

TITLE

More than carrying a bag? The role of the caddie in facilitating a golfer's psychological performance

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Abstract

Psychological factors affecting golfing performance have been widely researched within the sport psychology literature. Although there is a general consensus on these, the sport offers a unique environment whereby at the highest-level golfers compete with a caddie. Despite the proximity and potential influence on the golfer, the role and perspective of the caddie has been overlooked. This study therefore sought to ascertain caddies' perceptions of their role in facilitating a golfer's psychological performance. One semi-structured interview was conducted with seven male active caddies (M age = 35.57, SD = 9.78), working across six professional tours. Caddies reported a mean experience of 9.25 years (SD = 8.39) and 1.7 years with their current player (SD = 1.09). Transcripts were analyzed using thematic analysis. Three themes were identified: a) it's more than carrying a bag, b) caddying, it's a people thing, and c) confidence is a two-way street. The study provides an insight to the role of the caddie, the specific processes employed, and the factors which influence their ability to facilitate a golfer's psychological performance. It is intended that findings and implications for practice will enhance understanding for professionals and sport psychologists working within golf. In addition, educational tools are warranted to develop the knowledge and subsequent evidence-based practice of aspiring and currently active caddies.

Keywords: caddying, golfing performance, perceptions, psychology.

52 More than carrying a bag? The role of the caddie in facilitating a golfer's psychological
53 performance

54 In competitive sport a determining factor of success is an athlete's ability to attain and
55 uphold an appropriate psychological state (Durand-Bush et al., 2001). Within golf this
56 becomes particularly challenging given the self-paced, closed skill, and highly objective
57 nature of the game (Pilgrim et al., 2016). Competitors can become vulnerable to the effects of
58 fatigue impacting concentration levels, decision-making, and performance (Thomas et al.,
59 2014). As a result, it has been identified that golfers need to be able to 'adjust' their
60 psychological activation throughout a round to cope with such effects (Finn, 2008). These
61 challenges have made golfing performance of particular interest to sport psychologists
62 (McNeill & Meade, 2017). Subsequently, a plethora of research has been conducted
63 surrounding the psychological components impacting a golfer's performance including
64 attentional control (Oliver et al., 2020), motivation (Beauchamp et al., 1996), and choking
65 (Guccuardi et al., 2010) to name a few. Although these psychological components are
66 familiar to other individual skill-based sports, golf offers a completely unique environment as
67 at the highest-level golfers often compete with an assistant, known as a caddie.

68 Traditionally, the role of the caddie involved tasks to reduce the golfer's workload by
69 carrying the bag, cleaning the clubs, and maintaining the course condition for play
70 (Mackenzie, 1999). Indeed, the professional golf association (PGA) defines a caddie as a
71 person hired to carry clubs and provide other assistance (Adams et al., 2020). Yet,
72 researchers have identified that caddies may provide their player with specific advice on
73 course management, yardage estimates, and club selections (Coate & Toomey, 2012).
74 Additionally, anecdotal accounts of a caddie go one step further suggesting the role includes
75 being part psychologist, weather-forecaster, cheerleader, mind-reader, coach, dietitian,
76 secretary, and crowd controller (Carrick & Duno, 2000; Reinman, 1999).

77 Lavalley et al. (2004) presented a four-component model into the role of the golfer-
78 caddie relationship, containing: the basic structure of the caddie's role, decision-making,
79 moderators of the partnership, and goal setting. In addition, they discussed strategies to
80 enhance the effectiveness and how knowledge of the caddie's responsibilities and player
81 goals could provide more structure and consistency to the partnership. Nevertheless, the
82 model failed to fully account for the potential of a caddie to facilitate the golfer's
83 psychological performance. This aspect was subsequently identified by Simpson et al. (2011)
84 during an interview with PGA tour caddie Joe Skovron. When discussing the role of the
85 caddie, Joe stated that psychological factors definitely come into it, from conversations
86 between shots and overall encouragement, to keeping the player thinking correctly
87 throughout a round. In support of this, McNeill and Meade (2017) interviewed six Irish PGA
88 golfers. Albeit from a golfer's perspective, their findings support those by Simpson et al.
89 (2011) and offered additional ways in which a caddie may facilitate a golfer's psychological
90 performance, for example by influencing their flow state.

91 Indeed Swann et al. (2015) identified the caddie as a possible facilitator for the
92 concept of flow and highlighted how they must be able to maintain their player's confidence
93 levels. In light of this finding, Swann et al. (2016) interviewed 10 European Tour
94 professional golfers to better understand the occurrence and experience of flow in elite-level
95 golf. They argued that although flow is connected to excellent performance; its occurrence
96 can be seen through two subjective states. These were described as "letting it happen", a state
97 consistent to the definition of flow whereby confidence comes naturally, and "making it
98 happen", a state with more intent and purpose where there is a sudden increase of
99 concentration and effort made by an individual. Swann et al. (2016) stated that given the
100 position that the caddie holds with regards to their proximity to the player during

101 competition, it is possible that the caddie could facilitate the concept of flow, in particular the
102 state of “making it happen” to bring on expert performance for their golfer.

103 Building upon the aforementioned research, Pilgrim et al. (2016) aimed to examine
104 the nature of the caddie’s role in the decision-making, psychological conditioning, and
105 tournament preparation of elite-level golfers, by interviewing both golfers and caddies.
106 Pertinent to the aims of this study, was their discussion surrounding the caddie’s role to
107 maintain a player’s high-performance state for as long as possible, by employing attentional
108 control and/or cognitive strategies. Offering a theoretical underpinning, a key assumption of
109 attentional control theory is that anxiety increases the allocation of attention to both internal
110 (worrying thoughts) and/or external (task-irrelevant distractors) threat-related stimuli. The
111 ability of an individual to allocate their attentional resources during such time becomes
112 overridden and can result in an overall reduction in attentional control and consequently
113 performance (Eysenck et al., 2007). In the Pilgrim et al. (2016) study, cognitive strategies to
114 support this were identified as positive reinforcement, trigger words, and regulating attention
115 in between shots to lower psychological activation. These findings further build the notion
116 that the caddie is in a position to influence a golfer’s psychological performance and aimed to
117 provide a more comprehensive picture, by interviewing both golfers and caddies. Upon
118 further investigation, the caddies interviewed in the study volunteered from their primary role
119 held as a tournament coaching consultant, national coach, three PGA teaching professionals,
120 and a PGA professional trainee, and so only caddied infrequently around these roles. As a
121 result, despite the significant mean experience of 15 years, the views obtained from the
122 ‘caddies’ are potentially not reflective of those typically available at the elite level and could
123 arguably be influenced from the perspectives they held as professional golfers and coaches.

124 Jowett and Zhong (2016) further contended that researchers have failed to explain the
125 specific nature and quality of the golfer-caddie relationship. To address this, they employed

126 the use of the 3+1C's relationship model (Jowett, 2014) to provide a theoretical basis from
127 which the golfer-caddie relationship could be explained. The 3+1C's model defines the
128 quality of the coach-athlete relationship as a situation where coaches and athletes' feelings of
129 closeness, thoughts of commitment, and behaviors of complementarity or co-operation are
130 mutually and causally interdependent or co-orientated (Jowett, 2005, 2007). Researchers have
131 identified that a quality coach-athlete relationship is closely associated with both athlete and
132 coach motivation (Adie & Jowett, 2010; Jowett, 2008), performance (Jowett & Nezelek,
133 2012), team cohesion (Jowett & Chaundy, 2004), collective efficacy (Jowett et al., 2012) and
134 psychological well-being (Felton & Jowett, 2013). Unsurprisingly, it was identified that the
135 player-caddie relationship was underlined by the same constructs of the coach-athlete
136 relationship and a significant contributing factor to performance (Jowett & Zhong, 2016).

137 From synthesizing the existing literature, it is apparent that the player-caddie
138 relationship is regarded as a significant component to performance (Jowett & Zhong, 2016).
139 This is due to such factors as the position that the caddie inhabits with regards to their
140 proximity to their player, the trust between the player and caddie, and their awareness of the
141 golfer's psychological state (McNeill & Meade, 2017; Pilgrim et al., 2016). Nevertheless,
142 with the exception of Lavellee et al. (2004) and Jowett and Zhong (2016) previous
143 researchers have failed to obtain the perspective of the caddies themselves (e.g., McNeill &
144 Meade, 2017; Swann et al., 2016). Furthermore, understanding how the caddie facilitates the
145 golfer's psychological performance has been noted as an overlooked area within the literature
146 (Adams et al., 2020; Pilgrim et al., 2016; Schlereth, 2015). Accordingly, the primary aim of
147 this study was to ascertain professional caddies' perceptions regarding their role. Specifically,
148 we were interested in understanding the experiences and processes employed by caddies to
149 facilitate the psychological performance of a golfer.

150

Method

151 Methodology

152 The research was approached from an interpretive paradigm, to discover reality
153 through participants' views, background, and experiences (Leitch et al., 2010). Underpinned
154 by ontological relativism and epistemological constructivism, an assumption was made that
155 participants have their own unique interpretation or perspective (Sparkes & Smith, 2014).
156 Through the use of semi-structured interviews, rich descriptions of caddies' perceptions of
157 the role they play in facilitating a golfer's psychological performance were obtained (Smith
158 & Sparkes, 2017). In line with the interpretive paradigm, thematic analysis strategies were
159 used to develop themes, while using the language of the participants to fully describe each
160 theme (Braun et al., 2017). Moreover, thematic analysis was selected given its versatility to
161 be applied to a range of epistemological approaches including constructivism (Braun &
162 Clarke, 2006).

163 Participants

164 Following institutional ethical approval, participants were purposefully selected on
165 the basis they held a role as a currently active caddie for a professional golfer and approached
166 via personal email addresses or social media accounts (Instagram & Twitter). Seven male
167 professional caddies were recruited, ranging in age from 25 to 49 years ($M = 35.57$, $SD =$
168 9.78). All participants were Caucasian, including five British, one American, and one
169 Canadian. At the time of the interview, caddies reported working on the PGA European Tour,
170 PGA Tour, Ladies PGA Tour, Staysure Senior Tour, European Challenge Tour, and PGA
171 EuroPro Tour. Collectively, the sample held a mean of 9.25 years' experience as a
172 professional golf caddie ($SD = 8.39$), and a mean of 1.7 years with their current player ($SD =$
173 1.09).

174 **Interview Guide**

175 A semi-structured interview approach was employed (adapted from work by McNeill
176 & Meade, 2017) to elicit rich in-depth information from the professional caddie participants.
177 This approach allowed the first author to explore answers provided and develop new lines of
178 enquiry beyond those identified on the initial interview guide (Kajornboon, 2005). Prior to
179 data collection, a pilot interview was conducted on a PGA regional tour professional golfer
180 with caddying experience. Following the pilot, it was identified that more clarity between
181 practice and tournament rounds would be required, and the addition of professional
182 development questions would be introduced. A range of demographic and introductory
183 questions were initially asked (e.g., ‘How long have you been involved in golf?’ ‘How did
184 you get into caddying?’) to assist in the building of rapport with participants (Whiting, 2008).
185 The final interview guide focused on three sections, including the role of the caddie (e.g.,
186 “Tell me about what the role of the caddie involves?”), effects on performance (e.g.,
187 “Drawing on your experiences, can you talk me through where you have had an influential
188 impact on a player’s psychological performance?”), and tournament specifics (e.g., “In your
189 opinion, does your role as a caddie change depending on the tournament?”). Throughout the
190 interviews, additional probes were used to expand upon responses, alongside encouraging
191 participants to provide specific examples that had occurred during their caddying
192 experiences. Participants were also provided with an opportunity at the end of the interviews
193 to add and discuss any areas which were not addressed by the initial questions, but which
194 they felt were relevant.

195 **Procedure**

196 Participants were provided with information sheets, which explained the purpose and
197 procedure of the study (Jones, 2015). The document highlighted anonymity, specifically that
198 both the caddie and the player they represent would be non-identifiable and pseudonyms

199 would be used throughout the writing up of the study. Following the completion of informed
200 consent, participants were interviewed via both face-to-face and telephone modes. Face-to-
201 face interviews were the preferred method of the authors, given their suitability to semi-
202 structured interviews and ability to gather in depth information (Sturges & Hanrahan, 2004).
203 Nevertheless, only one participant was able to partake in a face-to-face interview due to
204 tournament schedules and accessibility, therefore it was deemed appropriate to use telephone
205 interviews for the remaining six participants. This method allowed a greater sample to be
206 recruited, including participants from different countries and supported those currently on
207 professional tours, enhancing the overall view of the caddies' perspective. Interviews were
208 recorded, transcribed verbatim by the first author (163 pages), and lasted a mean of 70.58
209 minutes ($SD = 21.00$).

210 **Data Analysis**

211 To identify, analyze, and report themes from within the transcribed data, the
212 researchers adopted the six-stage thematic analysis process (Braun & Clarke, 2006, 2019).
213 Stage one of the analysis involved a familiarization of the data for the lead author by
214 reading and rereading the interview transcriptions. During this stage, initial ideas were
215 highlighted and noted down, to assist building a picture of the data set. Once immersed
216 within the data, stage two involved the construction of initial codes from key points of
217 interest. Following this process, initial codes were assorted into potential emerging themes; it
218 was important at this point to give equal attention to the entire data set as initial codes were
219 generated on an interview-by-interview basis. Stage four involved the second author acting as
220 a critical friend to review and refine the initial themes into more well-rounded and evidence-
221 based themes. For example, initially three themes (professional experience, interpersonal
222 relationships, performance) with six sub-themes (the practical role, knowledge development,
223 compatibility, trust, confidence, consistency) were identified, however following a critical

224 discussion, overlaps were identified, and the themes and sub-themes were merged and
225 renamed to create the three themes of the study. Stage five included the defining of each
226 present theme from the analyzed data, to ensure that themes were appropriately named,
227 accurately represented, and fitted into the narrative of the study. The final stage of the process
228 involved the writing up of the analysis, including the presentation of key extracts relating to
229 the research question. During this stage, the second author once again acted as a critical
230 friend to ensure there was a balance between the participant data extracts being used.

231 **Methodological Rigor**

232 In line with the standpoint of the research, ontological relativism and epistemological
233 constructivism, the first author employed the use of a reflexive journal, a critical friend, and
234 member reflections to enhance the methodological rigor of the study (Berger, 2015; Smith &
235 McGannon, 2018). The lead author at the time of the study was an active competitive golfer,
236 with experiences in both playing and caddying at an amateur level. This was deemed a
237 strength to the research process because the personal insight into the sport allowed for deeper
238 investigation to take place during the interviews, given the understanding of sport specific
239 references made by the participants. Nevertheless, a reflexive journal was maintained
240 throughout the study. This included reflections of why the research was taking place, any
241 personal and golfing experiences which may influence the researcher, and initial thoughts
242 following data collection to guide future interviews, with regards to any interesting or
243 unexpected concepts identified (Williams et al., 2017). For example, during the first
244 interview the impact playing partners may have on the role was discussed. This line of
245 enquiry was noted in the journal and subsequently followed up in all remaining interviews. In
246 addition, the co-author, with over 10-years' experience as a qualitative researcher and sport
247 psychology practitioner, acted as a 'critical friend'. The addition of a 'critical friend',
248 provided another outlet to explore, debate, and reflect upon possible alternative

249 interpretations of the data (Sparkes & Smith, 2014). Finally, member reflections were
250 employed because they can assist in developing rigor, by generating further insight into the
251 topic being investigated (Smith & McGannon, 2018). Participants were asked to reflect on
252 their interview and in collaboration with the first author, identify any further opinions to
253 generate additional data (Schinke et al., 2013), however, no additional information was
254 identified.

255 **Results**

256 A range of processes were employed by the caddies to facilitate a golfer's
257 psychological performance. The participants shared that (a) it's more than carrying a bag; (b)
258 caddying, it's a people thing; and (c) confidence is a two-way street, contributed to their
259 ability to facilitate a golfer's psychological performance. The three themes have been
260 presented with representative verbatim quotations and participant identities protected through
261 pseudonyms.

262 **It's more than carrying a bag**

263 Participants placed a great importance on their ability to facilitate a golfer's
264 psychological performance by taking care of the practical side of the role. It was
265 acknowledged that should caddies accurately (e.g., selecting the correct club/yardage),
266 effectively (e.g., providing only essential information for the task at hand), and consistently
267 (e.g., carrying out the same tasks for each tournament) complete their practical tasks, it
268 facilitates an environment whereby a golfer is able trust their caddie, enabling them to focus
269 solely on their swing and hitting the ball. With that being said, it is important to start by
270 stating that caddies felt their role was one which is frequently misunderstood: "There's so
271 much more to it than people might realize, I mean to some its seen as just carrying a bag"
272 (Jack). This misconception was further highlighted by Oli who went on to explain a number
273 of different practical tasks within the role:

274 Taking away, not the stress, but the silly jobs which you would have to do if you
275 didn't have a caddie. For example, pin positions, getting range balls, setting up the
276 trackman...running the trackman back to the locker room...making sure there's the
277 correct food and enough drinks in the bag, making sure the towels wet, the
278 waterproofs are in the bag, we've got enough balls.

279 By making sure the practical tasks were completed, the caddie would enable their
280 golfer to focus on what really matters, and not on tasks which could potentially disrupt their
281 performance. This was consistent across all of the participants who agreed that although the
282 basics of carrying the bag, cleaning the clubs, and getting the correct lines and yardages are
283 there for most caddies, the role often includes so much more:

284 Helping him even with booking flights...then there's the actual psychology of being
285 on the course, getting together a strategy for how you're going to play certain golf
286 courses, what clubs are going to be in the bag. (Tom)

287 Though a range of practical tasks were expressed across the participants, it was
288 stressed by all that a key component of carrying out the practical role was being consistent.
289 Consistency was discussed in relation to leading up to, preparing for, and competing at a
290 tournament, regardless of the tournament size, prize money, or location in the world:

291 You shouldn't be preparing any differently for a bigger or likewise a smaller event.
292 Ultimately a round of golf is about trying to produce the lowest score possible over 18
293 holes and different events shouldn't really have a different impact on how you prepare
294 or how you train to achieve that. (Oli)

295 It was indicated that consistency, in particular sticking to the agreed processes during
296 competition, is a major focus for caddies to help their players overcome adversity out on the
297 course:

298 He's got one technical thought in his rehearsal for his swing and he didn't do his
299 rehearsal for two shots in a row and he hit two poor shots, he was pissed off and so I
300 said to him, mate rehearsal, do the rehearsal...I'm taking his mind off the shot and
301 putting it onto right I'm going to do my rehearsal next time, he then did it next time
302 and it was bang flush great golf shot...it's taking the mind and focusing the mind on
303 the right thing for that person, on that process or that trigger. (James)

304 In addition, participants also referred to carrying out the practical side of the role
305 consistently as a method used to encourage and maintain successful performance and flow
306 states: "Watch and be very careful what you say, keep doing what you're doing, whatever has
307 gotten you into that zone try not to change it up too much to keep your player going" (Ryan).
308 Although consistency was identified by some participants as a way to induce this flow state,
309 it was also claimed by others that this state is more player led; suggesting the role of a caddie
310 during such times to be consistent in a manner of staying out of the players way:

311 Just let the player do it because you get in that zone and that flow state through the
312 player, you know everything is player led and you can influence...you can rub off on
313 them. But the player, you're just getting out of the way, because the player is out of
314 the way of themselves, so just let them go. (Lewis)

315 Taking care of the practical side of the role accurately, effectively, and consistently
316 therefore seemed to be a deliberate attempt by caddies to decrease the golfer's workload:
317 "Making their job as easy as possible so that all they have to do is hit the shot" (James). The
318 result of which enables them to positively facilitate psychological performance by enabling
319 their golfer to have: "A bit of extra time, energy, and concentration, that the player can put to
320 good use" (Oli).

321 **Caddying, it's a people thing**

322 Within this theme, participants indicated the individual preferences, needs, and wants
323 of a golfer, which the caddie must meet in order to facilitate psychological performance.
324 Participants shared that their ability to develop and sustain a relationship is essential for
325 performance, because it allows caddies to tailor their practice to the individual needs of their
326 golfer. Consequently, concerns were raised over the ability of caddies who move from bag to
327 bag (a process where a caddie moves from one golfer to another golfer), with suggestions that
328 their impact to facilitate psychological performance would be reduced due to a lack of
329 specific knowledge regarding their current player.

330 Like any relationship, “Caddying is a big people thing and it’s about how you say
331 your words, when you say them and how well you say them” (Jacob). The importance of this
332 was highlighted by Tom who discussed the significance of understanding a players’ needs
333 and preferences in relation to how feedback surrounding technical information could impact
334 on performance during a round:

335 If it’s a technique thing, one player might want to be told straight away so he can try
336 and change it, the other might not want to know because he doesn’t want to have too
337 many thoughts going on when he’s over the ball. (Tom)

338 Furthermore, this understanding was conversed as particularly important when
339 transitioning from one golfer to the next, because what worked with one player might not
340 work with another: “They (names former golfer) doesn’t respond well to that motivational
341 self-talk thing, it just pisses them off whereas, (names current golfer), I think it absolutely
342 helps to get him refocused” (Ryan). These examples highlight that though the role of the
343 caddie might be similar for all, is it essential for caddies to be able to develop a relationship
344 with their golfer to enable them to fully understand their individual preferences.

345 In addition to ‘how’ and ‘what’ information is provided to golfer’s during
346 competition, participants contended that their ability to fully understand a player and

347 facilitate psychological performance was impacted by the length of the partnership. While no
348 optimal time together was identified during the study, it was emphasized that time to build a
349 relationship was key to a successful partnership:

350 I have been with (names current golfer) now for three years and we've learnt how we
351 react to each other and that. I can almost read him now, like I can always tell when he
352 is thinking and I know when I may need to step up and say something, or when I need
353 to say nothing at all. (Oli)

354 Consequently, participant's raised concerns for caddies who move from bag to bag
355 each week, questioning what they can actually offer a player, given the short amount of time
356 spent together:

357 They don't have that relationship, they're just carrying the bag, getting a yardage,
358 cleaning the clubs. From a psychological point of view, I would say they are not
359 giving a lot because what they say to one player could be completely false to another.
360 (James)

361 This argument became particularly significant when you consider the proximity of the
362 caddie to the golfer, particularly during a round, because the ability to understand not only
363 when to step, but what to step in with, enabled caddies to provide support tailored to that
364 individual golfer. For example, the ability to distract players in between shots was agreed by
365 all participants as a key part of their role:

366 We're the only one with him in the heat of battle and it's on us to make sure he is
367 distracted in between shots, absolutely! I don't care, talk about the weather, cats and
368 dogs, anything, and then focused again for those 40 seconds where we are getting
369 ready for the shot. (Ryan)

370 For some caddies however, the ability to develop a relationship with their golfer
371 enabled them to engage in topics specific to their golfer's interests. Allowing them to go that
372 extra step to ensure that their player is relaxed in between shots:

373 I don't even like badminton, but I've found myself learning about badminton because
374 he wants to talk about it. So, if I'm going to do my job properly, I need to make him
375 relaxed and learn about what he likes. (Tom)

376 Although the example above highlights the lengths a caddie will go to facilitate
377 performance, a lack of understanding surrounding their current player's preferences could
378 also prove detrimental to performance. As exemplified below, where Tom discusses the
379 importance and awareness over his own body language on his current player's performance:

380 If I'm on the 12th hole and I started yawning next to the player and he sees me he
381 might think, oh yeah actually I'm a bit tired as well...then as soon as he's swinging it
382 four miles an hour less and it's not going as far as it should be and then I look like
383 I've done the wrong job because the club we've chosen has come short and it was
384 actually because I've yawned. (Tom)

385 Knowing your player, therefore seems to play a major role in the ability of a caddie to
386 facilitate a golfer's psychological performance. Especially given that: "What the caddie says
387 is the very last thing that is in that player's head before he pulls the trigger and hits the shot"
388 (James). As a result, while no optimal time together to build a relationship was identified, it
389 was unanimously agreed that: "Once you understand your player, you know when to keep
390 quiet and when to let them talk, or when to do the talking yourself" (Oli).

391 **Confidence is a two-way street**

392 Throughout the interviews, participants specifically expressed confidence as a key
393 area whereby psychological performance could be facilitated. As a result, the final theme

394 explores the significance that confidence plays on a caddie's ability to facilitate
395 psychological performance with both player and caddie confidence discussed.

396 Building and maintaining confidence was collectively acknowledged as a
397 fundamental part of the caddie's role: "It is a massive role for the caddie to breed that
398 confidence into a player" (Jack). For some, the role of the caddie was seen as a way to build
399 confidence in a proactive manner:

400 During the warmup I will try, like when he's hitting shots, I will be saying good shot,
401 great swing, stuff like that, just trying to build that confidence up right from the start
402 before we've even got onto the first tee. (Jack)

403 Whereas for others, a caddie's role was more reactive, being there to help maintain
404 confidence during moments of adversity, when a player's emotions could take over:

405 You've got to remind them that they're playing well and then as soon as they make a
406 bogie, you're only human, you've made eight birdies this week and its only Friday
407 morning. That's your first bogie, don't stress we were overdue one it's golf, carry on
408 playing, you're playing well. (Tom)

409 In light of this information, it seems a caddie's ability to facilitate confidence is
410 influenced by their ability to pick and choose the most appropriate times to convey
411 information to their player. The results of which allow a golfer: "To be confident and feel
412 good in himself, to execute the shots we are trying to do" (Jack), as well as to stop a golfer
413 getting wrapped up in any negative emotions and maintain their confidence and focus to the
414 next task at hand. In addition to what a caddie says both before and during a round,
415 participants also discussed the impact that trust has on their ability to develop confidence: "If
416 he's got confidence in you as a caddie... he knows you're doing your job right, that in turn
417 will definitely give a player confidence" (Oli). For example, participants discussed that if a
418 caddie is able to complete all of their required tasks prior to the start of a round, the caddie

419 has been able to fully prepare and build up a strong knowledge base of the course during the
420 practice rounds. This in turn enables both the player and caddie to be confident heading into a
421 tournament because no stone has been left unturned:

422 Just say on a certain hole there's a flag on the green which I know you can't go long
423 of...because of the back bunker. He might not know because he's concentrating on
424 his performance and he might be like right I want to be aggressive and I'll have to tell
425 him, look we can't do that. (Jack)

426 With that being said, it is important to note that while caddies valued the importance
427 of player confidence: "You want them confident, committed, and completely focused on the
428 task at hand" (Ryan), a caddie's confidence in their own ability was also highlighted as a
429 factor impacting their ability to facilitate psychological performance. For example, players'
430 responses, beliefs, and the relationship between the player and caddie were all highlighted as
431 key factors which influenced a caddie's confidence levels: "You know your player might
432 criticize you or yell at you for a bad read or a bad club selection, so then you start to doubt
433 yourself" (Jacob). As a result, to ensure a caddie is able to facilitate the psychological
434 performance of their golfer: "Both people have got to be confident but, it's almost confident
435 in the other party if that makes sense" (Tom).

436 Caddie's confidence levels were interestingly highlighted during the interviews when
437 discussing their entry to, knowledge of, and experience of caddying. Participants discussed
438 the ways in which they developed the knowledge required to become an effective
439 professional caddie: "You learn through hard knocks, through experience on the minor tours,
440 that's your education" (Ryan). Additionally, it was emphasized that: "There's no training, no
441 degrees" (Lewis), no formal route to become a professional caddie: "You don't need any
442 qualifications or anything to become a caddie on the European Tour" (Jack). As a result, it

468 The practical role of the caddie has previously been identified to involve actions
469 including cleaning clubs and working out the correct lines and yardages (Mackenzie, 1999).
470 Researchers have also highlighted how caddies may provide advice on course management,
471 yardage estimates, and club selections (Coate & Toomey, 2012). Yet, this is the first study of
472 its kind to gain the perspective of currently active caddies working on a range of professional
473 tours, advancing the research currently surrounding their role. It was identified that the role
474 of the caddie does indeed involve more than just ‘carrying the bag’, with the practical side of
475 the role, playing a significant function on reducing a golfer’s physical and mental workload.
476 In fact, participants classified the role is everything a normal golfer would have to do if they
477 did not work with a caddie, with examples including collecting the range balls: making sure
478 the correct clothing and food is in the bag, and even making sure all travel arrangements have
479 been sorted prior to a tournament. This finding not only supports early research within the
480 area (see Coate & Toomey, 2012; Mackenzie, 1999) but emphasizes the importance of the
481 caddie and highlights the lengths a caddie will go to in order to decrease the mental workload
482 of the golfer, allowing them to focus solely on their performance.

483 The degree to which a caddie felt they could facilitate a golfer’s psychological
484 performance was influenced by the longevity of the player-caddie partnership. Likened to the
485 coach-athlete relationship, Jowett (2014) conceptualizes the dyadic partnership through the
486 3+1C’s model. Specifically, researchers have suggested that ‘time’ allowed for the
487 development of closeness in a relationship (LaVoi, 2007). This was an important aspect
488 identified in our study, with participants suggesting that ‘time’ allowed them to tailor how
489 they work with that individual golfer. This belief is opposed to findings in the Jowett and
490 Zhong’s (2016) study, whereby 83% of participants (six players; six caddies) held a short-
491 term relationship, yet still perceived functioning at a high level of performance. These
492 differences could lie in the defining of a long-term relationship. For example, participants in

493 Jowett and Zhong's (2016) study expressed a week as a sufficient amount of time to get to
494 know a golfer. Yet in our study, concerns were expressed by the caddies over relationships
495 which change week to week, given the lack of time to identify what the player likes, dislikes,
496 wants, and needs. This arguably could impact the quality of the player-caddie partnership.
497 Which, as previously discussed, could help in developing strong long-lasting connections,
498 such as those associated with higher levels of perceived competence, confidence, and
499 performance (e.g., Jowett & Nezelek, 2012, Jowett et al., 2012). In support of this, Jowett and
500 Zhong (2016) did exemplify the 25-year relationship between Phil Mickelson and caddie Jim
501 'Bones' McKay, acknowledging that the best players do tend to have a longer relationship
502 with their caddie.

503 Previous researchers (McNeill & Meade, 2017; Pilgrim et al. 2016) identified that the
504 caddie is in a position to maintain and enhance a golfer's confidence levels, by what they say
505 and do directly before and after a shot. Our findings went beyond this, in that the belief of the
506 caddie was perceived to play a significant role in their ability to facilitate a golfer's
507 confidence. Within the domain of sport psychology, self-efficacy as a concept indicates the
508 degree to which a person believes that they have the capabilities to perform a specific task
509 (Bandura, 1997). Furthermore, among coaches, efficacy has been associated with the use of
510 positive behaviors, improved athlete performance, and greater athlete satisfaction (Myers et
511 al., 2005; Sullivan & Kent, 2003). Although the caddie does not hold the role of a coach,
512 these findings highlight how the caddie's self-efficacy beliefs, could play a vital role in their
513 ability to facilitate a golfer's psychological performance. It has been argued that the golfer-
514 caddie dyad relationship is one which resembles that of a team (Jowett & Zhong, 2016). In
515 that regard, the concept of collective efficacy may be better suited to explain this finding.
516 Unlike self-efficacy, collective efficacy refers to both members' appraisals of the group's
517 capability (Fransen et al., 2015; Shearer et al., 2009). This was exemplified in the current

518 study, with caddies noting the importance of confidence in the other party, given the roles
519 they hold and mutual understanding to work towards the same goals. Evidence suggests that
520 higher collective efficacy beliefs can lead to improved task engagement, greater satisfaction,
521 and more successful performances (Beauchamp et al., 2012; Myers et al., 2004; Stajkovic et
522 al., 2009). This finding is instrumental for not only golfer's and caddies but also for sport
523 psychology practitioners. It highlights should a caddie or golfer not be confident in their own
524 ability (self-efficacy) or be confident in each other's ability (collective efficacy), then the
525 capacity of the caddie to facilitate a golfer's psychological performance could be affected.

526 Across the board, caddies expressed a lack of education, training, and resources
527 available to them during the early stages of their career, to help them develop their
528 understanding of what the role entails. Indeed, participants conveyed that it is common
529 practice for individuals to enter the role of a caddie with experience ranging from little to
530 none, and for individuals to build their knowledge base through a process of trial-and-error
531 over time. This distinct lack of educational resources and training is a finding unique to this
532 study and was initially unexpected given the progressive professionalization of the game
533 (Farrally et al., 2003). In comparison to applied sport psychology, an evidence-based practice
534 is what guides practitioner work, allows them to make informed decisions, and conceptualize
535 their client's needs (Martindale & Collins, 2005; Winter & Collins, 2015a). On the other
536 hand, Holder and Winter (2017) discussed that given the multifaceted and dynamic
537 environment that the sporting world presents, a practice-based knowledge may also be
538 advantageous because it can provide practitioners with the opportunity to learn in a wide
539 range of situations, as opposed to the more fixed and focused nature of evidence-based
540 knowledge development (e.g., qualification/course/curriculum) (Ivarsson & Anderson, 2016;
541 Winter & Collins, 2015b). In the case of the caddie, this could explain how it has become the
542 norm to use practice-based knowledge.

543 Within the study, participants reported learning on the job because in the absence of
544 any formal education (something which is present for sport psychologists), it forced both up-
545 and-coming and experienced caddies to learn from a range of situations on the golf course.
546 This method could arguably be most effective for knowledge development amongst caddies,
547 given that in golf no two shots are ever the same (Stockl & Lamb, 2018). However, recently
548 it has been identified that golfers expressed a dissatisfaction in the number of skilled caddies
549 available (Pilgrim et al., 2016). It could therefore be contended, that providing caddies with
550 an evidence-based approach to learning, from which they could apply to each scenario they
551 find themselves in on the course, would not only complement their practice-based knowledge
552 (Ivarsson & Anderson, 2016; Winter & Collins, 2015a) but also help to develop the number
553 of skilled caddies available.

554 A further area of note within the study, was the caddie's perceptions towards sport
555 psychology. Throughout the interviews, evidence supporting the findings of Pilgrim et al.
556 (2016) was identified, as caddies highlighted the importance of maintaining the golfer's
557 performance by employing a number of cognitive strategies including positive
558 reinforcements, attentional control, and trigger words to maximize commitment and
559 confidence. On a number of occasions, it was expressed that caddies did not perceive their
560 role to include psychologically underpinned techniques or something which they would
561 consciously do, because they: "Wouldn't want to start frying his brain out on the course"
562 (Oli). During the interviews, caddies frequently stated how they conversed with their player
563 on non-golf related topics in between shots, in an attempt to shift attention away from the
564 situation and to avoid focusing on any potential stressors, such as their position in a
565 tournament. Despite their ability and awareness to do this, the perception and understanding
566 of the psychological underpinning surrounding this method of attentional control is lacking
567 (Winter & Collins, 2015a). For example, Nideffer (1976) proposed attention as different

568 styles which can be shifted to suit the needs of the situation. Given the self-paced nature of
569 golf, the ‘art of distraction’ to shift a player’s attention is commonly used. Yet shifting
570 attention can also be used to conserve energy for the entirety of a round, allowing ultimate
571 focus during times of preparation and execution, and complete relaxation in between shots
572 (Bell & Hardy, 2009). Consequently, although caddies actively recognize they carry out such
573 methods, their lack of awareness or misunderstanding of the research and evidence base
574 surrounding attentional control and the impact that anxiety plays on an individual’s allocation
575 of attention (Eysenck et al., 2007) could result in it being misused or ineffective.

576 Initially this perception was surprising given that in golf, both players and coaches
577 have readily acknowledged the importance of mental skills to performance (Thomas et al.,
578 2014), particularly given the increase of prize money and professionalization (Farrally et al.,
579 2003). Ravizza (1990) discussed that this perception is not uncommon, because techniques
580 are often not fully understood. Furthermore, players and coaches often confuse a focus to
581 educate and improve mental performance, with the stigma of having psychological problems
582 and being a weak or problem athlete (Harmison, 2011; Pain & Harwood, 2004). As a result of
583 these findings, it seems a curriculum for caddies seems more important than ever. The
584 development of such could enhance the effectiveness and ability of a caddie to facilitate a
585 golfer’s psychological performance given a greater understanding of the processes behind
586 what they are doing. The result of which, could enable caddies to make better informed
587 decisions and fully conceptualize their player’s needs (Martindale & Collins, 2005; Winter &
588 Collins, 2015a), improving not only what they do on the course but potentially and more
589 importantly, how and when they do it.

590 Though this study was able to identify a range of methods employed by caddies and
591 factors influencing their ability to facilitate a golfer’s psychological performance, it was not
592 without limitations. Given the difficulties surrounding participant schedules and geographic

593 location, six of the seven interviews were conducted over the phone. Though interviewing by
594 telephone has become widely popular within qualitative research, face-to-face interviews
595 offer the interviewer the advantage of extra information including social cues of the
596 participants voice, facial expressions, and body language (Opdenakker, 2006). The addition
597 of this supplementary information could have changed the dynamic and relationship between
598 the interviewer and interviewee and as a result may have impacted on information being
599 picked up or on subsequent follow up questions. Additionally, although the authors were able
600 to achieve a representation from a range of major tours, there was a considerable difference
601 in the experience levels across the caddies ($SD = 8.39$). As a result, despite consistent
602 messages provided, it is possible that the experience of the caddie could have had an impact
603 on the findings of the study. Furthermore, during the collection and analysis of the data,
604 differences became apparent between the European and American tours in regard to their
605 perceptions and engagement in psychological techniques. Future research should therefore
606 look to explore and compare transatlantic perceptions of the role of the caddie and how they
607 can facilitate a golfer's psychological performance. From the findings, it has also been
608 identified that exploring the effectiveness of both evidence-based practice and practice-based
609 knowledge in producing effective quality caddies, across a longitudinal study, would be
610 warranted. In addition, researchers should continue to build on this study, by continuing to
611 obtain the perspectives of currently active caddies (Pilgrim et al. 2016; Schlereth, 2015)
612 however, to add a greater depth to the findings, the addition of the golfers linked to the
613 caddies may further enhance the understanding from both perspectives, of how the caddie
614 facilitates psychological performance.

615 The application of these findings can inform how future caddies may approach the
616 role. In addition, there are clear implications to developing current caddies' views of the
617 psychological underpinning behind the current processes they employ. If caddies were able to

618 learn and advance their understanding of the evidence-base behind their actions, this
619 potentially would not only help develop the belief and confidence that they have in their role
620 but will also enable them to improve how they deliver interventions and the timing of when
621 they use them (Martindale & Collins, 2005; Winter & Collins, 2015a). This understanding
622 may also further promote the use of sport psychology techniques and practitioners within
623 elite level golf, giving a greater understanding of their role to be understood (Pain &
624 Hardwood, 2004).

625 Finally, given the distinct lack of training available for caddies and the perception of
626 sport psychology currently held, we would encourage golf's national governing bodies to
627 explore the development of educational tools and/or professional development workshops
628 specifically for amateurs looking to achieve a career within the game (both playing or
629 caddying). The implementation of such resources within the sphere of amateur golf, could
630 prove of great benefit to the perception and understanding of what sport psychology is, and
631 how it can benefit golfing performance. Not only amongst caddies, but across golfers at all
632 levels of the game, because those individuals who continue into professional ranks will have
633 a better understanding of the uses and benefits of sport psychology. This in turn also has the
634 potential to benefit the employment of sport psychologists working within the game, given
635 the increased understanding and more accurate perceptions of what sport psychology is.

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