd get lazy with it*

*P: I don't think so...I probably would put a load of money into the programme and say right look, no excuses this time guys let's get a full time physio, a full time coach, for fucking everyone and you know let's do all of this properly"*

This participant differed from the others by explaining that they would instead choose to put the money into the programme itself, instead of focusing on themselves. Alongside this idea was another reference to time, that money will not buy the time it takes to get good in the sport, as it was a long learning process that could not be accelerated artificially. This differed to previous participant's responses, as the majority believed money would provide an instant boost to performance. Another different response came from a coach, this time emphasising the importance of funding:

*"I: If all the athletes that you coach won the lottery do you think you'd have the best team in the world*

*P: Oh, in this sport I don't think you can say that...I believe that we would have a team that could compete to win gold at any event, but I don't think you could say we have the best team in the world...even Korea can't guarantee they are going to win a gold, you know they are probably going to get on the podium...but we could be one the great, great three [nations] if we had unlimited funding*

*I: So do you think there's a happy medium to be found between the amounts of funding that a programme has*

*P: I'll be honest, money buys success, in any sport. It really does, we don't want to admit it, but it does"*

There was division between participants as to whether greater levels of funding would result in a better team. More experienced participants held the opinion that whilst useful, unlimited money would not simply result in the best team as the sport has too many variables. Newer members of the squad described how funding would instantly help as they could then focus more time on their sport instead of employment or other commitments. The general consensus was that whilst money is undoubtedly important, it is not everything.

## The Influence of the UK Sport Programme

One of the most interesting findings of the project was how participants regarded UK Sport criteria and funding awards as brutal. The obstacles that had to be transversed in order to be awarded funding seemed to be of particular frustration to athletes, and participants frequently referred to the entirety of the UK Sport system as “cutthroat” or that it “hinders” the actual athletes within the relevant sports World Class Programme. The general consensus among athletes throughout this section was that the UK Sport model, and the pure focus on Olympic medal success, led to any other sporting success being deemed somewhat meaningless outside of the immediate sporting landscape.

There was a strong theme throughout this section of the research that Olympic sports were not just about the Olympic Games, despite the focus that UK Sport places solely on success at the Olympic Games. Within the UK Sport model, performances at events beyond simply the World Championships have been regarded as merely an indicator of upwards trajectory, instead of success in its own right; these victories at other events are therefore only seen as an indicator of potential later Olympic success. This is a sad viewpoint, but one that can be substantiated through my own personal experience; the likelihood of Olympic success was always in the background of any performance discussions, though there was a much greater appreciation of sporting success at the other main international events from the NGB. The focus on performance at these single events could be seen to form part of the habitus of elite sport within this country.

The potential origins for this mindset can be easily traced back to the 1996 Atlanta Games; the disaster is a clear point of reference for UK Sport who themselves cite the fact that “we have taken GB from 36<sup>th</sup> in the Olympic medal table at Atlanta to second...at Rio 2016” (UK Sport, 2018). The relentless drive to improve has meant change in the actual programmes recognition of success; this development is remembered by some of the participants who explained that ten or twenty years ago a 9<sup>th</sup> or 4<sup>th</sup> place finish at an Olympic Games had a high level of value attached; nowadays however, that is no longer the case. Referring back to the original sports policy element of this project, the reasoning behind this is clear; UK Sport is funded

by taxpayer's money through the DCMS, and also from the National Lottery *Good Causes* fund. Whilst athletes may consider the programme to be tough on performance, the amounts of public money involved are very high: funding for the World Class Programme (WCP) increased from £59million for the 2000 Games to over £266million for the current Tokyo 2020 programme. With this in mind, it is perhaps easier to understand why UK Sport has quite a tough stance on sporting performance. The domineering attitude of UK Sport seemed to be an integral part of the habitus in elite level performance, with most participants regarding the control UK Sport has over the sport as excessive, whilst simultaneously demonstrating gratitude for the funding and money received from the organisation.

Other key findings of the research include how participants believe UK Sport incorrectly treat each Olympic medal as equal in importance; the 20<sup>th</sup> cycling medal is viewed as the same in importance to the first archery medal for example, and that in reality, medalling across a wide range of sports should be viewed as more important than high medal counts in limited sports. One participant referred to this, and the inevitable redistribution of funding from a less successful sport to a more successful sport as a *zero sum game*. A somewhat sobering opinion came from another participant who stated that some nations with far less resource than Great Britain achieve greater levels of success, and part of the research addressed the concept of unlimited money; from these twin viewpoints it became clear that money was not *necessarily* everything when it came to elite sport, though other participants did state it could be used to buy success. Overall, there was a suggestion that something greater than purely money and finance must be driving individuals towards high performance, though money does play a factor in whether an individual is indeed *able* to pursue that goal; from the wider literature and theoretical underpinnings of this research, the impact that forms of capital (in particular, symbolic capital) has on an individual should not be overlooked. There was very little discussion around UK Sport and welfare issues that had been a frequent topic for discussion on news outlets in the months leading up to the interviews, which was surprising.

Whilst Olympic success is of great importance to participants within this focus, it is important to remember that the games only occur every four years. In



between those games, much can change in the sporting landscape. Funding remains, in both my own personal experience and the findings from the research undertaken in this project, the most important aspect of an athlete's career beyond purely performance. With the single medal won at the 2004 Athens Olympic Games came millions in downstream funding through the 2004-2016 period; participants referred to this fourteen year period as one of wastage, poor governance and with a lack of direction; a period where some athletes were simply doing the sport in order to receive APA's and be, as one participant explained, professional trainers. The loss of funding after Rio led to what another participant called "dead weight" being cut loose, and the people who genuinely cared for the sport being left to build the programme back up; from a personal viewpoint, I was privy to the absolute outrage at poor performances in the 2013-2016 years where Great Britain failed to achieve at several key events.

A key area of UK Sport policy that participants were all critical of was sports being totally dropped from UK Sport funding; even sports that had achieved their set targets at Rio 2016, such as Badminton. During the course of this project, a public consultation was undertaken which will lead to major changes in elite sports funding policy post-Tokyo. Funding tiers have been re-evaluated and now include Podium, Podium Potential and Progression; the last tier being able to "enable sports and athletes to take the first step on the performance pathway" (UK Sport, 2019), perhaps a move that would reduce the belief that athletes often feel like "underdogs" when competing against other funded nations, a belief expressed by a number of participants. From this, it would then seem that the group of sports joined together through the *Every Sport Matters* campaign have achieved something of a victory; though the realities of this will need to play out in years to come to see whether any meaningful change can truly be enacted. This change in policy would suggest a softening of the current UK Sport model, suggesting that the current model has gone too far in its dogged promotion of only Olympic medal success, and actually losing public support; this is likely due to the spate of whistleblowing cases regarding athlete welfare leading to greater public scrutiny of the elite sport model in the UK (UK Sport, 2018).

In brief, participants overwhelmingly saw UK Sport as an overlord-type figure, dominating sport NGB's and dictating terms of performance; though this sounds damning, UK Sport also provides strong, clear and publically-mandated direction to the elite sport system in the UK, something that is the envy of other nations. Although already mentioned earlier in this section, this distrust of UK Sport also seemed to be a part of the established habitus within the British squad. Participants did seem slightly ill-informed of where exactly *funding* was coming from, and perhaps with greater understanding there would be more appreciation of why UK Sport enforces such a strict performance criteria. It was also clear throughout both the research and my own experience in the 2016-2019 time period that sole focus on performance at the Olympic Games or World Championships was simply a part of the habitus of elite level archery in this country.

### The Talent Pool of Athletes:

Throughout the research reference was made to the actual talent pool of athletes several times. This was through the discussion of certain athletes being used, how certain squad members reached their current position and also, of key importance, how the current squad came into existence following the disastrous performance at the London 2012 Olympic Games. As Archery missed all of its associated performance goals and failed to achieve any level of success, this time period is crucial to observing how a failing sport can be treated by UK Sport and the risks and dangers of missing performance goals.

### The Past Squad:

One participant talked at length regarding how the current squad came into existence, where it came from and how the situation started, which frames a great deal of this current research project and is key to answering the research questions this project is based on:

*I: How many people do you think the sport lost when funding was pulled*

*P: Half a dozen*

*I: Would you say they were just people there for the money*

*P: I would say they were people who had their heads buried in the sand and didn't realise a performance mattered...think there were people who trained professionally, every day, but didn't realise that you needed a performance on top of training and that's the place we had ended up in prior to 2015, where people were training really hard...but they didn't realise that they needed a result*

*I: How long do you think they had been on that kind of trajectory for*

*P: 3 years...well...2013/2014/2015*

*I: Do you think they lost hope in the system or do you think they lost hope in the funding*

*P: When funding went they vanished...they were just professional trainers they just weren't people good enough to deliver a result...[I'm] not going to say that it was the fault of the system, I'm not going to say it was a fault with the coaches, they were just in a system with no measure*

*I: So do you think that the athletes that were left on the programme do you think they were the best talent to work with*

*P: They were the fighters, they were the ones who were getting the results they were the ones who wanted to stay, who believed they could turn it around – and have – the winners, they don't quit*

*I: How do you think the organisation faced the loss of funding, do you think there was always hope or*

*P: With a positive fight that we will turn this around, our performance director [Anon] said I'm turning this around and [they] have, kudos to [them], because [they] found grittier people with fight who wanted to get a result...from the start of 2016 hit every medal target"*

This viewpoint that the GB squad and team was in need of a renewal after the 2012 Olympic Games was directly supported by another participant:

*"I: How do you feel about where GB was years ago from Athens to Beijing, Beijing to London, London to Rio in terms of the millions of pounds they already had*

*P: Obviously I wasn't involved so I can never fully judge but you do get the impression that there was a lot there and that it was kind of squandered in some ways...and I think almost, in some ways us losing funding was a good thing, because we lost a lot of the dead weight...*

*I: Do you think it made everyone who was left more driven*

*P: I think the people who were there because it was easy, because they didn't kind of you know, you had people who had done it as kids and had been on junior programme and had gotten onto podium potential funding and were hanging around because you know...I can keep doing archery and someone will pay me to do and they didn't have any particular drive to go anywhere with it, those people the funding went and those people vanished, pretty quickly afterwards, so the only people you had left were the people crazy enough to think I still want to do this, and then we got the funding back and it's still those people*

*I: So you know they are in it for the right long term reasons*

*P: Yeah it feels as if we're in a good place as a team and as a group and that's, it also gives us the chance to be underdogs, which is pretty powerful psychologically, so we're trying to rebuild, so there was a point in time where we were pretty damned good, especially kind of around the Beijing time, pretty competitive, and so there's not many people left who remember that personally but we know we did it before, and I think we want to show we can do it again really"*

The viewpoints from these two sections is that the team needed to loose what is referred to by one participant as "dead weight". This dead weight refers to a number of athletes that were on the programme but not achieving anything; the previous section refers to athletes that were cleared out after the London 2012 games owing to a very disappointing performance. The turmoil this caused both for the organisation and the athletes in question (about eight individuals) was immense.

Within six months of the 2012 Olympic Games, all of the top talent were simply “asked...to move on”, leaving the subsequent performance level far below the international standard necessary for performance. This event is key to understanding how this research project is framed.

Both sections make a strong reference to the subsequent monumental turnaround made throughout the organisation: different athletes were brought in, the squad has become more competitive, medal targets have repeatedly been hit since 2016 and the individuals on the squad are said to be on the squad “for the right long term reasons”.

#### Characteristics of the ‘New Style’ Squad:

Having discussed how the previous squad was, essentially, made redundant following the London 2012 Games it is interesting to note certain characteristics of the current squad. Notably, after researching the ages of current GB squad members, the average (mean) age was calculated as 22.25 for women and 25.3 for men; it is notable that six of the sixteen squad members are under-23. More notable is the age difference between this squad and the athletes that attended the 2012 London Olympic Games; the women’s team had an average age of 30.5 and the men’s team had an average age of 34; the young age of the talent pool is a very interesting element to Great Britain’s current squad. This was discussed with the participants:

*I: With the current recurve squad, why do you think so many of the current squad are students*

*P: It provides you more with a kind of time to dedicate to the sport so, developing into your studies as well but you’ve still got a bit of free time in, because you’re not actually attending lectures all those times you can study, but you can train around your study schedule...when you’re at work your work comes first that pays all the bills and it’s a bit harder to fit your training around work so it just makes it easier to do the training while you’re at university...I think it is beneficial, for those studying and doing archery at the same time*

*I: What do you think about how young the recurve squad is*

*P: As long as it is actually a case of the best are competing whereas before it was slightly based on, yeah they’ve come through the pathway, we must use them, now it’s a case of yeah we’re using the best people”*

The squads use of younger athletes was an issue raised earlier in this project and was first mentioned in the ethics section of the methodology. Under-18s and younger athletes were not a part of this sample for reasons discussed previously; despite a conscience involvement of this group of people they still feature prominently through the discussion with participants:

- I: So when you come up against fellow squad members, or see other squad members who are juniors or are quite young, you know we are talking under-20, do you feel that's an advantage you have over them*
- P: I think it means...I have that slightly more mature attitude towards things, so, you know if...a competition or a tournament goes badly, I generally don't get in too much of a huff over it...I just figure out what went wrong and just get straight to work over it so I think I improve faster...I think I learn faster having learned as an adult than if I'd have learned as a kid, and I think I feel perhaps less entitled, in some ways...I don't hold anything against anybody who is one of the juniors now, I used to again, three or four years ago have a chip on my shoulder and be like ahh the GB juniors and just classify them as this heterogeneous group of people who were like funded and brattish and entitled and take great pleasure in trying to beat them...and now obviously I work with some of them and see the individuals not the group and actually again a lot of the ones who make the transition into the senior squad are those ones who are a bit more self-determined and are a bit more about things, I get on really well with a lot of them, and I try and help them out*
- I: So your perception of them has changed quite a bit from working with them actually as a coach*
- P: Also just because I get to know them better so rather than they were just sort of people that I had to beat before you know I now meet them and see them in training and get to know them so now they are people rather than opponents...obviously you can empathise with them more and the junior academies are like really expensive to do so the people coming up through that system your thinking ok, yeah it might be mam and dad paying the bills but a lot of those cases mum and dad are taking big hits, you see a lot of them are really working very hard and trying to make the best of it"*

It is clear from this participant that their own personal opinion of the seemingly "heterogeneous" young juniors changed considerably once they begun working with and coaching them.

### Being Part of the Squad:

One participant discussed in depth the journey of getting on the actual squad, detailing their long battle:

*"P: I started going up for regular coaching I think in 2014, I wasn't on squad or anything, I was improving, so I was asked up just to come and have a look so I was like ah yes I'll do that and when I went on individual squad I was very much kept separate, there was the squad and me and a few other people who got invited on...so we were out of the squad but we made it up through the selection shoots because they were very open where we were beating the other people, and when we went out to the selection shoots it was very much the squad, so the gents and the ladies were kept separate and then we would just hang out...and then I slowly worked my way in...that was in...2015...no, tail end of 2016 I think*

*I: With what you said about...you were invited to train with the squad, but you were kept really separate...how did that play out in reality...were you just literally stuck on the side*

*P: At some certain events so it came to prove one time when a French squad came over for a training camp they were like oh no you're not allowed to take part in this...so when they did specific training events I wasn't allowed to take part...one when we were invited to Manchester and the other time we went out to try and get a squad for the European Games*

*I: How did you feel about that, being invited to take part in something, but also not [allowed] at the same time*

*P: Yeah pretty annoyed...for me to be excluded...and for me to have to shoot by myself"*

The idea of being firmly inside a squad or on the periphery was detailed by another participant:

*"I feel as though there is a fairly stable core to the team... so there's four or five of us who are pretty well locked into place and you'd be shocked if any of us was missing from the team over the next few years so that gives us some stability and...that core has been pretty accurately identified by AGB so two of those people are on full UK Sport funding, and the other two are the other two that AGB are putting individual funding towards from the money they've got so they've kind of fairly accurately identified us and have put extra resource into us so then who else is around that changes and year to year yes of course it does new people come up... as the standards are going up in the country, like more and more people are challenging for those spaces but you still kind of expect that's going to drive the scores up... we have a pretty good purpose as a group and a good sense of team"*

It is clear then that whilst all the participants in the study are viewed as elite, there was some level of differentiation between those who were permanent and long-term fixtures on the team and those still working up to that level – a form of second hierarchy. The idea of locking people into the team, mentioned previously, was addressed by another separate participant:

*“P: Just talking to members of my own squad, we say if we could attend internationals with the same three people, we would get more podiums, because consistency and attendance pays off in this sport, yeah, and with self-funding I get one team here, I get one team there, I get another team there...you don’t get consistency*

*I: So within the recurve squad do you think that it should be that the same 3 athletes*

*P: Korea lock a team for a year and they are the most successful team, I’m not saying it should be, I’m saying if we had consistency I believe we would do better, I’m not saying I want to lock a team of three out for a year, but I reckon if someone statted [sic] it, you’d prove it”*

The idea of “locking” a team for a year identifies an additional level of competition for squad members; not only do they have to compete and succeed on a domestic level to be eligible for the squad, the squad members must then subsequently compete for travelling places. Another element key to the talent pool of athletes is how competitive the group of athletes are seen to be on a global stage, and if the group of athletes selected return a high level of performance when competing at international competitions. One description of this came from one of the participants when discussing attending international competition for the first few times:

*“I mean when I first started turning up your first thought is like baptism of fire anyway, and but I think it’s changing because when I first made the team around that time we weren’t very competitive, and therefore when you first made the team and you went away you were kind of like, it was kind of like sending lambs to the slaughter in a lot of ways...so yeah that is intimidating and you turn up and you realise how shit hot the rest of the world is, that happens, suddenly your selection scores don’t look too good, your like oh holy crap yeah there’s a whole other game to be played here...but nowadays our standards are going up, we are putting our scores up but also, I think before people were looking to be good enough to get on to the UK team and now you know those of us who are on the team are not thinking about making the British team we are thinking about what do we need to do to be competitive in Europe and be competitive in the world...”*



The participant makes reference to “making the British team” as also mentioned in the previous section. This further developed into a shift in the athlete’s mentality from simply qualifying for an event to actually *performing* at an event and was evident throughout conversations with other participants; the need for GB to be competitive on a world stage was also a pressure coming directly from UK Sport and participants described instances of both internal and external pressure to deliver a good performance.

### People Quitting the Sport:

A particularly strong theme that emerged from the research was what exactly made people quit the sport, or to not make it in the first place:

*“You’ve got people who work full time and can only come up and train at the weekends...if we had unlimited resource I think AGB would try and buy all of them out of their jobs and say come and train here full time, get all of the benefits of training with the team and all of the resources that we have...but we had that before with full funding and we didn’t necessarily have the right people or use it wisely...I don’t think it’s ever as simple...in some senses I think the lack of funding means you need to be really successful to make it, and that makes people really hungry so it may even help but, you know for everyone who does make it there’s going to be another couple who never quite...I think people will quit in the current system, people will quit sooner if they don’t make it or people will never commit fully, that’s pretty scary to go like there’s no funding available but I’m going to try training full time anyway and see what happens... I think a lot of times the people who don’t quite make it and walk away I think a lot of them even with unlimited money might still have not made it and walked away”*

The reality of not ‘making it’ within the sport was also explored by other participants:

*“By the time you’ve made it to where I am I think you’ve almost kind of, it’s like you’ve broken through the ice and found something to hang on to...you’re not like, super comfortable but your kind of safe...people just on the edge of the national squad or people trying to get on it, and juniors trying to come through is huge, it will be a big factor the people who can afford more can stay in the game for longer...some people might only have one chance, one season that they can afford to do and if they don’t do it in that time you know, they can’t keep playing, so they leave”*

This quote directly attributes financial position with the ability to continue in the sport. This is again key to the initial research question. A final point raised in this section regarded athletes' crossing over from one sport to another, and another group of individuals who do the sport at a high level simply to reach the one-off goal of representing their country:

*"P: How many people have I seen come into archery, make a big noise and go up pretty quick, you then hear that two years ago they were a professional crown league bowler or a skier, or a shooter or a golfer yeah and two years later they are off doing another sport, so many of them, I've seen twenty [of them] in my time...people who think they can be world champion and then have a realisation they can't, everyone has different drivers for why they do it, so many people just want to get a GB shirt yeah, so many people want to win a medal, but there's a point where you realise it's not gonna happen, and that's the point where are you a lifer or are you just there for a game  
I: How do you contend with those people  
P: They won't make it, they just won't make it, or they'll make it once, and drop off really quick...or, they'll keep fighting for years"*

These types of athletes were evidently not well regarded, being described as people who "drop off really quick" and thus have little longevity within the sport. When discussing people who leave the sport money was frequently cited as a key reason, alongside the amount of time needed to dedicate to the sport.

#### Talent Pools and Identity:

The development of the current squad of athletes was a key theme throughout the research. Participants held strong views regarding where the squad was in the past (during the proverbial 'dark days' of 2013-2016) and where the squad was now. A particularly difficult issue was how previous athletes had been unceremoniously ditched off the programme in the post-Rio timeframe; these athletes were referred to as "dead weight". Following this was a period where new and upcoming athletes were fast-tracked onto the squad, with individuals being selected "for the right long term reasons".

This use of younger athletes emerged as a key theme through the research. Many of the athletes that constitute the core performance squad (that is, the squad

most likely to attend the Tokyo 2020 Olympic Games) have broadly similar social characteristics. When participants were quizzed about this, most expressed a similar set of characteristics: full-time archers, not holding any employment, living with parents or partners and in (or having recently left) tertiary education. It is reasonable to expect that had the study included under-18s these characteristics would have been even more prevalent, with issues regarding athlete welfare and wellbeing addressed in the earlier literature review being very relevant.

These broadly similar characteristics of the squad link to the concepts and theories Pierre Bourdieu developed, and which are introduced earlier on in the literature review section; in particular, the notion that athletes must traverse a number of *fields* within their life. A single athlete may experience upwards of five *fields* within elite archery alone, all separate and distinguishable from each other. These could be the fields of: being an elite GB athlete, being an elite GB athlete on a UK Sport programme, being a part of the elite recurve squad, being a part of a local archery club and being part of the British Olympic team: this list is not exhaustive, and only attempts to suggest the staggering number of fields that an individual athlete may exist within inside their sport alone. Throughout this section it was clear that athletes may reside in one field (such as being a member of a national squad) yet may continue to strive to be a regular on the core international squad. This is evidence that whilst athletes may comfortably reside in one or a number of fields, they may still actively be striving to be part of another field through choice.

Continuing this theme, one element to emerge from this specific section in the research is the notion that the majority of athletes included in this study have a similar and shared lived experience of *fields*. Within each of these different fields, an individual's level of symbolic capital can have different levels of meaning; existing in so many different fields, with such variation between them, there must exist a certain amount of participants feeling *torn* between fields, or at least experience tension and conflicts or, as described above, a desire to be part of a different field. This develops into the concept of habitus that Bourdieu also introduced, the "ways in which the socio-symbolic structures of society become deposited inside persons in the form of lasting dispositions" (Wacquant, 2016: 65). Attempting to cross so many fields within an athlete's life inevitably leads to a clash of the habitus that succeeds best in them;

for example, what works well for an individual in the field of the national level squad may not work as effectively as what is required to succeed on the international competition stage. This could be seen as similar to the numerous definitions of athlete identity presented in the earlier literature review; throughout the discussions with my participants, it became clearer how domineering and singular the athlete identity can be, seemingly to the point of leaving no room for other identities.

Bringing this theory to life with real-world examples, I certainly felt a conflict between fields in my balancing of external demands with my sport. In one job I was coaching archery, helping others to realise their potential and enabling them as individuals. This field crossed over with my athlete identity, and as such I experienced very little conflict. The habitus between the fields remained broadly the same, and my position felt secure, and the social order was familiar. As Wacquant explained in the same above article, “a sequence of congruent institutions and stable microcosms will tend to fashion a cohesive habitus whose successive layers reinforce one another and work in unison” (2016: 68-69). This was particularly clear to myself when I then had to go to my *other* job; totally unrelated to both education and sport, in which I held very little symbolic capital and social standing. The conflict between habitus was clear; in one field (elite sport) I need to be dominant, unrelenting, driven and self-motivated. In the other field (my main part-time job) I needed to be subservient, superficial and inferior. Whilst participants did not hold jobs the same way I did, I feel this area would have been interesting to explore.

As a final note on the need for the talent pool within the sport to navigate various fields in their athletic career, the sheer incompatibility between certain fields must be taken into account. As athletes improve and grow in their performance level, it is natural that they will experience a growing attachment to their own athletic identity. Understanding this aspect allows me to understand my participants’ motivations and pains in more detail, and with greater empathy. A part of this section addressed individuals that walk away from their sport; why would someone willingly walk away from something they have spent ten or twenty years training? Following this exploration of Bourdieu’s theory around field and habitus, it can simply be seen due to the incompatibility of what they are doing in the different fields. Interestingly, this also applies to those that drop everything else in their lives to pursue their sport

as a full-time athlete; in order to be an elite performer (at least in the experience of my sample), athletes must have a single focus on their sport – and only their sport – in order to achieve.

### The Emotional Cost of Doing the Sport:

The emotional cost of sport emerged throughout the research in all aspects of an athlete's life. It became apparent that for most participants the emotional cost of sport was present in many areas of their lives; family, friends, career, mental health and home life. One participant recounted the previous emotional cost that they felt themselves in the past:

*I: Do you think that sport naturally has a high emotional cost*

*P: Yes of course it does, there's nothing more emotional than sport, the highs are high the lows are low, and there's no sure things in sport*

*I: Where do you feel the emotional cost of sport*

*P: It's everything, yeah, it's across the board, and I imagine there's people who regret it and there's people who don't, but where does the journey end"*

The high emotional cost of sport was a continuing theme throughout the research:

*I: Do you think there's a high emotional cost to doing sport at an elite level*

*P: Yes I do...it's just stressful you know, people expect, and other people have expectations on your training, on your results, and there's consequences to your results so you know at the world champs if we don't get a medal I won't have an APA again so then I'll end up having to work more and there's always a circle*

*I: Is that something you were thinking about when you were shooting in years previous*

*P: No it's always been a factor, not so much as you've got funding you haven't got funding or the level of funding would vary on the results at a world championships...so it's always been there it's just one of those things that you try not to think about*

*I: In terms of the stress of the performance, when you say people are expecting a performance who do you mean by people*

*P: Me, coach, performance director, other teammates, boyfriend*

*I: Has that ever been explicitly put over to you or is it something that you're thinking in your head*

*P: There are times when it hasn't been explicitly told to us but you still know it's there, you can't pretend that there aren't those expectations, but more without our current performance director and coach we're a lot more open and frank about the expectations because its...I think its nicer to know where you actually stand to be fair and then you can cope with it*

*I: Over the years that you've shot do you think you've just gotten better with managing that or*

*P: Yes probably...I think it gets easier*

*I: Is that just because it becomes more normalised or*

*P: Yeah because it's more normal*

*I: Have you ever had periods of burnout in your sport or is that something you've managed to control*

*P: Probably but without probably knowing it*

*I: So you've never, you know, thrown your bow on the floor and walked off*

*P: What had a tantrum...no not really, I mean there have been points where I haven't really enjoyed it"*

This above section reveals several key points around the emotional cost of sport, namely the normalisation of the stressful situation of elite sport, experience of burnout, the pressure of funding and performance and cycles of enjoyment within the sport. The sacrifices athlete's made were again discussed by another participant:

*"I: Do you think that there's quite a high emotional cost to doing sport at an elite level*

*P: Obviously it can be challenging and stressful, you're trying to do your best and those days when it doesn't go so well...but it's not a massively traumatising or anything*

*I: Where do you feel the emotional cost is it in terms of your job so your career options which aren't available to you because you choose not to pursue them, is it with friends and family, is it just frustration when you don't perform is that something that you feel*

*P: Yeah it would be a combination of all those things so you can't socialise as much with friends and family, you won't be able to get up the career ladder...be a bit more comfortable money wise, but then I think I have a nice comfortable position personally with money with my job anyway, so I don't feel the need to go out there to get more money, it would just be a bit more of a new challenge, I've got enough challenge to do my sport, so if I did stop doing the archery now, then I would put some more energy into my work*

*I: Do you ever feel you've been stretched too thin doing your sport, so balancing it with your job and everything you have as part of being an adult and having a life*

*P: Oh yeah*

*I: Is that something you feel quite a lot*

*P: It crops up more when you don't...if I'm having a tough time at work...or in the summer time when a lot of people go on holiday so I've got to do coverings, I've got to do some of their work then I have to do my work as well,*

*I: Do you, do you love your sport or is it just something that you do really well, so you do it, how do you feel about your sport*

*P: Definitely 50-50 I do love my sport, I couldn't imagine not doing it otherwise, but then I'm also a competitive person who is like yeah I'm good at this ill just keep doing it"*

This participant emphasised that whilst they found the sport to be “challenging and stressful”, they did not find participating in elite sport to be “massively traumatising”. The issue of juggling work with the sport became apparent again, with the participant emphasising that their sport was holding their career back. Clearly this participant enjoys their sport, yet they then seem split between whether they truly love their sport, answering they are “50-50” on loving their sport, and that one reason they continue the sport at a high level is simply due to them being good at the sport. It was not particularly evident that this participant was torn between a normal life or a sporting life; they effectively balanced both. This was the only example of this found in the sample. Another participant had a considerably different response to the others when asked about the same topic:

*I: Do you feel there's quite a high emotional cost to it*

*P: It doesn't feel like a cost...it almost feels natural, you know I think about a certain level of competition and then I do it and yeah in the events themselves because the process of getting there inevitably involves going to a set level of competition and getting your arse handed to you many times, each one of those is emotionally draining, but, I'm never, you know it might be upsetting immediately at that point and I'd say like anger and frustration are the main things because inevitably when you get your arse handed to you its more often than not you've underperformed as well, and you can see what you've done wrong, but immediately afterwards I'm then just motivated to just make that thing better so I'm then just into the next one and the next one and so I just don't feel a big cost to that no...people encourage me and kind of, I'm happy to go and do those things, so any time that I'm away in a row is kind of like going to be physically and mentally draining, but, there's no way I wouldn't do it, it's the, whatever cost it is I think is more than worth it in the experience...I still almost feel like Alice in Wonderland in some senses because I never expected this kind of life, in some ways, I wasn't sporty as a kid, I was never good at sports that wasn't even something in my comprehension so to be given this opportunity, yeah I'm going to take it of course*

*I: Do you feel the age at which you came into the sport plays a part in that*

*P: Yeah I feel that as a strength exactly, it feels like, it makes me feel more in control of my own fate, and it makes me feel like everything I've done to this point has been my choice to do that”*

Several key points are raised here. The participant clearly feels no external pressure to perform, emphasised by the closing statement. The participant also evidently feels in control of their own development, expressing a disbelief at just how far they have come within the sport. The emotional pressure this participant feels is generally



limited to anger and frustration felt towards their own poor performances, instead of being similar to previous participant's responses. This participant seems to show a very high and continuing level of motivation and dedication towards their sport, referring to their situation as feeling like "Alice in Wonderland".

Whilst this positive statement from one participant should be noted as being important, other participants did explicitly discuss the negative impact of doing the sport, and the sacrifices they have had to make for it. One particularly noteworthy instance is below:

*"I: In your interview, and then obviously afterwards you mentioned that you had an archery first mentality...and that archery came first above everything*

*I: Yes*

*I: Is that something that you chose or is that something that was kind of put on to you*

*P: I think I chose it, yeah I chose it*

*I: Do you feel any regrets about that*

*P: That's what you've gotta do...so...no l...ugh...I suppose there was times when I wish I had of been able to put say family first, but at the same time I would not take back, say, the world champs where we won our Olympic spaces, I would not have missed that for the world, even though I had to miss my grandads funeral for it, I couldn't miss that, and I wouldn't, I mean it's hard because you've got a choice and it's a really tough choice but, I wouldn't, I couldn't change my mind, if I had that choice again I'd always take that same choice*

*I: Has that mentality impacted on anything other than your family relationships*

*P: I suppose friends, I don't have as many friends as most other people, well, I do now, but say ten years ago or five years ago I didn't have like any friends outside of my team, just because there was no time, it was always archery or nothing*

*I: Do you think this kind of sport first idea or what you've experienced, do you think it's the same in every sport*

*P: Probably...I wouldn't be surprised"*

Unlike the previous participant the tangible examples of sacrifice were very clear. Through the research several individuals discussed the pressure and the choices they had to make for the sport in general terms. This extract above gave a specific example of where a decision was made to concentrate on the sport ahead of family or personal commitments, along with the belief that it was the right choice to be made for their sport. Another such decision is detailed below:

*I: Where do you live at the minute, do you live somewhere you rent yourself, do you live with parents, do you live with somebody else*

*P: Nah, still living at home, because then I don't have to pay as much on accommodation, I am trying to save up*

*I: So do you choose to live at home purely from a financial point of view*

*P: Definitely still while I'm trying to achieve performance wise, it's still a case of, I'm not too sure about moving out because then that would be even more of an additional cost and then I would have to really heavily budget it*

*I: Is that something you feel your sport has held you back in, or is that just how it is for quite a lot of people in their 20s and 30s that especially with you being in London area, the costs of moving out are extortionate*

*P: No it'll be my sport*

*I: Is that something you regret about your sport or is it a sacrifice that you're absolutely willing to make*

*P: Obviously I do regret it a little bit, but I am willing to sacrifice that little bit*

*I: Do you feel it's because, obviously I've just said about doing sport at a really high level is quite stressful, so do you feel that you get quite a nice level of support from actually being at home*

*P: Yeah, definitely...yeah it's got its own benefits, it would be nice to move out but then I don't know what I'd be able to afford and it would be a lot more stressful trying to balance all those things, paying all the bills, if I was living on my own"*

Whilst the participant clearly sees benefits from living at home with their parents it is still easy to view this as a sacrifice for their sport given the explicit reference to saving money and lower stress levels that living at home enables. The participant suggests this is purely due to the financial pressures that the sport places on them. Another participant discussed the impact that sport has had on their identity and personality:

*"I suppose it's because it is so ruthless and it is your life... I suppose it's sort of there's always a risk, your never in a safe environment because your always having to compete and some people are just natural competitors and might thrive in that, I'm not, I've had to learn to be a competitor...but I suppose it's when I suppose at times when I've had target panic and then I didn't have the coping skills that I have to cope with that...everything seems overwhelming, and it's those times which are really difficult and that's when there is an emotional cost because it's in your whole life, because archery is like your whole life so it is your life so I dunno, you get depression and that because you feel like you just can't cope yeah...it's not like I can do another job, it's the only thing that I really wanna do"*

It is clear that the participant views their sport as integral to their very existence, commenting how it is their "whole life", and that it is "the only thing that I really

wanna do”. Another key part of this section was the description of needing to be “ruthless” within the sport, with the participant having to develop into a “competitor”. This was further developed in a follow-up interview:

*“I: You mentioned the way you put it was that you had to learn to be a competitor...how did you mean that*

*P: Because it’s not, well it didn’t used to be in my nature to be ruthless...you know when I was at school when I was a kid, I was really nice and I wanted to be nice and, you can’t be nice on the shooting line if you want to win, you can be nice behind the shooting line if you know, you can still be friends with your competitors, but, if you want to be standing on the line to win you’ve got to have a certain amount of, determination or being nice has got nothing to do with that...I think my general nature has changed even behind the line because of that, I am now quite ruthless when like 20 years ago I didn’t give a shit about anything, I just used to take life as it came”*

This section again demonstrates the emotional cost of doing the sport, the participant discussing having to change from being a nice person in and outside of the competition environment to someone who describes themselves as ruthless on top of fundamental changes to their personality. It is clear from several parts of this section that the participants felt sport has a wide impact on their lives, both negative and positive; different participants seemed to experience varying levels of emotional pressure relating to their sport. The above quotation suggests an individual had to fundamentally change their own personality simply to fit into an elite sports mind-set, yet, a previous quote from another participant states how they felt they were still in an “Alice in Wonderland” scenario. These differences make for interesting reading, demonstrating how varied the pool of elite athletes were within the sample.

#### The Emotional Cost to Athletes:

There is a wealth of previous literature available on the subjects that surround the emotional cost sport has. Elite sports people are presented as by the media as being on the limit of human performance for a very good reason: they are. This project was never conceived with this particular subject in mind, and as such the literature gathered on this topic was never particularly in-depth; it was a brief overview of

themes that were likely to emerge. Key areas that emerged were findings conducive with the athletic identity concept, issues with dual careers, burnout and other emotional pressures felt by athletes in the sample. Retirement was the only area under-utilised in the research, simply because my participants did not discuss it in the research to any great extent. The issues of athlete welfare and wellbeing did not present themselves in the research as expected, which was surprising.

The pressure that the athletes felt was evident throughout the entirety of the project. The pressure of elite sport, like the elite of anything in this world, can be immense. From qualifying Olympic places (a key theme in this project) to winning medals at World Cup events, the sport provides a range of its own extremely stressful situations. Besides these, however, there is also the stress that is not seen on the competition field, a more subtle and internalised pressure that participants had not displayed or discussed with me prior to this project.

There was, however, a clear gender divide between lived experiences. Men clearly reported their emotional struggles differently to women in this project. Women reported more instances of mental pressures and struggles than men; the characteristics of burnout (depression, low self-esteem, malaise and fatigue) were all evident in the discussions with all women in the sample. Women directly discussed depression as a result of poor sporting performances, and a feeling of worthlessness when dropping to a lower level of performance, directly echoing findings in Newman et al.'s autobiographic study of depressive experiences in sport (2016). This is something that echoes my own experiences; mid-2016 to late-2017 was a *peak* for my own performance levels, whilst early 2018 through to early 2019 was the biggest *trough* I had experienced in my sporting career to date. During these time periods I experienced two periods of burnout myself; these were characterised by a total unwillingness to practice or train, and a feeling of exhaustion and repulsion towards the sport. This was conducive with what my participants felt during their periods of burnout, along with the passing of these feelings with the passing of time and *recovery* from burnout. Men in the sample responded differently to questions regarding pressure. Whilst one believed that "there's nothing more emotional than sport", this did not particularly present itself. One participant did give a very affirmative answer when questioned if they felt they had been *stretched too thin*, but

it felt as though men in particular did not wish to discuss emotions in particular depth. When asked about sacrifices made for their sport, it was evident *all* participants had made substantial sacrifices purely for their sport. These ranged from leaving their full time job in order to pursue their sport to choosing to live at home in order to save money purely to spend on their sport. Within my own experience I understand the level of sacrifice needed to pursue and succeed in elite sport, and the experiences of my participants were unsurprising. In one sense, it was *reassuring* to find that people in a similar (or higher) position to myself sacrificed broadly the same *things* that I found I had to: time spent with friends, certain careers and job opportunities, financial sacrifices, material sacrifices alongside more relationship-based sacrifices such as seeing friends and family less due to sport. It is only until the wider costs to athlete's are explored that the *true cost* of being a high level elite athlete can be appreciated.

One explanation as to why individuals choose to make these sacrifices comes from the theory underpinning this project; the theory of different forms of capital. Athletes competing for Great Britain in any sport have a wealth of symbolic capital granted to them, and interplay between economic capital, sponsorship, funding and employment also became apparent in relation to this granted symbolic capital. Allison and Meyer's quote that society "tends to glorify the professional sports career" (1988: 221) links to the idea that athletes are held up as a symbol of human achievement in any society, but athletes representing a home nation are a particular rare breed and thus are more likely to be granted higher levels of symbolic capital. The participants in this study all freely admit to spending around £6,000 to £8,000 a year on their sport, and I have spent more than this myself in several past seasons. The social worth and value intrinsically attached to sport means, at some indeterminate point, sport ceases to be a leisure activity for individuals. It becomes something *more*, including an increased emotional cost (outlined in this section) for participants.

The amount of symbolic capital that an athlete gains by being an elite athlete must, to the individual, compensate for the emotional cost that being an elite athlete takes on an individual. Being granted sponsorship and wider funding (in the form of APA grants) not only grants obvious economic capital, but also a large amount of

symbolic capital to an individual. They are confirmed by institution(s) (in this case Archery GB and UK Sport) as being a beneficial and worthy; something so precious and good that the nation is willing to pay them a wage simply to do sport for the nation. This leads to another amount of cultural capital being granted to the athlete, similar to how a university degree is a recognised institutional form of cultural capital. Whilst taking part in sport at an elite level has its personal *costs*, it obviously has *benefits* which minimise or counterbalance the emotional costs described in this section. This idea can be supported from participants who have lost funding, when they explained that they felt *valued* when receiving UK Sport funding and how they felt they lost their position as an athlete when the funding was stopped; their cultural capital was *taken away*. Only by committing to the programme fully – by leaving their jobs and proving their dedication to the sport – can individuals then gain the highest levels of symbolic capital available; they have become a *professional athlete*, the highest level of sporting livelihood possible within minority Olympic sports.

### Lifestyle:

Aside from the monetary cost associated with doing the sport, the project also sought to explore how participants felt their sport impacted on their day-to-day life. This section will be broken down into several key categories including the impact the sport has on their day-to-day life and the issue of employment, both immediate and in the longer term, alongside being an elite sports person.

### Training Regimes:

Participants were very willing to discuss their training regime, and the frequency of both sport-specific and general fitness training:

*“I: Do you do weight training in the house*

*P: Weight training in the house, drills with my bow as well, obviously then I also do some shooting, doing the gym work comes down to more the time restraint to actually be able, so to actually go to the gym, do the work and then I could do more time shooting because if I went and tried to fit in more time in the gym then there would be less time for shooting so I could get more from doing shooting, rather than doing gym work”*

*“My training is quite diverse, and it’s quite cyclical in nature, so I have a rest day once a week and I have a couple of easy sessions once a week and if I’m shooting hard I’m still only shooting hard four times and then I kind of spread out at different points...then I kind of cycle between times like this when I’m doing less work and I’m more focused on the gym, in the season where I’ll be doing more shooting and less work in the gym”*

The discussion around sport training was generally led by the participant, with minimal researcher input. It was felt to be some form of release for the participants; to be able to freely and without prejudice, discuss their day-to-day training activities and commitments.

*“I rarely go training thinking shit I really don’t want to go training today, but sometimes I just do it because that’s what I do, rather than really looking forward to it, but, recently I’ve been like quite enthusiastic about my training...I guess you go in cycles...if your shooting crappy and you don’t really know what to do for a few*

*months at a time then it does really get like tedious, but if your shooting well then trainings great isn't it, everyone loves training if your shooting good"*

One participant was asked if they could reduce their time commitment to their sport:

*"Not really...I mean over the summer I was training before work and after work, it's just trying to get in the arrow values that we need to be getting in, obviously on the recurve side of things it is literally just arrow values or quantities, or quantity and quality of shot...it's been around 1200 [arrows] a week, but I want to get it up to get it more like 2000 a week"*

Interestingly, when further questioned regarding training and the motivation to train for long periods, most participants were happy to say that the motivation for training came from within themselves:

*"It's always been pretty self-directed with the shooting up until this point I've always been in control of what I do, I've directed my training, so because I'm kind of creating it myself and planning it myself I don't have to motivate myself to do it, I enjoy the shooting so I go out and do what I've planned... I don't feel any stress if I need to take a couple of easy sessions, you know, do stuff that's easier than I thought I was going to do, or if I'm going along and I'm feeling good I can just, you know, do more, and I don't worry about that...he's earned my trust...there was never any kind of threat or punishment or fear"*

It was comforting that participants did not say they felt pressured or coerced into training or being coached in ways that they did not agree with, the current model was presented in an overwhelmingly positive way. Other discussions with participants throughout the research pointed towards similar findings; a culture that embraced and encouraged athletes. Another element of training that links closely to this area is the athlete's weekly schedule, and the need to balance training with other commitments.

#### Juggling Busy Schedules:

*"So its flexi [participants job], it's one of the key benefits that helps me in this sport...we don't officially operate on flexitime, but it more or less is there, so I like to start early so then if I don't get any additional callouts or anything if I don't start, so I usually try and leave and get the first train out so I leave the house just before five, and get the first train at 5 past 5, I start work at 6, and then if I haven't got any*



*additional work or jobs come in I can finish just after 2, or half 2, so I get, I can in theory come back for half three, and start shooting from there, or about 4 by the time I get back and get to the range”*

The intensity of the weekly schedule was evident in this extract, and again another participant’s experience

*“I: How many hours do you train a week  
P: Probably 35 [hours], yeah at least 35”*

With the participant spending at least 35 hours per week solely on their sport it leaves little time to fit in additional, everyday tasks. When athletes were further asked about how they spend their downtime away from the sport, working lives or other commitments, the pressure on them became even more evident:

*“I: What do you do for downtime outside of your sport  
P: I do gardening or some DIY...I’ve got two cats that I play with....  
I: How much downtime do you have a week  
P: About an hour  
I: An hour a week  
P: Not much at the moment  
I: Is that just with how much your training or is that with how much work you’re doing  
P: There always seems to be something to fill up my day off*

Another participant revealed they spend a large part of their supposed downtime on the sport alongside their professional development:

*“I: So aside from the sport what do you do for downtime  
P: Well, a bit of my time is on coaching as well, which is more of a job, but is also fun, and then outside of that I do, I like reading, kind of a mixture of stuff I do, reading up and learning about...kind of stuff related too...  
I: So your downtime is kind of spent....  
P: Yeah on archery – so more like sports psychology, physiology, I’m doing like an internship with the S and C team at [Anon], well I’m doing a placement with them, they take on some interns and those people run strength and conditioning sessions for the performance clubs...there’s a possibility I might do more of that kind of thing in the future, and that wouldn’t necessarily be limited to archery, it’s kind of an option I’m keeping open at the moment”*

Another participant emphasised having to juggle various commitments in their current life:

*I: So you see the archery as not a downtime as all*

*P: It's not a downtime, like the evenings are like I get longer obviously evenings when I'm at Lilleshall, because obviously during the week I'm working 8-5 and then I have to shoot, so I don't get home until half past nine, whereas on the weekend I'm doing like 9-5 or 6 then I get home and well I'm home and so I've got from 6 onwards to relax*

*I: How much downtime a week would you say you have*

*P: So it changes because of how far away the indoor range is but on a Monday I take that off as my rest day so I'll get home at half five and then I'll have to like catch up on house chores and like cleaning and washing and then during the week I normally don't get in until about half nine ten o'clock and I've still got to shower and wash and whatnot and then I like to sort of just make sure I get an hour of TV before I go to bed and then when I'm at Lilleshall I'll finish at maybe 6 or 7 in the evening and then binge watch TV till ten-ish and go to sleep*

This extract emphasises how the normal day-to-day tasks, when added on top of a standard full time job and elite level sports practice makes for little time to be spent on more personal activities or downtime. If weekends contain a tournament on both days (with a start time of 7.30AM and a finish time of around 6pm) in addition to a standard 39hr full-time job, and practice on five evenings of the week from 5pm to 9pm, the total hours spent on those three tasks adds up to 80hrs per week. It is perhaps not surprising therefore that participants discuss having hardly any downtime in their lives given the time spent on multiple commitments during the week.

#### Athletes Personal Lives:

Following this exploration of downtime it came as little surprise that participants often found themselves with little time to see friends or family. A diminished social network resulting from the intense time pressures is likely to have wider ramifications. One participant stated that they see their 'mates' at tournaments, meaning they regard other competitors also as primarily friends:

*“I quite like the social aspect of it too, so yeah you are competing but then you’re still having a good laugh with your mates in between”*

One participant emphasised the impact elite sport had on their personal relationships with friends and family more explicitly:

*“I: Where do you feel that the most [emotional pressure]  
P: Like the burnout feeling, then the stress of trying to juggle like work and shooting and at some point have a life, I don’t have a social life at all because I’m just shooting when I’m not working, I don’t ever feel like I ever have time to go home and visit my parents so my parents have started coming up to visit me at [anon] which is like a four hour drive for them instead of a two hour drive for me to go home, because they know if they came to visit me during the week id be shooting, whereas they know I have like 3 hours off in the evening if they come visit me at Lilleshall so that normally Is prompted by me crying down the phone to them for a two hour conversation and then the next day can we come visit you at Lilleshall, but I don’t ever get to see people...I think I’ve been to the cinema once in the past year and a half, or year and a couple of months that I’ve been living in [anon]...I don’t feel like I can take the time off to go to it, and I’m so exhausted by the time I get round to my rest days that I want to just rest and chill out and do nothing...I think all athletes that are trying to juggle working a job or school or education will have the same sort of struggles, but athletes that are fully funded or are able to shoot full time would then find it a lot easier because then obviously, sport shifts into your working hours and you still have your social hours outside of that”*

With the emotional pressures of doing elite sport made clear in this above section, coupled with the time pressures and burnout experience by athletes the issue of having to juggle many different tasks in life becomes more real. Far from simply popping to the gym after work for recreational purposes, the elite athletes within the sample are training for their sport similar in hours to what a full-time job requires – around 30 to 40 hours per week. Adding this on top to an already packed schedule not only restricts what the athlete is able to do outside of work and sport but also likely directly impacts on feelings of burnout and demotivation. Further compounding this is the intense competition schedule that the participants *want* to participate in; elite athletes do not simply train for the purposes of training, they should rightly *want* to demonstrate and test their skill and performance at competition, with international competition being the most appropriate arena. Yet ‘outsider’ opinions seem contrary to this fundamental principle:

*I: Do you see the expenditure on competitions both domestic and international as a normal expense or a luxury or as a combination of the two*

*P: It feels like a luxury but it's a necessity at the same time...I think other people see travelling around the world as a luxury,*

*I: So when we say other people do we mean other like friends and family or other athletes or other people outside of the sport*

*P: other people in the sport and my friends and family who haven't been a professional athlete yeah"*

With other people both inside and outside seeing the sole way to legitimately prove skill as an athlete (competition) as a *luxury* it is unsurprising athletes may choose their friends from inside their sport. A notable response came from one participant when asked about an upcoming training trip that does go some way to support what the above participant discusses:

*I: So just trips are funded...the Turkey camp do you have to pay for that*

*P: It was nearly a grand last year and it'll probably be about the same this year...it's nearly 2 weeks and it's the Rixos which is a five star hotel*

*I: Would you rather you were stopping in a different hotel or*

*P: No it's a five star hotel*

*I: Well I know but if you were gonna save like half of the money would you rather stop in a different hotel or do you see that as kind of your holiday in a way*

*P: That's my holiday"*

The participant clearly regards this particular trip as a part-holiday. It was clear from previous comments and statements from a range of participants that the time pressures athletes felt were numerous and from many different stressors. It was somewhat troubling that an athlete felt the need to use a major international competition as their holiday; it could be due to the lack of available time off from work or financial pressure that leads to that situation developing.

### Employment

Employment undoubtedly formed one of the biggest focuses of the research project which was unexpected. Participants spoke quite freely about their work-based experiences, and were generally more open than when discussing their personal

experiences of pressure, stress and difficulties. For this reason, the below section forms a key piece of research that helps explore the issue of employment and jobs amongst elite level sports people. Out of the sample of participants, three were working full time, two worked on a self-employed basis and another was doing casual work as and when it arose. The two full timers provided a vital insight into juggling the demands of their sport with the needs of their jobs, along with how they genuinely enjoyed doing their job, even though they did consider themselves to be working purely for the money that enables them to do their sport:

*"I: Do you work to fund your sport*

*P: Yep...I enjoy the job as well*

*I: Have you ever turned down promotions or been offered opportunities that you've had to turn down because of your sport*

*P: They have never specifically approached me on that but there have been positions where I've thought yeah I could do that, or I would like to do that, so yeah I've turned those down"*

The participant further detailed how the demands and working hours of the job often fit in quite well with the demands of their sport:

*"P: So long as I'm going to the client and making sure they are being serviced and they are all happy and as long as no one is complaining then I'm left to my own devices, what I like to think about my job is I have all the benefits or being self-employed without any of the disadvantages*

*I: That's really interesting, so do you feel there is actually that level of freedom*

*P: I plan my own day out so if I'm not planning to do any training on the weekend, or if I've had a competition so then I don't really feel like coming in early, I can do a bit later...it just works"*

From these responses it would appear the participant is in a reasonably stable job that fits the schedule of their sport; training is not interrupted, shifts are very flexible and the individual's management is happy with the situation. Other participants spoke little of their job satisfaction, simply talking of the work that they do as inherently separate from the other spheres of their lives, and holding them back within their sport due to the time needed to spend in employment every week. This was an interesting element to the research that only became apparent after the completion of the interviews. Another aspect of the theme of employment was the

discussion of holidays and time off from work. This took up the majority of the discussion, with participants enthusiastically discussing how much time off they could get from work:

*"I: Does your employer support your sport*

*P: Yeah they've been fairly supportive, every time I've needed additional holiday, they've said yeah that's fine*

*I: So when you say they grant you additional holiday how many days are you talking*

*P: For that year I believe it was just an extra two weeks, so another ten days holiday*

*"I: Have you had to use unpaid leave from work to attend tournaments before*

*P: Yes last year I did...I think it was only like two or three extra days but then this year they've given me an additional 15 days so I didn't have to take unpaid leave*

*I: So they've increased your holiday allowance...by fifteen days...that's a lot, why have they done that*

*P: For the archery specifically*

*I: ...Does your employer support your sport*

*P: Yes and no...my manager as the time arranged it and sorted it all out...he really wanted to support me but...I had a conversation with my newer manager about going down to a three day working week, from next year...basically, the senior leadership team have turned around and said she needs to pick choose between the Olympics and her job so other than that generally yes they've been quite supportive"*

It is clear from the above passages that some employers are more than happy to accommodate elite sportspeople through the provision of additional *paid* time off. This was amounting to nearly three weeks additional holiday for some. For a business to grant such a privilege to the employee there must likely have been a very good relationship between employee and employer, something which sadly was not expanded on to a great extent by participants, although some were very dismissive of how supportive their employers were. The issue of simply *needing* vast amounts of time off in blocks came out throughout the interviews too, going so far as to limit the employment types that would be possible for an athlete:

*"Competition is the main issue, I think training is not that much of a problem especially if you could get something part time, but it's then when you say to them [an employer] by the way in April I need to go to Korea for two weeks and then China for a week and then I'm back for three days then I'm in Turkey and then I'm back for a week then I'm staying in Holland for three weeks and then I'm flying straight from there to Belarus...so can I basically have three months off please,*

*that's the difficult bit, so that's where going self-employed is the way to go because like...I'm asking myself...and then I can say yes"*

### Longer Term Employment Plans:

This issue became evident when participants were asked about future career choices and their longer term employment plans: any career plans were firmly placed on hold whilst the participant was pursuing their elite sport career – and this was not a choice made easily by some:

*"I: Do you think that your sport is holding you back in a potential career or are you happy at the like level you're at working?"*

*P: It's definitely holding me back, it will hold me back, it's not holding me back at the minute yet but basically my plan if we get the Olympic quota places next year, if there's 3 of them and I still feel like I'm in a good position on the team I will stop working, I'll take a year and a half out to focus on the Olympics but then trying to get back into engineering afterwards is just going to be horrific and I don't particularly want to be 28 years old and going back in on a graduate salary..."*

One quote provides a little more context to the issue of trying to develop a career alongside pursuing elite sport:

*"I looked at jobs as I was getting towards the end of the PhD and I was thinking I'm not going to be able to train properly if I apply for that so let's just delay the decision until later, because it took probably about a year for my funding going from my PhD funding to getting on to funding for the archery, and I was pretty much just sort of stalling for time, sort of like, this will be fine a solution will prevail and find itself, and just sort of like, make sure I finish the PhD and everything, so, during that time I considered going into full time work after the PhD or I was even looking for part time stuff as well but that was really hard to find, it wasn't really advertised, and then there's not a lot of part time stuff advertised it's more like you could ring up people and ask, but that was much more proactive than I was, I wasn't ready to do that at that point"*

The very last line of this quotation can effectively sum up a number of participants ideas regarding work: that they were *not ready to do that*. This idea can be seen in a number of instances with different participants; delaying and essentially stalling for time when considering jobs and employment because it did not feel like the 'right time'. The unwillingness of the participants to give up or cease their lifestyle as a

performance athlete reaches a major crunch point at this particular phase of life; it seems to be a *now or never* situation for the athlete. The impact of being half in and half out<sup>1</sup> of the sport can be seen throughout the sample, yet some evidence is given of the consequences of this mentality:

*“P: Yeah I mean I just don’t have the time to chase after stuff like that but also I’m still in a situation where I don’t know if I really want...like my parents have already said that I can go home and live with them again and train full time if I want but I’ve spent four years at university you know to get this degree to get this particular job that I’m doing and until I know that we have those quota places it’s too big of a risk to give up my career for that already*

*I: Because you could risk going backwards*

*P: Well, not even backwards, I would see myself as unemployable with a two year sort of a year and a half gap in it, especially if I didn’t have the Olympics in my CV as a to sort of why I had that huge gap, I just don’t see someone employing me”*

Whilst previous quotes detail participants difficulties with initially finding a suitable job whilst competing at an elite level, this participant is clearly wrestling with a few major issues: an unsupportive employer, direct pressure from their employer to pick between their job and their sport and also internal difficulties in deciding between their sport or their career. It is abundantly clear from the above sections that participants were all very aware of the issues and difficulties that elite sport had on their working lives; the difficulties in finding appropriate work, subsequent issues regarding actually holding down that work, a frequent discussion of self-employment as a ‘cure all’, concern around future levels of employability and skillset degeneration and a general uneasiness about how employment balances with their sporting commitments.

Employment was continually discussed in a negative way and as something that seriously limited an individual’s ability to pursue their sporting career to a high level. With particularly blunt sections emphasising how participants had to choose between their jobs and their sporting life or seemingly being pushed into ‘self-employment’ it became apparent that participants had very little choice when it

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<sup>1</sup> Being ‘half-in and half-out’ is the phrase used within this research referring to an elite athlete pursuing both a career (more than simply a full-time job) and also doing sport at an super-elite level, That is, being a top-5 performer in the country, thus with a very strong chance of attending the next Olympic Games.



came to their employment options. Following an Olympic dream has very real employment-based consequences for these participants with a constant theme of uncertainty around the future evident throughout the whole sample of athletes.

### Athlete's Turbulent Lifestyles:

This section addressed real and tangible impacts that being an elite athlete has on individuals' lifestyles. From juggling incredibly busy schedules to following rigid sport-specific training plans, to the impact on personal relationships and personal lives, it became clear that all my participants struggled with the same issues.

One particularly major theme that developed out of the research was how athletes attempt to maintain dual careers. Though much of the research makes explicit reference to full-time education, I believe that this dual career phrase should be able to refer to any other large commitment that might exist in an athlete's life; be it full-time employment, parenthood, education or otherwise; the suggestion that dual careers only apply to education is too narrow a focus. Subijana et al. (2015) and Aquilina (2013) provided much previous research on dual career athletes, and the inherent difficulties they face. At numerous times during this project I have drawn attention to the general incompatibility between the strength of the athlete identity and any other minor identity that must exist alongside this domineering primary identity.

The decision to pursue a dual career is frequently financial, as athletes often cannot afford to support themselves purely through their sport; this is perhaps most relevant in the Olympic sport disciplines where success does not bring mega-rewards, the likes of which can be found in the worlds of tennis, golf or football. Several authors have written on the topic of dual-careerism within elite athletes, and these were presented earlier in the literature review (Cosh and Tully, 2014; Subijana et al., 2015). Within my own experience, I know of a wide range of elite archers that have returned or remained within education far longer than they anticipated. I myself am guilty of that. It has provided me with a *safety net* of some sorts, a get-out clause for if my performance level plummets suddenly or if I fail in my sport. I would still be a student, a worthwhile social identity to hold. Only one participant out of four I spoke

with seemed generally content with their dual career, a somewhat worrying figure; I was growing tired of it myself rapidly, for reasons of general incompatibility. If our athletes *have* to hold dual careers, and these are the best in our entire nation, is there not more than can be done to enable them, or alleviate the burden of dual careerism within athletes? Such larger questions are not for this project to answer however. An early indication of the disparity between the perceived reality of an athlete's lifestyle and the *actual* reality was the quote from Allison and Meyer (1988: 221) which states that outside forces (such as the media or the general public) "tend to glorify the professional sports career". This quote only adds to the mythology that surrounds the elite sporting career; the idea that this elite group of humans have surpassed the normal boundaries of human achievement and have reached some kind of skill-based nirvana, yet, they still have a day-to-day lifestyle as explored in this section.

Athletes in my sample represent the very highest top-5 of a specific sport within the country, and my findings were considerably different to the above generalised glorification of athletes' notion. Individual athletes were still battling to improve and never seemed to rest on their performances. The metanarrative that athletes *reach* a level and then magically remain at this level is simply not true; each of my participants sought to improve on their own performance and develop their abilities. Continuing the theme of athletic identity, authors (Brewer et al., 1993; Stephan and Brewer, 2007; Sabato et al., 2016) wrote extensively on the impact that athletic identity has on individuals; these concepts and theories were evident not only amongst my participants, but also within my own beliefs. As I improved within my sport – the same as my participants – my identity as a person changed. Only with objective hindsight can I now see this. As I began to improve at my sport I began to *allow* it to define me and override my other social identities; instead of being a student, a girlfriend and a twenty-something searching for the next task in life I began to embrace the identity of being an elite athlete – and at one point this was all that mattered to me. Only when my performance dropped in mid-2018 can I see why that was a dangerous *choice* I made, and I do believe it was a conscience choice I made.

Within my project I can see participants make this same choice, but on a higher performance level, and with more impact to their general day-to-day lifestyle

that I never personally experienced. I accept that my participants will likely have a different lived experience than I personally had, as our experiences of our social world vary by too much to allow any form of comparison. Several participants willingly left the social world of employment in order to pursue their sport. Some remained in education far longer than they thought they would or wanted (such as myself). Others shifted their identity entirely; two participants willingly rejected decades of training in order to pursue their sport, and both understood the risks of never being able to return to what they left behind. Some participants seemed stuck between social worlds, a concept I referred to as being *half-in half-out*, and only wanted to grow and develop their athletic identity at the cost of others. One participant expectantly quit their job following their interview, dramatically solidifying their dedication to their sport. The lifestyles of the athletes and participants I interviewed all featured common themes though, centring particularly on dual-careerism, training regimes, day-to-day life and balancing personal relationships with their relationship with sport.

### The Expense of Doing the Sport:

Throughout the research a continuing theme was the high cost associated with doing the sport. Each respondent broke this cost down into two different sections, namely; equipment and training and competition and international travel. In particular, equipment was highlighted as an expense that athletes had to dedicate a high amount of long term financial resource towards.

The majority of participants regarded the cost of equipment as a major initial barrier for any beginners coming into the sport. With the cost of doing a mandatory beginners course standing around the £50-£100 figure, the cost of buying equipment is the more major expense; the reality is that a beginners set of equipment costs around £200-£400. This is usually explained to the beginner as being an *investment*. Unlike other sports where equipment will be used up as a consumable (such as ammunition for target shooting), the equipment bought can be reused for hundreds of sessions.

Participants generally accepted the cost of equipment needed. Put simply, if an individual did not have the equipment they could not participate in the sport; in addition to this point, it is worth remembering that participants are all using the highest grade of equipment available, often costing much more than entry-level equipment in order to maximise potential performance gains. Due to this, the equipment is seen as a necessary expense:

*“I: Do you think of equipment as a major expense now*

*P: Yeah...like I don't have like a budget or anything, but if I was organised enough to make a budget then like, I'd put aside enough money every so long but I'm not that organised”*

Again, the same mentality of *needing* equipment was put over by another participant:

*“Yeah you go back three years ago and then you can put on top, probably a couple of thousands worth of equipment in sort of 2014-2015, every year because, I changed to new bows I had to get two bows for internationals so I had two nice expensive MK bows, and I was buying arrows at that point”*

It was clear from the responses from all participants that they had all the equipment they needed to compete within the sport at their elite level. Not one participant commented that they needed a piece of equipment, or that they needed to replace a piece of equipment and could not do so due to financial constraints. Of particular note was the emphasis placed on one specific piece of equipment: arrows. Mentioned by the majority of participants, arrows came to be seen as the most vital piece of equipment an archer has, even beyond the bow.

*"I: Did you used to think of equipment as a major expense personally  
P: Arrows were always the one you know, I used to shop around for the best value arrows I could find every year, you know thinking back I should have bought two dozen instead of a dozen so I had better arrows all the time, by the end of the year I had shagged arrows"*

*"Because I know I was buying a new set of arrows like every year so that's sort of like at that level at county level it was about £300 for a set, whereas I guess tournaments would have been like...I would have spent like £300 for the year....so the equipment is the most expensive thing..."*

*"Once you've got the equipment, there isn't that much apart from general maintenance and occasional arrows here or there...the only thing you want to constantly improve on is arrows"*

A set of high end arrows costs roughly £300 for a dozen shafts, and an additional £150 for the additional pieces that make up an arrow (points, nocks, fletchings, wraps and pins). Most elite archers have at least two sets of arrows (one for tournament use and one for practice use), but at the super elite level several sets of arrows are needed every season; one respondent explained that they need more arrows depending on the level of tournament they are attending that year – the higher the level, the more arrows are required, again emphasising their importance.

On top of the cost of arrows, the cost of the other pieces of equipment can mean a full 'international setup'<sup>2</sup> would cost in the region of £5000 to £7000; a figure that is far detached from the initial beginners equipment cost of around £200 to £500. From this brief section part of the real cost of doing archery can be seen. With

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<sup>2</sup> An International Setup for the purposes of this piece refers to: two identical bows, with identical attachments, two full sets of arrows and the additional miscellaneous equipment needed to compete internationally (a flight case, spares, personal equipment etc.).

arrows alone costing at least £900 a year, and a full bow setup in the region of £3000, the costs can be startling. Yet within the competitive archery landscape something else can soften this blow and endures as a major subtheme: sponsorship.

### Sponsorship

Sponsorship exists on various different levels within archery. At the elite level however, the implications of being sponsored shift quite considerably.

*“[The cost] was getting more and more because obviously I was like I need more I need better equipment to be able to compete at this level and to get up to the next level but then once I got onto GB and I managed to get sponsorship all of that just suddenly disappeared like my bows are free, my arrows are free, that money, I mean I’ve saved like a couple of grand a year almost because I’ve not had to pay out for so much stuff”*

As evidenced in the quotation above, being sponsored alleviates some of the cost implications of needing large quantities of high quality equipment:

*“I: Have the sponsorship agreements you’ve got allowed you to spend more money on competing, or is it just that it alleviates the cost of gear*

*P: Yeah it’s all been kit, so it’s got money off that and its left the money for something else I suppose”*

*“I: Do you have any sponsorship agreements with equipment companies*

*P: Yeah I’ve got one currently...the manufacturer Uukha who manufacturers risers and limbs so they give me a discount, a decent discount on the manufacturing cost*

*I: Does that allow you to spend the money on competing or something else within the sport or do you just see that as freed up cash in general for yourself*

*P: Both really, the expenditure always revolves around the archery anyway”*

Other super-elite participants are fortunate enough to receive everything they need free of cost, generally on a fair-usage policy:

*“I: Do you think in your current situation as an athlete, do you think of equipment as a major expenditure*

*P: No, because I get everything sponsored [free]”*

Whilst others have a part-sponsorship package:

*I: So with that do you kind of get one a year or is it one when you need it or is it  
P: It's supposed to be two a year, but I think I got like four last year I think  
[manufacturer] just lost count of how many he was sending me  
I: So is it more like a fair usage, and then you get the X sight glasses  
P: Yeah I think they were like 50% discount, I can't remember the exact what they  
were, and then you get a discount on like anything you get from them"*

Another aspect that became apparent throughout the research was the varying levels of support received from the NGB<sup>3</sup>. Some participants commented that they had received equipment from their NGB to help them establish a quality set of equipment, others commented that they did not receive access to such equipment:

*I: Do you get any support from your national governing body in terms of your  
equipment  
P: The only time I got something was a set of arrows and I got a hand-me-down set  
another year, so I've had two instances when they've given support for the  
equipment, I just do it all myself"*

*I: Do you receive any support from your NGB in terms of equipment  
P: No...they don't really provide equipment to anyone, they have the odd  
things...they do have a few sets of sponsored arrows that they are able to give to  
archers within the programme, or lend to archers within the programme"*

One response revealed an alternative side to NGB support related to equipment; the facilitation of sponsorship for participants through networking. With senior coaches acting as gatekeeper figures, archers were sometimes given equipment to test that coaches had received from manufacturers and thought would most likely help the archer or prove advantageous in some way:

*I: Have you ever got any support from [the sport NGB] in terms of just your  
equipment  
P: I think the arrows come through [the sport NGB], through Easton so they sort  
them out and then it was [Anon] that put me in touch with Fivics so he keeps getting  
bow manufacturers send him stuff to try and then if he likes it he offers it to an  
archer to try and then tries to get them sponsorship so he arranged all of that"*

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<sup>3</sup> NGB – National Governing Body, in this case Archery GB

The varied and somewhat muddled world of sponsorship can be seen from these interview responses; whilst some receive *everything* they need free of charge from the respective manufacturing companies, other participants are still required to spend a sizable chunk on the products that are necessary to compete within the sport at the highest level. From an outsiders perspective it may sound somewhat odd that an individual who is regarded as 'sponsored' would still have to contribute towards the cost of the equipment, yet from an insiders perspective this practice is seen as widespread and also potentially damaging the trade itself as this extract highlights:

*“the trade is not in a good place, shops have no margin, because of aggressive shops selling at no profit, hurting the whole market, that is very bad for the sport as a whole, pro shooters, particularly in America demanding huge salaries from bow companies so they’ve reduced what they’ve been giving away...they’re trying to be clever and tell everyone they’re sponsored by selling them trade price equipment which is direct selling which again is cutting out the dealers...no the trade is not in a good place...at the moment the whole manufacturing trade need to look at what they’re doing and how they are allowing people to sell, they are trying to stop some of these shops just selling at no profit”*

Another higher level of archery sponsorship involves contingency pay-outs that various equipment manufacturers offer. For example, the winner of the World Archery World Cup wins 20,000 Swiss Francs (equivalent to roughly £15,000). An additional pay-out will be made to the archer via the various equipment manufacturers that the archer chooses to represent: these often total more than the prize money from an event. For example, a recent tournament in the USA paid out \$53,000 to the winner of the largest open entry archery tournament in the world held annually in Las Vegas. These pay-outs are accepted as a norm by the super-elites, and represent, for the other elite archers, another rung on the sponsorship ladder. These pay-outs were mentioned in brief through the research:

*“At the time 3 of the senior male athletes were all paid by their bow companies to travel, yeah, so they were getting paid to go by GB and also getting a \$2000 appearance bonus on top of that so even if they paid for themselves they were still making money”*



*“Because [they had] won a medal Win&Win<sup>4</sup> rewarded her with money that paid for the whole event”*

*I: When you won that money did you see it as, did you see it more as you’d won the lottery for something, or did you see it as returns on an investment you had made*

*P: I saw it more as I can invest this in myself in the future, and I can go and do more [competitions]”*

The majority of the time, however, pay-outs often only cover the cost of actually attending the events, as the vast majority of pay-outs are smaller scale (in the region of £250-£1000).

With the contingency and sponsorship element forming the top level of elite archer’s financial achievements beyond merely their performance, it was interesting to push participants on why individuals would spend so much money on equipment, and the key differences between budget and superior level equipment:

*“The arrows, you need the best arrows, if you want to aim for the best you are going to want to afford the best and get the best equipment out there, I would always recommend just get what you need like the best arrows”*

*“I: Ok, do you think better equipment makes you better in your sport*

*P: Definitely...you’re not going to the Olympics with a wooden bow would you*

*I: Where are the differences*

*T: Like in manufacturing, like, there made to like better tolerances you can like tune them easier, there just a lot more accurate”*

Two interesting responses, still generally in line with the others, came from two of the more experienced participants:

*“I: Do you think better equipment makes you better within your sport*

*P: To a certain extent yes, but there’s a limit, so once you’ve got decent equipment...you’ve reached your limit...so long as you’re a good enough archer...if your crap anyway it probably won’t make much of a difference*

*I: How does better equipment make you better within the sport, so where does that improvement come from*

*P: I suppose if you’ve got some old bent limbs then your results are going to be less consistent, as opposed to If you’ve got nice new shiny straight limbs - I suppose that the biggest difference is the arrow; most intermediate beginner archers have really shoddy arrows and they do wear out...the biggest is the arrows, especially I suppose*

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<sup>4</sup> Win&Win is a Korean manufacturer of archery equipment

*if you've got an intermediate archer and they hit the leg a couple of times, the arrows are bent and then they become less consistent again"*

The participant mentioned how improving equipment only improved performance to a limit, and even then that improvement depended on the base skill of the archer involved. Another response took this idea to another level, in which the emphasis was much more on the skill of the archer:

*"I: Do you think athletes over-estimate the equipment in the sport*

*P: Quality arrows are important, yeah, but I promise you most budget bows would shoot just as well as a mainline bow, it's a piece of aluminium with some holes cut in it"*

It is very interesting to note that the two most experienced participants in the research regard equipment to not be particularly important to an athlete's overall level of performance, with one going so far as to state they agree that athletes over-estimate the importance of equipment.

Another topic that drew much discussion was exactly how much of an expenditure participants viewed equipment, and if it felt excessive. Having discussed the implications of sponsorship, cost of equipment and how important equipment was specifically to the sport, it was important to ask participants how much of a financial obligation they felt said equipment was. The responses did vary between participants:

*"I: Do you think of equipment as a major expenditure for athletes today*

*P: Beginners starting off, yeah it's a huge expense, when you're at international level nearly everyone's got everything they need for free, I see it as a source of income for some, because they get so much for free they just sell it all"*

Clearly this participant above had mixed views regarding how large they regarded equipment expenditure to be, again reiterating the previous comments that beginners may see equipment as more of a burden than established archers, with arrows again getting a specific mention.

*"I: When you were a novice or just starting out did you think it was really expensive then*

*P: Not really, because I bought like a novice kit for like £300 or something, including arrows, and I thought that was like really good”*

*“I: Do you think of equipment as a major expenditure for yourself*

*P: Not now, once you have made that investment in the beginning of the year, if I need new arrows book it in then, its, I don’t see it as a huge massive expenditure*

*I: Can you remember a time when it was a big deal*

*P: Yeah when I was still moving up through the stages and getting to new equipment I wanted to get better and that was the easiest way of doing it, getting new equipment...”*

Again this last result echoes the message that buying equipment, although seen as quite a large financial burden, led to the reward of higher scores and better performances, something seriously challenged by more experienced members of the sample.

*“I: In your current situation as an athlete, do you think of equipment as a major expenditure*

*P: No, because I get everything sponsored*

*I: Before that did you used to think of equipment as a major expense, or can you, you’ve shot for so long, can you remember a time when it was a big deal for either you or your family*

*P: To get a new bow – yeah it used to be a big deal, if we got a new bow, yeah”*

It is also interesting to note that throughout the responses to the topic of equipment there seems to be something historical when participants were discussing the financial pressures of buying equipment. Many responses seemed to suggest that financial pressures regarding equipment has since gone away because of generous sponsorship agreements.

Aside from equipment, two other major areas of expenditure still required exploration: competition and general training costs.

### Training Costs

The costs associated with training were discussed throughout the interviews. One element of higher training costs was living further away from the Midlands area where squad training and the majority of competitions occur:

*“I could spend more by living somewhere else in the country where I am is a pretty good location, I’m relatively close to Lilleshall, and I’m relatively close to most UK tournaments so if I lived somewhere that was more to the periphery of the country it would easily increase it on a domestic level”*

When asked about their greatest training expense, location was an issue for some:

*“It would be the travel costs, the travel costs would be the largest expense...Lilleshall is a good two hours drive, I’m regularly doing over ten thousand miles a year”*

Other participants experienced other financial pressures simply from the frequency of practice necessary to attain a high level within the sport:

*“When we were both competing and living in our old house, indoors I used to spend £60 a week on practicing, both of us, we both went 4 nights per week to different local clubs and paid the fee to shoot there, we were paying £60 a week to train”*

Another explanation of training costs brought together three core costs: use of the shooting range, fuel costs and gym memberships.

*“I: What takes up the bulk of your living expenses*

*P: Petrol, rent and petrol*

*I: So is the petrol mainly to do with the commute between Lilleshall and where you live*

*P: Yes and because the indoor range is a thirty mile round trip for me to get to over winter*

*I: How often do you go there*

*P: Only twice a week at the moment”*

The use of gym facilities were also mentioned by many other participants, but they did not seem to group the use of the gym together with their sport training. Whilst training costs for some were specifically calculated the most discussed area of expense was competition costs.

## Competition:

Competition can be broken into two separate categories: international competitions and domestic tournaments. There was limited discussion regarding domestic competitions, though this was mainly limited to references around fuel costs and minor costs that add up over time:

*“Well, if you’re doing national competitions, you’ve only got to say pay petrol or maybe like a hotel for one or two nights, when you have to go to an international you’ve got to pay for flights and a hotel for like a week so it’s going to cost you maybe...as much to go to like two internationals as it does to go to like ten national shoots”*

Discussion of the international competitions revealed far more, and two further sub-categories emerged: the actual cost of doing the events and the pervasive issue of ‘self-funding’. The cost of actual international events varied throughout the research. Actual specified costs of individual events were not mentioned often, though one respondent did specify an amount:

*“So the self-funded tournaments I was doing were...much more expensive trips, they were 2-2500 thousand a go instead of 1-1500 thousand yeah they weren’t cheap to get too”*

The majority of participants seemed to add the cost of events into a larger total spend:

*“P: So how many competitions a year do I go to...oh, it’s one of the those which I also don’t want to think about...entry fees they are expensive aren’t they...I want to say like three or four grand a year*

*I: What costs the most out of that spend*

*P: It would be if I’m going to internationals”*

*“I: What’s your most major expenditure within your sport at the minute, so what costs you the most*

*P: Competitions*

*I: And with that is it the travel required or the accommodation, entry fees –*

*P: I suppose the travel as well because some of them are abroad...entry fees and accommodation, all of them”*

As the cost of these international tournaments (often referred to as 'trips') has been detailed in the above extracts, it is important to note that the cost is often paid for by the athlete themselves – as a 'self-funded' event.

Discussion of this issue of self-funding was very prevalent. Throughout the research, not only in this overriding category, the discussion of self-funding had far wider ramifications than the purely financial elements. Below are some key extracts from the interviews that reveal the pressure self-funding events places on the athletes themselves:

*“This is the hardest part about asking people to self-fund right...is it my decision if I say yeah you can self-fund is it up to me to judge what you can or can't afford or say well you've self-funded twice this year I'm not going to let you self-fund a third, is that, is it right that I do or don't decide that, I've said to people oh you've self-funded before this year are you sure you can afford this, and they are like oh well it's my decision – I hate it, I hate that your asking people to pay to represent themselves for Great Britain...it's awful self-funding, but I see as an athlete, let's go back ten years exactly, I had qualifying scores to go to world cup as a compound, we had no money for a team to travel, and the PD back then said no one self-funds, because they'd done it and someone had got themselves in financial difficulty and hadn't paid bills and stuff like that...I didn't give a fuck, I could afford it I wanted to go...I was annoyed and I wanted to self-fund”*

*“L: How much do you think you spend in a year*

*P: It's going to be between five thousand and eight thousand because then, you have things like a training camp in turkey which is self-funded, that's about a thousand pounds, and I've been on at least one self-funded competition every year being about a thousand pounds to fifteen hundred...yep...probably about the higher end of that range”*

Of particular note and mentioned throughout the research was a pre-season training trip to Turkey. This trip would be used to select the teams that would then be able to attend the World Cup events in early 2019, which were to be used as the selection events for the 2019 World Championships and subsequent Olympic qualifying events. The importance of this event was high, the trip is a necessary expense for anyone wishing to make the international GB squad for this major upcoming year:

*“You have things like there’s a training camp in Turkey which is self-funded, that’s about a thousand pounds”*

*“I: So just trips are funded, so no, so like the turkey camp do you have to pay for that*

*P: Yeah we pay for that*

*I: So how much is that*

*P: It was nearly a grand last year*

*I: Really*

*P: And it’ll probably be about the same this year*

*I: It’s quite a long one though isn’t it*

*P: Yeah so its nearly 2 weeks”*

Asking participants how the total spend on their sport added up through all the various elements also led me to question how this spend is broken down. This was asked to all participants, with answers correlating with each other:

*“I: Do you think the equipment expense and the tournament expense and the coaching expense, which one has the most effect on your overall spend for the year*

*P: Yeah I think it’s still tournaments*

*I: What kind of split would you give it*

*P: Like minimal coaching so maybe like 10% coaching, 30% equipment and 60% tournaments, I probably spend twice as much on tournaments as I do on equipment”*

*“I: So when we talk about the situation now, what do you think the bulk of peoples expenditure on their sport is on, is it on tournaments is it on travel, is it on equipment, what do you think the bulk of the expense – where does that come from*

*P: I would say doing like competitions, travelling to competitions and competing...because really, you don’t have to buy equipment every year...so yeah it must be competitions”*

One particular stand out quote came from a participant detailing how recent changes in financial mind-set towards the sport had changed, emphasising that the sport has not always been as expensive as it is today:

*“Competing is the biggest expense these days, when I competed I had a tent in the boot of my car, I drove in a little diesel car, I entered all my tournaments for the year in February with a chequebook, and I had a tent, and I drove there Friday, I left my work at 5 o’clock on Friday and I zoomed up the motorway with my tent, my tent cost me nothing because I never paid my camping fees anywhere, and now I see, and I used to have a Trangia, to cook my bacon sandwiches on, and I buy a maccies*

*on Saturday night. Now I see everyone stopping in £50 a night premier inns, eating £25 three course meals yeah. Hello? Maybe that's why I never was skint"*

This piece stands out as an effective summary of the current landscape of competition within the UK; changing from a low-cost and cheap way through which the sport could be done, to a high cost simply through the use of hotels and meals out when travelling for competitions. This was substantiated by another response:

*"I: Do you think the level of expenditure on those different levels differs a lot  
P: Not a lot, not for me it wasn't a lot because all the competitions I used to do I went camping in a tent like overnight we didn't get hotels or anything*

*I: Was that to save money*

*P: Well, everyone camped...things have changed now, I suppose now it does cost more...I suppose you've gotta travel a bit more and entry fees are probably higher at national tournaments and the local ones"*

The pervasive message from the interviews regarding competition costs was that self-funding is a direct cause of high costs relating to the sport, with most participants citing a spend of around £6,000 to £10,000 a year. The more recent trend towards staying in hotels and paying for meals out was driving the cost of doing the sport up on the domestic front. With participants commenting that around 75% of expenditure on the sport was directly accountable to competition costs, the importance of this finding should not be overlooked.

#### Normalisation Of A Vast Spend

As highlighted in the above section, parts of the research involved asking my participants to evaluate exactly how much they spend on their sport in a time period. The responses to this were surprisingly similar. Participants expressed shock in adding up the actual amount spent on their sport:

*"I: Can you estimate how much you spend on a month in archery*

*P: Oh god, I don't know, I've never written it down It'll just scare me...I don't know.*

*I: Have you got any idea how much you'd spend in a year*

*P: No"*

*"I: How much do you think you spend on archery in a week*



*P: It's probably only like £50 a week then because I spend...£54 to fill up my tank and I go through a full tank each week over the winter and that's pretty much it or maybe like an extra £20 on a weekend so maybe £70 maximum a week as a standard week*

*I: And how much do you spend in a month*

*P: In a month uhhh, times that by four so 70 times 4, its 280?*

*I: And then how much do you think you spend on archery in a year?*

*P: Oh god that gets a lot more expensive then...as in when you start adding trips and stuff...so...I'm going to get a calculator....ooh that's quite a big number already...probably around £6000? No wait I added arrows to that, plus that... probably upwards of...somewhere between six and ten grand?"*

*"I: How much do you think you spend on archery*

*P: How many competitions a year do I go to...oh...it's one of the those which I also don't want to think about...erm...I want to say like three or four grand a year"*

*"I: How much do you spend on archery in a year*

*P: Ah, that's a scary thing, I partially budget around it have I gone over that threshold, yeah I haven't gone over that threshold so yeah, oh I've gone over it ok I'll try and spend a little bit less so I never know the exact figure"*

With these vast sums of money spiralling a natural progression was to ask if participants believed this spend to be excessive or whether their progression to an elite level in their sport has led them to simply accept the level of expenditure as normal:

*"I: Do you think as you've got higher up in the sport and kept progressing, do you think the spend has become more or less of a burden to you, you just accept that you spend £8,000 a year*

*P: I probably don't notice it because it comes in such small little bits, it's like yeah I'll go and do a shoot this weekend, yeah I'll go and do a world cup in Luxembourg why not, yeah you just become accustomed to it obviously, but also as I've progressed like now...you know two years ago I looked at something like Nimes and I would go right I have to go to get the experience, and I'm going to mentally dispose of this amount of money to do it because I don't expect to get anything back on that... now I look at indoor world cups and go ok, if I go to all of these there's a good chance that I'll make money back on a couple of them"*

Participants were also asked whether they thought that the level of expenditure necessary at the elite level of their sport was comparable to other sports:

*"I: Do you think the pathway available for elite performance is expensive*

*P: It's expensive in all sports*  
*I: Do you think it's particularly expensive within archery*  
*P: No*  
*I: So you just think it's comparable across all sports*  
*P: Yeah, as I said earlier...gimme a golf lesson for free"*

*"I: Would you say that the pathway available for elite performance is expensive within your sport*  
*P: I'd probably say yes but I wouldn't know what it was compared to other sports, so compared to other sports it might be cheaper"*

As a final question to the participants, they were asked if they believed a ceiling limit existed on their sport: a level where greater expenditure had no greater level of reward:

*"I: Do you think there is actually a ceiling limit where you reach and you just can't spend any more on the sport*  
*P: I think if you're not progressing you'll get to that point, progressing people have no worries...if your progressing and your winning and your gaining and your achieving you just keep going, you don't stop to think about it, but it's when its going wrong you start looking at what you're doing and start questioning it"*

*"I: Do you think there's an infinite spend potential on archery or do you think there's a ceiling limit which you're at*  
*P: Yeah I could shoot compound and want to do all the world cups that would pretty quickly increase the cost, so, I'm not at maximum expenditure by any means but I think it would be hard for me to spend too much more at this point... a lot of what I do now is dependent on what the programme does so we might have training camps or competitions that we go to a lot of that stuff is funded so that makes it a bit easier"*

Having explored individual's level of expenditure on their sport, it was believed that exploring participant's financial situation was prudent to fully understand individual's position and how much of a financial stress taking part in elite sport was.

### Personal Finances

This section constitutes a range of different areas. An overriding theme was exploring exactly how individuals afforded the immense levels of spend that were necessary, seemingly, to do their sport at an elite level. Another theme was the idea of living frugally in order to be able to fund their sport more:

*I: Have you ever tried to cut on back in the past, just so you can pay for the sport  
P: I don't think so, but, I've always been quite, I've always been quite frugal in living expenses anyway, so during my undergrad I was trying to save money up and then when I was doing my postgrad I was like ah stipend is loads of money...I get a cheap phone contract I don't have Netflix...I don't really have much else that I spend money on, so long as I can cover food, rent, bills and archery, that's kind of me done at that point...I don't really feel the need to cut back on anything, because there's nothing else I'm getting that is beyond essential"*

*I: Have you ever tried to cut back on anything to take part in your sport more, so, have you ever tried to save up money for it and think oh well I can cut back on this, I can cut back on that*

*P: I tend to be quite tight anyway*

*I: So I only buy something if I need it, not if I just want it, so I'm generally quite a tight person anyway, that's just my nature"*

*I: Have you ever tried to cut back on basic living expenses so you can pay for your sport*

*P: No, I'm really stingy with money anyway...I'm just constantly saving"*

With many of the participants demonstrating higher levels of financial control the group of participants could generally be regarded as being quite good with controlling their expenditure. No participant seemed to be spending unreasonable amounts on archery, and could manage the spend level that seemed to be needed (as explored in the previous sections). Questions around how financially secure and comfortable individuals were followed this section:

*"On what we have now... the ins are going to balance the outs, and that's enough for me to be comfortable with that... for the time being, I'm happy at that position, it doesn't worry me too much, for me to start actually start, for how many years am I happy to stay at that equilibrium"*

*I: Do you feel you and your partner are in a comfortable position, are you quite comfortable financially*

*P: Yeah, comfortable*

*I: How much of an impact does it have on your financial position*

*T: It's quite a hard question because if I didn't do archery, I don't know what I would do with the money that's there...I'd probably have a lot more savings"*

With participants explaining how financially comfortable they felt despite the spend levels required (around £8,000 to £10,000 per year) and the frequent self-imposed restrictions on how much they could spend on day-to-day living expenses, it was easy

to view individual athlete's situations as manageable and not a financial struggle – until savings were discussed. Savings surprisingly formed a major part of the participant's ability to spend vast amounts per year on their sport:

*"I: So you had your money coming from your stipend were you ever concerned about that*

*P: Yeah because that ran out...when I started going off on this worldwide bender of archery...so pretty much I was just running down savings for six to nine months to just, thinking like oh I'll figure something out when I finish"*

*"I: Have you ever spent savings to pay for your sport*

*P: Yeah, I've had to put money into a regular savings account and that's for things like big expenditures, so if the trips aren't funded then I have to dip into that or if I need some equipment then I dip into that as well"*

*"I: Have you had to eat into more basic living expenses to pay for the archery*

*P: No, it's mostly come from my savings, like I'll build up savings over like the indoor season, yeah so [laughs] my savings are for archery not for life"*

One more unique response is from a participant who commented that they "don't do crazy" suggesting that some individuals have an unreasonably high level of expenditure on their sport:

*"I: Have you ever spent savings to pay for archery*

*P: I have personally when I was chasing my own stuff in the late-90s, but I'm very clever, I'm sensible with money, I don't do crazy, yes I've done Vegas, yes I've been to the Arizona cup or Mexico, European shoots, but I knew what I had, ugh I'm a sensible guy, maybe that's why I'm good at spending the budget I've got [now]"*

One participant explained how they were seemingly managing to save money whilst spending vast sums on archery:

*"P: I'm really stingy with money anyway...I'm just constantly saving*

*I: So at the minute are you actually saving money on a year to year basis are you actually managing to save money at the minute*

*P: Yes I think so...yeah"*

This again provides more evidence to substantiate the earlier theme that participants in this study generally all felt financially comfortable and able to afford the burden

that elite sport placed on them. This is further supported by asking the participants if they had ever loaded up credit cards, overdrafts or taken out loans to support their sport: every person interviewed said a very clear and quick 'no'. One remarkable response demonstrated that sometimes money comes from more unexpected sources - an inheritance left by a grandparent forming a more unique story amongst my participants:

*"I: In the past have you ever found yourself short on money when you've been spending a lot of money to go and do self-funded tournaments and things like that, or have you just relied on savings which you've mentioned*

*P: Not to the point where I've been worried to the point where I've been yeah, I've relied on savings quite a lot, and partly I was able to do that, partly because I have [Anon] whose very nice, but partly because in like my second year of uni my grandma died which was my last grandparent, and she left me a bit of money which has then been like repeatedly dipped into and built back up, that kind of gave me the buffer...that's just how it is"*

Funding from other sources proved an important aspect of how athletes afforded the vast expense of their sport, and how receiving funding removed the pressure to take on more paid work:

*"So the funding I get is from UK Sport money but it wouldn't exist without AGB so because AGB lost all their UK Sport money...and then we kind of scraped some back with the medal in Mexico in the world championships, out of that skeleton funding they put together a plan and that plan included myself and two others, to get a bit of individual funding, so that's what's really taken the stress off in the last year, if it wasn't for that this would be a different situation I'd be much more, I'd have had to prioritise a lot differently, looked at part time jobs much more seriously or had to have massively increase the amount of time I spend on coaching things to try and push that to fund myself"*

One participant who received an APA had a different view on the subject, having been awarded APA's for a large majority of their sporting career:

*"I: How much impact does your own current financial position have on your current sporting performance – is it benefitted because you have an APA or does it not quite work as straightforward as that*

*P: I don't think it does have a huge bearing, it does make life easier for sure...I've had various spells without an APA*

*I: Can I just ask how many times you have actually been on an APA, so how many years of your elite archery career have you actually been on an APA for*  
*P: From 2001 until 2013...so yeah until 2013, and then 2015 until 2016 and then this year...whenever I've had you know a good amount like a high level of funding I've always tried to like save as much as I can for when I just, when I just don't have funding in the future...I suppose it is difficult to come off funding"*

This was similar to the other participant's comment that they were still actively trying to save as much money as possible whilst doing their sport. The comment, combined with the participants longer experience of funding revealed just how temporary and short-term the main government funding system of elite sport was; it could be taken off the athlete at very short notice, as had been the case for this participant in the past. From this perspective then, funding was seen as something that did not particularly have a large bearing on sporting performance or personal finance stability, mainly due to the instability of funding policy.

#### The Financial Side of Success:

The impact that the financial burden of doing elite sport has on athletes was the focus of an academic journal by Morely et al., (2018), entitled "*Can't pay, can't play?*"; this project drew a lot of inspiration from that article. In addressing the purely financial cost to athletes, several key findings emerged: the impact of individual sponsorship and funding, the willingness to accept the high level of cost that sport entails, the level of expenditure on the sport, elite sport as inherently expensive the emotional underpinnings of an athlete's financial situation, and – most relevant to this particular project – the impact finances has on economic and symbolic capital.

Individual sponsorship was an important part of the research given the high cost of elite-level equipment. Archery is by its nature an equipment based sport, and as such the necessity of equipment cannot be understated. As detailed in the results participants minimised equipment costs through a range of sponsorship agreements with manufacturers that enabled them to receive either cheaper or free equipment. There was some echoing of Marx's theory of commodity fetishism (Billig, 1999) in this aspect of the research, especially when a range of participants commented that if they *needed* pieces of equipment, participants would seemingly never hesitate to

acquire the latest piece of kit; this was a finding consistent with the earlier autoethnography.

Individual funding was a larger topic than sponsorship within discussions. Participants discussed receiving individual funding; this can be split into several different methods through which *funding* is received. The first such method involves participants receiving Athlete Performance Awards (APA's). These are awarded to high performing athletes that medal or perform to a certain pre-determined level, at a specific event, and are also approved by the NGB. UK Sport and the NGB do not work in isolation on deciding who receives funding, it is a negotiated agreement by both parties. Participants frequently focused on APA's throughout the research. Other ways of receiving *funding* include the NGB receiving a greater level of programme funding that directly filters down to the individual athletes. This can be the funding of certain international trips, or from what one participant discussed, expenses paid out to cover the cost of travelling to train with the squad away from a home location which helps alleviate the costs of training. From my own experience, I know that through 2016-2017 there was a drastic increase in the amount of funding available to recurve athletes as they no longer had to pay for their attendance at international shoots like the non-Olympic competitors had to. Throughout the research 'funding' was described in a somewhat muddled manner, with the word being used to cover a vast array of topics.

Through the research, the impact of receiving an APA was revealed to be very high for all. One participant agreed that they existed as a carrot on a stick, and referred to it as the "dream" for athletes. The benefits of APA's were not purely financial; whilst they allowed athlete's to pursue their sport without the need to also commit to a full-time job, it seemed that an athlete being granted an APA was, in some way, more worthy than other athletes; that their status as a successful, high performing athlete had in some way been confirmed by an outside agency, thus confirming their identity as an athlete. It seemed as though UK Sport had perhaps granted this individual athlete a level of symbolic capital purely through granting them an APA.

This idea links in strongly to the concept of capital presented throughout this research. Although this may sound overly dramatic, participants that had received

APA's – often for several years – said that having an APA taken off them, or losing their funding, left them feeling bereft of identity. In one example, one participant explained that having funding “made me feel like I've got a position, like I'm valued”, and when that funding was withdrawn following poor performances, the same participant “felt like I wasn't allowed to be a part of the British team anymore”. This helps provide evidence that the financial ramifications of funding in elite sport go far wider than simply affecting affordability of the sport or spending patterns.

My participants referred to the fickle and changeable nature of APA's, whether they would be reviewed and renewed or cut off entirely – as some had experienced. With the rest of the world gradually turning professional (another key theme throughout this project) it seems odd then that APA's are an inconsistent experience for British athletes. It is for this reason that British athletes must not view individual funding as a form of goal, but more of a bonus for individual performance (despite how UK Sport may promote APA's). The inevitability of losing funding must be a focus for researchers then; from my own research and my own experience, it has a very traumatic effect. The impact that receiving money towards sport expenses was also explored in the research.

I know from my own personal experience, and on a smaller scale, that receiving money directly related to my own sporting ability was a very powerful tool that had more than a purely economic impact on my life. I felt valued, and wanted. I felt as though someone more powerful and knowledgeable than I had finally judged me as *worthy* in some way that transcended my own ability to do so, simply because my bank balance was increasing due to my sporting performance. Suddenly, I was more important because of this. People were willing to give me cold, hard cash simply because I could shoot arrows in the middle of target; something that seemed bizarre given the fact that sport remains a leisure activity primarily. This feeling echoes throughout my own research participants responses; it cannot be coincidence that I and my participants experience the exact same emotions and feelings.

The sheer cost of doing the sport was also a key focus of the research. Most participants spent around £6,000 to £8,000 on their sport annually, and from my own personal experience, I would say this is low-end of the range. Individuals who possess a large amount of economic capital are generally believed to have a better chance at



reaching the elite levels within the sport; as one participant stated, “money buys success”. The expense of doing the sport at an elite level can be crippling; participants generally agreed that there was an upper spend limit on the sport, but this figure stood at around £20,000 to £30,000 a year. A full roster of international tournaments, equipment and travel costs could easily see an annual spend reach that level, and I know several individuals who spend around that level consistently, and despite this high cost, most of my participants seemed glad to accept how much they spend on the sport; had the research included those who struggled financially, the findings would likely have been different.

Personally, financial barriers were the greatest difficulty I faced in my elite sport career. I could practice every day, twice a day, but if I could not attend the major tournaments there seemed little point. International competitions added thousands to the total annual spend on the tournaments, and I remember having to choose from a list of five tournaments which I could afford to do; I still regret not doing the ones I did not do, but I simply could not reasonably afford them. I have been guilty of loading credit cards and overdrafts up with purely sporting expenses, but I did not find this to be true amongst my participant’s experiences; most participants seemed to be managing their own personal financial situations remarkably well, save perhaps the extensive use of savings to fund sport.

The split of the total cost was another interesting feature of the research; most participants attributed around 60-80% of the total expenditure on archery throughout the year to the competitions they needed to attend, emphasising a key area where participants could work to reduce costs – or an area where greater financial assistance could be provided; again this finding was congruent with my own experiences reported in the personal reflection section. A lack of money within the sport was seen as simply incompatible with high level elite sport, and the financial demands it places on individuals. One of my participants explained that athletes with the most money would be able to compete to join the GB squad for the longest, simply because other competitors might only have enough money to try one season; a sad thought which I did believe was true from my own experiences.

Thus, in trying to summarise a somewhat fuzzy and unclear combination of findings, a relationship certainly exists between economic capital and employment

within this project. It is a relationship characterised not by greed or the pursuit of money – but quite the opposite. Individuals throughout the project *willing sacrifice* their economic capital for their sport, something that Bourdieu’s theory on capital does not account for. Out of the participants I interviewed, most were willingly sacrificing careers and employment in order to pursue their sport. The only problem with this is that the research repeatedly suggests that elite athletes must not only possess their own economic capital (either in the form of savings, funding from external sources or otherwise), they seemingly must be willing to *sacrifice* their own economic capital in order to fully commit to their sport.

## Conclusion

### The Original Research Questions and the use of Bourdieu's Theory

The project managed to answer research questions first proposed in the introduction section of the thesis, despite uncovering topics that went far broader than originally envisaged:

1. Does UK Sport's relentless drive for Olympic medal success encourage or discourage the athletes involved?
2. Is the current UK model of funding sustainable given the ever-increasing costs associated with elite success?
3. How much of burden is elite sport to those athletes participating in it?

The first research question has been addressed throughout the previous discussion chapter. Athletes were generally critical of UK Sport as whole, viewing it as a domineering organisation. Specific criticism was directed towards the dropping of sports from funding altogether (such as Badminton and Archery) following the Rio 2016 Games. The relentless drive for more medals – regardless of which sport they are from – was also another area of policy singled out for criticism by one participant. Medals, it was argued, should be won from a wide range of sports, not a handful where Great Britain is dominant (such is the case now with cycling and rowing, for example). The targets and guidelines set by UK Sport in order for a sport to be eligible for funding (both at a programme and individual level) were criticised by participants. The issue around badminton's performance at the 2016 Games – where it hit its predetermined performance goal and still lost all UK Sport funding – was an area of specific criticism from a number of participants. Still, participants seem keen to pursue the ultra-elite level of sport that the Olympics characterises regardless of UK Sport's influence; this is clear from the number of participants who remained loyal to the sport through a period of defunding and upheaval, a time where other individuals deserted and left the sport. Participants did put particular emphasis throughout the project on achieving individual funding, something that comes as a

direct result of UK Sport partnership; this was clearly encouraging participants to perform and achieve highly, a by-product of which ultimately *could* be Olympic medals. It is worth also fundamentally asking if any elite sportsperson would *not* want to win an Olympic medal, the highest accolade in many sports. This leads to a somewhat fuzzy conclusion regarding this research question; whilst UK Sport is seen in a generally negative way and participants generally disagree with the programmes rigid performance criteria, a by-product of the athlete's genuine determination to succeed in their sport leads to increased sporting success – this is what UK Sport then in turn regards as a successful performance, thus granting additional funding and support to athletes, establishing a somewhat odd performance cycle.

The second research question regards the cost of the programme. Whilst Great Britain is currently dominant in a range of sports, this is entirely dependent on the rest of the world. If other nations catch up to our performance, we will cease to be as dominant as we are, and will need to raise our own performance in order to regain dominance. This directly translates into a higher cost. The immense cost of the UK Sport programme is clearly communicated to the general public on their own website; the Sydney Games WCP (World Class Programme) amounted to roughly £59million. The current WCP for the 2020 Games is utilising £266million. Whilst Great Britain has leapt up the medal table from 10<sup>th</sup> in Sydney to 2<sup>nd</sup> in Rio, the final push for a 1<sup>st</sup> place medal table finish could require a doubling or a tripling of that WCP budget still again. Throughout the project athletes were clearly stating they needed more money, for competitions, travel, training and support. Imagine this demand multiplied by the number of athletes the entirety of Great Britain has, across all Olympic sports. The demand would be incalculable and the cost would spiral infinitely. It is for this reason that it is argued the current model of funding is unsustainable in the long-term, as Olympic success is too dependent on forces that UK Sport has no control over.

The third research question asks how much of a burden elite sport is to athletes themselves. Whilst this question was originally envisaged to explore the *financial* cost that athletes experienced, the research uncovered the emotional impact and sacrifices that participants experienced throughout their sporting careers. Throughout the research issues with athletic identity, pressure, burnout and

dual careers all begun to dominate this original question, emphasising just how powerful these themes are to elite athletes. A clear gender divide did present itself in this area; women more openly reported these emotional struggles in greater depth, whereas men referred to the pressures of competing and wanting to win – and having to handle the aftermath of failure. The range of these impacts was larger than expected, and can be examined in more detail in the results and discussion section. Broadly, elite sport presented itself to be a very intense burden to participants through both financial and emotional examples. There was a surprising level of homogeneity in the sample; participants all seemed to have experienced similar levels of sacrifice, similar levels of expenditure and similar emotional pressures. This similarity should be noted as a key finding of the research; there is a level of homogeneity in the sample that would suggest the burden elite athletes experience is consistent.

Whilst not directly a research question in itself, the application of Bourdieu's theory to the project help grounds the research in larger social structures that help account for *why* the participants experience their sport how they do. Given the vast back catalogue of academic literature that utilised Bourdieu's social theory, and Bourdieu's own work on sport in his book *Distinction* (1984), including this theoretical underpinning appeared to be vital. Of particular relevance was the explanation of fields that social actors occupy, and the impact that attempting to transfer habitus between numerous and often unrelated fields had on athletes (such as the fields of elite archery and part-time employment). The findings presented in the previous section provide a greater level of explanation for why athletes make decisions that may seem questionable to outsiders, such as leaving a full-time job to pursue a potential goal. Despite the usefulness of Bourdieu's work, certain parts of this study could never be explained purely by a sociological theory; whilst the links between previous academic studies and Bourdieu's own work are present, it would seem somewhat foolish to try and explain the entire structure and development of elite sportspeople's struggles and opinions with a purely theoretical model – this would ignore and disregard so many details that constitute an elite sportspersons journey and their identity. Therefore, whilst certain elements of theory (such as the

aforementioned capital, field and habitus concepts) are useful to the project, these concepts should only be used as indicators of why certain situations potentially arise.

### Strengths and Limitations of the Thesis

The research gained provides a valuable and knowledgeable account of the experiences of athletes within a specific sport from an insider with a *lived experience* as an athlete within the sport, something previously criticised by Roderick (2006: 77) as being fundamentally necessary when understanding athletes' lives. Although some of the data collected is inherently sport specific, a more substantial amount is likely transferable between sports. The level of access the researcher was able to facilitate to a sample of elite sportspeople, known to be a difficult population to access (Hertz and Imber, 1995) was a rare opportunity. In addition to this, the researcher also brought detailed and in-depth knowledge of both the immediate sporting landscape within the specified sport and a lived experience of elite performance themselves within this sport. Such a combination of both access and insider knowledge is a precious and rare resource within social research, but there is an acceptance of potential bias on the part of the researcher. For this reason, the above can be noted as both a strength *and* a limitation. It is impossible for the researcher to completely remove bias towards the project given their own personal situation and closeness to the research project, though this is not necessarily a negative. In addition, the pre-existing relationships with the participants can be seen as both a positive and a negative; the conversational-style interviews likely yielded more in-depth and personal data, but again a level of bias is likely to exist deep within the data; this does not detract from the usefulness of the findings however. The sample size used within the project (six individuals) is also a limiting factor, even when the sheer volume of data collected (over 65,000 words in transcripts) is taken into account. Gathering more participants would have been difficult, however, given the criteria for participants to be self-sufficient and old enough to be independent from parental support.

The study was undertaken at a *critical* time for British archery; the qualification procedures for the 2020 Tokyo Games begin in July of this year, and so

athlete's decisions taken during this project can have major implications. This crucial timing is both a benefit and a hindrance to the project. Participants are likely to be more determined to succeed in their sport at this critical time, willingly sacrificing other aspects of their life in order to pursue elite sport. These decisions may be recorded in this research as being normal, whilst they are in fact once in a lifetime decisions made during a specific and unique time period; this is an important consideration as it could affect the results drawn from the data.

Another limitation of the research is the framing of this project. Given that elite sports financial cost to athletes has such little previous research, there is no major past literature on which this project can be based, save for the article by Morley et al., (2018). Owing to this, the project had to explore the topic in a very general way, drawing on aspects of previous research that had not originally intended to be a focus of the project. With a greater foundation of previous literature to build on, the project could have had a far narrower focus that could have explored one or two key areas with the participants; instead, the project collected data on so many topics it is difficult to reach a firm conclusion on many of them. An example of this is the preparatory literature review undertaken, and the topic of athlete retirement. Though this was intended to be included in the research, it was left relatively unexplored due to time constraints. Of course, the project explored a topic which has very little previous research and this must be considered a strength of the project; it would have been more beneficial if there was *some* body of previous literature in existence on the subject.

#### Directions for Future Research

Primarily, future research must establish a body of literature on the impact that elite sport has on the athletes that take part. A wealth of research exists that explores the impact sport has psychologically on participants, or how individual athletes' social characteristics (gender, age, class etc.) impact on their potential or actual sporting achievement. With class having been such a key focus of previous research into sport (albeit with a participatory focus), it seems inexplicable that academic literature has

not explored the impact that financial pressure has on individual athlete's competing in elite sport.

Specific areas for future research based on the findings of this project could include: a more detailed exploration of athlete identity and the potential conflict generated through inhabiting a range of different social fields; whether athletes' specific criticisms regarding the UK Sport model are present in a range of different sports; whether more has a clear impact on performance thresholds of individual athletes and entire nations; whether receiving an APA improves performance due to the psychological benefits or the tangible monetary provision; whether specific dual careers are more compatible with athletes lifestyles and finally, what the public perception of UK Sport's current remit is, versus athletes' opinions. Each of these topics could provide a foundation for a substantial body of research, and are only indicative of potential future research areas.

#### Personal Conclusions from the Research and Final Thoughts

This research project was one of the toughest personal challenges I have faced. Researching the topics explored in the project made me face up to my own relationship with sport; what benefits and positives it had brought me, but also what it had taken away from me. Before I started the project I had no idea of the personal difficulties I would encounter. The project, at times, left me questioning something I had spent several years and several thousand pounds on. The impact of this was clear throughout my own 2018 season, where I failed to achieve any real success in my sport; I had lost my direction and was questioning if I *really* wanted to continue doing my sport. I made the decision to retire in July 2018, only to be invited to shoot for England less than 48 hours later. I took this as a sign I had made the wrong decision, and that – for some bigger reason I am yet to comprehend – I should continue in my sport.

From my own experience and the experiences of my participants, I now hold the firm belief that you can only do *two* things in your life simultaneously at a high level. For some, this will be holding a full-time job and being a fantastic parent. For others it might be holding a full-time job and achieving in their post-16 education.



From my own personal experience, and my own personal experience, doing more than these chosen two *things* will lead to a detrimental drop in performance. I do not believe as humans we are capable of elite performance in every element of our lives, simultaneously. For this reason I believe APA grants to athletes are *vital*. The benefits of even the most entry-level award are clear from participants in this study that receive them, and more should be done to distribute them wider.

My final conclusions from the research draw on two ideas that emerged when writing the discussion. Firstly: that Olympic sports are not *just about the Olympics*. There seems an absurd level of short-sightedness in UK Sport's sole pursuit of Olympic medals. If UK Sport exists for elite sports sake in the UK, then greater focus should be placed on a wider range of sporting success, unless, of course, there is an ulterior motive surrounding national prestige and glory at play. Secondly: that there seems to be a very British notion about elite sport, and a somewhat paradoxical belief that it needs to be *elite, but not 'too' elite*. The development of sport in recent decades away from the concept of amateurism may be prevalent in sporting circles, but the British public and general social conscience still has to catch up to this idea. Thirdly, the idea that some athletes are 'stuck' *half-in, half-out* within their sport was a powerful finding; not only should athletes be helped to fully immerse themselves within their sport, there should be the same assistance in transferring *out* of sport, following an athlete's inevitable retirement. These three ideas were not explored with participants as they emerged following completion of any data collection, but would form the basis of any future research I undertook within sport as they form the key findings of the research project.

Overall, this project proved to be much more of a personal struggle than I believed it would be. The findings of the research could potentially be generalised to a wider population, but this is a relative unknown owing to the lack of previous research on this subject. The research stands as a greater call for research into the sorely under-explored area of elite sports impact on the individual.

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## **Appendix A: Ethical Approval**

Ethics Approval  
JACKSON, FIONA S.F.  
Wed 21/03/2018, 16:11 FOSTER, ELIZABETH  
Inbox

Dear Lizzie

I am pleased to confirm that the Ethics Committee have approved your recent Ethics Application forms and you are now permitted to undertake the aspect of the field work and data collection referred to within them.

Unfortunately I am unable to send a copy of the Ethics forms with signature at the moment so it is recommend that you hold a copy of this email approval with your ethics forms when you are undertaking field work.

Congratulations on reaching this exciting stage of your Research.

Best Wishes

S.Fiona Jackson

***S.Fiona Jackson*** | Postgraduate Research Administrator

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## **Appendix B: Participant Information Sheet**

This form will provide me with consent from you that I am able to use findings and details gathered from your experiences in my research project. Within social research we refer to this as “informed consent” – that you understand the entirety of the project, including its main aims and objectives.

I have selected you as a participant in this research because you are an elite sports person with previous experience of the change in UK Sport funding provision over a period of time, and within the UK. Your participation in this research consists of a semi-structured interview expected to last between 30-60 minutes.

The main aims and objectives of this project are as follows. The research project seeks to draw together a range of experiences from sportspeople with differing sports backgrounds to provide a critical analysis of the current UK Sport funding model, and also provide an understanding of how elite sportspeople have to self-fund their sport. Your experiences will help to provide research into an area that currently is very under-researched: this could potentially help a large number of future athletes.

There is little risk to your participation. Key to the project is the anonymity and confidentiality that will apply. You will be discussed using a pseudonym, only I will know the actual names of the athletes competing. For example, I could refer to you as “Jane Doe”. As you will be part of a sample of similar individuals (every sampled person will do sport at an elite level) it would be nearly impossible to decode which sportsperson is which respondent. No events in particular will be discussed in any great depth, no medal positions or specific time frames will be mentioned, nor will any specific achievements that could lead to your identity being deduced.

Your data gathered will only be used for this research project – the findings will not be passed on to another team or attached to another research project. The findings will be securely stored in password protected cloud storage, and will be securely destroyed following the completion of the project. I am the only researcher working on this project. The final document will not be publically accessible.

You can withdraw from the project at any point. You can do this by contacting me at:  
[elizabeth.foster@durham.ac.uk](mailto:elizabeth.foster@durham.ac.uk)

Please sign below to indicate your understanding and acceptance of the above.

Signed.....  
Date.....

## Appendix C: List of questions for individuals who are not athletes

Question List for interview schedule:

Profiling questions:

- How old are you?
- How long have you been associated to your current sport?
- Have you been associated with a sport previously?
- Have you ever partaken in 'the' sport?
- Did you do this to a performance level or as a recreational pursuit?
- Do you currently partake in the sport?
- How long have you done this sport for?
- How much longer do you *currently intend* to participate in this sport for?
- What is your highest level of competition you have attended as an athlete?
- What kind of competition was this?
- What is your highest level of achievement in this sport so far as an athlete?
- What is your highest level of competition you have attended as a coach?
- What kind of competition was this?
- What is your highest level of achievement in this sport so far as a coach?
- What would you say is the best thing you have ever done in this sport, chosen from anything you have done?
- How long have you worked in your sport as a paid employee?

Questions about UK Sport: all questions refer to recurve archery not compound unless stated

- Is archery GB inseparable from UK Sports influence and power because of the arrangements between the two? I remember the board being changed years ago simply to get more funding for example.
- The amount that AGB gets from UK Sport – how much of that 'headline' figure actually reaches athletes, or is it mostly taken up by staff salaries, ground rent on facilities and support services from providers such as the EIS?
- From what you have seen in the past decade do you believe the UK Sport model works for the athletes that you see within the sport currently?
- Do you believe the model has worked well in the past?
- Do you believe changes to the model in the future are necessary?
- Do you think that archery as a sport will benefit from a more general baseline level of funding for sports?
- What was it like when funding was lost after the Rio games?
- Did that moment challenge your dedication to the sport as a whole?
- How many people do you think the sport lost when funding was pulled?
- Why did people drop involvement in the sport when funding was lost? Was it a financial decision or a moment when people lost hope?
- How did the organisation face the loss of funding? Was there always hope, or was it a case of slimming the organisation down as much as possible and as quick as possible?

- Do you think the athletes that were left on the programme were the best talent to work with? (recurses)
- UK Sports interpretation of sporting achievement is medalling at the Olympic or World Champs within a sport, with medals at other lesser events seen as indicators of performance. What is your interpretation of sporting achievement?
- Do you think UK Sport was lenient in restoring funding after the Mexico World Champs bronze medal?
- Do you see APAs as carrots on sticks to athletes? In a good way or a bad way?
- Were you involved in the sport before APAs were widespread?
- Thinking back to that time, how would you say sport has changed in general over the past years?
- How would you say archery has changed in that same time period?
- Regardless of the benefits for the programme, athletes and sport – do you feel it is right that a large proportion of UK Sports funding comes directly from gambling?
- If a social issue such as homelessness or drug abuse was assisted through and funded from the sale of say, cigarettes, how would you feel about that?
- Post-2020 Tokyo the future of UK Sport and how it is funded and with how much money is very uncertain – do you think the ‘glory days’ of the 2012 olympics are in the past now?

#### Delivering the Olympic games

- What can you tell me about how you got into volunteering for the olympic games
- Was it a particular role you applied for or were sorted into
- Was this a full time role
- How did you balance that with your job
- How intense was the build up to the event
- How did you find the actual event
- Did you enjoy it at the time
- Looking back at the time how do you view it
- Did you experience any challenges with UK Sport when delivering the games that you hadn’t foreseen?
- Do you feel the 2012 olympics were an opportunity for UK Sport to show off its power
- Do you think the 2012 games were a moment of sporting greatness for sports itself or an occasion where GB showed off its sporting power
- How much of a legacy do you think 2012 left within our society
- Do you think Rio was on the same level, or do you think the public was let down in comparison to London (spectacle not as great and problems in run up)
- Can you tell me anything about Rio behind the scenes – any issues or problems that wouldn’t have been made public?
- If you had to score Beijing, London and Rio out of 10 for how good a sporting spectacle the event was, what would you give them?
- Do you think Tokyo will be a successful Olympics? More so than Rio?

#### Employee of archery GB

- How does it feel to work for your sport; is it a dream job or not?
- How do you feel about people holding high positions of responsibility within the sport that have never actually done the sport?
- Do you get sick of the sport – you have helped organise the Olympics, attended countless events as a coach, coached tens of people (more like hundreds), have a

full time job in the sport, have a partner on the olympic programme within the same sport and live and breathe the sport in every single area possible – do you just enjoy the sport to that extent or has your situation simply snowballed?

- Have you ever wanted to walk away from the sport?
- How do you feel about the previous olympic cycles where archery received millions in funding?

#### Equipment questions:

- Do you think of equipment as a major expenditure for athletes today?
- Did you used to think of equipment as a major expense personally? Can you remember a time when it was a big deal?
- Does better equipment make you better within the sport (from beginner/intermediate equipment to elite/top of the line equipment)
- Have the sponsorship agreements you have allowed you to spend more money on competing?
- Would you say the equipment you need for your sport is expensive?
- Does better equipment make you better in your sport?
- How does it make you better?
- Do you think the proportional cost of equipment has dropped in recent years?
- Do athletes over estimate the importance of equipment in the sport?
- Do you think the technology used can develop much more without new materials being utilised?
- The qualification scores shot at the 1996 Atlanta games were: Williamson – 648, hallard 664 and hardinges 658; how do you feel about these scores?

#### Athletes financial position:

- Is there any consideration given to an athletes financial background?
- Do you think enough support is provided by the NGB (Archery GB) regarding levels of funding?
- Do you feel there is pressure put on to individual athletes to self-fund trips abroad?
- Do you think there is an infinite spend potential on sport or is there an actual ceiling limit?
- Do you think if APAs were means tested that would be a good or a bad thing?
- Should UK Sport or the sports national governing bodies take into account individuals financial positions?
- If you won the lottery do you think you would be a better athlete?
- If others on your squad won the lottery, do you think it would make them better athletes?
- Do you think elite performance is heavily reliant on funding and money?
- Can you tell me of a time where ends did not meet – and what you chose to sacrifice?
- Have you ever willingly gone without daily ‘things’ to fund your sport?
- How often do you find yourself short on money?
- Can you explain why you choose sport over more ‘normal’ spending in life?
- Could you estimate for me how much you spend on archery in a week?
- Could you estimate the same for a month?
- For a year?
- And finally, for the past 5 years?

- Would you say the cost for archery as individuals progress to a more elite level becomes more, or less, of a burden?
- Have you ever loaded up credit cards, overdrafts or taken out loans to specifically pay for sport expenses?
- Have you ever spent savings to pay for archery events or expenses?
- Were those savings meant for other things or were they just there to spend?
- Do you live with your parents?
- IF you do, do you think it will be impossible to move out whilst doing your sport?
- What takes up the bulk of your living expenses?
- Do you try and cut back on your living expenses in order to do more of your sport?
- Have you tried to cut back on basic living expenses in order to pay for your sport?

#### Psychology/ mental strain questions – pressure of sport:

- Can you give me an example of a time where archery took precedent, and you had to go without something?
- What is the most major expenditure within your sport at the moment?
- Do you think you could be more efficient with your financial resources?
- Do you see the expenditure on competitions, domestically and internationally, as a 'normal' expense? Or as a luxury? A combination of the two?
- Are we able to discuss sponsorship?
- How much would you say you have 'won' in cash over your time competing?
- And would you say that is significant?
- Do you spend that money on your daily expenses, or use it more as a "lottery" type win?
- Do you think more money would make you any better?
- Do you think more money would make 'other' people on the squad/team better?
- Can you think of any individual in particular for whom money was a 'make or break' issue in their sporting career?
- How long did they last?
- How long do you think you could maintain your current level of spending for?
- Do you think your spending on this sport will increase or decrease in the next calendar year?
- What are your major goals for the next year?
- Have financial difficulties made you a more resilient athlete?
- Have you explored any funding options outside of the NGB/UK Sport such as private sponsorship or grant-making organisations such as charities?
- UK Sport is currently undertaking a major funding reorganisation. Do you think your sport will benefit from this?
- And why is that?
- Would you say that the pathway available for elite performance is expensive in your sport?
- Is attendance REQUIRED at squad events and camps that are not 'local' (within 2hours) to where you live?
- How much does it cost to be a member of your current squad per year?
- Do you pay for private coaching?
- Do you provide paid coaching services?
- Do you see your sport as a job?
- What do you do for downtime
- Does increased financial support reduce the emotional cost?
- How much downtime do you have a week?

- Do you think there is a high emotional cost to doing sport at an elite level?
- Do you ever feel stretched too thin? Has there been times in the past where you have been stretched too thin doing your sport?
- Where do you most feel the emotional cost of sport – is it with friends and family, career choices, options available to you or something else?
- Do you feel you compete at a different level when on a world stage next to nations that are able to train full time?
- You've spent quite a long time at the top of your sport, has it changed how you approach each season with regards to cost?
- Do you just accept the amount you have to spend on sport per year?
- Do you consider your future self when making decisions in the present?

Previous questions:

- **Do you currently, or have you previously, received funding from your NGB or other sources for your sport?**
- **How do current UK Sport funding arrangements impact on you?**
- **How do you think the gains and losses of funding impact other sports?**
- **How much impact does your own current financial position have on your sporting performance?**
- **If you had more money would your performance be better?**
- **Have you ever chosen to sacrifice your quality of life in order to afford your sporting commitments?**
- **Do you think the current UK Sport model benefits or hinders your personal performance?**
- **Do you think the current UK Sport model benefits or hinders your teammates performance?**
- **Do you think the current UK Sport model benefits or hinders other sports performance?**
- **Do you think the performance directors and coaches in your sport understand financial aspects of elite sport or don't see them as a priority?**

Levels of performance questions:

- What is your biggest sporting achievement?
- What is your current 'big goal'?
- What timeframe is that goal over?
- Does your financial situation hold you back from achieving that goal?
- Did you find moving from one level of performance to another (from say, county to national, or national to international) dramatically increased the level of expenditure necessary?
- Do you believe that 'pinch points' exist within your sport – times where suddenly
- Do you think to move to a higher level of performance will require more expenditure?
- What would that expenditure be on? Tournaments, travel, equipment or something else?
- Do you find there are dietary requirements for your sport? Do you have to pay for a more specific diet?
- Do you use any supplements that are an added cost?
- Do you have to pay for a gym membership?

- Or do you train at home?
- Do you receive a free gym membership through sponsorship etc?
- Do you need to pay for services such as physiotherapy or sports massage?
- Do you believe at a higher level these services are 'required' or an additional 'nice thing to have'?
- Do these additional services place an extra demand on the funds you have available?
- When you are healthy do you use support services as much as when you are injured?
- Do you ever think about the other athletes on your squad?
- Do you ever think about their financial capabilities?
- Have you ever known an athlete that for whom financial resources really was a make or break moment – that they simply didn't have enough money to continue the sport?
- Why do you think the squad is so young
- Why do you think so many of the squad are students
- Does doing a degree or being in education help or hinder performing in archery
- Have you ever had to choose between your job and your sport
- 

#### Employment questions:

- Have you had to use unpaid leave from work to attend tournaments?
- Do you have a job?
- Have you had a job in the past?
- How many weeks holiday a year do you get from that job?
- Does your employer support your sport?
- Does your sport support your job?
- Have you ever felt under pressure to reduce your employment to progress your sport?
- Do you feel your work and your sport are in balance?
- Do you work only to fund your sport?
- Do you feel your sport holds you back in your career?
- Have you turned down promotions or opportunities in work because of your sport?
- Do you find you can balance your training well with your job?
- Can you balance the competition needs well with your sport?
- Do the dates and times of competitions make it difficult to balance with your job?
- Does your employment cover your sporting expenses, or your living expenses?
- Are you doing your job for your sport or your personal development/ career?

#### Questions as a coach:

- You coach a predominantly unfunded team yet your partner is on a funded pathway. What differences do you see between unfunded and funded athletes? (in terms of performance, ability to train, dedication, complacency, difficulties)
- How much do you see people struggling to pay for the sport they do?
- Do you see these financial difficulties more at the lower level or the elite level (ie, people on pathways struggling to pay for their sport)
- Do you use your own experiences to help you in your role as a coach?



- I've asked about your big sporting goal but other participants have told me their sporting goals. Do you think people should focus on one single goal?
- Do you think this big goals mentality helps athletes?
- Do you think people in the sport that want to achieve success have to contend with other people who just want to achieve the goal of representing their country?
- Do you see burnout in many athletes you coach?
- Do athletes tend to try and hide this?
- Do you think your talent pool is people who are the 'best' candidates to be good in the sport or those who can afford it?
- If all the athletes you coach won the lottery do you think you would have the best team in the world?
- If not, and if money is an issue -is there a happy medium to be found?
- Do other nations that you are friendly with/have contact with also have this issue?

As a partner:

- Your partner does the sport to an elite level. How does the sport affect your personal relationship given you are both so tied up in the sport?
- How does your personal relationship affect your experience of the sport?
- How does your personal relationship affect her experience of the sport?
- Do you think it benefits sporting performance to have a partner in the sport?

Comments?

## **Appendix D: Question List for interview schedule**

- Do you feel there is pressure put on to individual athletes to self-fund trips abroad?
- Is there any consideration given to an athlete's financial background?
- Do you think enough support is provided by the NGB (Archery GB) regarding levels of funding?
- Can you give me an example of a time where archery took precedent, and you had to go without something?
- Can you tell me of a time where ends did not meet – and what you chose to sacrifice?
- Have you ever willingly gone without daily 'things' to fund your sport?
- How often do you find yourself short on money?
- Can you explain why you choose sport over more 'normal' spending in life?
- Could you estimate for me how much you spend on archery in a week?
- Could you estimate the same for a month?
- For a year?
- And finally, for the past 5 years?
- Would you say the cost for archery as you have progressed to a more elite level has become more, or less, of a burden?
- Do you think of equipment as a major expenditure?
- What is the most major expenditure within your sport at the moment?
- Do you think you could be more efficient with your financial resources?
- Do you see the expenditure on competitions, domestically and internationally, as a 'normal' expense? Or as a luxury? A combination of the two?
- Are we able to discuss sponsorship?
- Have the sponsorship agreements you have allowed you to spend more money on competing?
- How much would you say you have 'won' in cash over your time competing?
- And would you say that is significant?
- Do you spend that money on your daily expenses, or use it more as a "lottery" type win?
- Do you think more money would make you any better?
- Do you think more money would make 'other' people on the squad/team better?
- Can you think of any individual in particular for whom money was a 'make or break' issue in their sporting career?
- How long did they last?
- How long do you think you could maintain your current level of spending for?
- Do you think your spending on this sport will increase or decrease in the next calendar year?
- What are your major goals for the next year?
- Have financial difficulties made you a more resilient athlete?
- Have you explored any funding options outside of the NGB/UK Sport such as private sponsorship or grant-making organisations such as charities?
- UK Sport is currently undertaking a major funding reorganisation. Do you think your sport will benefit from this?
- And why is that?
- Would you say the equipment you need for your sport is expensive?
- Would you say that the pathway available for elite performance is expensive in your sport?

- Is attendance REQUIRED at squad events and camps that are not 'local' (within 2hours) to where you live?
- How much does it cost to be a member of your current squad per year?
- Do you pay for private coaching?
- Do you provide paid coaching services?

Previous questions:

- **How old are you?**
- **What sport and discipline do you currently do?**
- **Have you done a different discipline in this sport before?**
- **Have you done a different sport to the same level of performance previously?**
- **How long have you participated in your current sport for?**
- **How much longer do you *currently intend* to participate in this sport for?**
- **What is your highest level of competition you have attended?**
- **What kind of competition was this?**
- **What is your highest level of achievement in this sport so far?**
- **Do you currently, or have you previously, received funding from your NGB or other sources for your sport?**
- **How do current UK Sport funding arrangements impact on you?**
- **How do you think the gains and losses of funding impact other sports?**
- **How much impact does your own current financial position have on your sporting performance?**
- **If you had more money would your performance be better?**
- **Have you ever chosen to sacrifice your quality of life in order to afford your sporting commitments?**
- **Do you think the current UK Sport model benefits or hinders your personal performance?**
- **Do you think the current UK Sport model benefits or hinders your teammates performance?**
- **Do you think the current UK Sport model benefits or hinders other sports performance?**

Levels of performance questions:

- What is your biggest sporting achievement?
- What is your current 'big goal'?
- What timeframe is that goal over?
- Does your financial situation hold you back from achieving that goal?
- Did you find moving from one level of performance to another (from say, county to national, or national to international) dramatically increased the level of expenditure necessary?
- Do you think to move to a higher level of performance will require more expenditure?
- What would that expenditure be on? Tournaments, travel, equipment or something else?
- Does better equipment make you better within the sport (from beginner/intermediate equipment to elite/top of the line equipment)
- Do you receive any support from your NGB in terms of equipment only?
- Do you find there are dietary requirements for your sport? Do you have to pay for a more specific diet?

- Do you use any supplements that are an added cost?
- Do you have to pay for a gym membership?
- Or do you train at home?
- Do you receive a free gym membership through sponsorship etc?
- Do you need to pay for services such as physiotherapy or sports massage?
- Do you believe at a higher level these services are 'required' or an additional 'nice thing to have'?

#### Employment questions:

- Have you had to use unpaid leave from work to attend tournaments?
- Do you have a job?
- How many weeks holiday a year do you get from that job?
- Does your employer support your sport?
- Does your sport support your job?
- Have you ever felt under pressure to reduce your employment to progress your sport?
- Do you feel your work and your sport are in balance?
- Do you work only to fund your sport?
- Do you feel your sport holds you back in your career?
- Have you turned down promotions or opportunities in work because of your sport?
- Do you find you can balance your training well with your job?
- Can you balance the competition needs well with your sport?
- Do the dates and times of competitions make it difficult to balance with your job?
- Does your employment cover your sporting expenses, or your living expenses?
- Are you doing your job for your sport or your personal development/ career?

#### Living expenses questions:

- Do you live with your parents?
- IF you do, do you think it will be impossible to move out whilst doing your sport?
- What takes up the bulk of your living expenses?
- Do you try and cut back on your living expenses in order to do more of your sport?
- Have you tried to cut back on basic living expenses in order to pay for your sport?
- Do you think there is a high emotional cost to doing sport at an elite level?
- Could you give me an example of this?