

# ATHLETIC INSIGHT

March, 2004  
Volume 6, Issue 1

## **The Golfer-Caddie Partnership: An Exploratory Investigation Into the Role of the Caddie**

*David Lavalley*  
*Loughborough University*  
*England*

*David Bruce*  
*University of Queensland*  
*Australia*

*Trish Gorely*  
*Loughborough University*  
*England*

### **Abstract**

This study reports the results from a research project designed to examine the role of the caddie in the golfer-caddie partnership. Interviews were conducted with eight golfers and eight caddies from the Australasian Professional Golfers Association (PGA) Tour. An interpretational analysis of the data revealed a four-component model that was able to both describe the role and provide guidance to golfers and caddies for optimizing their partnership. The components included in the model were the basic structure of caddying, decision-making, moderators of the partnership, and goal setting. Strategies for players and caddies to enhance the utility of the caddie are discussed, including how knowledge of the goals and responsibilities of the player and caddie in different situations can provide a greater degree of structure and consistency in their partnership. Future research is suggested on the particular characteristics of the golfer-caddie partnership, including the content of the interpersonal behavior, the frequency of interaction, the history of the relationship, and the style of communication on and off the golf course.

## Introduction

There has been an increasing interest in the popular press regarding the role caddies play in competitive golf. Donegan (1998), for example, has provided a journalistic account of a year as a professional caddie on the European Professional Golfers Association Tour. The importance of the golfer-caddie relationship with respect to performance has also been recently chronicled by Dabell (1997, 2000). These, and other anecdotal accounts (e.g., Abram & O'Byrne, 1996; Carrick & Duno, 2000; Puett & Apfelbaum, 1992), have provided some insight into the general facets of the caddies' role by suggesting that caddies need to be part psychologist, part weather-forecaster, part cheerleader, part mind-reader, and part coach. Other authors in the popular press have described caddies as counselors, dieticians, secretaries, crowd controllers, and amateur physiologists (Mackenzie, 1997, 1999; Plimpton, 1997; Reinman, 1999).

The available literature has also revealed some of the particular characteristics of the relationship between competitive golfers and the caddies who work so closely with them. For example, the role of the caddie has been identified as being primarily technical in nature and involves, above all, carrying the golfer's bag (Mackenzie, 1997). A professional golfer's bag typically weighs 20kg, and includes clubs, rain gear, golf balls, food, drinks, an umbrella, and various other items (Reinman, 1999). The average round of competitive golf also takes approximately 4 hours and 15 minutes, covers 4-5 miles, and involves the caddie picking up the bag in the region of 50 times (Bruce, 1999). Other technical facets of the role of the caddie include cleaning the golf clubs, providing information on shot selection (e.g., keeping yardage in order to indicate the distance of a shot), having new golf balls ready when needed, keeping things dry when it is raining, and assisting with travel preparation (Carrick & Duno, 2000; Lavalley, 1998). Many caddies also spend time with their players before and after a competition during warm-up and post-round practice sessions.

Another characteristic of the golfer-caddie unit, which has been described in the literature, and one, which is more of a characteristic of the game than of the relationship itself, is that there is a very large amount of 'down time' between shots in golf (Dabell, 1997, 2000; Donegan, 1998). Because it takes less than five seconds to swing a golf club and usually no more than one minute to plan and execute a shot, a golfer who shoots level par during a round of golf (usually between 70 and 73 strokes) will be directly involved in planning shots for about 25% of the time (Bruce, 1999). Moreover, competitive golfers physically play shots for usually no more than 2% of the time on the course. Although the golfer is the one who actually executes each golf shot, anecdotal evidence suggests that golfers and caddies work together during the available down time in planning the task(s) that need to be completed prior to the shot (Mackenzie, 1997; Reinman, 1999).

Along with the technical assistance provided by caddies during a round of golf, the available literature suggests that there is also a psychological component to the caddie's role (Dabell, 1997, 2000; Donegan, 1998). Interestingly, many of the anecdotal accounts have focused on the psychological facets of the role rather than the technical (e.g., Abram & O'Byrne, 1996; Carrick & Duno, 2000; Plimpton, 1997), and many golfers have (been)

reported selecting caddies in order to help their mental game (e.g., Love III, 1997; Palmer & Dodson, 1999; Reilly, 1997). In an unpublished study, Lavalley (1998) has also found evidence suggesting that caddies play a role in assisting golfers with maintaining motivation, confidence, attention, appropriate arousal levels, positive thinking, and an appropriate mental state in order to play optimally. In this study, five elite-amateur male golfers and four male caddies in England were invited to complete a survey interview on the role caddies play in golf. In addition to the technical and organizational tasks previously identified in the literature (cf. Carrick & Duno, 2000; Donegan, 1998), this investigation revealed that many attributes are assigned to the 'ideal caddie' including the following: intelligence, trustworthiness and reliability, having a positive attitude, patience, a calming influence, knowing when to speak and when not to speak, and knowledge of golf, their golfer, and the golf course. Although Lavalley's study provides some empirical insight into the golfer-caddie relationship, its small scope and preliminary nature limits its utility and predicated the examination of the nature of similar relationships in other sporting contexts.

Despite the vast range of interpersonal relationships that exist in the world of sport, there are few direct comparisons from which elements of the relationship between golfers and caddies can be extrapolated. Sports in which athletes perform a number of independent skills separated by times in which they can consult with a coach or other figure (e.g., diving, field events in athletics) are similar to some extent. The difference with the golfer-caddie partnership is that, as opposed to providing information about a number of challenges that are ahead and then letting the individual go on alone, golfers and caddies move through a round of golf together. In this sense, a cox in certain rowing events is also in a position to play a role similar to that of a caddie. However, we know of no published research that exists on this particular relationship.

The closest comparison to the golfer-caddie partnership is perhaps the relationship between a rally car driver and their navigator. Exploratory research by Roberts and Kundrat (1978) examined this relationship by studying what they referred to as the expressive style among rally drivers and navigators. Their initial results suggested that drivers and navigators in an optimal pairing tend to possess certain expressive styles during competition. In particular, drivers would have a "potent" style (i.e., approach the world as though it is a game of skill), while navigators would have a combination of "fortunist" (i.e., approach the world as though playing a game of chance) and "strategist" style (i.e., approach the world as a game of strategy) styles. It was also proposed that these styles allow the driver to remain in control of the physical skill of driving, while at the same time allowing the navigator to be less disturbed by what the driver is doing, and thus be able to concentrate on their own tasks.

In summary, despite a wealth of anecdotal discussions on the important role of the caddie in golf, there has been little formal research conducted on this role, or on the relationship between the golfer and the caddie. Thus, the purpose of our investigation was to use in-depth interviews to identify a framework that describes the characteristics of the golfer-caddie partnership. In particular, we sought to assess the specific technical and psychological roles that caddies play, the perceived advantages and disadvantages that

both golfers and caddies feel caddies bring to the partnership, caddies' involvement in decision making, and determine when caddies are important during a round of golf.

## **Method**

### ***Participants***

The participants in this investigation were eight golfers and eight caddies from the 1997-1998 Australasian Professional Golfers Association (PGA) Tour. All participants were either playing, or caddying for a player, at a major tournament on the tour. Players ranged in age from 25 to 47 years ( $M = 30.9$  years), and had between two and 21 years ( $M = 8.1$  years) of experience on the Australasian PGA Tour. The players, or the players of caddies who participated in this investigation, had a mean rank of 67 ( $SD = 47.25$ ) on the 1997-1998 Australasian PGA Tour Order of Merit at the time of the study. The criteria for inclusion of players was that they were playing, or attempting to qualify for, the majority of events on the 1997-1998 Australian PGA Tour calendar.

Caddies ranged in age from 23 to 42 years ( $M = 30.8$  years), and had been caddying on either a part-time or full-time basis for between four and 16 years ( $M = 9.9$  years). Four caddies were full-time professional caddies at the time of the study, one was semi-professional, two did annual caddying (i.e., caddying once a year at a local tournament), and one caddied in several tournaments a year. There were two golfer-caddie partnerships (i.e., interviews were completed with both a golfer and their caddie for that tournament) within the sample. However, little emerged from these two pairings that was demonstrably different from that found in the study generally.

### ***Interview guide***

An interview guide was used to elicit information from participants. Based on a review of the available literature and the experience of the second author as a caddie to a professional golfer (as outlined in the Procedures below), two different forms of the guide were developed; one for the golfers and one for the caddies. The content of both guides was similar in that only the wording of some questions varied slightly to make it more appropriate for the target group. There were seven basic themes in the interview guides: the perceived advantages and disadvantages of caddies, how players and caddies come together, the expectations of each other, good and bad experiences, when caddies are important during a round, caddie involvement in decision-making, and reacting to mistakes. Each theme was introduced in a way that prompted a descriptive response. The interviewer then asked further questions to gain as much information as possible about the situations and issues that arose. While each interview followed the guides and contained all these areas, the interviewer also had the flexibility to follow-up and probe responses that went beyond the specific questions of the guides (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

## *Procedures*

Prior to recruiting participants and conducting the interviews, a period of time (i.e., five tournaments) was spent by the interviewer (second author) as a caddie to a professional golfer on the Australasian PGA tour. This initial phase was critical to the overall study for several reasons. First, it allowed the researchers to become familiar with the language and jargon of both caddying and professional golf. An active involvement in caddying also gave the interviewer a measure of credibility with the players and caddies who were later interviewed. The knowledge gained on the administrative side of tournament golf allowed the interviewer to arrange access to both the course and the players and caddies for the interview phase. Finally, during this phase the interviewer was able to develop contacts that facilitated recruitment for the interviews.

During the interview phase of the research, players and caddies were approached and invited to take part in an interview about caddying in professional golf. The interviewer knew six of the eight players and four of the caddies who agreed to be interviewed from his five weeks on the Australasian PGA Tour. Interviewing took place at the tournament venue on the TueSDay (practice round), WedneSDay (professional-amateur competition), and ThurSDay to Saturday (rounds 1-3 of 4) of a competition. Participants initially completed an informed consent form that included an explanation that the interview was to be audio-taped and transcribed for analysis. Interviews took between 30 and 90 minutes depending on the interviewee and the time available to them. One interview was only half completed due to time constraints during the initial interview, and thus, a time was set to complete the interview. However, the player of this caddie unexpectedly missed the cut (i.e., eliminated from the competition after 2 of the 4 rounds), and both the player and caddie left the tournament before the interview could be completed. All interviews were conducted by the same person (second author). The audio-tapes were transcribed verbatim prior to analysis.

## *Data analysis*

The data was analyzed following the guidelines suggested by Tesch (1990) for interpretational qualitative analysis. Interpretational analysis involves the researcher developing a structure to make the phenomenon under study easier to understand, and generally looks at the relationships between one 'part' and another 'part' (Tesch, 1990). Within interpretational analysis, the structure devised by the researcher is still seen to emerge from the data and is not predetermined (Côté, Salmela, Baria, & Russell, 1993).

The two primary phases of the data analysis were the identification of categories or parts, and then the identification of the relationships between them. Completion of these phases involved the following steps as adapted from Tesch (1990):

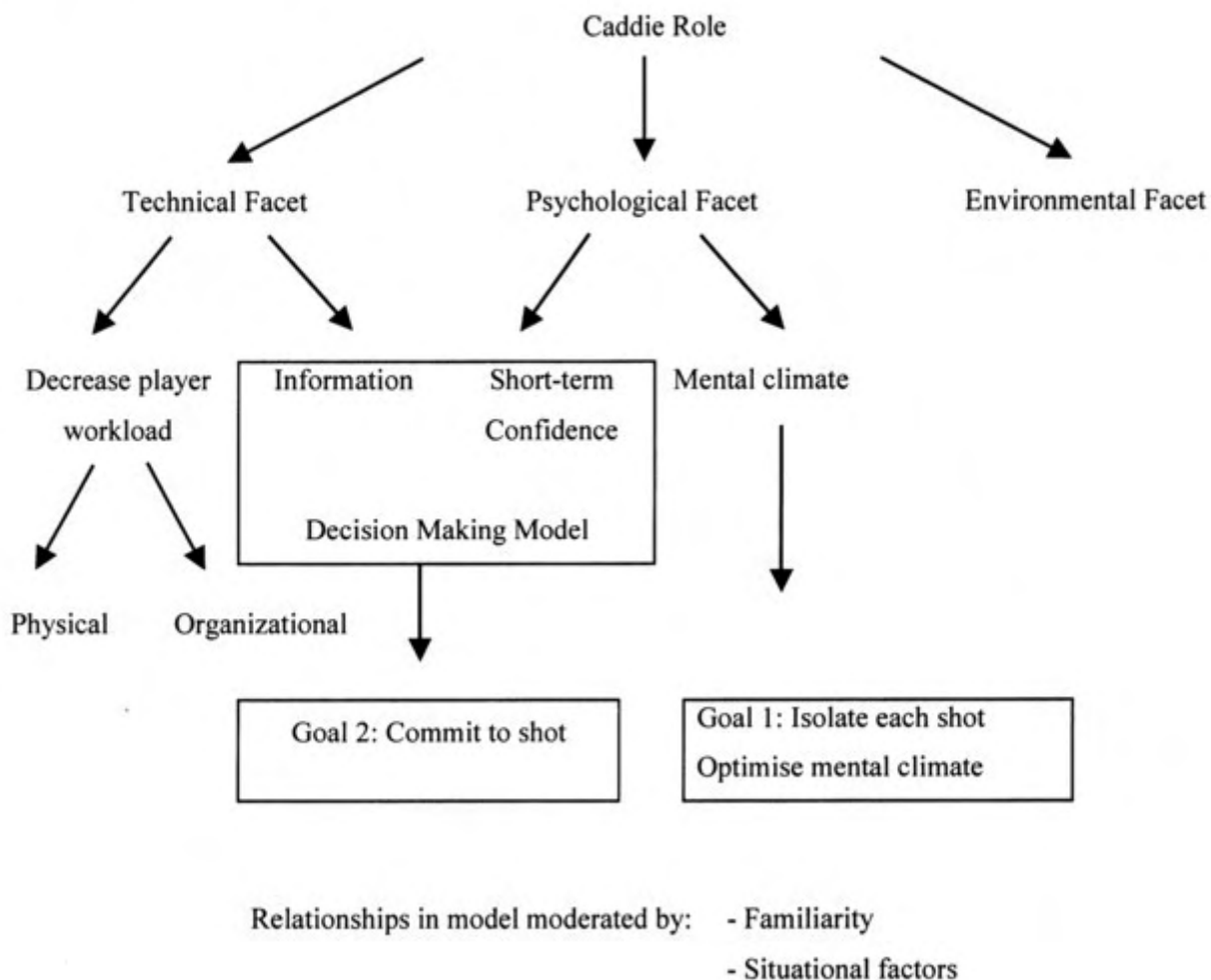
1. The verbatim transcripts were read several times to get a sense of the whole.
2. Meaning units were tentatively established, and then revised and refined by making several more cycles through the transcripts (Jacob, 1987). A meaning unit summarizes a main idea being expressed and is initially tagged with a provisional

- name describing the topic. For example, the following quote was tagged as a meaning unit of ‘a caddie reduces player workload’: “I suppose it cuts down their workload, they’ve got a lot of other things to think about....I know if you’ve got a caddie you don’t have to worry about some things, you don’t have to think about everything.”
3. The meaning units from Step 2 were re-examined and groups of similar tags were drawn together into broader underlying concepts or properties. These properties were named according to the common feature that they shared. For example, all the meaning units to do with reduce player workload were grouped together.
  4. The properties were compared and grouped into broader structural hierarchies that helped display the underlying concepts. For example, the property ‘reduce player workload’ and another property, ‘giving information’ were grouped into a wider category called ‘technical facets,’ which itself appeared under a higher order property of ‘caddie role.’
  5. The meaning unit within each property was revisited to look for ‘similarities and uniqueness in content’ (Côté & Salmela, 1996, p.250). This allowed for dimensions and subtleties to emerge. For example, the ‘reduces player workload’ property was found to contain two lower order dimensions of ‘physical aspects’ and ‘organizational aspects’ that help reduce player workload.
  6. The final step, once the meaning units and the resulting hierarchy had been formalized into a model, was to consider the credibility of this model. Thus, the model was discussed in detail amongst the authors and with several other golfers who had experience of both playing and caddying. These discussions indicated that the model had a high degree of face validity in their experiences. Combined with the model’s ability to account for all of the data obtained through the interviews, the model was considered to be a credible description of the golfer-caddie partnership.

## **Results and Discussion**

Analysis of the interviews revealed a four-component model that was able to describe the role of the caddie in the golfer-caddie partnership. As outlined in Figure 1, the components included in the model were the basic structure of caddying, decision-making, moderators of the partnership, and goal setting. These components are heavily interdependent, yet sufficiently distinct to warrant separate description. The choice of order in which they are presented below is based on the order in which they emerged during data analysis.

Figure 1. The basic structure of the caddie role.



Due to the limited extant literature in this area, and the exploratory nature of this study, the results and discussion have been integrated under headings corresponding to each of the four aforementioned components. A conclusion section highlighting applications of the results and providing suggestions for future research is then presented.

### ***The Basic Structure of Caddying***

The first component to become apparent during data analysis was the basic structure of the caddie's role. This structure could almost be considered a job description for a caddie, yet it is valuable as it provides a structure and context for deeper exploration of the relationship. This structure was derived from the reasons given for using a caddie, or the benefits obtained.

The basic structure was found to consist of three broad facets that explain why players use caddies. The first two, which were identified as technical and psychological,

were apparent from previously published anecdotal material (Dabell, 2000; Donegan, 1998). The third facet was termed environmental.

For a task to be included as a technical facet, it was determined to be a physical or tangible service provided to the golfer. This included many of the routine tasks performed by a caddie and could be broken down into two elements: decreasing workload and increasing knowledge.

Decreasing the player's workload is probably the most basic of all benefits provided by a caddie. At its most elementary level it requires minimal specialized skills (e.g., it could literally be just carrying the bag) and caddies fulfil this element essentially by completing tasks that the player would otherwise have had to do themselves, thus freeing-up player resources to focus on the task of playing the game. This was expressed by one golfer in this study who stated that "[A caddie is] someone to carry the bag, to talk to, to provide you with the information you need so you can keep your mind clear and concentrate on the job at hand." Within this element two specific levels were identified: freeing-up physical resources and freeing-up organizational resources. Examples of physical resources are carrying the bag, cleaning balls, and tending the flagstick when a player is putting. Examples of organization resources, which tended to be more salient to caddies than to players, include crowd control, ensuring that everything required is in the bag prior to teeing-off, and keeping the distance book up-to-date.

The second element of the technical facet is providing the player with the information required to play the shot which confronts them. This was found to be more complex than simply completing a task for the player. The most fundamental information required by a player are the parameters of the shot (e.g., the distance, wind, direction, or line of a putt). Additional levels of information may be required in some situations to clarify the nature of the shot and/or strategy. This may include alternative options to consider or knowledge of the rules of the game that can assist the player in getting the best result from the situation. This element also plays a role in the player's (and player-caddie unit's) decision-making, a sophisticated and subtle process which will be discussed in more detail later.

The psychological facet of why golfers use caddies is less tangible than the technical one in terms of specific and visible benefits to the player. Criterion for inclusion of a task in this facet was reference to a psychological element of the player's game (e.g., confidence, commitment, focus). Two specific elements were identified within this facet, with the first being ensuring that the player is at an optimal mental state at the time of playing a shot. The importance of this element was expressed by one caddie who said, "...you're always giving the player confirmation, always backing him up, trying to make him feel confident with his decisions."

The second element of the psychological facet was found to be maintaining and optimizing the player's mental state over the course of the entire round. A round of competitive golf typically takes over 4 hours to complete and the player has to contend with a number of varied situations such as waiting to play, playing a shot, and walking to



the next shot. Both physical and psychological factors can impact on the mental state throughout the round (Cohn, 1991; Thomas & Fogarty, 1997), and both the player and the caddie need to be able to monitor and control this state well enough to allow it to be optimized at the time of playing each shot. As one golfer noted:

...I think that it's a security feeling...you can do your own yardages, or carry your own bag, the physical work is not so much as the feeling that someone is there, a compatriot, going through the good and bad times and feeling it together.

The third general facet identified in player's reasons for using a caddie was the environmental facet, which was found to be more related to the game of golf than to the technical or psychological benefits to the player. This facet includes the tradition of having a caddie, it being seen as more professional to do so, and in some cases tour rules requiring that players use a caddie.

### ***Decision-Making***

Another important element involved in the golfer-caddie partnership is the decision-making process which occurs on the course. The caddie's role in this process comprises two of the aforementioned elements of the basic structure of caddying derived from reasons players use caddies: the information element of the technical facet and the short-term confidence element of the psychological facet. The objective is to give the player the best possible chance of playing a good (i.e., quality of execution) and successful (i.e., outcome) shot. In practice, this means assisting the player to be confident enough in the decision to fully commit to its execution. As one caddie noted, "You might be out there all day and he only asks you once, but that's when you have to be positive"

The stages that the player and player-caddie unit pass through in making a decision are relatively consistent, and the various roles and responsibilities can be described through a four-stage model. In the first stage, which involves the initial decision, the caddie's role is to provide information to allow the player to choose a shot. The actual amount of input into this initial decision was found to vary considerably from "none, unless I ask for it" to "with [one golfer] I did everything except hit the shot basically." This also can differ based on the personality of the player, the length of the working relationship, and the conditions of play. Regardless of how much input the caddie has to the shot selection, however, "ultimately it's the player's decision."

During the second stage the caddie's role switches from technical to psychological as the caddie evaluates the decision made and makes one of three possible assessments: they can either agree with the decision made, disagree with it, or be uncertain. The subsequent stage of the model is dependent on this evaluation, as well as the length and strength of the golfer-caddie partnership. One golfer identified the importance of this by stating that, "...as long as I know the guy well enough to trust him, I encourage caddies if they are really convinced of something to say to me, no, I think you're making a mistake."

The third stage is the response to the decision. If the caddie agrees with the player, then they simply reinforce it. If they disagree or are uncertain, they face a more difficult scenario. Realistically they have only two options, and they must choose instantly to either support the initial decision or attempt to change it. The latter appears to be the more precarious approach, but the way either is implemented can potentially have a major effect on the player. If the caddie is uncertain or feels that despite believing the decision to be wrong that for some reason they are not in a position to suggest a change, then they tend to reinforce the initial decision. The player often senses any hesitation or doubt, and this can subsequently have a deleterious effect on their confidence, commitment, and the outcome. This is exemplified in the following quote from a golfer who commented, "If you get under pressure and you turn to your caddie...and he's going um, ah, and he's hesitating, that puts doubt into you." If a caddie feels that a decision is the wrong one and chooses to try to change it, then they need to be able to provide additional information to allow a re-evaluation to take place. Specifically, they must have reasons to back up their thoughts (e.g., reference to previous shots) and an alternative option to consider. As one caddie discussed:

You have got to back yourself up. There is no point in going 'it is a 9 iron' and not back yourself up. You want them to be able to get over the shot and still be able to commit to it.

The fourth, and final, stage in the decision-making process is the player's ultimate decision. At this point there is no further opportunity for caddie evaluation or input. The caddie must, therefore, realize that the player may not have taken their advice and be prepared to accept it. They must reinforce the final decision (regardless of their own feelings) and assist the player to be confident and committed to the shot. This is reflected in the following quote from a caddie who said, "...then if he hits it in there [a hazard], well at least you've been positive enough and he can commit to the shot."

This model of decision-making presupposes that a well-executed but badly thought-out shot has more chance of succeeding than a badly-hit shot, no matter how well planned. To this end, it focuses on getting the player to the point where they have the best chance of executing the shot to the best of their ability.

### ***Moderators of the Partnership***

The basic structure of caddying and the decision-making model described above outlines the general nature of the golfer-caddie partnership. However, the relative importance of the individual components was found to vary considerably in practice. Data analysis revealed familiarity and situational factors as two major moderators.

Firstly, familiarity can be considered to be the extent to which the player and caddie have worked together and know each other. Most players prefer to use a regular caddie where possible, and most caddies prefer to work with a particular player. For example, one caddie's comments about this was, "It just makes it easier every week, you pick up the bag and there's nothing new. You still get nervous but consistency is the big one

[advantage].” The mechanism that underlies this preference appears to be learning by both the player and caddie. The caddie learns about particular aspects of the player’s game over time (e.g., how far they hit each club, preferred shots), how they react under pressure, their moods, and how to interact with them. Critically, the golfer learns to trust the caddie’s reliability and technical skills, as well as how to interact on a personal level. This learning results in the development of a more efficient working relationship, which brings benefits of a decreased management workload and decreased risk for the player. One golfer was quoted as saying:

...it depends on how much knowledge he’s got of your game. This week I won’t ask my caddie to do much...he’ll just carry the bag. With my regular caddie...we’ve got to the point where we’ve known each other for a couple of years...so I let him do the yardages and the pins and whatever.

It also appears that this relationship is likely to break up when the learning process does not transpire. This can occur, for example, through personality incompatibilities or when a caddie makes mistakes that do not allow the player to develop a trust in them. Thus, the level of trust that the player has in a caddie has a very significant impact on the nature of the relationship. Interestingly, there was some suggestion that a player may also have a higher degree of trust in a caddie they know is good at the job (e.g., they may have caddied for high profile players in the past). This suggests that it may be possible to circumvent the familiarization process in some situations. As one golfer noted, “As long as I believe they’ve got the knowledge, which this guy did for sure. Obviously because he’s a good caddie on the US tour and he’s caddied for great players.”

As familiarity increases, several subtle changes in the role of the caddie become evident. First, as much of what the caddie learns is psychological in nature (unless they are very new to caddying and are still learning the basic skills) and familiarity increases the player’s trust in them, the psychological facet of the role tends to become relatively more important. Essentially the player is prepared to give the caddie a larger role in maintaining their mental state knowing that the risk of errors is reduced.

Following this, the caddie’s role in decision-making evolves. They are often invited to provide more input into the initial decision, able to make more accurate evaluations of the initial decision, and the player can become more open to alternative suggestions when they are comfortable that the caddie knows their game and has proved themselves. The biggest danger of familiarity is that players can become over-reliant on the caddie to do all the thinking to the extent where they are no longer playing an active role in the decision-making process.

The second moderator of the relationship is a selection of situational factors. Poor weather is one of the most salient of these, during which the technical facet of the role is emphasized and the caddie may have additional tasks to complete. Complex shots may require increased informational input from the caddie, as well as increased psychological input to ensure the player is committed to the shot. This is reflected in the following quote from a caddie:

They get up on the first hole and it's a standard 5-iron shot, no wind, 180 yards and flat. You say 162 + 18; 180 total, and he pulls a 5-iron and hits it. All your input there was to give them a number. Windy day, tricky conditions...I might be working very hard on days like that and they want a lot of input.

Under pressure a player's thinking patterns will also often change, either narrowing or becoming easily distracted (McCaffrey & Orlick, 1989). Thus, as suggested by one golfer in this study, the caddie needs to be able to remain (outwardly) calm and logical to ensure that decision-making remains effective:

When you're under the hammer...that's when a caddie, a good caddie is of best value....He's the one that can stand back and make the right call completely devoid of all emotion, purely based on logic.

When the player is playing badly the importance of the psychological role increases as it is a time when the caddie can influence the player's responses to shots in more positive directions. One golfer said the following:

When you're going well, you can do it on your own no problems. But if you're not going so good or starting to struggle, that's when I see a caddie proves whether he's any good or not. Whether he can get you back into a better frame of mind.

At these times the caddie must also be careful to ensure that all technical services are provided as required to reduce any additional irritations which may impact the player's mental state and performance further.

### ***Goal Setting***

The role and benefits of goals in performance have been widely acknowledged and the mechanisms underlying these benefits described (e.g., Burton, 1989; Locke, Shaw, Saari & Latham, 1981). While it may then appear counter-intuitive to list the goals of caddying last in this section, the reason for this is that neither players nor caddies formally recognized goals in this study. In fact, there was no evidence to suggest that either party regularly makes an attempt to establish what the goals of the golfer-caddie partnership actually are. The result of this is that caddies and players appear to establish relationships that evolve in unique ways through trial and error, but often without any clear destination.

From the components of the model above describing the basic structure of caddying, it is clear that caddies' primary goals include optimizing the player's mental climate for that shot, and ensuring that the player is fully committed to each golf shot. The first of these was found to have two components: the isolation of each shot and the optimal mental climate, itself. Isolating a shot essentially means remaining in the present by avoiding cumulative effects of the evaluation of previous and future shots which golfers are particularly vulnerable during down-time between shots (Lavalley, 1998). The importance of this was mentioned by one caddie who suggested that, "...if a player gets

down on themselves...if they drag on for 3 holes that could be the end of the tournament right there.” Avoiding these cumulative effects can help a player avoid potentially catastrophic responses to apparently trivial stimuli. Cohn (1991) identified a number of psychological characteristics related to peak performance in golf. While these vary from player to player, the goal is still to ensure that the golfer reaches their own optimal state immediately prior to a shot.

The second goal derived from the model (i.e., ensuring that the player is fully committed to each golf shot) relates to the outcome of the decision-making process. There are two premises of this goal, the first being that a well-executed shot that has also been well-planned has the highest chance of success. The second is that a player has a greater chance of successfully executing a shot the more that they are fully committed to the shot. The caddie’s contribution to this commitment comes from two sources. It is partially from the technical facet by providing sufficient and accurate information to allow the player to feel comfortable that they have selected the best option available to them, and partially from the psychological facet by reinforcing the player’s decision and helping to remove any doubts they may have. If the caddie feels that the player has not fully committed to a shot, it is important that they are able to take some steps towards rectifying this situation. The following quote from a golfer in this study exemplifies this:

...one time I was umming and ahing between two shots, whether to lay up or go for the green. All I got was strong, positive encouraging words from my caddie....“I know you can hit it, I think it’s the shot to play, just all you have to do is focus, trust yourself, and hit the shot and you’ll be alright.” He took me from a real sort of two minds about what to do, to this is the way to go, no problem. He took all the doubt out of my mind about whether I was hitting the right shot so I could focus solely on hitting a great shot.

In reality, these are also the goals of the player and in many cases the player is able to self-regulate both of these. However, the caddie needs to constantly monitor this self-regulation, and in situations where it fails, have the knowledge and skills to contribute.

## **Conclusion**

The purpose of this study was to examine the characteristics of the golfer-caddie partnership. Results revealed a four-component model that addresses the basic structure of caddying, caddies’ involvement in the decision-making process, moderators of the partnership, and goal setting. In line with previously reported anecdotal reports (e.g., Carrick & Duno, 2000; Donegan, 1998), a distinction between the technical and psychological roles that caddies play was identified. However, it was found that increasing familiarity between golfers and caddies results in a shift in emphasis toward the psychological facet, as well as a greater role in decision-making.

The results of this exploratory investigation highlight a number of ways in which golfers and caddies can use the model as a guide for optimizing their partnership. For example, knowledge of the goals and responsibilities of the player and caddie in different situations may provide a greater degree of structure and consistency in their partnership.

Although player management of caddies was found to be minimal, recognition of familiarity as a moderating factor may also help competitive golfers facilitate the development of trust with their caddies. An important strategy for players appears to be letting caddies earn their trust, rather than just giving it to them. Moreover, starting the caddie in the basics of the role, and allowing them move into a larger role as they prove they are capable, could benefit both the player and caddie's confidence in the job the caddie is doing.

Data also suggested that golfers could become over-reliant on their caddie to the extent that they no longer play an active role in the decision-making process. This raises the question as to whether there is an optimal life of a player-caddie partnership, a suggestion that may account for the tendency of some golfers to immediately begin playing better after changing their caddie who they have had a long-term partnership with (Donegan, 1998; Lavalley, 1998). Future researchers may want to examine this particular issue.

Additional research is also required on the particular characteristics of the golfer-caddie partnership, including the content of the interpersonal behavior, the frequency of interaction, the history of the relationship, and the style of communication on and off the golf course. Exploring the utility of theories related to the optimal mental state of a golfer, as well as their responses to their performance, could also help clarify the partnership, itself. Hanin and Syrja's (1995) research on individualized zones of optimal functioning, for example, could prove useful in modeling golfers' mental climate as it considers the effects on performance of both positive and negative emotions in varying intensities.

## References

- Abram, G., & O'Byrne, B. (1996). *Distance to the green: A caddy's lessons in life, business, and golf*. New York: Plan II Publications.
- Bruce, D. (1998). *Turn up, keep up, and shut up: The role of a caddie in male professional golf in Australia*. Unpublished master's thesis, The University of Queensland, Brisbane, Australia.
- Burton, D. (1989). Winning isn't everything: Examining the impact of performance goals on collegiate swimmers' cognitions and performance. *The Sport Psychologist, 3*, 105-132.
- Carrick, M., & Duno, S. (2000). *Caddie sense*. New York: St. Martin's Press.
- Cohn, P. J. (1991). An exploratory study of peak performance in golf. *The Sport Psychologist, 5*, 1-14.
- Côté, J., Salmela, J., Baria, A., & Russell, S. (1993). Organizing and interpreting unstructured qualitative data. *The Sport Psychologist, 7*, 127-137.
- Côté, J. & Salmela, J. (1996). The organizational tasks of high-performance gymnastic coaches. *The Sport Psychologist, 10*, 247-260.
- Dabell, N. (1997). *How we won the Ryder Cup: The caddies' stories*. Edinburgh: Mainstream Publishing.
- Dabell, N. (2000). *Winning the Open: How we did it*. Edinburgh: Mainstream Publishing.
- Donegan, L. (1998). *Maybe it should have been a three-iron: My year as a caddy for the world's 438th best golfer*. New York: St. Martin's Press.
- Hanin, Y., & Syrja, P. (1995). Performance affect in soccer players: An application of the IZOF model. *International Journal of Sports Medicine, 16*, 260-265.
- Jacob, E. (1987). Qualitative research traditions: A review. *Review of Educational Research, 57*, 1-50.
- Lavallee, D. (1998). [The golfer-caddie partnership: Psychological skills and preferred attributes]. Unpublished raw data.
- Locke, E. A., Shaw, K. N., Saari, L. M., & Latham, G. P. (1981). Goal setting and task performance. *Psychological Bulletin, 90*, 125-152.

- Love III, D. (1997). *Every shot I take*. New York: Simon and Schuster.
- Mackenzie, R. (1997). *A wee nip at the 19th hole: A history of the St. Andrews caddie*. Chelsea: Sleeping Bear Press.
- Mackenzie, R. (1999). *The caddie master*. Chelsea: Sleeping Bear Press.
- McCaffrey, N., & Orlick, T. (1989). Mental factors related to excellence among top professional golfers. *International Journal of Sport Psychology*, 20, 256-278.
- Palmer, A., & Dodson, J. (1999). *A golfer's life*. New York: Ballantine Books.
- Plimpton, G. (1997). Golf caddies. In N. Coleman and N. Hornby (Eds.), *The Picador book of sportswriting* (pp. 147-165). Philadelphia: Trans-Atlantic Publications.
- Puett, B., & Apfelbaum (1992). *Golf etiquette*. New York: St Martin's Press.
- Reilly, R. (1997, December). What a trip. *Golf World*, 31-33.
- Reinman, T. R. (1999, March 30). A caddie's life. *The San Diego Union-Tribune*, p. D-4.
- Roberts, J. M., & Kundrat, D. F. (1978). Variations in expressive balance and competence for sports car rally teams. *Urban Life*, 7, 231-251.
- Tesch, R., (1990). *Qualitative research analysis types and software tools*. New York: Falmer Press.

Footnote: Golfers in this study ranged in age from 22 to 31 years ( $M = 26.8$ ;  $SD = 3.49$ ), and all had a scratch handicap at the time of the study. Caddies ranged from 19 to 44 years of age ( $M = 33.4$ ;  $SD = 9.48$ ), and had caddying experience that ranged from 2-9 years ( $M = 5.6$ ;  $SD = 2.88$ ). Data collection occurred during an English Golf Union tournament held in North Yorkshire, England in May, 1998.

Correspondence regarding this article should be sent to: David Lavalley, Loughborough University, School of Sport and Exercise Sciences, Loughborough, LE11 3TU, Phone: 44-1509-226328, Fax: 44-1509226301, Electronic: [d.e.lavalley@lboro.ac.uk](mailto:d.e.lavalley@lboro.ac.uk)