

Factors Affecting the Transition to Retirement of Professional Rugby Players in South Africa

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ABSTRACT

During the 1970s and early 1980s sports psychologists developed an interest in how professional athletes dealt with retirement. Initially, the process was considered to be a single, all-ending event. Consequently, the termination of an athlete's sporting career was seen as being inherently negative. However, as the study of this process matured and the body of knowledge around the subject grew, the process of retirement was reassessed and deemed transitional in nature instead. This transitional approach was subsequently expanded in the 1990s to include phases in an athlete's career other than retirement; this resulted in the current holistic, life-span view of athletes' careers.

The aim of this study is to explore the factors affecting the transition of professional rugby players to retirement, and to establish to what extent South African rugby institutions have programmes in place to facilitate this transition.

The focus of this study is professional rugby players in South Africa who have performed at the professional level (both domestically and internationally), and it examines how the skills athletes acquire on the field may be transferred to other careers once they retire.

The data for this study were obtained through in-depth, semi-structured interviews with willing respondents involved in professional rugby in South Africa. The interview schedule consisted of a number of open-ended questions and all interviews began with questions that were considered not too invasive.

The key findings of this study are that athletes who do not adequately prepare for retirement experience far more difficulty when transitioning to retirement than those who do plan for their retirement. A second key finding is that professional rugby organisations in South Africa provide insufficient support to those players who are transitioning out of the sport.

DECLARATION

I, _____, declare that this research report is my own work except as indicated in the references and acknowledgements. It is submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Business Administration in the University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg. It has not been submitted before for any degree or examination in this or any other university.

Grant Horatio Hinckley

Signed at

On the day of 2012

DEDICATION

To my parents, Keith and Lydia Hinckley,

Thank you for instilled in me the importance of working hard. That philosophy is the foundation of my own successes and how I continue to live my life. I am also incredibly grateful for the sacrifices both of you endured; all that you have shared with me and all that you have taught me – I would not be the person I am today without your support and guidance.

You both worked hard to ensure that my brother and I enjoyed opportunities neither of you had growing up, and you gave selflessly of your time and energy to ensure that we received the best education you could provide. I am grateful for your love, encouragement and support.

Most importantly, I would also like to thank my amazing wife, Chiara Hinckley. Thank you for your patience, unwavering support and love during this endeavor. I am eternally indebted to you as this would not have been possible without your understanding and love.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I have never considered myself an academic nor did I think I was capable of achieving a Master of Business Administration degree but I am extremely fortunate to have the support of people who believe in me and what I am capable of achieving.

My father constantly provides me with his insight and the benefit of his experiences, allowing me to grow into a better business man. After deciding to take this course I discovered within me the ability to achieve any goal I work diligently towards.

Completing this degree has helped build my confidence and awakened a willingness to undertake new challenges, no matter how large or daunting. I now realise that I am capable of far more than I give myself credit for.

My supervisor, Doctor Kerrin Myres, was my pillar of strength during this trying time and without her this was not possible. Thank you for your support and willingness to always go the extra mile for me.

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

1.1 Purpose of the study

The purpose of this study is, essentially, to examine professional rugby players' transition from active sportsperson to that of a retired athlete. Analysing and interpreting this process is crucial to understanding how athletes cope with this change, as being a professional athlete means dedicating oneself completely to the sport, often to the exclusion of all other considerations. This, psychologists agree, may harm an individual's overall development, thereby making it difficult for the athlete to reintegrate into post-athletic life once his or her career has ended (Erpic, Wylleman and Zupancic, 2004; McKnight, Bernes, Gunn, Chorney, Orr and Bardick, 2009).

By identifying practices that would facilitate a smooth, healthy change and by providing the athlete with the correct tools and sufficient preparation for retirement, the transition he or she experiences will generally be positive (Wylleman, Alfermann and Lavallee, 2004; McKnight et al., 2009).

One of the factors contributing to positive transitions to retirement is anticipatory socialisation (McKnight et al., 2009), a pro-active approach which aims to provide athletes with education focussed on helping them to gain new skills that will prepare them for life after sport (Erpic et al., 2004; McKnight et al., 2009). This study will examine how South African rugby institutions are preparing their professional players for retirement.

1.2 Context of the study

During the 1970s and early 1980s sports psychologists developed an interest in how professional athletes dealt with retirement. Initially, the process was considered to be a single event. Following this paradigm, researchers paralleled an athlete's retirement with the study of aging, and even the study of the process of dying (Wylleman et al., 2004).

Consequently, the termination of an athlete's sporting career was seen as being inherently negative (Wylleman et al., 2004). However, as the study of this process matured, and the body of knowledge around the subject grew, retirement was re-appraised as being a transitional process. This transitional approach was subsequently expanded in the 1990s to include phases in an athlete's career other than retirement; which in turn resulted in the current holistic, life-span view of an athlete's career (Wylleman et al., 2004).

The termination of a successful sporting career can have a traumatic effect on the athlete if not conducted in an appropriate manner (Erpic et al., 2004; McKnight et al., 2009), but a key differentiator is the level at which the athlete has competed. Research suggests that professional athletes find retirement from sport far more traumatic (requiring a degree of adjustment) than high school and college athletes (McKnight et al., 2009). It has been suggested that this may have to do with high school and college athletes simultaneously pursuing interests other than sport, whilst at the same time receiving academic training (McKnight et al., 2009). As previously mentioned, professional athletes, by necessity, are not exposed to this diversity of training which makes retirement from active competition far more difficult for them; they have to relinquish, in a sense, that which defines them.

Five factors have been identified as having an effect on an athlete's transition to retirement, namely:

- a) anticipatory socialisation;
- b) identity and self-esteem;
- c) personal management skills;
- d) social support systems; and
- e) voluntary versus involuntary retirement (McKnight et al., 2009).

This study will examine athletic transition from the perspective of anticipatory socialisation and voluntary or normative retirement.

Athletes who do not prepare themselves for retirement, for fear that it may be considered defeatist, are often left questioning what they will do subsequent to their retirement (McKnight et al., 2009), whereas those who plan for retirement

find the transition less traumatic or disruptive, as they have a new passion and challenge to pursue (Erpic et al., 2004; McKnight et al., 2009).

The focus of this study is professional rugby players in South Africa who have performed at the professional level (both domestically and internationally), and it will examine how the skills athletes have acquired on the field may be transferred to other careers, aiding their transition into retirement.

1.3 Problem statement

1.3.1. *Main problem*

The aim of this study is to explore the factors affecting the transition of professional rugby players to retirement, and to establish to what extent South African rugby institutions have programmes in place to facilitate this transition.

1.3.2. *Sub-problems*

Sub-problem 1:

Defining the factors affecting the transition of professional rugby players into retirement

Sub-problem 2:

Examining the nature and degree of the assistance provided by South African rugby institutions to players in preparing them for retirement.

1.4 Significance of the study

The study will complement and advance existing research on the subject as it examines an athlete's retirement from a business perspective, rather than from the usual psychology or sports psychology perspective.

While there is a rich body of literature pertaining to professional athletes' transition to retirement, most of these studies are from developed countries – countries in Europe, North America, and also from Australia and New Zealand.

This study differentiates itself by examining how the factors that affect athletes' transitions to retirement are impacting professional rugby players in a developing country, namely South Africa. It fills a gap in that, although South African rugby continues to take tremendous strides in transforming itself, engaging in the development of the sport at all levels, it remains unclear what measures are being taken to ease the transition of professional players into retirement.

This study will provide guidance to those organisations that employ professional athletes. Although the study focuses on the practices within the rugby industry, the findings of this study will be equally applicable to organisations and business employing professional athletes across all sporting disciplines. By drawing the relevant organisations' attention to the fact that the termination of a sporting career, if not handled correctly, could be very traumatic for their athletes, this study will not only serve to inform the respective parties involved to potential risks, but also identify suitable processes to implement to ease the transition.

Using the insights gained from this study, professional sporting organisations will be better able to plan for the retirement of their athletes. In so doing, these organisations may very well gain a benefit, as the anxiety of the athletes regarding their retirement will have been reduced. Additionally, by understanding that athletes often have talents which are transferable to non-athletic careers, organisations will be poised to gain a competitive advantage.

Finally, the study provides guidance to the athlete. By realising that there are avenues that can be pursued to reduce the trauma associated with retirement, athletes will be empowered. Knowing that there may be programmes available, aimed specifically at assisting them in making the eventual transition out of sport, athletes may in the future stipulate that access to these programmes be included in their contracts.

1.5 Delimitations of the study

- Although the majority of the literature refers to athletes in the generic sense of the word, this study will focus exclusively rugby players in South Africa.
- The study focuses exclusively on those athletes who have attained the professional level of the sport.
- The study will further delineate the research by examining athletes who are currently in the mastery phase of their careers, and those who have subsequently transitioned out of the sport and into retirement.
- The transition from professional athlete to former athlete takes place on several levels (athletic, psychological, psychosocial, and academic/vocational), and through several phases (Wylleman et al., 2004). Besides the obvious athletic level (retirement from the game), as described in the previous delimitations, the study will focus exclusively on the academic/vocational level.

1.6 Definition of terms

Anticipatory Socialisation: Adopting a proactive approach to retirement by preparing for it before it actually happens (McKnight et al., 2009).

Athletic Identity: The extent to which someone identifies with the role of athlete (Erpic et al., 2004).

Normative transition: Life changes that are considered to be normal in nature; that is to say, ones which are not brought about by unpredicted, unanticipated or involuntary events such as a career ending injury (Wylleman et al., 2004).

Transferable skills: Abstract skills that an athlete has acquired in the sporting environment that may be transferred to other facets of the athlete's life or to a different career (McKnight et al., 2009).

Transition: An event or non-event which gives rise to changes in the assumptions about oneself, one's life, and the world such that corresponding changes in one's behaviour and relationships need to be made (Erpic et al., 2004).

1.7 Assumptions

- It is assumed that the researcher will be granted an interview by an organisation that employs professional rugby players. Not being granted an interview by a professional rugby team will have an influence on the outcome of the study, as part of the study is aimed at establishing what measures professional teams are taking to facilitate the transition of their players to retirement. However, as there are several professional rugby teams in South Africa, it is felt that at least one interview should be obtained.
- It is assumed that the researcher will be able to interview a sufficient number of professional rugby players to make the study meaningful. This assumption is reasonable as the researcher is familiar with the professional rugby community and will have access to these athletes.

- It is assumed that, although the Rugby World Cup is being held in the latter part of 2011, the researcher will nonetheless have access to individuals who are currently or who have recently represented South Africa at an international level. This assumption is reasonable in that as the national rugby team comprises a limited number of individuals there will be who have competed at an international level.
- It is assumed that the respondents acting on behalf of the organisation will have sufficient knowledge about player retirement to provide detailed answers to the questions posed to them. It is reasonable to make this assumption as organisations are expected to be professional.
- It is assumed that respondents acting on behalf of their organisations will be forthcoming and truthful with their answers. Should respondents withhold information or be untruthful, it will influence the findings of the study. Steps will be taken to elicit truthful answers and gain the respondents' trust by assuring them that the study is purely for academic purposes.
- It is assumed that the players will be knowledgeable enough about their retirement plans to provide detailed answers to the questions posed. Regardless of whether or not players are able to provide such answers, the data that will be gathered will still be useful. Not having a detailed retirement plan may be a reflection on the organisation.
- It is assumed that players will be knowledgeable enough about the programmes put into place by their organisations to provide valuable data on their effectiveness. This assumption is reasonable as the players being interviewed will have gone through their organisations' facilitation programmes, and will therefore be able to provide valuable comment on these.

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. Introduction

In 1995, South Africa, along with New Zealand, Australia and a host of other nations entered an era wherein the game of rugby was no longer considered an amateur pastime, but instead a profession (Gerber-Nel, 2004; Price, 2007). Owing to this move, a brand new workforce was established, with hundreds of previously amateur rugby players becoming employed as full-time professionals (Price, 2007).

As professional rugby gains prominence in South Africa and around the world, more and more young men are lured to the profession, sometimes directly out of school, in the belief that being a professional rugby player is a glamorous and well-paid career path (Price, 2007). A consequence of this is that there is a glut of players wanting to participate at the professional level, resulting in a high turnover of athletes, many of whom who will not have fulfilled their dream (Price, 2007).

Research indicates that many professional athletes leave their sport without ever having gained the necessary education, training, or life-skills development that will assist them in successfully transitioning from active participation in their sport to a career post-sport (Price, 2007).

This study examines some of the challenges faced by professional rugby players when retiring from the sport, and the education and developmental programmes that have evolved as a means of easing this transition.

2.2. Background discussion

During the 1970s and early 1980s the notion of an athletic career comprising transition from actively participating in a sport to a life post-athletics gained momentum. Social scientists and sports psychologists began by examining athletes' coping mechanisms following their retirement from high-level competitive and professional sports (Wylleman et al., 2004). Prior to the

recognition of the transition involved, researchers considered the end of an athletic career as being a singular event (Wylleman et al., 2004). Furthermore, this event was often considered negative, or even traumatic in nature, often resulting in depression, decreased self-confidence, eating disorders and even substance abuse (Wylleman et al., 2004; Lally, 2007).

However, with the maturation of the research and the realisation that athletic career termination involved transitions not only at the level of the athletic career, but also on several non-sporting levels (including the psychological, psychosocial and academic/vocational levels), social scientists and sports psychologists were able to devise interventions that facilitated positive transitions to retirement (Wylleman et al., 2004).

One of the interventions devised relates to the development of transferable skills, defined as generic and free from context and content, which may be applied to a post-athletic career and to other areas of the athlete's life. Examples of transferable skills include tenacity, adaptability and flexibility, perseverance and dedication, organisational skills, meeting challenges and deadlines, setting and attaining goals, performing under pressure, patience and motivation (McKnight et al., 2009).

2.2.1. *From singular event to process of transition*

Gaining momentum in the 1970s, interest in conceptualise athletes' transition into retirement grew within the sports science community and it continued through to the early 1980s when sports psychologists and social scientists examined athletes' adaptation to the difficulties that follow retirement from high-level competitive and professional sports (Erpic et al., 2004; Wylleman et al., 2004).

In early studies, the end of an athletic career was considered to be a singular event. However, researchers later re-appraised the termination of an athletic career, arguing that retirement from competitive sports should instead be viewed holistically as a life-event; a transitional process that impacts upon former athletes' development and well-being (Erpic et al., 2004; Wylleman et al.,

2004). This transitional approach has subsequently been used to characterise the other phases and events (both athletic and non-athletic) that occur throughout an athlete's life, and has given rise to the current holistic, life-span perspective on the transitions that athletes undergo (Wylleman et al., 2004).

Initial studies in the field of athletic career termination also focused on retirement from professional sports and the drop-out from youth sport, both of which were initially regarded as a singular event (Wylleman et al., 2004). Many of the studies highlighted the negative, or even traumatic, experiences among athletes retiring from professional sports, especially those who had no other profession to pursue on retirement (Wylleman et al., 2004). In their efforts to explain the end of athletes' careers, sports psychologists likened the event to retirement from the workforce, or to the process of dying, drawing from the fields of social gerontology (the study of the aging process) and from thanatology (the study of the process of dying and death), respectively (Wylleman et al., 2004). However, questions soon arose about the appropriateness of using such analogies in describing athletes' move into retirement.

From a gerontological perspective, as opposed to occupational retirement, these analogies failed as

- a) athletes typically retire from their athletic careers at a much earlier age than those retiring from other occupations (Wylleman et al., 2004; McKnight et al., 2009);
- b) upon retirement from athletics, athletes generally move into other careers; and
- c) the end of an athlete's career need not necessarily be seen as a negative event requiring extensive social adjustment (Wylleman et al., 2004).

From the perspective of thanatology, attempts to liken career termination to death or to the process of dying were deemed inappropriate owing to the fact that, unlike the dead, retired athletes continue to function in society, even if in very different roles (Wylleman et al., 2004).

As the study of athletic termination matured, researchers began to adopt the view that career termination could serve as an opportunity for athletes' social rebirth (Wylleman et al., 2004). The sports career came to be regarded not as a single event, but rather as many events or stages, with each stage (including the transition to a post-athletic career) characterised by specific demands requiring adjustment by the athletes (Erpic et al., 2004).

This in turn led researchers to consider athletic career termination as a transitional process rather than as a singular event (Wylleman et al., 2004).

2.2.2. *The development of conceptual frameworks*

In order to construct conceptual frameworks, researchers looked outside the field of athletics, at models that defined transitions as events or non-events that cause individuals to change the assumptions that they make about themselves and the world. These changed assumptions would require that they, the athletes, change their behaviour and relationships accordingly (Erpic et al., 2004; Wylleman et al., 2004).

One of the models proposed by Charner and Schlossberg (1986) the Model of Human Adaptation to Transition - as cited by Wylleman et al. (2004) - identified three factors that interact during any transition, namely:

- a) The personal traits and characteristics of the individual undergoing the transition;
- b) How the athlete perceives the particular transition; and
- c) The characteristics of the pre- and post-transition environment (Wylleman et al., 2004).

As the study of athletic career termination developed, it was found that although transition models went further than previous studies in trying to analyse professional athletes' transition to retirement, and permitted for both positive and negative adjustments, they were nevertheless deficient (Wylleman et al., 2004).

It was realised that studying the process of transitioning out of competitive sport should include non-athletic transitions as well, as these also impact athletes' adaptation to life post-athletics (Erpic et al., 2004; Wylleman et al., 2004).

Non-athletic transitions include those psychosocial events which, although not directly sports related, nonetheless influence the quality of athletes' sporting careers and post-sports lives. The concept of non-athletic transitions includes life-events that require that athletes re-organise their expectations and/or lifestyle. How individuals react to life-events, however, is determined by their subjective perception of those events (Erpic et al., 2004).

In the late 1990s attention began to shift away from focusing on athletes' transition exclusively from the perspective of the athletic career to include a more holistic, life-span perspective (Erpic et al., 2004; Wylleman et al., 2004). The adoption of this perspective ran parallel to studies that were being conducted in the fields of talent and career development.

The stages identified in talent development within the field of sport included:

- a) the initiation stage in which young athletes are identified as being talented athletes and are introduced to organised sports;
- b) the development stage in which the level of training and specialisation is increased, and where athletes become more dedicated; and
- c) the mastery stage at which athletes reach the highest level of athletic expertise (Wylleman et al., 2004).

Wylleman et al. (2004), citing Stambulova (1994, 2000), state that an entire athletic career is generally considered to be relatively predictable, comprising, to a large extent, of the following phases:

- a) The beginning of a specialisation in sport;
- b) An increase in the training intensity of the athlete's chosen sport;
- c) The transition to achieving in adult sport;
- d) Transitioning from amateur to professional sports;

- e) Transitioning from the height of an athlete's sports career to the end; and
- f) The end of an athlete's sports career (Wylleman et al., 2004).

Using the holistic approach to the study of athletic transitions, Wylleman and Lavallee, in 2003, developed a model depicting the main transitions (both athletic and non-athletic) undergone by professional athletes up until they reach middle age, as illustrated in figure 1:

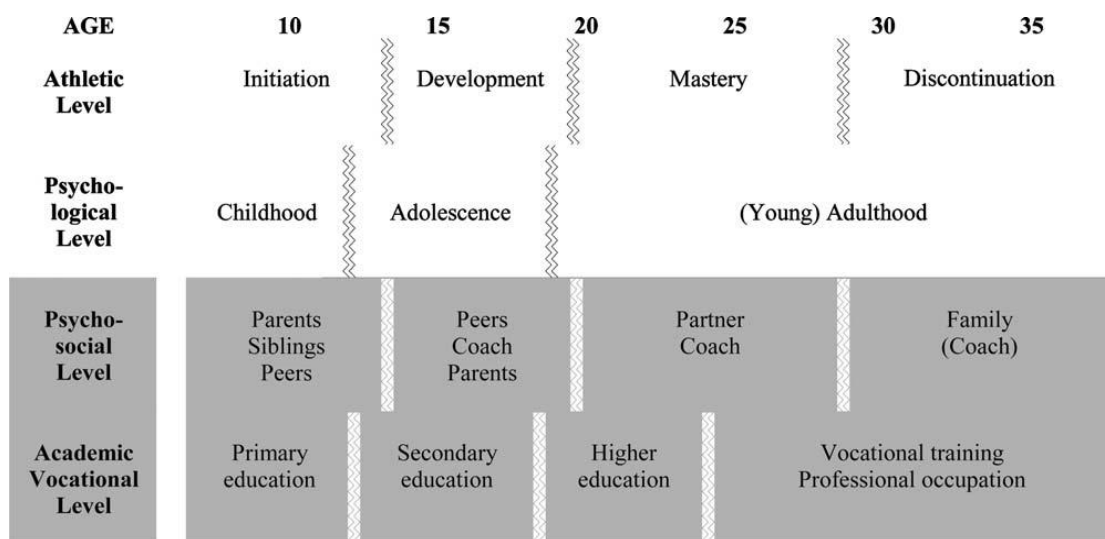


Figure 1: A developmental model on transitions faced by athletes at athletic, individual, psychological and academic/vocational level (Wylleman & Lavallee, 2003)

The model highlights the interactive nature of the different transitions that athletes may undergo, both at the athletic and non-athletic level (Wylleman et al., 2004).

The focus of the current study is the first and fourth levels of the model, that of the athletic level and the academic/vocational level. Firstly, it focuses on the athletic career in that it examines the transition from the athletic mastery stage to the discontinuation stage, and secondly, it examines the academic/vocational stage in that it analysing the measures professional rugby organisations have taken, or what programmes they have put in place, to prepare their professional players for the eventuality of retirement, and how vocational education may be structured to assist in this endeavour.

2.2.3. *Identity and athletic retirement*

Current literature suggests that an individual's identity is developed through both personal factors as well as the context within which the individual operates (Lavallee and Robinson, 2007). Self-identity is generally considered to be a multidimensional view of oneself that is a dynamic rather than static phenomenon. The notion of self is derived through a process of continuous formation, where individuals are constantly called upon to make choices that influence their identities (Lally, 2007; Lavallee and Robinson, 2007), which in turn are nonetheless open to influence from social and environmental factors (Lally, 2007).

Although an individual's identity typically comprises several dimensions, it is possible for one dimension to become dominant. And while this narrowing of identity may be beneficial to the dominant role, it often comes at a cost to the other facets of an individual's identity. By neglecting the other roles, individuals expose themselves to difficulties surrounding their identity and their overall concept of who they are (Lally, 2007).

As the level of competition within sport has intensified over the years, so too has the call for athletes to devote greater amounts of time and energy to the mastery of their chosen sport in order to succeed. To excel at the professional level, athletes are required to put in endless hours of practice, and are encouraged to do whatever it takes, regardless of the consequences (Lavallee and Robinson, 2007).

However, in recent years researchers have begun examining how this pursuit of excellence may in fact be jeopardising athletes' ability to achieve personal excellence (Lavallee and Robinson, 2007). In order for individuals to live a healthy well-balanced life, it is necessary that they know themselves well enough to make the correct choices. It is therefore important to note that an important part of the identity forming process takes place during adolescence when individuals are able to experiment with differing roles and possibilities in accordance with their interests, talents and values (Lavallee and Robinson, 2007).

Owing to the amount of time that athletes dedicate to their sport during the developmental stage of their lives, little time is allocated to acquiring interests in other areas (McKnight et al., 2009), and athletes seldom find the time to engage in the levels of self-exploration necessary to make prudent decisions outside of their sport (Lavalley and Robinson, 2007).

This, in turn, may lead to disruption and in fact arrest young athletes' normal development, resulting in the athlete developing a foreclosed identity (developed when young athletes identify exclusively with their role as an athlete) (Lavalley and Robinson, 2007; McKnight et al., 2009).

Research suggests that the difference between athletes' transition to retirement and that of more conventional occupational retirement is that athletes experience a far greater degree of disruption to their identities than do other individuals (McKnight et al., 2009).

Athletic identity, the extent to which the athlete identifies with the role, is a psychological factor that plays a key role in influencing and determining an athlete's ability to adapt to a post-sport career (Erpic et al., 2004). Professional athletes especially are often guilty of investing and committing so much of themselves into the sport that they are forced to reduce the amount that they invest in other aspects of their lives (Erpic et al., 2004; McKnight et al., 2009). This may lead to the formation of a strong athletic identity, a factor which can have both positive and negative effects on the athlete (Erpic et al., 2004).

A strong athletic identity has a positive influence on the athlete's achievements within the sport, adherence to rigorous training schedules, and overall athletic performance.

Conversely, research suggests that athletes who have developed a strong athletic identity risk experiencing difficulties after the termination of the sporting career (Erpic et al., 2004). It also suggests that a strong athletic identity may influence both the number of difficulties that these athletes experience in transitioning into retirement, as well the length of time that it takes them to adjust both socially and emotionally to a post-athletic career (Erpic et al., 2004; McKnight et al., 2009).

By not being afforded the opportunity of developing a well-balanced self-identity, it is therefore possible that, upon retirement, athletes lose not only their athletic identity, but also the concept of who they truly are (Lally, 2007). It may be that those athletes who identify more strongly with the role of the athlete experience greater difficulties following retirement (Lally, 2007; Lavalley and Robinson, 2007; McKnight et al., 2009).

Athletes who are engulfed by their athletic identity have a tendency to be hampered in that they do not develop on a multidimensional level, consequently increasing the difficulty with which they are able to successfully transition from the role of the athlete to other roles following retirement (Lally, 2007; Lavalley and Robinson, 2007; McKnight et al., 2009). Very often it is because these athletes have not examined who they will be in the future, following their athletic career (Lally, 2007; McKnight et al., 2009). Although not typical, such difficulties in transitioning to retirement have been known to result in depression, decreased self-confidence, eating disorders and even substance abuse (Lally, 2007).

It needs to be noted that not all research points to the notion that retirement inevitably brings about an identity crisis or confusion for an athlete. In these instances, retirement may be viewed as only one of many life transitions that athletes must undergo, and has no more negative impact on athletes' self-image than other life events (Lally, 2007). It can be argued actually that the concept of professional athletes experiencing identity crises following retirement may be a generalisation within the literature (Lally, 2007).

Overall, athletes have ways of redefining themselves and their life-goals following retirement, and seldom require extensive periods of adjustment following career termination. Many studies also suggest that there appears to be no notable difference between athletes and non-athletes when it comes to career planning (Lally, 2007).

2.2.4. *Interventions aimed at easing transitions*

With the importance of athletes' transitions to retirement having been realised, so has the realisation that interventions may be necessary to facilitate these transitions (Wylleman et al., 2004). Wylleman et al. (2004), citing Gordon (1995) and Ogilvie and Taylor (1993, 1994) states that, with the possibility of career termination having traumatic effects on athletes, many researchers have recommended a number of traditional therapeutic approaches to combating this, such as stress management, cognitive restructuring and emotional expression through various means. Other interventions advocated include the athlete undergoing psychotherapy, mentoring, information processing, and account making, where athletes in transition are called upon to explain, describe, and emotionally react to problematic or influential life-events (Wylleman et al., 2004).

Using the research obtained through the study of career transitions, several transitions and athlete life-skill programmes have been developed in an effort to provide support for the transition from an athletic career to a post-athletics career (Wylleman et al., 2004; McKnight et al., 2009). The vast majority of these programmes are managed by national sports governing bodies, sports federations, national Olympic committees, independent organisations linked to sport, and academic institutions (Wylleman et al., 2004).

Additionally, these programmes aim to develop social, educational and work-related skills, focusing on lifestyle management and the development of transferable skills that could assist athletes in transitioning from athletic to post-athletic career, including: goal setting, time management, commitment and discipline (Wylleman et al., 2004; McKnight et al., 2009).

Some programmes are aimed at optimising the combination of an athletic and academic career, while simultaneously helping to launch the athlete's post-academic working career (Wylleman et al., 2004; Price, 2007). Many of these programmes comprise topics such as career awareness and decision making, values and interest exploration, CV preparation, job search strategies, interview techniques, career counselling, and the development of social and interpersonal

skills. Successful transition programmes can therefore be seen as ones that are multidimensional and include support, counselling, and career and personal enhancement (Wylleman et al., 2004).

Price (2007) reports on such programmes having been successfully implemented in many of the top rugby playing nations of the world, namely the United Kingdom, France, Australia and New Zealand. However, there is little evidence in the literature of such programmes being implemented in South Africa.

2.2.5. *Factors contributing to positive transitions to retirement*

An athlete's adjustment to a career post-athletics is very much dependent on the individual. When attempting to understand an athlete's transition, it is important to understand the level of the athlete's involvement in the process and the time period over which the transition takes place. Depending on these, the results may be very different. Researchers studying the retirement of professional athletes immediately following their retirement concluded that the transition is more often than not traumatic, requiring a period of adjustment (McKnight et al., 2009).

However, retrospective research of high school and college students found that retirement for these individuals was not nearly as traumatic and does not require a period of adjustment. It has been suggested that this may have to do with the fact that these athletes are simultaneously pursuing interests other than sport that often includes academic training (McKnight et al., 2009).

Research has also focused on the influence of various, mainly sports-related, factors on the quality of the transition process (Erpic et al., 2004). The success of a healthy transition is affected not only by athletic factors, but also by the causes of the career termination; factors relating to how the athlete adapts to a post-athletics career; and the resources available to the athlete. Other factors contributing to the success of the transition include the degree to which the sports termination was voluntary, how gradual the transition to retirement is, the degree to which the athlete's personal identity is tied to that of his or her athletic

identity, and the extent to which an athlete has planned for a post-athletic career (Erpic et al., 2004).

The following factors have been identified as relating to successful career transitions:

- a) Anticipatory socialisation
- b) Self-esteem and identity
- c) Personal management skills
- d) Social support systems
- e) Voluntary versus involuntary retirement

(McKnight et al., 2009).

Anticipatory socialisation

Anticipatory socialisation refers to an athlete's proactive response in preparing for retirement (McKnight et al., 2009). The degree to which an athlete plans for a life post-athletics has a marked influence on the quality of the adaptation to life following a competitive sports career (Erpic et al., 2004). A lack of preparation may negatively impact on an athlete's ability to adjust (McKnight et al., 2009). Such planning may include a variety of activities, including education, activities to facilitate social networking, and occupational endeavours. Although this type of planning has been widely shown to reduce the difficulty with which an athlete transitions to retirement and adapts to life after competitive sport, many athletes do not consider life after an active sporting career (Erpic et al., 2004).

Without such preparation, athletes very often begin questioning their existence, with many of them uncertain of what the future holds for them. While some athletes do not think of retirement while they are still active in competitive sport as they believe it to be self-defeating and admitting to failure, those who do plan for retirement generally find the transition to retirement to be less traumatic (McKnight et al., 2009). Athletes who plan for retirement are able to channel

their energy as they begin considering their new societal roles and lifestyles. A factor found to have a positive effect on an athlete's transition to retirement is that of having interests other than the sport while the athlete is engaging in competitive sport (McKnight et al., 2009).

Self-esteem and identity

Any problems an athlete may experience in retirement are often associated with a loss of identity and reduced self-esteem (Lally, 2007; McKnight et al., 2009). Athletes frequently gauge their self-worth by their ability as athletes, thereby becoming dependent on sport for identity (Lally, 2007; Lavalley and Robinson, 2007; McKnight et al., 2009), and when athletes' identities are too closely tied to their sport they often experience negative transitions to retirement and become confused about their identities (McKnight et al., 2009).

Athletes who experience non-normative transitions to retirement, where they are plagued by injury, or are dismissed from the team and are forced to begin a new career, often feel that they have not achieved all that they have set out to accomplish (McKnight et al., 2009). These non-normative or forced transitions often result in difficult or traumatic transitions (Erpic et al., 2004; McKnight et al., 2009). In particular, athletes plagued by injury who feel they are no longer able to compete at their previous skill level and intensity may consider it to be a breakdown in their ability, which may in turn impact their perceptions of themselves (McKnight et al., 2009).

The degree to which athletes are able to consider alternative roles in society is an indicator of how successful their transitions to retirement will be. Those who experience a sense of accomplishment at having reached their goals within the sport are more likely to experience positive transitions to retirement, and are ready to take on new challenges (McKnight et al., 2009).

Personal management skills

Personal management skills are another determinant to the success of an athlete's transition to retirement. Those athletes with stronger personal

management skills are more likely to experience positive transitions than are those athletes with weaker personal management skills.

At times athletes lack preparedness for the transition because they are dependent on others for personal management. More often than not it is the coach, agent or manager who is responsible for determining the events that an athlete participates in, with the athlete having little or no say in the decisions taken. This form of emasculation may result in an athlete lacking the skills in self-management that are necessary in making alternate career decisions (McKnight et al., 2009).

However, coaching staff can teach athletes personal management skills at the same time as they are supporting them. The relationship between an athlete and his or her management team very often determines whether the transition to retirement will be positive or not. Positive relationships, which have resulted in the athlete reaching his or her goals and enjoying the sport, have generally resulted in positive transitions to retirement (McKnight et al., 2009).

Social support system

Support from family and friends during a transition to retirement generally reduces the degree of disruption that the athlete experiences. Those athletes who experience negative transitions to retirement often cite a lack of support from friends who continue with the sport (McKnight et al., 2009).

Conversely, support from former athletes, family and sport helps them to adjust to life post-athletics. Should an athlete mid transition be denied access to the old support system, and be unable to create a new support system, he or she may experience a sense of isolation (McKnight et al., 2009).

Athletes often blame the sporting associations and the “system” for any problems that they have with the coaching staff, often citing funding cuts, being forced into retirement due to their age, or because of politics within the sporting organisations (McKnight et al., 2009). Many athletes feel that the system only takes care of them while they are competing and are of use to the system.

However, it is felt that this care does not extend to retirement, when very little, if any, support is offered. Very often, support systems, if they are available, help with employment but fail to recognise the requirement for emotional support (McKnight et al., 2009).

Voluntary versus involuntary retirement

When an athlete's transition to retirement is involuntary, such as would be caused by injury, being dismissed by the organisation, conflict with management, or for family reasons, it invariably gives rise to problems, which in turn result in a negative transition (McKnight et al., 2009). Health problems and injuries often result in negative transitions out of athletics, as athletes are unable to control when or how their retirement process will be conducted (Erpic et al., 2004; McKnight et al., 2009). Career-ending injuries often leave athletes with a sense of not accomplishing their goals. Involuntary retirement often results in more resistance and less preparedness than in those athletes who retire voluntarily. It has also been found that those athletes who have alternative skills are more inclined to leave the sport voluntarily and experience fewer adjustment problems (McKnight et al., 2009).

The degree to which an athlete's career termination is voluntary is a crucial factor in determining the success of the transition into retirement, and the athlete's ability to adapt to post-sports life. Research indicates that there is a correlation between voluntary career termination and the ease with which an athlete is able to adapt to a post-athletics career (Erpic et al., 2004; McKnight et al., 2009). Involuntary sports career termination has been known to lead to psychological difficulties such as lower self-respect, reduced self-control, and increased frequency in exhibiting anger, depression and anxiety (Erpic et al., 2004).

An athlete's ability to adapt to post-sports life is also influenced by how gradual the process to athletic retirement is and is closely related to how voluntary the termination of the sporting career is (Erpic et al., 2004). For the majority of athletes it is preferable to gradually wind down their career than to have it end abruptly (Lavalley and Robinson, 2007); a more gradual transition process

tends to lead to fewer difficulties in adapting to post-sport life (Erpic et al., 2004).

Other factors

Other factors, not directly related to sport, which contribute to the success of an transition to retirement, include the athlete's age, the occurrence of non-athletic transitions, and the athlete's educational status (Erpic et al., 2004).

The athlete's age and the resulting decline in sporting performance are one of the main reasons for sports career termination. Athletes' ability to perform at the highest levels is dependent on them maintaining their physical capabilities and is therefore subject to a slow deterioration as they get older. As an athlete ages, he or she may be less motivated to train and compete, combined with a potential change in his or her values and priorities. In addition, as athletes age there is often a loss of social status within the sporting community and a decline in self-confidence in related social activities (Erpic et al., 2004).

Having a high socio-educational status may positively impact upon an athlete's occupational opportunities post-athletics. It also tends to have a positive influence on the quality of the transition to retirement (Erpic et al., 2004).

Although less studied than other factors, research also indicates that athletes who have achieved most of their sports-related goals experience less difficulty in transitioning to retirement and adapting to post-athletic life (Erpic et al., 2004).

2.2.6. Transferable skills

Most athletes who experience positive transitions do so by being able to capitalise on their transferable skills; those athletes who experience negative transitions often fail to see how the skills they acquired during their sporting careers translate, and may be transferred, to a non-athletic career (McKnight et al., 2009).

All athletes are eventually faced with transitioning out of the sport, but by assuming a proactive approach to the transition, such as focusing on the importance of transferable skills, athletes may improve the success of their transition (McKnight et al., 2009).

Regardless of the level at which they compete, athletes will have learned valuable lessons that may be transferred to non-athletic careers as well as to other aspects of their lives. Athletes who realise that they already possess skills and character traits that could make them successful in non-athletic careers become empowered (McKnight et al., 2009).

Transferable skills are generic skills that are free from context and content, and in terms of athletics these would include those skills acquired through sport that may be applied to a post-athletic career and to other areas of the athlete's life. An example of a transferable skill is that of tenacity, where athletes demonstrate persistence both on and off the field. This skill may successfully be transferred to the world of business where an athlete may be taught to channel such a skill to a domain-specific skill. An example of such a skill is being able to effectively manage employees or successfully negotiating.

Other transferable skills include adaptability and flexibility; perseverance and dedication; organisational skills; meeting challenges and deadlines; setting and attaining goals; performing under pressure; patience; and motivation (McKnight et al., 2009).

Instinctively, athletes view learning transferable skills, where they are able to transfer their mental abilities to a career post-athletics, as critical to their transitioning into retirement. Athletes often become concerned with the transferability of their knowledge and skills when they consider their transition to retirement. However, research has found that athletes respond positively when they are taught how to transfer their skills from the sporting arena to their non-sport lives (McKnight et al., 2009).

As mentioned previously, many athletes are not aware of the transferable skills that they possess, which ultimately creates a barrier to their use. Therefore, by increasing an athlete's awareness of their ability to transfer the skills they have

obtained from their sport to other areas of their life, it may be sufficient to bring about a positive outcome to the transition to retirement (McKnight et al., 2009). Athletes who are successful in their sport tend to focus so narrowly on what the sport entails that they often do not realise that they have developed skills that may be effectively transferred to a non-sporting environment (McKnight et al., 2009).

2.2.7. *Research question 1*

Which factors have national and professional rugby organisations, and players identified as contributing (both positive and negative) to the transition to retirement of professional players?

2.3. *Athletic transitions in the sport of Rugby*

Over the past twenty to thirty years there has been a marked change in the way that sports industries operate, with a significant shift toward professionalism, as is witnessed by the emergence of owners and managers of sport who have global strategies which are designed to generate huge profits (Price, 2007).

Rugby's increased professionalism has been accompanied by, and may in fact be the consequence of global commercial forces (Price, 2007). Over the years many sports, including rugby, have adopted an American philosophy towards business practices, increasingly embracing globalisation, the effect of the media and an overall professional environment (Price, 2007).

2.3.1. *The business of rugby in South Africa*

During South African rugby's transition period— when it changed from amateurism to professionalism in 1995 - leadership, management and governance were often deemed to be archaic (Gerber-Nel, 2004). But following its move towards professionalism 1995 - along with many other nations - it has become an extremely lucrative industry, estimated to be worth R400 million at the end of 2000 (Gerber-Nel, 2004).

South African rugby is governed by the South Africa Rugby Union (SARU), previously known as the South African Rugby Football Union (SARFU), and was established in 1991. In just 10 years - 2001 - SARU underwent a major transformation, opting to be separated into both a commercial division, known as South African Rugby (Pty) Ltd (SA Rugby) and a non-commercial division, SARFU (Gerber-Nel, 2004).

The aim of the transformation was to establish SARFU as the amateur arm of the industry that would be responsible for managing the rugby as a sport by focusing on the development of the game, amateur teams and players. SARFU was to be mandated to provide a link to the International Rugby Board (IRB), whilst at the same time maximising the industry's commercial potential. It achieved this with the establishment of SA Rugby, which became responsible for the commercial activities of all of the national teams, along with those of South Africa's 14 rugby unions (Gerber-Nel, 2004). The activities SA Rugby became responsible for included the management of professional teams and players (both international and domestic), the format and structure of domestic competitions, and sponsorship and endorsement contracts (Gerber-Nel, 2004).

In 1995 SARFU, together with the New Zealand Rugby Union and the Australian Rugby Union, established SANZAR, a governing body charged with administering the Tri-Nations rugby competition, which takes place annually between the three nations (Gerber-Nel, 2004). SANZAR subsequently entered into a lucrative agreement with the Australian broadcasting organisation NewsCorp, headed by Rupert Murdoch, which secured the television rights to the Tri-Nations and all other major competitions in the three countries for a period of ten years in a deal estimated to be worth US\$550 million (Gerber-Nel, 2004). Under the terms of this agreement South Africa was to receive 36.6 percent of the revenue, with New Zealand and Australia each securing 31.5 percent (Gerber-Nel, 2004).

SARFU, the amateur arm of South Africa's rugby industry, was solely dependent on contributions from SA Rugby for its income. In turn, SA Rugby's primary source of income came from the 10-year, US\$500 million broadcast agreement that was entered into between SANZAR and NewsCorp (Gerber-Nel,

2004). From the 36.6 percent of revenue that SARFU received from the SANZAR-Newscorp agreement, 40 percent was distributed between South Africa's 14 rugby unions, with 20 percent going to South Africa's national teams and a further 10 percent going to the company that facilitated the agreement with Newscorp (Gerber-Nel, 2004).

It needs to be noted that the income received by the 14 rugby unions from SARFU was not their only income, they also generate a considerable proportion of their annual revenue through sponsorship deals and ticket sales, and are chiefly responsible for the management of their own finances (Gerber-Nel, 2004).

From 1 January 2010, following the acquisition of the business, including all of the operating assets and liabilities of SA Rugby on 31 December 2009, South Africa's national rugby business became solely the responsibility of the South African Rugby Union (SARU), in terms of an agreement to amalgamate the two entities (Haddad, 2010). Although SA Rugby ceased trading operations on 31 December 2009, certain legal issues pertaining to the settlement of outstanding debt and other amounts are yet to be finalised. However, the process of de-registering SA Rugby continues, including provision for the payment of a dividend to SARU in the amount of R37.6 million (Haddad, 2010).

SARU reported a profit before taxation in the amount of R34.1 million for the year ended 31 December 2010, attributable chiefly to the dividend received following the amalgamation of SA Rugby and SARU (Haddad, 2010). However, the group incurred an operating loss before taxation in the amount of R5.4 million for the same period. The reason for this loss was primarily as a result of SARU having to pay an amount of R4.9 million in terms of a surety agreement in support of a loan to a former associate organisation, Eagles Rugby (Pty) Ltd, which was declared insolvent and placed into liquidation in 2010 (Haddad, 2010).

Another major player in the South African rugby industry is South African Investments Limited (SAIL), the largest rugby brand owner in the southern hemisphere, with shares in eight rugby unions throughout the country (Gerber-

Nel, 2004). Founded in 1988, the company initially became involved in the sport by building and financing hospitality suites at rugby stadiums throughout South Africa (Gerber-Nel, 2004).

SAIL's primary focus is to contribute positively to the commercial side of rugby by providing management skills, resources and structures to the game of rugby, and facilitating funding through its equity investments (Gerber-Nel, 2004).

Beside its participation in domestic competitions such as the Vodacom Cup and the Currie Cup, SAIL is also, by its association with four South African franchises, involved in the Super 15 tournament (Gerber-Nel, 2004).

Through its association with South African rugby, and the commercial interests it has taken in the sport, SAIL has increased the brand awareness, and subsequently the value of those brands with which it is associated. This has also resulted in increased revenue from improved ticket sales (Gerber-Nel, 2004).

2.3.2. *Developing South Africa's rugby talent*

The primary vehicle used by the South African Rugby Union (SARU) to develop rugby talent is its High Performance (HP) programmes which comprise a range of initiatives aimed at showcasing the rugby talent available at various age levels throughout the country (Masimla, 2010). In addition, SARU is committed to the creation of a national Talent Identification (TID) and player development system aimed at nurturing players at all levels of the game, thereby providing the country with a competitive advantage at all levels of international competition (Masimla, 2010).

Some of the initiatives included in these HP programmes include player tracking where the Sport Science Institute of South Africa monitors the game-time of all professional players in South Africa. The aim of this is to monitor the game-time for all players in general, and to evaluate the effectiveness of SARU's transformation processes (Masimla, 2010).

Further initiatives include the Youth Weeks HP workshops which are conducted annually, involving participating players and coaches. As part of these workshops players and coaches are provided with gym programmes and information pertaining to player and team performance. They are also provided with computer software that allows them to track and compare their fitness against that of national fitness norms for their player positions and age group (Masimla, 2010).

As part of its development strategy, SARU has identified a need to cater to four age categories, namely, Under-16, Under-18, Under-19 and Under-20.

Its decision to adopt this approach is based on the most recent research into talent identification which reveals that many of the critical physical and technical attributes necessary for performing at the top level of rugby become evident between the ages of 15 and 16 (Masimla, 2010). SARU recognises the importance of investing in players of this age in an effort not only to confirm that they do possess such talent, but also to ensure that, if the talent does exist, it is developed to its fullest. SARU also recognises that players of this age need to be afforded the opportunity to associate with the best professional players and coaches in order to make these potential future professional players aware of what would be required of them at the professional level of the sport (Masimla, 2010).

As many of the skills required to perform at the professional level of the sport are gained through experience, SARU conducts the annual Under-16 HP camp which offers players the opportunity to learning and experience the game in what SARU considers to be an appropriate environment (Masimla, 2010). In 2010 50 players were selected by the national selectors to participate in the Coca-Cola Grant Khomo week between 26 September and 3 October. Of these 19 were selected to the National Under-16 Squad.

As mentioned above, SARU also has high performance programmes for Under-18, Under-19 and Under-20 players. The primary aim of these programmes is the continued identification of talent through national competition structures (Masimla, 2010). These programmes typically consist of training camps

involving the physical assessment of the players and intensive coaching sessions under the guidance of professional coaches such as South Africa's Under-20 coach, Eric Sauls and the Springbok Sevens coach, Paul Treu (Masimla, 2010). A secondary aim of these programmes is to expose players to international competition, such as the Under-19 HP squad's tour of France in February 2010. In so doing, SARU aims to facilitate increased international contact which it hopes will help in preparing players for participation in events such as the IRB Under-20 World Cup (Masimla, 2010).

A further means by which SARU is developing its players is through player exchange programmes such as the SA/England exchange programme in which Wasps, Leeds, Scarlets, Leinster, Sale Sharks and Ulster agreed to player exchanges in 2010. Contributors to the programme include UK Sport which contributed a total of £15 000 in 2010 and Sport and Recreation South Africa (SRSA), which provided full funding for all flights for SA players travelling to the UK and partial funding for those players returning (Masimla, 2010).

Players who graduate to the premier squads are generally identified from the HP programmes. Premier squads aim to develop distinctive competencies within players, thereby ensuring the competitiveness of future Springbok teams (Masimla, 2010). The competencies targeted are those considered to be long-term, where coaches may not be able to address them adequately owing to time or resource constraints (Masimla, 2010).

2.3.3. Career planning and development beyond rugby

The movement of rugby away from amateurism to professionalism and globalisation changed not only the nature of the sport, but also what it means to be a rugby player (Price, 2007). This shift has resulted in rugby moving from a recreational activity to a work-like environment with organisations and players being motivated by profits (Price, 2007).

Unlike most professions, professional athletes find themselves in a complete ecosystem consisting of the coach, management, sporting organisations and governing bodies. It is therefore important that these key players in the athletes'

lives be involved in the planning and development of these athletes' careers (Price, 2007) both during and beyond their sporting careers. Given the intensive commitment to their sport, it is necessary that innovative, flexible programmes be established that would ensure that athletes are afforded opportunities to develop their skills outside of sport, while they remain competitive at the professional level (Price, 2007).

National sporting organisations have a responsibility to prepare professional athletes for a future beyond the sport of rugby. This in turn implies that these organisations would be responsible for assisting athletes with career and life-skills development (Price, 2007).

Professional sport is entering an era in which organisations are increasingly challenged to adopt more socially responsible attitudes towards their athletes. This has been highlighted in Britain where soccer organisations have been criticised for their failure to respond to the educational and vocational requirements of their players and have neglected to provide alternative career training (Price, 2007).

The same is true in New Zealand and Australia where pressure is increasingly being applied by both the media and wider society for sporting organisations to do what is deemed correct, by the adopting a holistic approach to the development of its athletes (Price, 2007). A number of career planning, development and education programmes and initiatives are in existence aimed at providing professional athletes with the necessary skills that may be used following their athletic career (Price, 2007).

Through the correct planning process it is possible for athletes to maintain high levels of sporting performance without foregoing valuable personal and career development opportunities (Price, 2007).

One of the most comprehensive programmes offered to Australian athletes is the Australian National Athlete Career and Education Programme, which is conducted in association with the Australian Institute of Sport. The Athlete Career and Education (ACE) programme aims to assist athletes in reaching their personal, educational and vocational goals (Price, 2007). The programme

provides all eligible athletes – those holding scholarships from the Australian Institute of Sport – with career, educational and professional development services (Price, 2007). The ACE counsellor's role is to assist athletes in effectively integrating sporting and vocational aspirations without compromising their sporting ambitions, and to assist athletes in developing a career plan that incorporates all aspects of the athlete's life (Price, 2007).

The ACE programme conducts a number of courses, seminars and training evenings throughout the year on a range of topics aimed at assisting athletes in realising their highest potential both on and off the sporting field (Price, 2007). Assistance is also provided in career counselling, CV development, educational guidance, employment networks, personal development courses and the like (Price, 2007). The programme has achieved considerable international recognition, resulting in it being licensed to both the United Kingdom's Sports Institute and the New Zealand Academy of Sport. In addition, it has strong ties with life-skill development programmes on offer in the United States, Europe, Asia and South Africa (Price, 2007).

The Australian Rugby Union (ARU) has also put in place career planning and development programmes for its professional players, partly motivated by the game's transition to professionalism and the resulting recruitment of younger players who may not have career or education involvement (Price, 2007).

In response to the changing profile of rugby players, the ARU and the Rugby Union Players' Association offer their players a career training scheme that empowers the players to maximise their potential both on and off the field. It aims to ensure that all of players within the scheme exploit the career and education opportunities that are made available to them throughout the duration of their rugby careers. However, not every professional rugby player qualifies to be part of the training scheme (Price, 2007).

In New Zealand, The New Zealand Rugby Players Association (NZRPA) offers its Super 14 players a Professional Development Programme, the aim of which is to guide, facilitate and assist professional rugby players and team management in focusing on career planning, education, personal planning,

work and work experience, professional environment and health and risk management (Price, 2007).

The programme focuses on each player's off-field personal and professional development requirements and objectives. Each of New Zealand's Super 14 teams is assigned a Professional Development Manager who is tasked with working closely with the athletes, providing guidance and support in their career planning and development. As with the Australian programme, academy players, and those competing just below the Super 14 level, are denied access to these programmes and resources (Price, 2007).

In 1997 the New Zealand Sports Foundation (NZSF) established a number of athlete support programmes that continue to operate. Professional athletes receiving personal grants from the Foundation are able to access career management advice through an independent consultant contracted to the Foundation (Price, 2007). A sponsorship agreement between the Foundation and a corporate body provides professional athletes with the opportunity of undergoing intensive skills analysis to assist them in making employment and training decisions. In addition, the Foundation launched a career development programme with the New Zealand Post aimed at providing employment and career opportunities for professional athletes (Price, 2007).

Although several studies have been conducted on professional athletes' transitioning to retirement, few have been conducted specifically with professional rugby players in mind, and as far as the researcher is aware, there exists no comprehensive studies, peer-reviewed or otherwise, on the measures taken by South Africa's professional rugby institutions and governing bodies in aiding the transition of their athletes.

2.3.4. *Research question 2*

To what extent have the South African Rugby Union (SARU) and other professional rugby organisations created and implemented programmes deemed both necessary and effective in facilitating the positive transition to retirement for their professional players?

2.4. Conclusion of literature review

Drawing from the literature it becomes evident that athletic career termination and the transition of professional athletes to retirement is extremely complex, and if not handled in an appropriate manner may have long-lasting, negative implications for the athletes concerned. Fortunately, through the use of various intervention measures, athletes' transitions to retirement may be made easier (Wylleman et al., 2004).

Many programmes instituted by national sports governing bodies, sports federations, national Olympic committees, independent organisations linked to sport, and academic institutions aim to develop social, educational and work-related skills. This is achieved by focusing on lifestyle management and the development of transferable skills that could assist athletes in transitioning from athletic to post-athletic career.

These skills include goal setting, time management, commitment and discipline, career awareness and decision making, values and interest exploration, CV preparation, job search strategies, interview techniques, career counselling, and the development of social and interpersonal skills. From this it is apparent that transition programmes need to be multidimensional and include support, counselling and career and personal enhancement (Wylleman et al., 2004).

2.4.1. *Research question 1*

Which factors have South African, professional rugby organisations and players identified as contributing (both positive and negative) to the transition to retirement of professional players?

2.4.2. *Research question 2*

To what extent have the South African Rugby Union (SARU) and other professional rugby organisations created and implemented programmes deemed both necessary and effective in facilitating the positive transition to retirement for their professional players?

CHAPTER 3: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 Research methodology /paradigm

The research methodology employed for this study was qualitative analysis as it was felt that this methodology was the most appropriate to use owing to the exploratory nature of the research problem and sub-problems (Willig, 2008).

The data collected for the study comprised spoken answers to the predetermined questions posed by the researcher during a semi-structured interview process conducted over a period of approximately three months.

The use of semi-structured interviews, it was felt, was the most appropriate means of data collection, again owing to the exploratory nature of the research topic. In order to gather meaningful data the researcher is required to extract answers to follow-up questions that arose subsequent to the respondents' initial answers (Willig, 2008).

Further reasons for the use of qualitative analysis included:

- a) The research conducted was field-focused (Leedy, 1993) and required that the researcher visit various rugby institutions,
- b) The researcher was ideally suited to engage respondents (Leedy, 1993) as he is skilled at setting respondents at ease and thereby obtaining valuable data, and
- c) The researcher, having personal experience at a professional level of the sport, was better able to interpret what was being conveyed through qualitative analysis than would have been the case were other methodologies employed (Leedy, 1993).

3.2 Research Design

The research design was a simple interpretive design, incorporating respondent triangulation from three respondent groups. As mentioned previously, semi-structured interviews were conducted as this is the most popular way of conducting qualitative research and the data obtained from the interview process can be interpreted using several methods of data analysis (Willig, 2008).

By interviewing three groups of respondents who participate, or have participated in rugby at the professional level, rather than focusing on a single group, the researcher had hoped to gain a holistic view of professional rugby players' transition into retirement. Another reason for using semi-structured interviews was that it provided the researcher with an opportunity to engage wholly with the interviewees, allowing them to talk openly about any aspect of their lives or careers they felt comfortable discussing (Willig, 2008).

Having previously participated at the professional level in the sport of rugby, it was felt that the researcher was, through semi-structured interviews, able to establish a rapport with each interviewee and in so doing was able to obtain valuable data.

3.3 Population and sample

3.3.1 Population

The population for this study was made up of professional rugby players (those who are currently active in the sport, as well as those who have already retired) and the managers and administrators of professional rugby organisations. The populations of all three of these groups of interviewees were from the Gauteng region of South Africa, specifically Johannesburg.

3.3.2 Sample and sampling method

The sample for this study was drawn from a population of professional rugby players (both current and retired) and the managers and administrators of professional rugby organisations. The sampling method used was at the same time purposive sampling as it was convenience sampling. That is, individuals who are knowledgeable of professional rugby in South Africa were identified for the contribution that they would make to the study. However, where these individuals were unable to participate in the study, alternative, yet still knowledgeable, participants were approached.

Table 1: Profile of respondents

Name	Research Role	Occupation	Organisation	Experience
Respondent CP1	Employee	Professional player	Rugby Club Z	11-year-long professional career. Previous clubs: Club X & Y
Respondent CP2	Employee	Professional player	Rugby Club Y	11-year-long professional career. Previous club: Club X
Respondent CP3	Employee	Professional player	Rugby Club U	3-year-long professional career
Respondent RP1	Former Employee	Retired player/ Municipality manager	Rugby Club Y	7-year-long professional career
Respondent RP2	Former Employee	Retired player/ Self employed	Rugby Club Y	9-year-long professional career
Respondent RP3	Former Employee	Retired player/ Self-employed	Rugby Club Y	7-year-long professional career

Name	Research Role	Occupation	Organisation	Experience
Respondent RP4	Former Employee	Retired player/ Self-employed	Rugby Club X & Y	10-year-long professional career
Respondent Admin1	Employee	Professional referee/ Businessman	Rugby Club Y and SA	11-year-long refereeing career
Respondent Admin1	Employee	Coach/ businessman	Rugby Club A	15-year-long coaching career
Respondent Admin3	Employee	CEO	Rugby Club Y	15-year-long career in professional rugby
Respondent Admin4	Employee	Club manager	Rugby Club P	17-year-long career of club manager

3.4 The research instrument

The research instrument employed in conducting this study comprised three semi-structured interview sessions of open-ended questions.

Each interview schedule consisted of six areas of interest, namely:

- 1. The ascension of players to professional rugby**

Interviewees were questioned about the general path that players follow in rising to the professional level of the sport.

- 2. Athletic identity**

Current and former players were questioned about how they identify themselves, while organisations were questioned about providing

players with the opportunity to develop identities outside of the sport of rugby.

3. Planning for retirement

Current players were questioned about the steps that they had taken in preparation for their eventual retirement. Retired players were similarly questioned about the steps that they took; organisations were questioned about how they assist players in easing their transition into retirement.

4. Perceptions/impressions of retirement

Current players were questioned about their perceptions and impressions of retirement and whether or not they had been made aware of the opportunities available to them following their rugby careers. Similarly, retired players were questioned about how they were coping with retirement.

5. Development programmes

Organisations were asked about the programmes they make available to their players. Players were asked about developmental programmes that they thought might help them in making their transition into retirement easier.

6. Transferable skills

Players were asked if they had been made aware of skills that they may possess that can be transferred to a career outside of rugby. Organisations were asked whether they were helping players identify how these skills may be transferred.

It ought to be noted that although each of the interview schedules contained the same areas of interest, the wording on each of the schedules was altered slightly as a means of targeting the respective audiences.

3.5 Procedure for data collection

The method for data collection was the same in each instance, the procedure of which was as follows:

- Prospective respondents were selected by the researcher from a personal list of contacts built up during his time as a professional rugby player. Respondents were selected based on their knowledge of professional rugby and the value that the respondent would add to the research.
- The respondent was then contacted telephonically, informed of the research being undertaken and was asked if he was willing to participate in the research. It needs to be noted that most of the prospective respondents made it to the final list of participants with the exception of two who indicated that they were unfortunately too busy to participate in the study.
- Once the respondents had agreed to participate in the study, they were each contacted via email and presented with a letter of request which included an outline of the study (see Appendix B). Furthermore, they were also asked to provide a time, convenient to them, when they could participate in the interview; an appointment would then be set up.
- Prior to the interview, the researcher would meet with each respondent and request that they sign the letter of request (Appendix B). Once all of the formalities had been concluded, the interview was conducted and was recorded using a digital recording device.
- Each recording was then transferred to a computer before being meticulously transcribed (see Appendix C1 to C11).

3.6 Data analysis and interpretation

Interpretation of the data took place over several phases to ensure that a high degree of quality, dependability, and trustworthiness was achieved (Golafshani, 2003).

To ensure that the research conforms to the methods employed by the majority of qualitative research analyses, there was an initial phase in which all of the interviews were meticulously transcribed verbatim or as close to verbatim as possible (Willig, 2008). As a means of further ensuring the accuracy of the transcriptions, the transcriptions were reviewed while listening to the respective recorded interviews.

Although it was the researcher's intention for each transcription to include respondents' remarks, mannerisms and actions, indicating the interviewees' body language and non-vocal cues during their responses (example, 'laughs', 'pauses', etc.), to allow for better interpretation and contextualisation of the data, it was found that this was not necessary to contextualise the respondents' answers, and therefore this was *not* undertaken.

Once the accuracy of the transcriptions had been verified, the researcher immersed himself in the content of each interview by reading them several times, gaining an complete overview and establishing a clearer context in which the answers were provided (Hsieh and Shannon, 2005).

Because all interviews were semi-structured, this was especially necessary as some answers requiring exhaustive interpretation. However, as the researcher once played rugby at a professional level, it is felt that he was better able to interpret the answers provided by the respondents by being able to relate to them. The researcher also made discrete notes during all of the interviews, making sure not to cause any disruption (Willig, 2008), and these too were consulted in an effort to ensure a more accurate interpretation of the results.

Satisfied that the transcriptions were accurate, interpretation of the results was undertaken using content analysis. However, unlike conventional content analysis, where the categories for the data analysis are not preconceived and actually emerge from the data (Hsieh and Shannon, 2005), in this study the categories were carefully considered from the literature review on athletic career transitions prior to the interview process commencing, and provided the starting point for the analysis.

With the categories having already been defined by the literature review and the questions posed to each respondent in the respective groups remaining identical, analysis of the data was undertaken, identifying common themes and differences in opinion. This proved relatively simple to do and where common themes were identified, these were noted; the results of which, along with the differences in opinion, are presented in Chapter 4.

Following the identification of common themes within the data, the data was then interpreted. This was done with reference to current literature on the topic of athletic career transitions; the results of which are presented in Chapter 5.

3.7 Limitations of the study

- The study is limited by the size of the sample. Conducting interviews was a time-consuming process requiring lots of co-ordination and consequently, only a relatively small sample was obtained; a hallmark of qualitative research.
- A potential limitation of the study is that one of the respondents, Current Player 3, indicated that he is still years away from retirement and has not fully considered what he will do upon retirement. While this respondent's contribution in terms of planning for retirement may be limited, his contribution is nevertheless valuable as it lends credence to the argument that early in players' professional careers, rarely do they fully consider their post-rugby careers.
- The study is also limited in that it is confined to just one region. Owing to the cost involved in conducting this type of study, it would be prohibitive to extend the study beyond the Gauteng region.
- Another potential weakness is that two retired players who were willing to participate in the study experienced positive transitions to retirement which skewed the data.

- Another limitation of the study is that the interviews took place in South Africa's largest city, where there are perhaps far more opportunities for players to successfully transition into retirement than in other cities. The data obtained may therefore not reflect the situation in the entire country.
- A limitation of employing the type of content analysis used in this study is that the researcher ran the risk of failing to develop a complete understanding of the context of the study. This may have resulted in failure to identify key categories which may in turn have resulted in findings that do not accurately represent the data (Hsieh and Shannon, 2005).

3.8 Validity and reliability

3.8.1 Validity

The concept of validity in qualitative research is regrettably open to interpretation. Although many researchers agree that validity does not apply to qualitative research, it is nonetheless accepted that there needs to be some kind of qualifying measure of the research.

Some of the measures used by researchers to assess the validity of qualitative research include quality, trustworthiness and rigor. Quality in qualitative research was introduced as a means of addressing the concerns of validity and reliability that appear in quantitative research (Golafshani, 2003).

The research conducted has external validity as the findings of the research can be applied across all professional rugby organisations throughout South Africa and to all professional players.

Furthermore, the research has internal validity as it used the same research instrument i.e. the same interview schedule within each group. The research's validity has been further raised by all of the interviews being conducted by the same interviewer, namely, the researcher.

3.8.2 Reliability

The concept of reliability relates more to quantitative research practices but when talking the reliability of qualitative research it would make more sense if one were to examine the quality and trustworthiness of the research.

In qualitative research dependability most closely equates with reliability in quantitative analysis (Golafshani, 2003).

To ensure the quality of this research, attempts were made to ensure that the data collected were reliable and dependable by using the same interview schedule for all interviewees within the same group. This, along with the researcher's objectivity, should go a long way to ensuring a high level of dependability and quality.

CHAPTER 4: PRESENTATION OF RESULTS

4.1 Introduction

The following chapter contains the results from 11 semi-structured interviews of three groups of individuals within South Africa's professional rugby fraternity. All of the interviews were conducted over a period of approximately three months.

The three groups from which the data were obtained comprised:

- Three current players
- Four retired players
- Four administrators

Although it was the intention of the researcher to interview a fourth current player, this unfortunately proved impossible within the constraints of time and available resources.

The data will be presented according to the carefully constructed themes derived from the literature and outlined in the interview schedule. For brevity, within each section, the corresponding questions that were asked during the interviews will be summarised. For actual questions the reader may refer to Appendices A1, A2 and A3.

The data obtained from each group for each question will be summarised, identifying common themes where they occur, beginning with current players, followed by retired players, and then the administrators. Verbatim quotations are used to illustrate the key points identified.

4.2 Demographic profile of respondents

Name	Research Role	Occupation	Organisation	Experience
Respondent CP1	Employee	Professional player	Rugby Club Z	11-year-long professional career. Previous clubs: Club X & Y
Respondent CP2	Employee	Professional player	Rugby Club Y	11-year-long professional career. Previous club: Club X
Respondent CP3	Employee	Professional player	Rugby Club U	3-year-long professional career
Respondent RP1	Former Employee	Retired player/ Municipality manager	Rugby Club Y	7-year-long professional career
Respondent RP2	Former Employee	Retired player/ Self employed	Rugby Club Y	9-year-long professional career
Respondent RP3	Former Employee	Retired player/ Self-employed	Rugby Club Y	7-year-long professional career
Respondent RP4	Former Employee	Retired player/ Self-employed	Rugby Club X & Y	10-year-long professional career
Respondent Admin1	Employee	Professional referee/ Businessman	Rugby Club Y and SA	11-year-long refereeing career
Respondent Admin1	Employee	Coach/ businessman	Rugby Club A	15-year-long coaching career

Name	Research Role	Occupation	Organisation	Experience
Respondent Admin3	Employee	CEO	Rugby Club Y	15-year-long career in professional rugby
Respondent Admin4	Employee	Club manager	Rugby Club P	17-year-long career as club manager

4.3 Results pertaining Research Question 1

Which factors have South African and professional rugby organisations and players identified as contributing (both positively and negatively) to the transition to retirement of professional players?

4.4.3 *Ascension to professional rugby*

Section 1 of the interview schedule on players' ascension to the level of professional rugby contained six questions aimed at setting each respondent at ease while gaining a better understanding of how professional rugby players reach that level in the sport.

Question 1.1 of the interview schedule required that the respondents describe the journey that each of them had taken to reach the professional level in the sport; how each respondent had risen through the ranks.

Current Players

All three of the respondents indicated that they had played rugby at school. However, the age at which respondents started their career as professional athletes varied widely, with most noting that Under 21 rugby had been

particularly meaningful in their careers. One respondent indicated that he had played Craven Week rugby, and was signed to a professional team in his Matric year. Two respondents indicated that they had represented South Africa, one for the Springbok team and one for the Springbok Sevens team.

Retired Players

It is interesting to note that while three respondents indicated that they had first started playing at school; one respondent had only started playing rugby once he had gone to university. Two of the respondents stated that they had played in the Craven Week tournament. Again, for this group Under 21 rugby was particularly meaningful. Most respondents had started their Under 21 rugby at university before moving to the provincial level.

Administrators

In response to this question, one respondent indicated that there were two kinds of player that he managed: those who focus on their post-rugby career, who generally start playing professionally later in life, perhaps because of studies, and those for whom rugby defined their identity, whose rugby careers “basically started from Standard 8,” and that for each of these groups the ascension to professional rugby was radically different. A second respondent indicated that players are identified relatively early in their careers at events such as Craven Week, and that when that happened, they were “pretty much in the system.”

Question 1.2 of the interview schedule required that the respondents describe what the defining moment in their amateur career was that made them decide to pursue rugby as a professional career.

Current Players

For all three of the respondents the defining moment in their careers came when they accepted opportunities to play professional rugby, rather than actively seeking this out as a career. As one respondent stated,

"I was playing in school, just loving the tours and being with the friends mostly and just playing the game and I was beginning of Matric when the guys of [team X] phoned me and gave me a contract and that's when I actually decided that I will just go forward with it."

Retired Players

Three respondents made it clear that at the time of them beginning to play senior rugby it was still an amateur sport and that their reasons for entering the sport were therefore not financial. For this reason all three of them felt that there was no defining moment. As one respondent stated,

"We only went professional in 1996 you know. [By] then I had already played for five/six seasons already for [team Y], which was amateur. I never thought of it as becoming a professional rugby player because it wasn't. I just happened to be in that situation and just followed it through."

For a fourth respondent the defining moment was when he was approached by managers looking for talent:

"I think at a certain stage people see the way you play and obviously they approached me to say, 'Listen do you want to become a professional rugby player?' So I got the opportunity that someone saw I've got a little bit of talent and offered me that opportunity. So I think from amateur to the next level it's [an] opportunity and there's money involved."

Administrators

Most respondents agreed that the defining moment for each player is different. As one respondent noted,

"[A] lot of guys actually find that defining moment of the ability, finding that spark that gives them the idea that they're gonna make it in a professional rugby career and it comes in different times."

A second respondent stated that for many players the defining moment may be when they are first selected to play in tournaments such as Craven Week. However, a third respondent refuted this:

“A lot of the players that play Craven Week and even SA schools doesn’t [sic] even make it to the top, and the simple reason for that is because players are mentally tired.”

Questions 1.3 and 1.4 of the interview schedule required that the respondents describe their parents’ reaction to the news that they had decided to pursue rugby as a profession, and following their announcement, the type of support that they received from their families in helping them to realise their dream.

Current Players

While two of the respondents indicated that their parents immediately supported their decision to pursue a professional rugby career, it took time for the third respondent’s mother to accept his decision. As he stated,

“My mother always told me The Bull would never pay my bills..., well I was right and she was wrong.”

Retired Players

All four of the respondents alluded to the fact that they did not approach their families to tell them that they were going to pursue rugby as a professional career because at the time rugby was still an amateur sport. Three of them stated that they went to university and that rugby was just a sport that they participated in before being approached to play for provincial teams. As one respondent stated,

“[M]y first choice was... obviously that’s why I went to university, was to get a degree and I did study Geology. It was what I wanted to become. And then half way through everything then rugby just started taking over...”

For a fourth respondent it was different, in the sense that he had been encouraged him from an early age. He stated,

“It was always a thing that I think my dad wanted me to achieve, so when it actually happened he was ecstatic. So they’ve always supported [me].”

Administrators

Parental desire emerged as a common theme amongst administrators who noted that parents place undue pressure on their children to succeed in sport, perhaps wanting them to following in their footsteps, or worse yet, living their sporting dreams vicariously through their children. As one respondent stated,

“I think a lot of parents who have never excelled at sport always [want] their kids to excel at sports, and they try to live their lives through their kids’ lives, which is a problem for me.”

Questions 1.5 of the interview schedule required that the respondents describe the moment when they were first told that they had reached the professional level of rugby.

Current Players

On first being informed that they had reached the professional level in rugby, all respondents expressed a general sense of delight, perhaps tempered with relief as two respondents explain:

“It was amazing. Words can’t really describe it, but it was amazing.”

“When I eventually made it as career it was obviously very relieving and very fulfilling.”

Retired Players

Retired players appeared to have had lower expectations, with only one respondent responded in a manner that one would expect, stating,

“Obviously it was something that I wanted to do from school but it only, the dream only realised later, so when I actually got the opportunity and luckily I worked at a company where they allowed me the freedom to pursue my career as a rugby player.”

Other respondents were pleased with the money they were earning but it was again not apparently a major factor in the decision.

Administrators

A common theme to emerge from the data is that players generally expressed a sense of delight at becoming professional players. However, a surprising emotion felt by most players, as mentioned by one respondent, was that of relief after a long period of effort. He stated,

“Definitely one of the major feelings that you find that the players actually express is relief more than anything else, because of the line of work, the effort that goes into getting to that status. But [for] most of them I think it’s very much a relief, and then after the relief we find that it’s ecstasy, because now it’s a big time.”

Question 1.6 of the interview schedule required that the respondents relate what goals they had set for themselves when they first started, and what measures they had taken to realise those goals.

Current Players

All of the respondents stated that their initial goals when entering professional rugby were relatively modest, with one respondent stating, *“I just wanted to see how far I can get,”* while another related,

“I saw my mates playing on TV and here I am I’ve got this opportunity, so for me that was one of the first things, I wanted to play on television.”

However, as their careers progressed, and as their self-confidence grew so did their ambition. As one respondent put it,

“You start mixing with the same, with people that actually get pulled up to bigger team, so it become Springboks next to you and you start realising that this is actually achievable, I can actually do this and that’s when you start broadening your horizons and say listen, instead of just being an average Under 21 player playing on television, now I can actually be a Springbok Under 21 Player because this guy has done it, that guy has done it”.

Retired Players

In response to this question, two respondents indicated that it was their goal to become Springbok players and represent South Africa. As one of these respondents stated,

“Everyone wanted to play Springbok. When you’re young you want to play Springbok. That was still at the back of my head, and obviously we played provincial, and that was a part of it, you have to go through the ranks to get there. Okay I did not get to that level, but at least I got to provincial level for [Club Y].”

For a third respondent the goals were different, driven largely by the financial rewards that professional rugby represented. As he stated,

“Once it became professional, obviously with the money involved you got a contract, it’s obviously to sort of maintain your level of play and to try and stay in as long as you can, looking after your physical side of things, you know because it’s a lot of money, there’s a lot of monetary value in it, staying fit and into the frame. As I said I knew at that stage I maybe had another five or six seasons left and I was just trying to make the most of that.”

Administrators

Although all players have individual goals, three respondents in this group agreed that the number one goal of every player is to become a Springbok.

However, one respondent highlighted the need to manage player expectations with respect to achievement of this goal,

“We have to plot that path for them so that they realise, there are goals, there are steps that they have to take. There’s a lot of hard work before they will ever achieve that. And hopefully also try and make them understand and face reality that some guys may never be a Springbok”

4.4.4 Athletic identity

Section 2 of the interview schedule on athletic identity contained seven questions aimed at establishing how players would look back upon their careers. Would the sport of rugby define who they are, or would they see it as just a sport that they participated in?

Questions 2.1 and 2.2 of the interview schedule required that the respondents describe how it is that they would like to be remembered, first as a player and then as a human being.

Current Players

In answering the first of these questions, the common theme for all three respondents was that of being a team player. One respondent stated that he wanted to be remembered as

“[A] player that was always on the team sheet, on the top five of your team sheet, the guy that if he didn’t play, it wouldn’t actually mean that they would lose, but players would prefer playing with you and fans would prefer you being in the team.”

Similarly there was the common theme for the second of these questions, that being friendliness. As one respondent stated,

“I think ‘accessible’, that’s the first word that comes to mind, I always try to do that, is being accessible, not being above anything else.”

Retired Players

The responses from the retired players to the first of these questions were somewhat different to those of the current players, with there being no common theme. As players, one respondent indicated that he did not care how people remembered him, while another indicated that he had not really thought about it. However, a third respondent indicated that he would like to be remembered as a member of a team that uplifted an entire community – the team aspect coming through in this response.

When it came to the second question there seemed to be greater coherence in the answers, with the theme of friendliness and humility coming to the fore. As one respondent stated when answering this question,

“I would say ‘humble’. I think that’s one of the big gains in becoming professional, well known. A lot of the guys actually lose touch of what is happening around them. Stay humble and all, and hopefully they saw me that way and you just enjoy the ride”,

Administrators

In response to the first of these questions, a common theme expressed by all respondents is that players want to be remembered for what they achieved on the field, for when they were at the top of their game, as legends of the sport. As one respondent stated,

“Those that have achieved, that left a good legacy behind, all of them what to be remembered for what they’ve done.”

In response to the second question, one respondent indicated that players generally wanted to be seen “as good, clean, hardworking, honest people. A second respondent noted that, “They like to be remembered as humble achievers, simple as that.” These themes were echoed by the remaining respondents.

Question 2.3 of the interview schedule required that the respondents describe how their outlook towards life had evolved from the time of them initially entering professional rugby.

Current Players

All three respondents indicated that their outlook toward life had dramatically changed from the time that they initially entered as professional players. One respondent stated,

“When I first started playing for team X I thought I was quite a big deal, a bit different to every other person in public. But slowly as you get older you realise that you’re just the same and that you no different. I think that is one of the biggest things how I changed.”

For another respondent it was injury that drastically changed his outlook toward life:

“I think I’m lucky in that regard. Well, it’s a bit of fortune with bad luck. I got injured quite early in my career a couple of times and one of the injuries was quite... it was near career ending, and that changed my perception of where I am, instead of just going out and spending...”

Retired Players

All of the respondents indicated that their outlook toward life had changed as they matured. Three of the respondents mentioned excessive partying, harbouring regrets, stating that there are things that they would change, given the chance. As one respondent recalled,

“I would have changed a lot of things. I used to be a smoker. I wouldn’t have smoked when I was a professional rugby player. Obviously boozing, that’s a big problem in one’s career because I mean you go away every second weekend for five months – where you go and have a big party after the game.

Administrators

In response to this question all respondents agreed that when players first enter professional rugby, their motives for doing things are very self-centred. However, as they mature so their values and priorities change. As one respondent noted,

“Simply put, young players are bullet-proof. When you first meet them they’re bullet proof, no one can stand in their way and the positivity, more physically based on what they can achieve, physically, is all important to them. The broader outlook of life is not there yet, the maturity. If you look at them when they’re young, they’re all rugby, they are all macho, a guy – ‘I can do the things.’”

Questions 2.4 and 2.5 of the interview schedule asked respondents whether they saw being a professional rugby player as defining of who they are, or whether they viewed it merely as something they do, a job, and whether they had always held these views.

Current Players

To the first of these questions, all three of the respondents indicated that being a professional player does not define who they are as people, but rather that it is their profession. A common theme to have emerged from this question is that all three respondents were grateful for the lessons that rugby had taught them. As one respondent stated,

“I’ve always tried for sport not to define me, but I’ve always also tried to pull certain principles from sport into my life. Whereas I don’t think... that’s where I see the parallel between the two, that you can take certain principles and apply it to your life and that’s how sports helps young people, where they can actually get there when things get tough. It’s... you can actually achieve it if you just keep on going that little bit extra.”

To the second question, all respondents indicated that the view of themselves they now take is very different from the view they took when first entering professional rugby. As one respondent stated,

“No, in the beginning I think you’re very easily influenced. You read papers and you believe it, and then they write the bad things, then you don’t believe it. Well you actually do believe it at first and then as you get older it’s... you actually don’t even read the papers anymore. So yes, I think it has changed quite a bit from the start, where you feel invincible.”

Retired Players

In response to the first of these questions, all of the respondents indicated that rugby did not define who they are, and for three of the respondents, although being a team sport, it remained just a game that they played. However, for one respondent it was different. As he put it,

“Rugby was more of a lifestyle to me, it was something that when I woke up in the morning I had to go to practice... I think like I said earlier, I didn’t really see it as a job. I saw it as part of my life.”

In response to the second of these questions all of the respondents indicated that the views they held at the time of the interviews were to varying degrees the same views that they held back when they started playing rugby professionally.

Administrators

In response to this question, most respondents stated that they did not feel that the majority of players are defined by the sport, but rather that most of them looked upon it as just a job. As one respondent stated,

“Ja, they see rugby as a job. I teach my players it’s a stepping stone in career. It’s a short term thing and they all know that rugby should be a vehicle.”

Question 2.6 of the interview schedule required that the respondents describe how their matured outlook toward life had impacted on the way in which they approach the game of rugby.

Question 2.8 on interview schedule for administrators.

Current Players

All three of the respondents indicated that as they matured, so their approach to the game had become more level-headed. As one respondent related,

“I suppose growing up you realise... well I realise, especially in my position, I’ve got a lot of responsibilities on the field. I can’t just go out there and do what I want. I’ve got to do things for the team, and what would be better for the team.”

Retired Players

Although responses to this question were varied, with no real common theme emerging, two key insights were revealed. One respondent stated,

“I just think you realise that life is not all about yourself; you need people around you; you need a good supporting structure and I think it is basically the same in life.”

A second respondent stated, “...it became more serious. If you start getting professional you must look after yourself because that will become your job. You have to look after yourself and look after your job, sport in that sense then.”

Administrators

In response to this question, the majority of respondents indicated that as players matured, so they became more professional and began displaying more dedication. In addition, their priority becomes serving the team rather than themselves. As one respondent stated,

“They definitely become more professional in the total outlook of the game. Where it used to be very self-centred, based on what they can achieve as a person, it now becomes more a case of what a team can achieve in the context of a team sport. They become very much more open to sharing information, assisting others, purely to uplift the whole team, uplift the club or the union that they are actually playing in.”

Question 2.7 of the interview schedule required that the respondents describe how they will look back once they have retired, whether they will take the view, “I was a professional rugby player,” or whether they will see professional rugby as merely something that they participated in.

Question 2.9 on interview schedule for administrators.

Current Players

The responses to this question were varied, with one of the respondents stating, “No, I would definitely see it as; “I was a professional player.” For another respondent it was different;

“I think it would definitely just be a chapter of my life and I’m gonna try my best, I think, to move on from rugby and try to put it in my past. Obviously, [I] will always love rugby and I will always love watching, but I [will] definitely try put it behind me and try and move on.”

Retired Players

Once again, the responses to this question were varied. One respondent stated, “Because my professional career never stretched over a long period, I think I see it as something - a sport. I think it was like a game I played.” For another respondent it was different. He stated, “I think at retirement you look back and say I was a professional rugby player and in saying that again things that came to my mind is that you didn’t take the opportunities that came your way, you didn’t make the best of the opportunities that came your way.”

Administrators

In response to this question, two of the respondents stated that players would look back upon their careers and say, “I was a professional rugby play,” wearing the achievement like a badge for all to behold. As one respondent stated,

“No, they definitely would think that they... they know that they were a professional rugby player and that they will carry with them all the time, and I think the fame they will use throughout their careers to help them achieve what they want after rugby in their business careers.”

Question 2.6 of the administrator respondent schedule required respondents to describe how their organisation encourages young players to develop well-rounded personalities.

Administrators

In response to this question all of the respondents indicated that they do so by making it compulsory for players to gain a tertiary qualification. One respondent added that he had a mentorship programme, stating,

“I have a full mentorship programme with my players. I sit down with my rugby players once a month and we have a mentorship session for three/four hours and we do various topics on that. It’s a full spectrum from psychological preparation and training, visualisation etc., financial management, career opportunities, identification. So there’s a lot of things I do with them.”

Question 2.7 of the interview schedule for administrators required that respondents describe how players’ views of themselves evolved from the time of them first starting out to just before their retirement.

Administrators

In response to this question all of the respondents stated that they had seen marked changes in their players from the time of them first entering professional

rugby to the time just before retiring. One administrator stated that he insisted upon it:

“I see a massive change with my players after six months. If they start on the 1st of January, 18 months later people won’t recognise them. Physically, mentally, they’re tougher; they’re humbler, so there’s a change. If I don’t see a change in a player in six months I part ways with the player because then they’re not changeable.”

4.4.5 Perceptions of retirement

Section 4 of the interview schedule on players’ perceptions of retirement contained six questions aimed at establishing what the average player’s understanding of retirement is prior to him actually beginning the transition.

Question 4.1 of the interview schedule required that the respondents relate what their perceptions of retirement are, or were, prior to retirement.

Current Players

From the data it emerged that players’ perceptions of retirement differ dramatically depending on whom they are in contact with and who the retired players are that they have based their perceptions on. For some, the experience was positive and productive, but for others the transition was perceived to be difficult:

“Most of my friends that have played and retired now are doing very well, they invested from a young age in property and all kinds of things and they’re really doing well and I also got a lot of tips from them.”

“Just by judging by how the players have dealt with that I think a lot of players have taken a bit of a hit and have battled immensely being out of the rugby loop. It’s been quite tough on them. I’m trying to prepare myself just before it slaps me in the face when it does happen.”

Retired Players

A common theme to emerge from the retired players comments was that retirement is far more difficult than what most of the respondents had expected. One respondent stated, “that he had anticipated being able to maintain the lifestyle that he had experienced while playing rugby. He continued,

“But again you’ve got a whole false image about retirement especially if you haven’t been a Springbok for about let’s say 5 years non-stop for that amount of money that you can earn.”

Another respondent echoed this sentiment, stating, that he thought it was going to be a lot easier

I didn’t realise business is that difficult, but you get to grips with that. It takes you a good two to three years to accept the fact that it doesn’t mean, the fact that you played for South Africa, that you just gonna walk in any place and get business. So ja, it’s a bit of a reality check, but you get used to it.”

Administrators

In response to this question, two respondents felt that many players believed that it would be a life of luxury once they retired. As one respondent stated,

“I think a lot of these guys also think that it’s just playing golf and having lunches and things like that.”

Another respondent stated that a player’s perceptions of retirement depend on whom they were in contact with. He stated,

“Ja, it depends who they know. There’s guys, ex rugby players, professional rugby players that have had it all and lost it all. So for existing players, it depends who their role models are, and who they look at and what they... but for most of them retirement in their mind is just a bleak thing.”

Question 4.2 of the interview schedule for retired players required that the respondents relate what their experience of retirement has been thus far and how they were coping with it.

Retired Players

For two respondents the transition to retirement had not at all been traumatic, perhaps owing to the fact that one had a job that he had held throughout his entire playing career, while the other had his own business that he had progressively become more focused on as he approached retirement. However, for two of the remaining respondents the transition was traumatic. As one respondent related,

“The experience I think first came as a shock. All of a sudden you not really someone you’ve always been, someone being recognised, being treated a bit differently, and all of a sudden you’re not there. As the years go by people forget easily.”

Question 4.3 of the interview schedule for retired players required that the respondents relate how they foresaw their lives after retirement prior to actually retiring.

Question 4.2 of the interview schedule for current players and administrators.

Current Players

For all three of the respondents, the goals that they have set for themselves for their retirement, and how they foresee themselves living, is surprisingly modest and very attainable. As one respondent stated,

“I think probably my goals, when I retire [are] probably to be able to support my family, just a small family at the moment, but we obviously hope to have kids and for me to be able to support them, as well as I can and give them a great upbringing, that’s probably it.”

Retired Players

Although the responses received from retired players were varied, a common theme to emerge is that each of the respondents foresaw that they would be better off than they actually were, that professional rugby would provide better for them than it actually did. As one respondent stated,

“You know when they started with the money in rugby we all thought you gonna make a lot of money, you gonna be rich, you gonna have a big house, you gonna have a nice car and all that – for some people obviously it worked but okay in my case not as such.”

Administrators

In general, administrators felt that players had unrealistic expectations of retirement, with very few of them having concrete plans of how they were going to realise these goals.

Question 4.4 of the interview schedule for retired players required that the respondents relate what some of the challenges facing professional players in their transition to retirement are.

Question 4.3 of the interview schedule for current players and administrators.

Current Players

The responses to this question were varied, with one respondent citing a lack of tertiary education, and another cited players being out of the limelight as a challenge to be overcome. There was, however, one common theme that emerged from the data on retired players' inflated expectations about their post-rugby careers. As one respondent put it,

“...just because you played rugby that someone will offer you a job is also something a lot of players think will just happen, but I think they get a fright when they don't get too many offers.”

I think one of the biggest challenges will be to have that mentality that when you walk into an interview for a job that you not gonna get the CEO position. You not going to get the corner office with the view. You've got to start at the bottom, and I don't think all of them have that."

Retired Players

What emerged from the data was that the biggest challenge to overcome for two of the respondents was not being at training in the evenings and missing the camaraderie of their respective teams. What also emerged from the data is that these two respondents maintained their same jobs throughout their playing careers and therefore had something to fall back on. For the two remaining respondents the challenges were far more daunting. As one respondent related,

"I think you not prepared; prepared-wise; business skills-wise. You not prepared on how life really works out there when you have to pay for stuff and where money doesn't come that easy. There is way more disappointments than the disappointments when you playing rugby - not selected, injuries or whatever. I think these disappointments can be permanent. It can affect your next 30 years of life. I wasn't prepared at all."

Administrators

Respondents agreed that one of the greatest challenges facing retired players are the restrictions of the business world. As one respondent stated,

"[It] is the transition from being a sportsman, and having the freedom of doing what you want, to become a businessman, with complete other responsibilities and being in charge of other people instead of just being a sportsman and being in charge of yourself."

Question 4.5 of the interview schedule for retired players required that the respondents relate what they believed to be the single most difficult moment in their transition to retirement.

Retired Players

The responses obtained from each of the respondents varied greatly and appear to be dependent on the circumstances in which the respondent found himself. However, it is interesting to note that the most difficult areas where those relating to personal achievements as a professional rugby player. One respondent who had a job to fall back on stated,

“I think realising that you didn’t achieve what you always wanted to: like I said becoming a Springbok.”

For another respondent it was his health. He related,

“[T]hat’s the day when I did my neck injuries, and I had to basically make the call because they said I can go for the operation and play in more season or I must call it quits because they said the injury was going take a year to heal, so it was just that, it wasn’t a very difficult decision because like I said I was tired of it but the moment when I said that’s it, I’m not gonna for the op, so it was actually in England, it was a very quick decision. It basically happened within a day, I went for the MRI scan, so I just basically had the two options, either yes or no. It was quick one, I came home.”

Question 4.5 of the interview schedule for administrators required that respondents relate how their organisations were helping players overcome the challenges associated with transitioning to retirement.

Administrators

In response to this question, all of the respondents cited the importance their organisations place on tertiary education for players. One respondent stated, in addition to formal education, that his club arranged for players to gain practical working experience through some of their sponsors. A second respondent related how individuals who are currently unemployed approach his club in the

hope of earning an income in that fashion but that rather than sign them up, his club does tries to assist them in obtaining employment.

Question 4.6 of the interview schedule required that the respondents relate what they thought the opportunities both within and outside of rugby were for retiring players.

Question 4.4 of the interview schedule for current players.

Current Players

All of the respondents agreed that the best opportunities afforded to retiring players would come from the networks that they had established during their playing careers. As one respondent stated,

“When the guys are still playing I think everyone wants to be your friend then, and I think it’s a great opportunity to make contacts and start thinking about your retirement then, and start chatting to those people that are interested in you then because I think five years after you’ve retired from sports I don’t think they’re too interested in you too much [any]more.”

Retired Players

When it comes to the opportunities available to retired or retiring players, two themes emerged. The first of these related to the networks that players had established for themselves, while the second related to the opportunities within rugby itself. As one respondent related,

“From a rugby perspective, none. We call it broederbond in rugby. The doors are pretty much closed in those circles. I don’t think they allow this, although there’s a couple of guys that do these days. I see they do pull in the guys to get involved with either coaching or assisting or but in those days it was the admin people and the players. There wasn’t really any open doors.”

Administrators

From the data it emerged that there were very few direct opportunities in rugby, but that opportunities outside of the sport were available provided that a player was able to effectively use the networks that he had established during his playing career. As one respondent stated,

“There’s definitely a lot of opportunities for them because it’s such a high profile sport. Once you become a top player in this country you do have the ear [of the people], and the people out there will support you in any venture that you go into, so you’ve got a massive advantage there.”

Question 4.7 of the interview schedule for administrators required that the respondents relate how their organisation was going about raising players’ awareness of the opportunities available to them.

Administrator

Responses to this question were varied. One respondent indicated that through his mentorship programme he and his players regularly discuss the opportunities available to players post-rugby, with many of players changing the direction in which they wish to go as they mature. A second respondent stated that his club tries to get players to gain working experience by getting involved in community work. He continued that players were also encouraged to purchase from companies run by their team mates rather than from the team mates’ competition. The respondent noted that his club’s leadership were all prominent business people in their district and that through their businesses players were given opportunities. A third respondent stated that on the players’ off days his club would arrange for those studying certain disciplines to visit some of their business partners who operate in those fields to gain experience.

4.4.6 Planning for retirement

Section 3 of the interview schedule on planning for retirement contained seven questions aimed at establishing what measures players are taking prior to their retirement, what their plans are and how they intend following through on those plans.

Question 3.1 of the interview schedule required respondents to state whether they had given retirement any thought, or in the case of retired players, at what stage in their careers they began giving retirement serious consideration.

Current Players

All three respondents stated that they had given retirement thought in the past year or two.

Retired Players

Although one respondent, who had sustained the neck injury, indicated that it had always been at the back of his mind owing to the risks involved in the sport, what emerged from the data is that players generally only begin considering retirement in the later stages of their careers. As one respondent stated,

"I think you realise towards the end of your career only. During your career you always try, because you meet so many people and you try to get involved in the business, but again you're training too much. You might be too lazy to really put some work in and you want everything on a platter. So you really just... towards the end of the career because you really thought, 'I will squeeze another year and something will come up.'"

Administrators

In response to this question, one respondent indicated that most of his players had not given it much consideration, given that they were wholly committed to playing rugby. For two other respondents, though, they stated that players were

prepared for their retirement relative early in their careers. As one respondent stated,

"I start with the retirement programme and talk to my players in the first month. They have to learn what it is because they could... rugby career can end in the first game. So they know exactly where they're going to. They know exactly more or less what is a retirement date gonna be, and we work towards that."

Questions 3.2 and 3.3 of the interview schedule required that the respondents describe how they were going about preparing for their eventual retirement and what some of their plans were.

Current Players

In response to the first of these questions, two of the respondents indicated that although they had thought of retirement, they did not go so far as to actually begin preparing for it. For a third respondent it was somewhat different. He stated,

"[Obviously] you spend a lot of time with friends away from rugby and you start to get a little of a feel of how they go about their things and that's how I will be going about my things in a few years' time. So you try and mix it a bit and try and spend a bit of time away from rugby just to get that feeling."

In response to the second of the questions all of the respondents stated that their plans were primarily financial in nature, with most of them increasing their savings. As respondent stated,

"I've been speaking to a few financial advisors with regards to financial things, but also with businesses. I've started up a business with two friends, so I'm looking at that; to move into that when I have finished playing".

Retired Players

Two of the respondents indicated that they were fortunate enough to maintain their jobs throughout their professional careers, and had therefore planned to

return to these once their playing careers had ended. However, not all respondents were this fortunate. As one respondent related,

“I don’t think we are prepared, it came [as] quite a big shock. [B]ecause everything came so easy... you don’t really prepare for it at all.”

With regard to the plans respondents made prior to their retirement, one respondent related his experience:

“You running around saying, ‘Okay, where to from here?’ So you try to network trying to get some opportunity but because you don’t have any work experience from the age of 22 up until 33; there’s no real company that will take you on because you don’t have work experience and the economy has changed, they don’t want you just for the name, especially if you haven’t played a couple of tests”

Administrators

Responses to the first of these questions were varied, but once again, all respondents emphasised the players’ need to obtain tertiary education, with one respondent noting that, in universities, players who are studying toward certain degrees are already in their preparation phase.

As for some of the plans that players were making, respondents stated that these included studying toward professional degrees, signing overseas contracts with the aim of increasing a players’ income over the short term, and investing in various ventures

Question 3.4 of the interview schedule required respondents to state whether their plans had played out as they had envisioned or how they thought their plans would play out.

Current Players

All of the respondents indicated that although they had played out various scenarios of their retirement in their heads, they were not sure how these would

play out. When asked how he foresaw his plans playing out, one respondent answered,

“I don’t know. I will just have to... I’ve made the investments and hopefully I planned that in say about four/five years I can get all the money out of it and we will see where it goes from there.”

Retired Players

Two respondents stated that what they had planned during their transition to retirement is exactly what had transpired. Not surprisingly, these were the two respondents who had maintained the jobs that they had prior to turning professional. However, for the two other respondents things had not worked out as envisioned. As one respondent stated,

“Obviously nothing in life works according to plan. You got all these visions and dreams but it’s like anything in life.”

Administrators

Responses to this question were varied with no common theme emerging. One respondent stated that many players base their plans on their rugby careers believing that they will be able to replicate the ease with which they ascended to professional rugby in the business environment, only to be bitterly disappointed. A second respondent stated that it depended on the individual, but that he had players who were engineers, architects, and even lawyers. A third respondent stated that many players who initially have big dreams of becoming successful businessmen often realise during their careers that they do not have the business acumen to follow through on those goals, and abandon those in favour of more realistic goals.

Question 3.5 of the interview schedule asked respondents what type of assistance they foresaw themselves needing to make the transition to retirement easier.

Current Players

In response to this question all three respondent once again referred to the network that each player had developed during his playing career as probably the single most important factor contributing to easing a player's transition to retirement. As one respondent stated,

"I think as much as you can speak into people outside of rugby and your friends that are out there working and doing their things, so I think hopefully they can help me and give me some advice on what I can do once I retire."

Retired Players

Two common themes emerged from this question, the first being networking and the second mentoring. On networking one respondent stated,

"You know I think you build these relationships through rugby. It just happens to be that in the business that I am, a lot of people that I got to meet, especially sponsors, you know you sort of keep those relationships going because you know that eventually in four/five years' time you gonna obviously need these people which will have an effect on your career and it might help you in future endeavours."

On the subject of mentoring, another respondent stated,

"So I realised that now I need to either learn very quickly or get some work experience to find out or to get involved with someone that will give me an opportunity where I can be a partner to really maybe acquire those skills from them – when running around at the end of the career trying to get that into place."

Administrators

One administrator claimed that because he and his players begin discussing retirement so early, and because they regularly revisit the subject and his players are "involved in their businesses while they are rugby players," that

“there’s actually no transition.” However, most respondents felt that the clubs and unions needed to provide assistance. A one respondent stated,

“No, we need to assist them at all levels. We need to make them the complete human being at rugby and not just being a rugby player, and I think that’s the responsibility of all the unions. They need to look at that and really have the player develop as a human being and a person in his own right, and I think that’s what the unions need to do.”

Question 3.6 of the interview schedule asked respondents to describe the type of support that they received (or foresee receiving) from their families and friends when transitioning to retirement.

Current Players

Two of the respondents indicated that, although they had not yet received any assistance from the families, they foresaw that if they were to ask for assistance, they would receive it without hesitation. A third respondent indicated that he had actually received such assistance, stating,

“With my brother he was actually in the financial game, he has been helping me try to set up a few things for when I do retire to help me out.”

Retired Players

All four respondents indicated that they had tremendous support from families and friends, both during their playing careers as well as during their transition to retirement.

Administrators

All respondents indicated that it was imperative that players receive the support of their families to ease their transition out of professional rugby. However, there was one anomalous response in which one respondent stated,

“You see, I must tell you. A lot of them do have the family support. There’s also a lot of them that are supporting their families, and I think that is the aspect that

still needs to be addressed, because a lot of the players, earning the type of money they do, the families actually become... they become the supporters of the families, and that doesn't help in a long run to them. So that is the issue with some of the players."

Question 3.7 of the interview schedule required respondents to state if there was anything else that they could think of that would help to make their transition out of the sport a little easier.

Current Player

In response to this question one respondent stated that he could do with gaining more work experience. For the two remaining respondents, the network theme once again came to the fore, with one respondent stating,

"I think it's just using your networks to the best of your ability. Whenever I've ventured into a certain industry or something like that, you go through your phone book and you actually stumble onto names that you haven't used or seen for quite a while. But if you can actually keep [in] contact with those guys they'd be more than willing [to help] because they do understand that."

Retired Player

From the data it emerged that more needs to be done by both the clubs and the unions to ease players' transition to retirement. As one respondent stated,

"I think from the union's perspective, I think they should really look after these guys because they don't have time these days to have a business, or even look in it, or even studying. So I think from a union point of view, I think they can be more supportive."

Administrator

In response to this question, one respondent stated that it would help to ease players' transitions through their careers, including to retirement, if all administrators understood what it meant to manage their players and not just be

their agents, along with managing their players' expectations. A second respondent stated that the public need to realise that it was a role that professional players assumed during their playing years, and that they had sacrificed a lot, especially giving up time to be with their families, to fulfil contractual obligations. He stated that it would therefore really help players if the public would allow them their privacy now that they have retired, and support them in whatever endeavours they engage in.

4.4 Results pertaining to Research Question 2

To what extent have the South African Rugby Union (SARU) and other professional rugby organisations created and implemented programmes deemed both necessary and effective in facilitating the positive transition to retirement for their professional players?

4.4.1 Development programmes

Section 5 of the interview schedule on development programmes contained nine questions aimed at establishing what respondents' knowledge and experience was when it came to development programmes, and what clubs and unions were doing to prepare players for the eventual retirement.

Question 5.1 of the interview schedule required that the respondents describe some of the measures that their clubs are taking in assisting players to prepare for their eventual retirement.

Current Players

While one respondent indicated that his club did take measures aimed at assisting its players in preparing for retirement, two respondents remarked that their clubs had not, and that there was only one club that they knew of that did so. As one respondent stated,

“With [Club Y] now, the club I’m with now, they haven’t helped me at all, yet. I can’t comment on [Club Y]. When I was with [Club X] they did send us to quite a bit of work experience and things like that which helps quite a bit and started to get you a different view on retirement. So ja, I must say [Club X] put in a bit of effort.”

Retired Players

Responses to this question were almost unanimous, with three respondents stating that they could not think of any measures that the clubs had taken to assist their players’ transitions to retirement. One respondent stated,

“I can’t think of anything that the unions that I played for did. Maybe individuals inside the union like the coach or someone that maybe wanted to push you into a direction, becoming involved in the business. But I must say looking back at it, I sometimes think it was maybe because it [was] for their own gain, or maybe they were wanting you to set up something that they can be part of, but there’s none whatsoever club that I was involved with that did that.”

Administrators

In response to this question, two of the respondents noted that development programmes in South Africa did not exist. As one respondent stated,

“Ja, I think out of all the rugby clubs in the world, all the provincial sides, everybody, I don’t think there’s more than 20 percent of them that actually do something for their players when they retire. As a matter of fact I don’t think any rugby union in South Africa is doing it, because they use them and when they’re done with them they kick them out, and they don’t care what happens with them afterwards.”

Questions 5.2 and 5.3 of the interview schedule required that the respondents describe the types of formal education or support programmes that their clubs were providing, and how their clubs were going about informing their players of the academic options available to them.

Current Players

The responses to these questions were varied. One respondent stated that clubs would encourage players to study, sometimes providing those who wanted to do so with bursaries, but that each player is left to fend for himself thereafter. A second respondent stated that when he began his professional career these types of programmes were not available to him, and that not too many clubs had offered him that opportunity since. By contrast, a third respondent stated that his club provided various courses, stating that to the best of his knowledge classes were held on Wednesdays and Saturday, and that by attending these courses players could complete whole degrees.

Retired Players

Responses to the first of these questions were evenly split, with two respondents stating that there were no such programmes, while the two remaining respondents acknowledged that their clubs and the unions provided bursaries to players who wanted to attend university.

Responses to the second of these questions were unanimous, with all respondents indicating that the clubs and unions did not make players aware of the academic options available to them.

Administrators

In response to this question, all four respondents, once again, stated that obtaining a tertiary education was a prerequisite for participating in professional rugby at their institutions.

Question 5.3 of the interview schedule for administrators required that respondents describe how their clubs are encouraging players to provide feedback on the programmes on offer.

Administrators

Beside the common response that tertiary education is compulsory at their clubs, one interesting response did emerge. As the respondent stated,

“Again, rugby unions and clubs don’t get involved with the tertiary education of the players. For them it’s just one thing, they’re professional, they sign the contract, the employee, they play rugby, what they do with their lives around that, very little care about it. Ja, and I think I mentioned earlier on what I do with my players.”

Question 5.4 of the interview schedule required that the respondents evaluate the programmes provided by their clubs, and state how they would go about improving these.

Current Players

In response to this question, one respondent stated that he was unable to evaluate any of the courses at his current club, as he hadn’t been provided with this type of assistance. He stated, however, that if he were able to provide his current club with advice, he would advise them to initiate a programme such as the one provided by his former team, where players were sent out to gain work experience and gain a sense of how tough it is in the real world. A second respondent echoed this sentiment, stating,

“Once again, the assistance they give in retirement is just not up to standard I think. So in the clubs that I’ve been, the only one is Club X that help the guys through retirement or starting new careers. Other ones have no such thing.”

A third respondent stated that the programmes provided by his club had only been initiated in 2011 and that it was still too new for him to properly evaluate the courses.

Retired Players

In response to this question none of the respondents were able to evaluate any of the courses because these had not been afforded to them during their playing careers. However, all respondents were unanimous in their conviction that clubs stress the need for tertiary education. As one respondent stated,

“I would definitely have some sort of education going for these guys because you can’t train for 12 hours a day, so really, I would urge these guys to do some sort of education.”

Question 5.5 of the interview schedule required respondents to name courses that they believe would benefit players and why they felt these were pertinent.

Question 5.4 on the interview schedule for administrators.

Current Players

The response to this question was varied. For one respondent it was logistics management. For another it was a programme that would encompass many things because as he put it, “a lot of rugby players don’t know what sort of line they want to go into, so that might help them, I think.” A third respondent stated that many players wish to remain in the sports field and would therefore benefit from coaching and management courses, as well as physiotherapy and bio kinetics courses.

Retired Players

Response to these questions were varied, however, what emerged from the data is that players would benefit most from short courses, owing to the time constraints placed on them, and from financial literacy course to help them better manage their finances. As one respondent stated,

"It depends on what level you play, but I could say obviously some financial advice first of all, and maybe teach these guys how to manage their fees or the money that they do get because it can be substantial..."

Administrators

A common theme to emerge from the data were that financial and lifestyle courses were recommended, with two respondents listing financial skills; personal skills; how to draw up budgets and deal with the media; small business management; financial management; and business administration courses.

Question 5.6 of the interview schedule required respondents to describe the interaction between course facilitators and the students.

Question 5.5 on the interview schedule for administrators.

Current Players

One respondent indicated that the interaction between the facilitators and the players at his club was "very good." A second respondent recalled his time at university and stated,

"So some of them are really good, some of them just make it really difficult for you, but it's also as a result of other players or guys just trying to take chances."

Retired Players

Although all of the respondents were unable to evaluate the interaction between players and facilitators, as they had not been part of such programmes when they were still playing, there was one respondent who offered advice on how he thought the interaction may be improved. He stated,

"I think that... people interacting must understand a rugby player or a sportsman, what he thinks or how he thinks, and maybe really come from that angle, that this oke can understand, 'Listen I'm actual the exact same person as the guy not playing rugby.'"

Administrators

The responses to this question varied, with one administrator indicating that unions should play a facilitating role between players and tertiary institutions to enable players to study and prepare for a life after rugby but that they do not. A second respondent indicated that his organisation had brought in a professional institution to facilitate these programmes and felt that it was therefore professional.

Question 5.7 of the interview schedule asked respondents if their clubs provided any courses or programmes that were not academic in nature.

Question 5.6 on the interview schedule for administrators.

Current Players

In response to this question all three respondents concluded that some sort of lifestyle or people skills courses should be included, with one respondent once again including networking. As he recalled,

“Networking, the older guys always used to say to us at functions because we used to hide in the corner together that you should network and mix with the people. Like I mentioned earlier, you can make a good contact now while you’re still playing and I think that’s really important advice.”

Retired Players

From this question, two education themes emerged. The first of these was life skills programmes, with players being taught how to network, how to compile a C.V., and perhaps computer literacy. The second theme to emerge was that players could be provided with technical courses aimed at helping them to develop a trade. As one respondent stated,

“I think maybe a technical course, doing a trade. South Africa lost a lot of tradesmen during the last couple of years and there’s always scope for guys working with their hands, getting a knowledge about that.”

Administrators

One administrator pointed out that rugby unions ought to enable players who are interested in certain business fields to spend time at organisations in those industries, but that in South Africa no organisation was doing that. A second respondent stated that his organisation did encouraging players to visit some of their sponsors’ businesses and in some cases car dealerships, to see if they might be interested in a career in sales.

Question 5.8 of the interview schedule asked respondents to describe how their clubs went about encouraging players to participate in these programmes.

Question 5.7 on the interview schedule for administrators.

Current Players

Two respondents agreed that the best way of facilitating such programmes is to ensure that players do not feel a sense of obligation to attend them, but rather it should be communicated in such a way that they want to participate. As one respondent stated, “[D]on’t make it seem like they have to do it or it’s a chore, make it feel it will improve them and they would go.”

Retired Players

All respondents stated that they had no knowledge of how clubs encouraged participation in development programmes. One respondent stated,

“I never really had the opportunities, so I don’t know how they do go about with all of that.”

Administrators

Two respondents stated that their clubs “encouraged” participation by making it mandatory for players to attend these courses.

Question 5.9 of the interview schedule asked respondents if they had any knowledge of the South African Rugby Union (SARU) assisting with players’ transition to retirement.

Question 5.8 on the interview schedule for administrators.

Current Players

In response to this question one respondent highlighted all of the work done by the South African Rugby Players Association (SARPA). Two interviewees stated that they had no knowledge of SARU assisting players in transitioning to retirement, and that neither of them had been provided with any advice from SARU. One of the respondents did, however, feel that if a player were to contact the organisation requesting assistance, such assistance would be provided.

Retired Players

All of the respondents indicated that they had no knowledge of SARU assisting players through the provision of development courses.

Administrators

One administrator stated that SARU have done nothing to assist in easing players’ transition to retirement. A second respondent felt that SARU is playing a big role in this regard, as evidenced by SARU making it compulsory for players to belong to the players’ union and the pension fund.

4.4.2 Transferable skills

Section 6 of the interview schedule on transferable skills contained four questions aimed at establishing whether players were aware of the concept of

transferable skills and how these may be used to ease players' transitions to retirement.

Question 6.1 of the interview schedule asked respondents to describe the qualities or traits they possess that helped them reach the professional level of rugby.

Current Players

All of the respondents agreed that participation in rugby had taught them how to work hard and persevere through challenges. One respondent put it thus:

“Perseverance, not to give up, to... to really give it your all and make the necessary sacrifices where you have to.”

Retired Players

As with current players, the theme of perseverance was prevalent among all respondents. However, two additional skills were mentioned by the respondents, namely social skills and leadership. As one respondent stated,

“You hopefully had to have some sort of social skill, because I think... [a player] not [being] socially accepted, won't make it at anything. It doesn't matter how good you are, you have to fit in, because at the end of the day rugby is about the bigger picture.” A second respondent stated, *“I like to think that I was a strong leader. One, I was the captain of a professional outfit in the Currie Cup, so obviously I had to have some sort of a leadership role or leadership qualities. So I think leadership was one of my big qualities that I had.”*

Administrators

Two respondents listed hard work, dedication and mental toughness as traits that all professional rugby players possess.

Question 6.2 of the interview schedule asked respondents how they thought they would be able to transfer these qualities to a post-rugby career.

Current Players

In response to this question, two of the respondents indicated that employers are always looking to hire hardworking individuals. As one respondent put it, “I think someone is always looking to employ someone that works really hard and puts in a good effort.”

Retired Players

Expanding on his previous answer, one respondent stated, “[We] started our own business where on a day-to-day thing, again the leadership quality came out, I turned to run the business and people looked up to me and listened to what I said.” Another respondent stated,

“In any business that you do, you do need some sort of social skill, and I must say rugby did help a bit on that, because you do learn a lot, with all the different people you get to know and how to accept it, and people in certain ways because not everybody is the same.”

Administrators

One administrator indicated that business is tough and that mental toughness generally means the difference between success and failure. He made the point that there are times “when you’ve got to say ‘no’.” A second respondent stated that hard work and practice at whatever they do is what players can take with them to their post-rugby careers.

Question 6.3 of the interview schedule asked respondents whether their clubs and/or SARU were helping them understand how these qualities may be transferred to a post-rugby career.

Current Players

Two respondents indicated that neither their club nor SARU had helped them in understanding how the skills they gained on the rugby field could be transferred to a post-rugby career.

Retired Players

All four of the respondents stated that neither their club nor SARU had helped them in understanding how the skills they gained on the rugby field could be transferred to a post-rugby career.

Administrators

One respondent stated neither his club nor SARU has helped players understand how they may transfer the skills they possess to a career beyond rugby. A second respondent stated that by talking to his players and explaining to them why it is that they should behave in a certain manner, and perhaps highlighting the downfall of previous players because of their behaviour, players might see what they need to do to succeed.

Question 6.4 of the interview schedule asked respondents whether their family and friends had made them aware of qualities or skills that they possess that may help them in their post-rugby careers.

Current Players

In response to this question, two of the respondents stated that their families and friends had told them that they are good with people. The third respondent simply stated, "I obviously don't have too good friends then because not too many of them have told me."

Retired Players

Responses to this question were varied with working hard and dedication being traits that was shared by all respondents. Some of the other traits that

respondents were informed that they had were leadership, hard-headedness, being a survivor, calmness, and loyalty.

Administrators

In response to this question, one respondent remarked that as players develop so do their personalities, with the qualities they possesses then coming to the fore. He stated that what a player needs to then do is identify his passion and pursue that. A second respondent stated the self-discipline was need for anybody to succeed.

Question 6.5 of the interview schedule for administrators asked respondents that if they were to create a programme designed to teach players how to use their transferable skills, what would it entail.

Administrator

One respondent stated that any programme he developed would incorporate five components, namely: decision making; time management; strategic management; financial management; and relationship management. A second respondent stated that he wasn't too sure what the final product would look like, but that any programme that he designed would emphasise discipline, self-discipline and dedication.

4.5 Summary of the results

A summary of the data contained in this chapter is now provided under each of the six headings.

4.5.1 Ascension to Professional Rugby

From the data collected for this report it would appear that the vast majority of professional rugby players first got their start in the game during their schooling, with some contending in competitions such as Craven Week. The data seems to support the fact that prior to the professional era most players who ascended

to senior provincial rugby did so by first going to university. With the advent of the professional era, that no longer appears to be the case although the administrators of professional teams insist that their players obtain a tertiary education.

The data would support that a major factor contributing to a player's successful participation in professional rugby is support; both from the player's family and his friends, and that the majority of parents support their children's decision to pursue this career.

Although one is made to believe that every player who enters professional rugby immediately believes that he can become a Springbok, the data does not support this claim. Instead, it would appear that players' goals are relatively modest and players pursue their goals incrementally.

4.5.2 Athletic Identity

When it comes to the way in which players identify themselves and how they wish to be identified, the results are not very surprising. As a rugby player, respondents wanted to be remembered as a team player, or a player who gave back to the game and to the community, or as one whose team and fans would prefer were in the team rather than not. When it came to being remembered on a personal level, the vast majority of respondents generally wanted to be remembered as good, humble, clean, honest, hardworking, approachable people.

For all of the respondents, how they perceived themselves at the beginning of their careers was greatly different from the way they perceived themselves as their retirement approached, with players becoming more grounded. The data suggested that none of the players saw rugby as defining of who they are, but for many they will continue to wear the title of ex-professional rugby player as a badge of achievement.

4.5.3 Perceptions of Retirement

Players' perceptions of retirement are varied depending on whom they are in contact with. For some the perception of retirement is that it is not too bad provided that one has properly prepared for it. For others, having seen retired friends battle to cope with their retirement, the answer is not so simple. Yet others view retiring from professional rugby as simply closing a chapter in their lives and moving onto the next.

From the data, it appears that no player believes that when he retires he will be able to put his feet up and relax. Instead, for the majority of players, the main concern when they retirement is not so much that they will lose all of the privileges that they currently have, but rather if they will be able to provide a comfortable life for their families.

4.5.4 Planning for Retirement

With the exception of one retired player, all of the respondents indicated that they had given thought to their retirement, with the majority indicating that they had also taken steps at easing their transition to retirement. The majority of current players indicated that the steps they had taken were financial, taking the form of savings and investments. One current player, however, indicated that he and two of his friends had started their own business.

Of the retired players, two of them indicated that they had maintained jobs throughout their playing careers and were therefore not concerned when it came to their eventual retirement. Another indicated that he had a business that, as his retirement date approached, he became increasingly involved in. A fourth retired player, as mentioned above, did not plan sufficiently for his retirement and found the transition to retirement extremely difficult as a consequence.

4.5.5 Development Programmes

The data gathered on development programmes and the measures clubs are taking to help ease players' transition to retirement are varied to say the least.

For both current and retired players it would appear that the measures taken by clubs is inadequate. Current players indicated that they had varying degrees of assistance from their clubs, with two respondents citing one club in particular as being the only organisation that they are aware of that truly goes out of its way to help its players.

When it came to retired players, the number of players who indicated that their clubs had helped them successfully transition to retirement was even lower; three respondents even stated that their clubs did not provide any programmes of this type. Respondents acknowledged that clubs and unions did provide bursaries for those who wanted to study at university, but that once these had been provided there was no further help from the club.

Administrators held a completely different view stating that their clubs had provided programmes that were facilitated by professional learner organisations and a number of administrators stated that it was compulsory for all of their players to obtain a tertiary education.

4.5.6 Transferable Skills

Many of the respondents indicated that they had similar character traits such as perseverance, dedication, and determination. One current player stated that a skill he had developed was not to dwell on mistakes, but rather to learn from them and move on. A retired player stated that he possessed social skills, while another indicated that, while being the captain of his team, he had learned leadership skills.

Asked how they thought these could be transferred to a life after rugby most respondents, especially the retired players, were able to indicate how they would do so. However, when asked whether SARU had made them aware of how skills learned playing rugby could be transferred to situations outside of the game, just about every respondent replied no.

CHAPTER 5: DISCUSSION OF THE RESULTS

5.1 Introduction

In the following chapter the results of the research, as presented in Chapter 4, will be analysed and discussed with reference to current literature on the topic of athletic retirement.

As with Chapter 4, the analysis will be discussed according to the carefully constructed themes derived from the literature and outlined in the interview schedule.

5.2 Demographic profile of respondents

As it was the researcher's intention to target specific respondents for this study due of their knowledge of and engagement in professional rugby in South Africa, most of the participatory respondents are those originally targeted. There were, however, two respondents who stated that they were unable to participate in the study as they were too busy. One of these respondents was a current player, hence there only being three current players in the study.

Of the current players, two have played for 11 years, both of whom have followed similar career paths. The second respondent is much younger and has only played for three years.

Of the retired players, three have since become self-employed, with the duration of their rugby-playing careers ranging from seven years to 10 years.

Of the administrators, two are involved in businesses outside of rugby in their personal capacity, while one is the CEO of a well-known business. The fourth is the fulltime manager of a lesser-known professional team

5.3 Discussion pertaining to Research Question 1

Which factors have South African and professional rugby organisations and players identified as contributing (both positively and negatively) to the transition to retirement of professional players?

5.3.1 *Social support system*

Although current literature on the transition of athletes out of competitive sports, most notably McKnight et al. (2009), concentrates on the nature of the support athletes receive during their final transitional phase, a different approach was adopted for the current study. Instead, this study sought to establish the nature of the support the respondents received throughout their professional careers and not just during the final phase thereof.

The reason for adopting this approach was simple in that the process being investigated, especially in the sport of rugby, needed a more holistic understanding. As Wylleman et al. (2004) noted, the contemporary view of athletic retirement, unlike the views held during the 1970s and the early part of the 1980s, is that it is no longer explained in terms of it being a singular, all-ending event. Instead, as Wylleman et al. (2004) state, citing McPherson (1980), athletic retirement, or athletic career termination, is now viewed as a transitional process.

Having adopted this approach, one of the earliest questions that participants in the research were asked was what their parents' reaction was when they were first informed that the player in question had decided to pursue a professional rugby career.

This was followed by a question asking participants to describe the nature of the support that they received subsequent to this announcement. The findings of these two questions were rather interesting. For all but for one respondent the support that each current and retired player received from his family was immediate and unconditional. The mother of one current player initially objected to him participating in professional rugby, but eventually capitulated once she

had seen the determination and the dedication with which he was pursuing his rugby dream.

According to one administrator the sentiment expressed by this mother is not uncommon, as mothers, he noted, are often reluctant to have their children participate in physical sports such as professional rugby. However, South African fathers revel in the idea of their children participating in professional sports, be it for whatever reason. The reasons cited were extremely self-centred and negative. There are fathers who push their children to follow in their footsteps; there are parents who did not excel at sports and try to live their sporting fantasies through their children; and there are fathers who would love for their children to become professional sportspeople because of the glamour and money associated with professional sports.

From the above observations from the administrators, one is able to deduce that, where many parents believe that they are providing support and motivation, the opposite may be true; their actions may in fact be a hindrance to a player's progress within the sport, and that it may in fact cause more harm than good. As one administrator remarked, many players who are pushed by their parents in this fashion do not make it to the level of professional because they are so burned out.

According to McKnight et al. (2009), support from family and friends during a transition to retirement generally reduces the degree of disruption that the athlete experiences, and that those athletes who experience negative transitions to retirement often cite a lack of support from friends who continue with the sport. Conversely, according to McKnight et al. (2009), support from former athletes, family and sport helps them to adjust to life post-athletics.

In response to the above question, all of the retired players indicated that they received tremendous support from their families, and that any difficulties they may have experienced during their transition to retirement were not for lack of familial support. None of the retired players mentioned any former players assisting them in their transition to retirement. However, they all stated that they had received no support from their either their clubs or their unions. Current

players similarly foresaw that they would receive family support similar to that which they have received throughout their professional careers. Two of the current players indicated that they were receiving no support from either their clubs or the unions at this stage. All respondents indicated that, generally, players receive good support from their families. However, there was one surprising answer to emerge from one respondent. He stated that although most players receive overwhelming support from their families, there were instances where, rather than receiving support, players were instead having to support their families. He felt that, in these situations, players' transitions to retirement were made that much more difficult, and that it was a phenomenon that needs to be addressed.

5.3.1 Identity and athletic retirement

According to Erpic et al. (2004) athletic identity, the extent to which the athlete identifies with the role, is a psychological factor that plays a key role in influencing and determining an athlete's ability to adapt to a post-sport career. Professional athletes invest so much into the sport that they are forced to reduce the amount that they invest in other aspects of their lives (Erpic, Wylleman et al. 2004; McKnight, Bernes et al. 2009). This may result in the formation of a strong athletic identity, a factor which can have both positive and negative effects on the athlete (Erpic, Wylleman et al. 2004).

When it came to being remembered as a rugby player, the vast majority of respondents indicated that they wanted to be remembered as team players. It is interesting that in so many cases, there is a difference between the perceptions of players and the perceptions of administrators. This suggests that the latter have a less intimate understanding of player needs and concerns than they might believe is the case. What emerged from the second question was somewhat surprising given the high profile nature of professional rugby in South Africa. As human beings, there were two themes to emerge from the majority of respondents in all three of the groups, that being affability and humility.

It appears that players lack maturity when they first begin to play professional rugby, which is hardly surprising, given their young age. Any reluctance to

contemplate readying themselves for retirement can probably be attributed to this lack of maturity. A large number of respondents also indicated that as they matured, so their goals became more team-focused rather than trying to obtain individual glory.

According to Lally (2007) and McKnight et al. (2009), problems an athlete experiences in retirement are often associated with a loss of identity and reduced self-esteem. This is borne out by the data. Although none of the respondents stated that rugby defines them, there was one respondent who stated that he found coming to terms with retirement difficult at first owing to the fact he was no longer recognised and he did not garner the attention that he once did.

McKnight et al. (2009) state that the degrees to which athletes are able to consider alternative roles in society is an indicator of how successful their transitions to retirement will be. This would appear to be corroborated by the data for retired players. Of the four respondents, three had already mapped out their post-rugby future by the time that their retirement dates had arrived, with two of them maintaining jobs throughout their playing careers which they were able to fall back on following their retirement, and one established his own business prior to his retirement, which he placed increasing focus on as his retirement date approached. Lally (2007) and McKnight et al. (2009) state that very often athletes experience difficulties in transitioning to retirement because they have not examined who they will be subsequent to their athletic career. Once again, the data would appear to support this; the only player to have not thought about retirement prior to the transition actually commencing experiencing the most difficult transition of the four ex-players.

Lally (2007), states that not all research points to the notion of retirement inevitably leading to an identity crisis or confusion for an athlete. In these instances, he notes, retirement may be viewed by the athlete as being one of the many life transitions athletes must undergo, and has no more negative impact on athletes' self-image than other life events (Lally 2007). This was very much the view adopted by one of the current players who stated that in view there are two retirement dates: one when transitioning out of the sport in which

they participate and the other at the age of 65. The respondent went on to state that retirement from professional sport does not mean that one stops working.

As Lally (2007) notes, and as the data obtained during this study indicates, it could be argued that the concept of professional athletes experiencing identity crises following retirement may be a generalisation within the literature, and that athletes have ways of redefining themselves and their life-goals following retirement, and seldom require extensive periods of adjustment following career termination.

5.3.2 Perceptions of retirement

While two administrators felt that players' perceptions of retirement were skewed, stating that players' view of life following retirement was that theirs would be a life of luxury, the data obtained from all of the current players did not support these administrators' assertions. However, one administrator was more accurate in his assertion when he stated that how players perceive retirement depended on whom it was that they were in contact with, and who their role models are. For one respondent whose friends were doing well following their retirement, retirement was seen as something that would not be too taxing. For another respondent, however, it was his experience that many players experienced extreme difficulty once they had exited from the sport. The interesting thing to emerge from the data was that although the two players had opposing views of retirement, each had been motivated by what they saw and experienced to take positive steps towards easing their own transition out of the sport when the time comes.

What emerged from retired players' comments was that retirement was far more difficult than most of them had initially expected. What was really interesting from one respondent was that he did not blame anybody for the difficulties he experienced during his transition to retirement, but indicated instead that he may have been naive in his perception of retirement. Another interesting point to emerge from the retired players came from one respondent who stated that it took him two to three years to finally accept that just because he played rugby for South Africa it didn't mean that business would automatically come his way.

Another respondent stated something similar, saying that ex-players become despondent when job offers don't automatically come their way.

What is interesting when analysing the different visions of these two groups is that it would appear that as rugby has matured as a professional sport, so too have the expectations of players become more realistic. Whereas older players may have approached their retirement with a bit of naivety in believing that rugby would be the vehicle for providing a comfortable living following retirement, the same is not true of the current players. With more and more players retiring from the game, so it has become easier for current players to observe and reference what is truly attainable and what is not. Current players are also able to see what works and what does not in terms of preparing for retirement.

From the data it would appear that over the course of their careers professional players develop inflated opinions of themselves and that very often this may lead to them developing unrealistic expectations, or believing that they are capable of more than they actually are. In fact, players may very well feel that they are owed something by the public.

From the data it emerged that there are relatively few opportunities for players to become directly involved in rugby once they have retired. One retired player described it best when he stated that within rugby there is what he termed a "broederbond," where once players retire from the sport, opportunities to continue in the sport in different capacities are, for the most part, limited unless they are very well connected.

For the two retired players who did not have jobs to fall back on, the challenges they faced when retiring were far more daunting than they had expected, especially for the respondent who stated that he did not prepare for his retirement at all.

5.3.3 Planning for retirement

As the study on athletes' transitions to retirement has evolved, so has the realisation that interventions may be necessary to facilitate these transitions (Wylleman, Alfermann and Lavallee, 2004).

5.3.4.1 Voluntary versus involuntary retirement

One of the key factors in determining whether a player's transition out of professional sport is successful is whether the career termination is voluntary or involuntary. McKnight et al. (2009) and Erpic et al. (2004) state that when career termination is involuntary, as would be the case where players sustain serious injuries, the transition to retirement is often negative, resulting in more resistance and less preparedness than in those athletes who retire voluntarily.

The question of injury was spontaneously raised by one or two respondents. What was interesting was the ease with which a respondent was able to call an end to his career after sustaining a serious injury. This is counter to current literature (McKnight et al., 2009) which holds that if a player's career termination is involuntary, the transition to retirement is more often than not negative.

Two factors may have mitigated the respondent experiencing the disappointments normally associated with involuntary career termination: having his own business and the stage of his career when the injury was sustained. From this it would appear that the type of preparation that a player has taken for the eventuality of retirement along with the stage of the player's career may significantly determine whether a player's transition to retirement is positive or negative.

5.3.4.2 Anticipatory socialisation

According to McKnight et al. (2009) anticipatory socialisation refers to athletes' proactive response in preparing for their eventual retirement. Erpic et al. (2004), state that the degree to which an athlete plans for a life post-athletics has a marked influence on the quality of the adaptation to life following a competitive

sports career. This being the case, McKnight et al (2009) state that a lack of preparation may negatively impact on an athlete's ability to adjust to a life post-athletics. Erpic et al. (2009), state that planning for retirement may include a variety of activities, including education, activities to facilitate social networking, and occupational endeavours.

Education

The theme of education continued to present itself throughout the entire research project, with every single respondent highlighting its importance, and the need for athletes to engage in further studies. However, although the value of education was continually touted, when it came to the form that education should take, respondents held a wide range of views.

Most of the administrators indicated that at their clubs it was mandatory for players to engage in tertiary education, with the aim of obtaining a tertiary qualification. What, however, emerged from the data was that it was left solely to the player to determine what form that education would take, whether it would be through a university, technikon, or college. What also emerged from the data is that while clubs often provide players with bursaries and other financial assistance in obtaining such qualifications, the clubs' involvement in players' education basically extends no further.

While it is important for players to be made aware that not everybody is suited to university education, all respondents indicated that more should be done by the clubs to convey to players the various options that are available to them.

Social Networking

Social networking is also a theme that many players, both current and retired, and administrators advocated. All respondents indicated that non-academic courses which included a social networking component would benefit players.

What was noteworthy from data collected was whether players were aware of how to effectively use their social networks. Only one respondent gave an indication that he knew how to do so.

Occupational Endeavours

Another theme to feature prominently throughout this research is that of players being provided with the opportunity of gaining real-world work experience. One administrator indicated that if there are unemployed individuals who approach his club with the sole purpose of earning a living from rugby, that the club instead helps them to find employment. Most of the respondents indicated that these types of programmes would greatly benefit players. However, what emerged from the data is that although clubs continue to stress the need for players furthering their education, very few of them afford their players the opportunity to gain real world experience through occupational endeavours.

According to Erpic et al. (2004) and McKnight et al. (2009), although planning for retirement has been widely shown to reduce the difficulty with which an athlete transitions to retirement and adapts to life after competitive sport, many athletes do not consider life after an active sporting career. The data obtained from retired players and administrators during the study appeared to corroborate this claim, with most respondents stating that it was not until the later stages of players' careers that they first begin thinking about retirement.

McKnight et al (2009) state that athletes who plan for retirement are able to channel their energy as they begin considering their new societal roles and lifestyles. A factor found to have a positive effect on an athlete's transition to retirement is that of having interests other than the sport while the athlete is engaging in competitive sport (McKnight et al., 2009). Once again, the data obtained from retired players seemed to substantiate the claims made by McKnight et al (2009), with three of the retired players who had begun to prepare for life after rugby experiencing much easier transitions than the player who did not.

5.3.4.3 *Personal management skills*

McKnight et al. (2009) state that, at times athletes lack preparedness for the transition to retirement because they are dependent on others for personal management, and that this form of isolation may result in an athlete lacking the

skills in self-management that are necessary in making alternate career decisions. All respondents who were able to manage their rugby careers while at the same time managing jobs and businesses experienced easier transitions than the player was not able to do so.

McKnight et al. (2009) state, however, that coaching staff can teach athletes personal management skills at the same time as they are supporting them, and that the relationship between an athlete and his or her management team very often determines whether the transition to retirement will be positive or not. One administrator indicated that he provided his players with mentoring which no other club was providing to their players. As part of the mentoring programme, players were taught leadership, a skill which undoubtedly helps in easing their transition to retirement.

5.4 Discussion pertaining to Research Question 2

To what extent have the South African Rugby Union (SARU) and other professional rugby organisations created and implemented programmes deemed both necessary and effective in facilitating the positive transition to retirement for their professional players?

5.4.1 Development programmes

Wylleman et al. (2004) and McKnight (2009) note that several transition and athlete life-skill programmes have been developed in an effort to support players in their transition to a post-athletics career. According to Wylleman et al. (2004), the vast majority of these programmes are managed by national sports governing bodies, sports federations, national Olympic committees, independent organisations linked to sport, and academic institutions. From the data obtained during this study it would appear that the same is not true when it comes to professional rugby in South Africa.

When asked to evaluate the developmental programmes provided by the clubs, most respondents were unable to as they had not been exposed to any

programmes of this type. All of the respondents were unanimous in stating that SARU had provided no assistance aimed at easing players' transitions to retirement, and what the clubs were providing in terms of development was insufficient.

According to Wylleman et al. (2004) and Price (2007), some programmes are aimed at optimising the combination of an athletic and academic career, while simultaneously helping to launch the athlete's post-academic working career. Wylleman et al. (2004) state that many of these programmes comprise elements such as career awareness and decision making, values and interest exploration, CV preparation, job search strategies, interview techniques, career counselling, and the development of social and interpersonal skills. The data obtained during the course of this study would appear to corroborate these findings, because when respondents were asked what types of programmes they thought would be able to benefit players who were transitioning out of rugby, many of them stressed the need for lifestyle programmes.

5.4.2 *Transferable skills*

According to McKnight et al. (2009), most athletes who experience positive transitions do so by being able to capitalise on their transferable skills; those athletes who experience negative transitions often fail to see how the skills they acquired during their sporting careers translate, and may be transferred, to a non-athletic career (McKnight, Bernes et al. 2009). From the study it emerged that although all of the players were able to identify what their qualities and character traits were, only a very small number of individuals were able to describe the skills that they had acquired during their time as professional players as being transferrable after retirement.

McKnight et al. (2009) state that regardless of the level at which they compete, athletes will have learned valuable lessons that may be transferred to non-athletic careers as well as to other aspects of their lives. Athletes who realise that they already possess skills and character traits that could make them successful in non-athletic careers become empowered (McKnight, Bernes et al. 2009). All of the respondents recognised that their character traits of hard work

and dedication, although not being skills per se, were still qualities that employers would find valuable, and was therefore something that all of the respondents agreed would help them in their post rugby careers.

Once again it would appear that what organisations place on their websites, in terms of helping players to develop as complete people, does not necessarily hold true.

What emerged from the data was that family and friends' perceptions of players' character traits and skills were often the same as how a player perceived himself. Other transferable skills include adaptability and flexibility; perseverance and dedication; organisational skills; meeting challenges and deadlines; setting and attaining goals; performing under pressure; patience; and motivation (McKnight, Bernes et al. 2009). These tended not to be mentioned by respondents, perhaps indicating a weakness in personal reflection.

5.5 Summary of findings

What we are able to conclude from the analysis is that the transition of rugby players out of the professional level of the sport is far more complex than most people would think. We are also able to conclude that there are factors which contribute to players' transitions to retirement being made somewhat easier.

The first of these factors is undoubtedly the support that players receive from their families and their friends. What emerged in terms of support is that it is not sufficient for players to have support from just these two groups, but that they need the support of their clubs, team mates, ex-players, and the public at large.

A second factor to emerge as contributing to the ease with which a player is able to transition out of rugby is the way in which he identifies himself. With players increasingly competing at a professional level at a younger age, very often being recruited directly out of school, they seldom focus enough on other parts of their personality, with the result being that they develop a skewed sense of themselves. Very often players who have developed in this fashion have difficulty transitioning out of the sport.

However, players who have interests other than rugby will find it easier to transition to a life post-rugby. This was borne out by the data in this study where the majority of respondents considered rugby to be an occupation rather than defining of who they are.

The third and fourth factors contributing to the ease with which players transition to retirement, were players' perceptions of retirement and their preparation for retirement. How players perceive retirement depends largely on whom they are in contact with and who their role models are. What emerged was, regardless of how players perceive retirement, whether it is as a positive or a negative thing, positive steps could be taken to ease their transition out of rugby.

When it comes to clubs assisting players in transitioning out of rugby it was found that clubs do not do enough, both in the provision of development programmes or in assisting players to identify the transferable skills they have.

CHAPTER 6: CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

6.1 Introduction

The following chapter will comprise a brief summation of the key findings ascertained by the study and highlight conclusions that may be derived from these findings.

Following the conclusions of the study, recommendations will be made to all the relevant stakeholders, namely, the players, professional rugby organisations, and the business sector at large. Finally, suggestions for further research will be offered for those wishing to expound upon the findings of this study.

6.2 Conclusions of the study

6.2.1. *Ascension to professional rugby*

What the study found is that the ascension to professional rugby is very similar for all of the players, with the majority beginning their rugby playing career in their primary school years. Many of the players competed in the annual Craven Week tournament, and all of the respondents in this study stated that they had tremendous positive support from their families. What emerged from the study, however, is that many players who had the potential to reach the professional level of the sport failed to do so as a direct result of negative pressure placed on them by parents with unrealistic expectations. What also emerged from the study is that most of the older players went to university prior to becoming professional players and that this is not necessarily the case these days.

From the above it may be concluded that having the positive support of family and friends is probably the single most important factor, other than a player's drive and determination, in helping players to reach the professional level.

6.2.2. *Athletic identity*

From the study it emerged that those players who define themselves by the sport in which they participate experience difficulty in transitioning out of the sport. All of the respondents in this study indicated that they were not defined by rugby, but rather that to rugby was an occupation. As for how they wanted to be identified as rugby players, the vast majority of respondents indicated that they wanted to be viewed as team players. This contrasted sharply with the way they viewed themselves early in their careers. As individuals, all of the respondents indicated that they wanted to be remembered as being affable and humble.

What may be concluded from this is that professional players don't have to be megalomaniacal, and that instead the opposite may be true. In a display of humility, none of the respondents blamed the 'system' for the difficulties they experienced when transitioning to retirement. Instead each respondent assumed responsibility for his own transitional experiences.

6.2.3. *Perceptions of retirement*

From the study it emerged that as rugby matures as a professional sport so do players' perceptions of retirement. Whereas older players believed that they would be able to retire to a life of luxury following their retirement from rugby, this is no longer the case. All of the respondents indicated that their goals for retirement were modest, with most of them just wanting to live comfortable lives, being able to support their families.

For the majority of respondents there is the realisation that retirement is more difficult than one would imagine, but that through the effective use of one's networks, the challenges faced by players can be overcome.

6.2.4. *Planning for retirement*

It also emerged that most of the planning that players did for their retirement involved saving and investing, with not enough focus being placed on acquiring new skills. Although one respondent completed a degree, he did not make use

of the knowledge that he acquired at university for the entire duration of his playing career. This resulted in him initially experiencing extreme difficulty in transitioning to retirement.

What can be concluded from this is that in addition to players saving and investing, they need to invest in themselves by acquiring new skills sets.

6.2.5. *Development programmes*

While the majority administrators touted their clubs' insistence on players obtaining tertiary education, there were only two respondents who stated that their clubs had a development programmes outside of universities and colleges. What was interesting is that once the clubs had paid for players' tuition, their interest in players' academic achievements became non-existent. It would appear that the introduction of development programmes is a relatively new phenomenon in South Africa. Another thing to emerge from the study was that the efforts that clubs put into providing these programmes is tenuous and inconsistent.

6.2.6. *Transferable skills*

Although many of the respondents indicated that they had similar character traits, including, perseverance, dedication, and determination, only two of the respondents described the actual skills that they possessed. One retired player stated that he possessed social skills, while another indicated that, being the captain of his team, he had learned leadership skills. Both of these players explained how they had managed to successfully transfer the skills that they had acquired through rugby to their post-rugby careers. The remaining respondents indicated how the attributes that they possess were valuable to employers and how these could be used in a business setting.

What also emerged from the study is that both the clubs and SARU had done nothing to help players identify the transferable skills that they have, and how these may be transferred to their post-rugby careers.

What may be concluded from this is that more needs to be done by both the clubs and SARU in helping players to identify these transferable skills and in helping players to understand how these may be transferred to a post-rugby career.

6.3 Recommendations

6.3.1. *Athletes*

The first and undoubtedly most important group of individuals to whom recommendations can be made is that of the players themselves. The first of these recommendations is that although attaining the level of professional rugby player is an honour that only a very select number of individuals are able to accomplish, players should not let this forever define who they are or what they are able to achieve away from the game of rugby. As one administrator noted, players should allow rugby to be a steppingstone for them to achieve far greater things away from the field in their post-rugby careers. The discipline required to participate within the sport of rugby at the professional level is something which all players should draw from, and take the lessons they learn during their playing careers along with them to their post-rugby careers.

A second recommendation for players is that they and they alone are truly responsible for their future. Certainly they will have the support of family and friends and, in some instances, managers and agents who are able to provide guidance. However, ultimately, it is they who will decide their how their lives develop. What all of this means is that although being a professional rugby player in South Africa is extremely glamorous and somewhat lucrative, players (especially those entering professional rugby directly out of school) need to examine themselves and their values, and decide if the decisions they are making today are the correct decisions for them in the long term.

Although not every player will be able to attend a university, it is recommended that those who are able to do so seize the opportunity. By pursuing professional rugby in this fashion, although it does not guarantee that a player's post-rugby

career will be a success, it does increase the likelihood of that happening. As one administrator indicated, if it were up to him, he would not allow players to be recruited directly out of school. The researcher is of a similar opinion. Even by taking a year off to do something as simple as a year-long IT course, a player could greatly enhance his employability when his career finally terminates.

A further recommendation for players is that it is not enough to merely be academically endowed. The days of individuals being given positions simply because they have completed a degree have passed. Instead, what employers are looking for is employability. By this it is meant that employers do not want to employ individuals who need to undergo on-the-job training. Instead what they want is somebody who if placed in a position will be able to carry out what is expected of him from the very first day. To this end, it is therefore necessary that players gain practical working experience by performing some sort of part-time employment, even if it is on a pro bono basis. This could be done on their rest days as well as during off-season. Even though it may not sit well with players, what they need to realise is that the compensation they receive from performing such work far outweighs the monetary value.

Finally, as mentioned by several of the respondents, players need to learn not only the importance of social networking, but also how to network correctly and how to effectively use the networks that they establish during their playing careers. For those who are not as adept at social networking as others, perhaps because they are by their nature introverts, it is advisable to spend time with those who do know how to do so and learn the skill themselves. For many of these individuals it will mean having to push their personal boundaries and step out of their comfort zones, but as we all know, doing so on occasion helps an individual to develop and grow.

6.3.2. Professional rugby organisations

What emerged from the research is that professional rugby organisations in South Africa, including SARU did not care very much about a player's well-being off the field, and this included players' post-rugby careers. Although

administrators indicated the types of programmes that they had in place to help ease players' transitions to retirement, the practice does not seem to be very widespread in South Africa.

From the administrators it emerged that clubs place great emphasis on players obtaining a tertiary qualification, and in many cases the clubs provide bursaries for the players to attend tertiary institutions. What happens thereafter is that the majority of clubs do not want to be bothered with a player's progress in the classroom. All the team is interested in is that the player performs on the field. It is also not clear if team bodies are concerned with the player's academic performance either; all that emerges from the data is that the player will not have his tuition paid for the following year if he does not pass. What is recommended is that, where players are attending university, the club arrange for someone to perform administrative tasks aimed at ensuring that the players are attending their classes and keeping up with their school work. Although universities provide tutorial classes for students, what often happens is that students do not attend these, resulting in many not completing their degrees. One way of ensuring better performance off the field would be for players to have certain conditions and incentives included in their playing contracts, such as being paid proportional to the results achieved in their studies.

Of course, there is bound to be some dissention, with many players feeling that they did not enter the world of professional rugby only to be made to go to university. For these players, along with those who do not have the acumen or drive to pursue a university degree there are other options available. What emerged from the data is that many of the clubs do not have non-academic programmes players can be involved in or when the clubs do have these programmes, that it is treated akin to having a guest lecturer, with the clubs outsourcing the facilitation of these programmes to third party institutions. It is recommended that all clubs invest in the creation of such programmes and that these be run by the clubs themselves. One retired player stated that when a rugby player retired, the doors were for all intents and purposes shut. This would be a great way for clubs to get past players involved helping to make their current players' transitions to retirement a little easier.

Nowhere is there any mention by the administrators of the clubs providing players with psychometric tests to help in determining what type of careers players would be suited for when their playing careers terminate. This is something that clubs could take a look at.

6.4 Suggestions for further research

- One phenomenon to emerge from the research was that players have to support their families (parents and siblings) once they turn professional. The respondent stated that in the long-term this has a negative impact on a players' transition out of the sport. What could be informative is establishing how many of these players remain in the sport purely for economic reasons, when their passion for the game no longer exists. Related to this, it would be interesting to establish how many players who may have made it to the highest levels of the sport opted instead to leave the sport because of the their families using them in this manner.
- From the study it emerged that many players tend to start their own businesses once they have retired, or may even do so during their playing careers. One respondent indicated that this may have to do with players developing inflated opinions of themselves while they were active players, and they were therefore unable to see themselves working for somebody else. A suggestion for further research would be how these players come to the realisation that entrepreneurship is for them. Is there some drive in rugby players that other people do not possess, or have not developed, that makes them want to pursue this path? Is there something in the development of rugby players that non-rugby players who want to begin their own businesses can take away with them?
- One respondent indicated that many players went into marketing following their playing careers, but that many of these individuals did not do too well. A topic that could be researched is what types of jobs retired rugby players are best suited to, outside of the field of rugby, and the success rate with which retired players were able to pursue these careers.

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APPENDIX A1

Interview Schedule: Current players

1 Ascension to Professional Rugby:

- 1.1 I've been following your career for a number of years and I am impressed with what you have achieved until now. Please can you describe to me the journey that you have taken to reach this point; how you rose through the ranks to this level of competition?
- 1.2 Can you describe for me what the defining moment was in your amateur career that made you decide to pursue rugby as a professional career, and how this made you feel?
- 1.3 Most parents envision their children becoming successful lawyers or doctors, or something along those lines, not professional sportspeople. Can you describe to me your parents' reaction when you told them that you were interested in pursuing a career as a professional rugby player?
- 1.4 Following your announcement that you wanted to become a professional rugby player, how did your family support you in the early part of your career to help you realise your dream?
- 1.5 Having realised your dream of becoming a professional rugby player, can you tell me how it was when you were first told that you had achieved becoming a professional player?
- 1.6 Can you tell me what your career goals were back when you first became a professional, and what steps you took in trying to realise those goals?

2 Athletic Identity:

- 2.1 Being a professional rugby player must be such an honour considering that it is the second biggest professional sport in South Africa after soccer. However, having said that, it is also a great responsibility, as many people look to you to be a role model. When you finally hang up your boots, how would you like the public to remember you as a rugby player?
- 2.2 How would you like the public to remember you as a human being?
- 2.3 As with many things in life, the way we perceive things when we are young is vastly different from the way that we perceive them as we mature. Can you describe to me how your outlook toward life has evolved from the time of you initially entering professional rugby until the present?
- 2.4 In so many professional sports we see sportsmen and sportswomen being defined by the sport that they participate in. To what extent do you see your being a professional rugby player as defining who you are, or do you see rugby merely as something that you do; a job if you will, or perhaps a game that you play?
- 2.5 Did you always hold these views, or was it different when your professional career was just starting out?
- 2.6 As you have matured and become more comfortable with whom you are as a player versus who you are as an individual, how has this maturity and outlook on life impacted the way that you approach the game of rugby?
- 2.7 How do you think your outlook toward life, from the perspective of a professional rugby player, will change once you retire? Do you think that your outlook will be that of, "I was a professional rugby player," or that rugby was merely a sport that you participated in – a game that you played?

3 Planning for Retirement:

- 3.1 I know that retirement was probably the last thing on your mind when you first entered professional rugby, but have you given it any thought now that you've been at this level for some time?
- 3.2 I know that participating at this level of the sport does not allow you much time for anything else, but can you tell me how you are going about preparing for the eventuality of having to retire from professional rugby?
- 3.3 Will you describe to me briefly some of the plans that you are making to prepare you for retirement?
- 3.4 How do you think these plans will play out? Describe to me some of the scenarios that you have developed, as to how you foresee the plans that you are making playing out.
- 3.5 Having thought through a couple of plans to make your transition out of professional rugby a little easier when the time comes, and having gone through a couple of scenarios as to how these will play out, what kind of assistance do you foresee that you will need to make these plans come true?
- 3.6 Undoubtedly, to have reached the level in the sport that you have, and to have succeeded for as long as you have, you must have fantastic support from your family. Can you describe to me the kind of support that you are receiving from them in relation to your retirement plans – the things that they are doing that will eventually make your transition out of professional rugby a little easier?
- 3.7 Beside the support that you are receiving from your family and friends, is there anything else that you can think of that will help to make your transition out of the sport a little easier, when the time comes.

4 Perceptions of Retirement:

- 4.1 We all have ideas, or perceptions of certain things. Can you describe to me what your ideas or perceptions are of retirement, and how you perceive former players that you might know to be managing retirement?
- 4.2 When we are young we all have aspirations and we see ourselves living a certain type of life by the time that we're ready to retire. Can you describe to me what some of your goals are, and how you foresee your life being, once you have retired from the sport?
- 4.3 To your knowledge, what challenges do professional players face in their transition out of the sport to retirement?
- 4.4 Can you describe to me what you believe the opportunities are available to former professional players both within, and outside of the sport of rugby when they retire?

5 Development Programmes:

- 5.1 As rugby has become increasingly professional, many of the clubs around the world have realised that, in order to attract the best talent, it is necessary that they treat their players well. That includes efforts aimed at easing players' transition to retirement. Can you describe to me some of the measures that your club has taken to assist all of its players, including you, in the eventual retirement process?
- 5.2 With many players these days turning professional directly out of school, and therefore not having a university or college education, many clubs have realised that it is necessary to provide their players with a level of tertiary education. Can you describe to me what type of formal education or support programmes your club has offered or provided to you to help you adjust to a life after rugby?

- 5.3 Many young players do not consider the paths they will take during their careers, which will eventually help in making their transition to retirement a little easier – such as applying themselves academically, when presented with the opportunity. Can you describe to me how your club has gone about informing you of the academic options available to you, which may eventually help you with a career beyond the sport of rugby?
- 5.4 Having given thought to your retirement, there are undoubtedly insights that you have gained, that some of the people who develop your club's programmes might want to hear about. How would you evaluate the type of support – the formal education and support programmes – which you have received from your club, and how would you go about improving these, if you had the opportunity to do so?
- 5.5 Can you name the courses or programmes that you believe to be the most beneficial to rugby players and why it is that you feel that these particular course or programmes are the most beneficial?
- 5.6 Can you describe to me the nature of the interaction between the individuals conducting the courses and the players?
- 5.7 Although many clubs around the world offer courses that any academic institution would be proud of, not every player is going to want to participate in such programmes. For many players it is preferable to be provided with what may be termed real-world, practical know-how instead. Are there any programmes, which aren't academic in nature, that you think your club could offer, that players would deem beneficial; for example, CV preparation, networking opportunities?

- 5.8 How does your club go about facilitating the implementation of such programmes; how is the implementation of such programmes encouraged?
- 5.9 To the best of your knowledge, can you describe to me what role SARU is playing in providing the players in your club with the assistance necessary to prepare them for a life after rugby?

6 Transferable Skills:

- 6.1 To achieve what you have in the sport of rugby takes a number of particular qualities. Can you describe to me what you think are the qualities that have helped you to reach this level in rugby?
- 6.2 How do you think that you will be able to transfer these qualities in a way that may assist you in your post retirement career?
- 6.3 How have your club, and or SARU, gone about helping you in understanding how these qualities may be transferred to a post-rugby career?
- 6.4 When talking to friends and family one is often told things about yourself that you really did not think about prior to them mentioning it. Often these include the types of qualities that you possess or the types of skills that you possess. What are the skills and qualities that your family and friends have told you that you possess; that you think may help you in successfully transitioning out of professional rugby into another type of occupation, post-rugby?

APPENDIX A2

Interview Schedule: Retired players

1 Ascension to Professional Rugby:

- 1.1 I followed your career for many years and I am impressed with what you achieved. Please can you describe to me the journey that you took to reach that point; how you rose through the ranks to that level of competition?
- 1.2 Can you describe for me what the defining moment was in your amateur career that made you decide to pursue rugby as a professional career, and how this made you feel?
- 1.3 Most parents envision their children becoming successful lawyers or doctors, or something along those lines, not professional sportspeople. Can you describe to me your parents' reaction when you told them that you were interested in pursuing a career as a professional rugby player?
- 1.4 Following your announcement that you wanted to become a professional rugby player, how did your family support you in the early part of your career to help you realise your dream?
- 1.5 Having realised your dream of becoming a professional rugby player, can you tell me how it was when you were first told that you had achieved becoming a professional player?
- 1.6 Can you tell me what your career goals were back when you first became a professional, and what steps you took in trying to realise those goals?

2 Athletic Identity:

- 2.1 Being a professional rugby player must be such an honour considering that it is the second biggest professional sport in South Africa after soccer. However, having said that, it is also a great responsibility, as many people look to you to be a role model. How would you like the public to remember you as a rugby player?
- 2.2 How would you like the public to remember you as a human being?
- 2.3 As with many things in life, the way we perceive things when we are young is vastly different from the way that we perceive them as we mature. Can you describe to me how your outlook toward life evolved from the time of you initially entering professional rugby until the time that you finally retired?
- 2.4 In so many professional sports we see sportsmen and sportswomen being defined by the sport that they participate in. To what extent did you see your being a professional rugby player as defining who you are, or do you see rugby merely as something that you did; a job if you will, or perhaps a game that you played?
- 2.5 Did you always hold those views, or was it different when your professional career was just starting out?
- 2.6 As you matured and became more comfortable with whom you were as a player versus who you were as an individual, how did that maturity and outlook on life impact the way that you approached the game of rugby?
- 2.7 How do you think your outlook toward life, from the perspective of a professional rugby player, changed once you retired? Do you think that your outlook is that of, "I was a professional rugby player," or that rugby was merely a sport that you participated in; a game that you played?

3 Planning for Retirement:

- 3.1 I know that retirement was probably the last thing on your mind when you first entered professional rugby, but can you tell me at which stage of your career you began giving it some serious thought?
- 3.2 I know that participating at that level of the sport does not allow you much time for anything else, but can you tell me how you went about preparing for the eventuality of having to retire from professional rugby?
- 3.3 Will you describe to me briefly some of the plans that you made to prepare you for retirement?
- 3.4 How do you think these plans have played out? Describe to me some of the scenarios that you had developed, as to how you foresaw the plans that you made playing out.
- 3.5 Having thought through a couple of plans to make your transition out of professional rugby a little easier when the time came, and having went through a couple of scenarios as to how those would play out, what kind of assistance did you foresee that you needed to make those plans come true?
- 3.6 Undoubtedly, to have reached the level in the sport that you did, and to have succeeded for as long as you did, you must have had fantastic support from your family. Can you describe to me the kind of support that you received from them in relation to your retirement plans – the things that they did that eventually made your transition out of professional rugby a little easier?
- 3.7 Beside the support that you received from your family and friends was there anything else that you can think of that would have helped to make your transition out of the sport a little easier?

4 Perceptions of Retirement:

- 4.1 We all have ideas, or perceptions of certain things. Can you describe to me what your ideas or perceptions of retirement were prior to your retiring?
- 4.2 Can you describe to me what your experience of retirement has been and how are you managing it?
- 4.3 When we are young we all have aspirations and we see ourselves living a certain type of life by the time that we're ready to retire. Can you describe to me what some of your goals were, and how you foresaw your life being, once you retired from the sport?
- 4.4 Can you describe to me some of the challenges that you faced as a professional player in transitioning to retirement?
- 4.5 Can you describe to me the single most difficult moment in your transition – the moment that you had the most difficult time coming to terms with the fact that your professional career was over?
- 4.6 Can you describe to me what the opportunities were available to you - both within, and outside of the sport of rugby - immediately after you retired, and what those opportunities are now?

5 Development Programmes:

- 5.1 As rugby has become increasingly professional, many of the clubs around the world have realised that, in order to attract the best talent, it is necessary that they treat their players well. That includes efforts aimed at easing players' transition to retirement. Can you describe to me some of the measures that your club took to assist all of its players, including you, in the retirement process?
- 5.2 With many players these days turning professional directly out of school, and therefore not having a university or college education, many clubs have realised that it is necessary to provide their players

with a level of tertiary education. Can you describe to me what type of formal education or support programmes your club offered or provided to you to help you adjust to a life after rugby?

- 5.3 Many young players do not consider the paths they will take during their careers, which will eventually help in making their transition to retirement a little easier – such as applying themselves academically, when presented with the opportunity. Can you describe to me how your club went about informing you of the academic options available to you, if at all, and how this helped you, or may have helped you, with your career beyond the sport of rugby?
- 5.4 Having gone through the transition to retirement, there are undoubtedly insights that you have gained, that some of the people who develop your previous club's programmes might want to hear about. How would you evaluate the type of support – the formal education and support programmes – which you received from your former club, and how would you go about improving these, if you had the opportunity to do so?
- 5.5 Can you name the courses or programmes that you believe to be the most beneficial to rugby players and why it is that you feel that these particular course or programmes are the most beneficial?
- 5.6 Can you describe to me the nature of the interaction between the individuals conducting the courses and the players?
- 5.7 Although many clubs around the world offer courses that any academic institution would be proud of, not every player is going to want to participate in such programmes. For many players it is preferable to be provided with what may be termed real-world, practical know-how instead. Are there any programmes, which aren't academic in nature, that you think your former club could offer, that players would deem beneficial; for example, CV preparation, networking opportunities?

- 5.8 How did your former club go about facilitating the implementation of such programmes; how was the implementation of such programmes encouraged?
- 5.9 To the best of your knowledge, can you describe to me what role SARU played in providing the players in your former club with the assistance necessary to prepare them for a life after rugby?

6 Transferable Skills:

- 6.1 To achieve what you did in the sport of rugby takes a number of particular qualities. Can you describe to me what you think are the qualities that helped you to reach that level in rugby?
- 6.2 How do you think that you were able to transfer those qualities in a way that has assisted you in your post retirement career?
- 6.3 How have your former club, and or SARU, gone about helping you in understanding how these qualities may be transferred to your post-rugby career?
- 6.4 When talking to friends and family one is often told things about yourself that you really did not think about prior to them mentioning it. Often these include the types of qualities that you possess or the types of skills that you possess. What are the skills and qualities that your family and friends have told you that you possess; that you think have helped you in successfully transitioning out of professional rugby into your current occupation, post-rugby?

APPENDIX A3

Interview Schedule: Management and Administration

1 Ascension to Professional Rugby:

- 1.1 I've been following the careers of some of your players for a number of years and I am impressed with what they have achieved until now. Please can you describe to me some of the journeys that the players have taken to reach this point; how they rose through the ranks to this level of competition?
- 1.2 Can you describe for me what some of the defining moments were in their amateur careers that made them decide to pursue rugby as a professional career, and how this made them feel?
- 1.3 Most parents envision their children becoming successful lawyers or doctors, or something along those lines, not professional sportspeople. Have any of your players described to you their parents' reaction when they first told them that they were interested in pursuing a career as a professional rugby player? Please would you relate to me what they said?
- 1.4 Following their announcement to their parents that they wanted to become professional rugby players, have your players let you know of the type of family support that they received in the early part of their careers to help them realise their dream. Please would you relate to me what they said?
- 1.5 Having realised their dream of becoming a professional rugby player, have any of them related to you how they felt when they were first told that they had achieved becoming a professional player? Please would you relate to me what they said?

- 1.6 Certainly you have had many players – both young and mature – relate to you their career goal. Can you tell me, from what you have observed, what players' career goals are in general when they first become professional players, and what steps they take in trying to realise those goals?

2 Athletic Identity:

- 2.1 Being a professional rugby player must be such an honour considering that it is the second biggest professional sport in South Africa after soccer. However, having said that, it is also a great responsibility, as many people look to players to be role models. When players finally hang up your boots, what do they say or have they related to you in the past as to how they would like the public to remember them as rugby players?
- 2.2 How do you think that the majority of your players would like the public to remember them as human beings?
- 2.3 As with many things in life, the way we perceive things when we are young is vastly different from the way that we perceive them as we mature. From what you have observed over the years, can you describe to me how players' outlook toward life generally evolves from the time of them initially entering professional rugby until their eventual retirement?
- 2.4 In so many professional sports we see sportsmen and sportswomen being defined by the sport that they participate in. To what extent do your players see being professional rugby players as defining who they are, or do your players generally see rugby merely as something that they do; a job if you will?
- 2.5 Certainly you have observed players of both kinds; those for whom the sport defines them, and those for whom it is something that they participate in. Please, without mentioning names, would you relate to me instances of both?

- 2.6 How does your organisation assist or encourage your younger players to develop a well-rounded identity, other than that of being a rugby player?
- 2.7 From your observations over the years, do your players' views of themselves remain the same throughout their careers, or are they different from the time when their professional careers are just starting out versus just before their retirement?
- 2.8 From your observations over the years, as your players mature and become more comfortable with who they are as players versus who they are individuals, how does this maturity and outlook on life impacted the way that they approach the game of rugby?
- 2.9 From your observations over the years, how do you think your players' outlook toward life, from the perspective of professional rugby players, will change once they retire? Do you think that your players' outlook will be that of, "I was a professional rugby player," or that rugby was merely a sport that they participated in; a game that they played?

3 Planning for Retirement:

- 3.1 I know that retirement is probably the last thing on many of your players' minds when they first enter professional rugby, but do any of them relate to you their thoughts on the subject, once they have been at this level for some time? Please would you relate to me some of these thoughts?
- 3.2 I know that participating at this level of the sport does not allow your players much time for anything else, but can you tell me how some of them, especially your older players, are going about preparing for the eventuality of having to retire from professional rugby?
- 3.3 Will you describe to me briefly some of the plans that some of these players are making to prepare them for retirement?

- 3.4 Have any of your players related to you how they think the plans that they are making for retirement are going to play out? Can you relate to me some of the scenarios that those who have related to you have developed; how they foresee the plans that they are making playing out?
- 3.5 Having thought through a couple of plans to make their transition out of professional rugby a little easier when the time comes, and having gone through a couple of scenarios as to how these will play out, what kind of assistance do you foresee that your players will need to make their plans come true?
- 3.6 Undoubtedly, to have reached the level in the sport that they have, and to have succeeded for as long as some of them have, they must have fantastic support from their families. Have any of them related to you the kind of support that they are receiving from their families in relation to their retirement plans; the things that they are doing that will eventually make their transition out of professional rugby a little easier? Please would you relate to me what they said?
- 3.7 Beside the support that they are receiving from their families and friends, is there anything else that you can think of that will help to make their transition out of the sport a little easier.

4 Perceptions of Retirement:

- 4.1 We all have ideas, or perceptions of certain things. Have any of your players related to you what their ideas or perceptions are of retirement, and how they perceive former players to be managing retirement, that they might know? Please would you relate to me what they said?
- 4.2 When we are young we all have aspirations and we see ourselves living a certain type of life by the time that we're ready to retire. Have any of your players related to you what some of your goals are, and how they foresee their lives being, once they have retired from the sport? Please would you relate to me that they said?

- 4.3 From your observations, what do you think your players believe are the challenges professional players face in their transition out of the sport to retirement?
- 4.4 Can you describe to me what you, as an organisation, believe the greatest challenges faced by professional players are in their transition out of the sport to retirement?
- 4.5 Can you describe to me how your organisation is helping your players to overcome these challenges; what measure your organisation is taking?
- 4.6 Can you describe to me what you believe the opportunities are available to former professional players both within, and outside of the sport of rugby when they retire?
- 4.7 Can you describe to me how your organisation is going about raising your players' awareness of the opportunities that are available to former professional players both within, and outside of the sport of rugby when they retire?

5 Development Programmes:

- 5.1 As rugby has become increasingly professional, many of the clubs around the world have realised that, in order to attract the best talent, it is necessary that they treat their players well. That includes efforts aimed at easing players' transition to retirement. Can you describe to me some of the measures that your club has taken to assist all of its players in the retirement process?
- 5.2 With many players these days turning professional directly out of school, and therefore not having a university or college education, many clubs have realised that it is necessary to provide its players with a level of tertiary education. Can you describe to me what type formal education or support programmes your club has offered or provided to help your players to adjust to a life after rugby?

- 5.3 Having given thought to their retirement, many of the players would undoubtedly have gained insights, that some of the people who develop your club's educational programmes might want to hear about. How has your club facilitated your players openly evaluating the type of support – the formal education and support programmes – which they receive from the club, and how have they been encouraged to provide ways of improving these?
- 5.4 From your observations over the years, can you name some of the courses or programmes that you believe to be the most beneficial to rugby players, and why it is that you feel that these particular courses or programmes are the most beneficial?
- 5.5 Can you describe to me the nature of the interaction between the individuals conducting the courses and the players?
- 5.6 Although many clubs around the world offer courses that any academic institution would be proud of, not every player is going to want to participate in such programmes. For many players it is preferable to be provided with what may be termed real-world, practical know-how instead. Are there any programmes, which aren't academic in nature, that you think your club could offer, that players would deem beneficial; for example, CV preparation, networking opportunities?
- 5.7 How has your club gone about facilitating the implementation of such programmes?
- 5.8 To the best of your knowledge, can you describe to me what role SARU is playing in providing the players in your club with the assistance necessary to prepare them for a life after rugby?

6 Transferable Skills:

- 6.1 To achieve what your players have in the sport of rugby takes a number of particular qualities. From your observations, can you describe to me what you think are the qualities that have helped some of your players to reach this level in rugby?
- 6.2 How do you think that they will be able to transfer these qualities in a way that may assist them in their post retirement career?
- 6.3 How has your club, and or SARU, gone about helping your players in understanding how these qualities may be transferred to a post-rugby career?
- 6.4 When talking to friends and family one is often told things about yourself that you really did not think about prior to them mentioning it. Often these include the types of qualities that a person possesses or the types of skills may possess. What are the skills and qualities that you have observed that you players possess that may help them in successfully transitioning out of professional rugby into another type of occupation, post-rugby?
- 6.5 If you were to design an education programme that incorporated teaching players how to use their transferable skills off the field, what would the programme look like, and how do you see this as being beneficial to the players in the long run?

APPENDIX B

Introductory letter to research respondents



Grant Hinckley
Wits Business School
2 St David's Place
Parktown
2193

Dear [Respondent's Name]

Re: Research into Factors Affecting the Career Transitions of Professional Rugby Players in South Africa

Thank you for agreeing to be a respondent in the research that I am currently conducting as part of the requirements necessary for me to complete my M.B.A. degree at Wits Business School. The research is strictly for academic purposes and aims to make a contribution to body of knowledge on the topic being reviewed.

As per our telephone conversation, this letter serves as an introduction to the research being conducted. It aims to provide a sense of the types of questions that will be posed in the interview, along with an explanation of the process the research will take.

From what I have researched thus far it would appear that many professional athletes experience difficulties when they retire. The aim of my research is to see what factors affect the transition of professional rugby players to retirement, and to establish to what extent South African rugby institutions have programmes in place to facilitate this transition.

Because this is a topic that has not been examined much in South Africa, and because I would like to gauge what people think about the subject, I have decided to gather information through interviews. The questions in the interviews will basically revolve around players' retirement from the game; whether they have made plans for their retirement; what those plans may be; how much players identify with their athletic identities; what development programmes professional rugby organisations have in place to assist players in their transition to retirement; and how

players may use the transferable skills that they have learned during their careers to ease their transition to retirement.

I wish to confirm the arrangements we agreed upon with respect to the interview:

Date:

Time:

Place:

Please be advised that, with your consent, I would like for the interview to be recorded using a Dictaphone so that I may obtain accurate data and not misrepresent any of your responses to the questions.

Should you have any questions regarding this research, or require any further information whatsoever, please feel free to contact me.

Yours sincerely,

Grant Hinckley

Tel: 083 440 5046

Email: Hinckley@centlube.co.za

APPENDIX C

Transcripts of interviews

Appendix C consists of 11 transcripts – namely Appendix C1 to Appendix C11.

Appendix C1 – Current Player 1

Appendix C2 – Current Player 2

Appendix C3 – Current Player 3

Appendix C4 – Retired Player 1

Appendix C5 – Retired Player 2

Appendix C6 – Retired Player 3

Appendix C7 – Retired Player 4

Appendix C8 – Administrator 1

Appendix C9 – Administrator 2

Appendix C10 – Administrator 3

Appendix C11 – Administrator 4

Owing to the sheer volume of the data obtained during the interviews each of these 11 transcripts may be found on the accompanying compact disc.