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The Experience of Becoming a Professional Golfer in the Philippines

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THE EXPERIENCE OF BECOMING A PROFESSIONAL GOLFER IN THE PHILIPPINES

BY

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ABSTRACT

Sport, exercise, and performance psychology (SEPP) practitioners have found themselves working with athletes, coaches, and other sport professionals who come from a diverse cultural background in the past few years. Yet some of them still find themselves lacking in cultural competence due to the lack of research regarding multicultural sport psychology (Gill & Kamphoff, 2009; Schinke & Hanrahan, 2009). Additionally, sport psychology researchers have examined golfers, however there is no research in the experience of becoming a professional golfer in the Philippines. Lastly, there has been a call for research regarding multicultural sport psychology (Gill & Kamphoff, 2009; Schinke & Moore, 2011). The current investigation involved existential phenomenological interviewing of 8 professional Filipino golfers ranging in age from 23 to 27 years old (M= 25 SD= 1.3) to determine the meaning of the experience of becoming a professional golfer in the Philippines.

Qualitative analysis of the transcripts revealed a total of 304 meaning units that were further grouped into themes and subthemes. A final thematic structure revealed that there were five major themes: *Game Development, Support System, Mental Skills, Pressure, and Emotions*. The findings add to the current literature and help practitioners in working with Asian golfers. Specifically, *friends* had a key role in the participants' experiences on their path to becoming professional golfers. However, the results seemed to suggest that these golfers' experiences were more similar than different to those of Western golfers. Thus, while as practitioners we must take into contact a client's cultural background, we cannot always assume that cultural differences contribute to differences in sport experiences and mental skills.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

"From the beginning I was taught the many facets of golf, that it was much more than just hitting the ball, finding it and hitting it again. It has been a constant learning process with experiences" (Woods, 2001, p. 24). The experiences that separate elite athletes from the normal player include the type, amount, and quality of work that the professionals exert in order to reach their goals (Bloom, 1985; Csikszentmihalyi, Rathunde, & Whalen, 1993; Ericsson, 1996).

Golfers spend as much as four to five hours playing a round of golf, and unlike any other sport, you hit each shot at your own pace (within the rules) and do not play until you're ready. Anyone who plays professional golf will say that at least half the battle happens inside the golfer's mind (Rotella, 1995). The discrepancy of the time spent in skill execution and the time that they spend on the course not executing the skill needed in a golf swing, leave golfers with a lot of time alone with their thoughts. The sport of golf focuses on the player's mind and ability to focus, attend to relevant stimuli and concentrate on the task at hand, which can be a challenge. Moreover, researchers have studied the mental demands of golf, and have found a positive relationship between mental skills use and performance (Cohn, 1991; McCaffrey & Orlick, 1989; Thomas & Over, 1994). McCaffrey and Orlick (1988) mentioned that professional golfers developed distraction plans, had detailed competition plans, engaged in mental preparation, used competition stimulation, set practice goals, had focus, used imagery, and had a total commitment to the pursuit of excellence.

Excellence in performance and in life starts with a vision of where you want to go and a commitment to do what is necessary to get there (Orlick, 2000). Several factors play a significant role in the development of expertise. These factors are: (a) training (Ericsson, Krampe & Tesch- Römer, 1993), (b) teaching/coaching (Côté, Salmela, Trudel, Baria, & Russell, 1995), (c) parental support (Bloom 1985; Côté, 1999), (d) enjoyment (Bloom 1985; Csikszentmihalyi, Rathunde, & Whalen, 1993; Scanlan, Stein, & Ravizza, 1989), (e) psychological skills and attributes (Botterill, 1990; Orlick, 1996; Orlick & Partington, 1988), and (f) innate abilities (Bouchard & Malina, 1984). Important findings regarding the development of expertise mentioned above will be further discussed in the literature review section of this research. Ultimately, it was found that none of the factors provided a universal characterization of expert performance amongst surveys of expertise research (Waldmann & Weinert, 1990). According to Holyoak (1994), there is a lack of constancy in the correlates of expertise in the whole field of expertise research.

The discussion of talent development in young people, which eventually led to sport expertise, was first discussed by Bloom in 1985. He developed a three-stage model of talent development, which involved three stages; (a) The early years, (b) The precision phase, and (c) The integration phase. These stages describe the changes in the athletes' social environment. He also pointed out that practice is an essential element in the development of expertise (Bloom, 1985; Ericsson, Krampe & Tesch- Römer, 1993; Salmela, 1996). The model for deliberate practice (Ericsson, Nandagopal & Roring, 2009; Ericsson & Krampe, 1993) acknowledges that the unique characteristics of exceptional performers are the result of adapting to intense and extended practice

activities that particularly activate dormant genes, which are found in every individuals' DNA. Deliberate practice is also one of the factors that is proposed to have a great contribution to the development of expertise (Ericsson, Krampe, & Römer, 1993). It is believed that expert performers need at least 10 years of practice to obtain the skills and experience that are needed to perform at an international level (Ericsson, 1990) and during the early stages of their development, experts are introduced to their sport through play (intrinsic motivation), which eventually evolves to deliberate practice (Starkes and Ericsson, 2003).

Smith, Takhvar, Gore, and Vollstedt (1986) argued that deliberate play is different from deliberate practice. This was due to the following criteria; (a) intrinsic motivation, (b) the behavior is pleasurable and enjoyable to the child, (c) the behavior is not carried out seriously, (d) the child is more interested in the performance of the behavior rather than the outcome of the behavior, and (e) the behavior shows some amount of variation in form or context.

Although Bloom's research was impactful in the research regarding talent development of experts, he did not systematically discuss the factors involved in the children's stages of participation in sport and the role of families at each level. To explain the gap in literature, Côté (1999) identified three stages of development specific to sport from childhood to late adolescence, and these stages were; (a) the sampling years, (b) the specializing years, and (c) the investment years. The author suggested that at each stage, individuals could move to a subsequent stage, drop out of sport, or enter the recreational years.

Côté (1999) highlighted the influence of social support in the development of the child. Starkes & Ericsson (2003) discussed this further by emphasizing on the role of coaches, parents and siblings/peers in the development of sport participation of an athlete. Ultimately, athletes can be considered experts if they excel in the domains of physiological, technical, cognitive, and regulation of psychological skills (Starkes & Ericsson, 2003). Moreover, Tucker and Collins (2012), concluded that elite performance is the result of both training and genetic factors (i.e., sex, height, VO2 max, and skeletal muscle traits).

The purpose of this study is to examine the experience of becoming a professional golfer in the Philippines. There have been numerous studies regarding the development of expertise in the sport domain, yet most of these studies were focused on the Western population. Specifically, there is no research done on the population of Filipino elite golfers. Furthermore, there has been a need to increase research regarding racial and ethnic diversity in sport psychology (Kontos, 2009), which hopefully this study will help shed some light on the topic.

Statement of the Problem

There has been a lot of general information on psychological skills used by experienced athletes (Orlick & Partington, 1989; Mahoney et al., 1987; Williams, 1986;) and the path that the athletes take on to become a professional athlete (Bloom, 1985; Côté, 1999). Additionally, in order to become experts in a particular sport, athletes need to develop the specific skills demanded by their sport. Since the present research will cover golfers in the Philippines, it is important to look into the mental skills associated with golf. There have been numerous studies conducted regarding the mental skills used in

golf (McCaffrey & Orlick 1989; Thomas & Fogarty, 1997). We also have information on mental skills used in golf, however we lack the knowledge on cultural influences that may play a role in one's experience of sport and use of mental skills.

Sport covers diverse participants in different physical activity contexts (Gill, 2007). As Parham (2005) argued, context is everything for effective sport psychology practice. We must consider people in context to understand their behavior. The goal of multicultural psychologists is to understand behavior and apply this understanding to help individuals in the real world. There is a challenge to work for social change and to address this challenge; psychologists must incorporate cultural relations and give importance to diversity in all the areas of professional practice (Gill, 2007). Culture is dynamic and is best understood within a multicultural framework that takes into consideration multiple, intersecting identities and identifications, power relations, and action for social justice (Gill & Ryba, 2014). Sport has its own culture in which athlete identities are produced. Sport psychology professionals need to understand how subjectivity and context affect each other, which translates into lived experiences of the athlete (Gill & Ryba, 2014).

Sport participants are diverse, but the sport population does not reflect the bigger population. The United States is moving toward increased cultural diversity, and in the near future, will no longer have one majority racial/ethnic group. The increased diversity is reflected in the youth population (Gill, 2007). In spite of the diversity and demand for cultural competence in the sport world, sport psychology has not adopted multicultural perspectives. Ram, Starek, and Johnson (2004) found that there is no systematic attempt to include the experience of marginalized groups. Additionally, sport, exercise, and

performance psychology (SEPP) practitioners are gradually experiencing working with athletes, coaches, and other sport professionals from different cultural backgrounds (Schinke & Hanrahan, 2009).

The status of cultural diversity and multicultural issues in applied sport psychology is reflected in the Association for Applied Sport Psychology (AASP) conference programs. Kamphoff, Araki, and Gill (2004) investigated the AASP conference programs from the first conference in 1986 to the 2003 conference and coded 240 AASP conference abstracts for diversity content. They noted that although AASP conferences included international participants, the data are mostly North American and it would be beneficial to investigate cultural diversity in conference programs of the European Federation of Sport Psychology (FEPSAC) and Asian South Pacific Association of Sport Psychology (ASPASP). The Philippines is currently a country member of ASPASP and has 4 individual members who are active in the ASPASP.

In general, multicultural perspectives are missing and cultural diversity is marginalized in applied sport psychology research and practice (Kamphoff & Gill, 2009). The analysis of AASP programs and observations by Kamphoff and Gill (2009) suggests that those in applied sport psychology pay little attention to the broader public and diverse participants. Sport psychology must expand the research base on gender and cultural diversity, and adopt multicultural competencies for professional practice so that the health and well-being benefits are not limited to the elite population (Kamphoff & Gill, 2009).

Multicultural competence is a requirement in psychology and other health professions, and refers to the ability to work effectively with people who are of a

different culture (Mio, Barker-Hackett, & Tumambing, 2006). It also encompasses (a) awareness of one's own cultural values and biases, (b) understanding of the client's worldview (in all its multicultural complexity), and (c) development of appropriate intervention strategies that are culturally appropriate (Mio et al., 2006). The American Psychological Association has recognized the key role of multicultural competencies in accomplishing psychology's mission to promote health and well-being (APA, 2003).

Cultural influences are so common that we hardly notice how cultural beliefs and contexts shape society and the world of sport (Gill & Kamphoff, 2009). It is also noteworthy that variation within any racial or ethnic groups is large (Lloyd, 1987). Hence, sport psychology professionals should incorporate cultural context into their work with individual athletes, instead of trying to fit athletes into a culturally stereotyped box. Duda and Allison (1990) concluded that there is no systematic attempt to include the experiences of marginalized groups. Further, Marens, Mobily, and Zizzi (2000) found that there is an almost complete absence of multicultural training for sport psychology practitioners. Programs rarely incorporate multicultural competencies (Gill & Kamphoff, 2009), and cultural diversity is marginalized in applied sport psychology research and practice.

A better approach is to be informed of cultural differences and be able to apply them to each athlete on an individual basis (Kontos & Breland-Noble, 2002). Consultants need to develop knowledge, and interventions that are multiculturally sensitive and take into consideration the social, environmental, and cultural factors that influence racially and ethnically diverse athletes (Sue & Sue, 2007), and adopt multicultural competencies for professional practice (Kontos, 2009). Hopefully, the information that will be gathered

in this research will help minimize the gap in literature. The results may also be useful for practitioners when working with Filipino athletes who are participating in elite sport in a location that is different from their birthplace.

One way to help understand the professional golfers in the Philippines is through existential phenomenology, which will allow them to discuss their concerns with someone other than their coaches, family, or friends (Nesti, 2004). The interpretative process that will be used in this method will focus on the meaning that the person will provide in relation to their experience (Nesti, 2004).

Purpose of the Study

As discussed in the previous section, there is a lack of literature on the role of culture that needs to be addressed. These gaps led to the development of the current study in which the experience of becoming a professional golfer in the Philippines will be examined. This study will be significant because it will contribute to the knowledge and development of theories attempting to explain the achievement of expertise in sport in the Philippines.

Assumptions

For this research, the main assumption is that the professional golfers will be able to accurately describe their experience in becoming professional golfers in detail by being able to recall their journey in becoming a professional golfer. Also, it will be assumed that the participants can effectively and efficiently relay their experiences to the researcher.

Delimitations

For this study, the population was delimited to professional golfers who are born and raised (must have lived in the Philippines for more than 10 years), and who have participated or is currently in the Philippine Golf Tour. Participants had to be at least 18 years of age to participate in this study. Both male and female golfers were to prevent gender bias. All interviews were conducted in English, meaning all participants must be able to express themselves in English.

Operational Definitions

Expert performance: reflects the highest performance possible that an individual can achieve, given the knowledge and training methods in their specific domain (Ericsson & Charness, 1994).

Performance: the act, process, or art of performing a ceremony, play, piece of music, etc. Performance. (n.d.). *Dictionary.com Unabridged*. Retrieved December 02, 2014, from Dictionary.com website: http://dictionary.reference.com/browse/performance

Talent: a special natural ability or aptitude; a capacity for achievement or success; ability.

Elite performance: "the product of a decade or more of maximal efforts to improve performance in a domain through and optimal distribution of deliberate practice" (Ericsson et al., 1993, p.400)

Mental skills: the set of trainable mental abilities and methods that contribute to performance. (also referred as *Psychological skills)*

Initiation/ Early phase: A stage in Bloom''s (1985) model of talent development which discusses motivation for sport involvement involved deliberate play which will eventually lead to specialized training.

Development/Precision phase: A stage in Bloom''s (1985) model of talent development where that athletes start to manifest talent and this is where a teacher is introduced.

Perfection/Integration phase: A stage in Bloom''s (1985) model of talent development which involves the full time commitment of the athlete to enhancing performance and ends when the individual becomes a professional or terminates full-time engagement in the activity.

Sampling stage/years: The first stage in the developmental model of sport participation by Côté and Fraser-Thomas (2007). Occurs from ages 6 – 12 and is characterized by high amount of deliberate play and low amount of deliberate practice. Athletes on this stage are involved in several sports.

Specializing stage/years: The second stage in the developmental model of sport participation by Côté and Fraser-Thomas (2007). Occurs from ages 13- 15 where the youth engage in fewer activities (which includes deliberate play and practice).

Investment stage/years: The third stage in the developmental model of sport participation by Côté and Fraser-Thomas (2007). Occurs from ages 16 and above, this stage represents the youth's commitment to only one activity and engages primarily in deliberate practice.

Multicultural psychology: the following definition for multicultural psychology will be used in this study. “Systematic study of behavior, cognition and affect in many cultures” (Mio, Barker-Hackett, & Tumambing, 2006, p.3).

Philippine Golf Tour: (PGT) is one of Asia’s leading golf circuits and is the country’s professional golf league. Professional golfers playing for the PGT are golfers of good standing in the Asian Tour, ASEAN PGA Tour and the Touring Professional Goflers Association of the Philippines (PGT, 2014).

Q-school: (also called qualifying school). This is the annual qualifying tournament for the Philippine Golf Tour (PGT). Aspiring professional golfers in the Philippines cannot participate in PGT organized tournaments if they do not qualify for Q-school.

IAGTO: (International Association of Golf Travel Operators) is the global trade organization for the golf tourism industry. IAGTO’s operators control over 85% of golf holiday packages sold worldwide (IAGTO, 2014).

Deliberate play: the engagement of time in physical activities that is difficult to match with any kind of structured practice (Côté, Baker, &Abernethy, 2007). Deliberate play includes sporting activities that are intrinsically motivating, provides immediate gratification, and is purposely devised to maximize enjoyment (Côté, 1999).

Deliberate practice: is made up of activities done to develop required abilities that are not intrinsically motivating, requires effort and attention and does not lead to immediate social or financial rewards (Ericsson, Krampe & Tesch-Romer, 1993). It is defined as any activity designed to improve current performance that is effortful and not inherently enjoyable (Ericsson et al., 1993).

Professional Golfer: under the rules of golf and amateur status of the USGA, the maximum an amateur can win is $750.00 (USGA, 2014). If an amateur accepts a prize of greater than this, they forfeit their amateur status and are therefore defined as a professional golfer.

Significance

Golf is a growing sport in the world (IAGTO, 2013). Golf is becoming more popular in Asia (HSBC, 2012), which evidently leads to an increase in golf tourism in Asia (Golfbenchmark, 2012). According to the 2013 Golf Tourism Report of IAGTO, the Philippine economy is the second fastest growing economy in Asia, which has resulted in a good number of golfers for 2012. This increase creates a need for sport psychology practitioners to understand golfers who come from a different culture in order to advance sport psychology in Asia.

This is particularly noteworthy because the top 2 players who have won the most world championships in the U.S. Kids Golf World Championship are Filipinos (US Kids Golf, 2014). Lastly, Filipino Americans are one of the fastest-growing Asian American ethnic groups immigrating to the United States. By the 2000 census, there were more than 2.4 million people with Filipino ancestry living in the United States, which makes Filipino Americans the second largest Asian American group after Chinese Americans. Therefore, sport psychology practitioners wishing to work with this group may benefit from research that addresses the importance of examining and understanding Filipino cultural values, customs, and traits (Patacsil & Skillman, 2006).

In summary, sport psychology has started developing multicultural frameworks and has addressed some multicultural issues. However, these efforts are limited and

mostly Eurocentric, and most research focused on gender issues and few on multicultural research and cultural psychology. Sport psychology practitioners in the Philippines need to know information about their culture since there are only a handful of them in the Philippines. Multicultural perspectives are required for sport psychology in the real world (Gill, 2007). Multicultural competencies must be developed to expand our reach to the marginalized and promote sport and physical activity for all.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Elite athletes attract great followings, enormous media attention, and the mutual appreciation of coaches, competitors, and teammates. This visibility is obvious in the fact that the most popular national and world events tend to involve sport competitions, from the Olympic Games, the World Cup, the Masters, and the Super bowl. From these competitions, we can see the massive popularity of sport and the extensive opportunity to view expertise in action (Starkes & Ericsson, 2003). However, despite being observed on a regular basis, it is still difficult to characterize the factors that predispose, describe, and lead to the development of an elite athlete.

This chapter will discuss the following literature: a discussion of expert performance including the key aspects of expert performance and the psychological skills employed by expert sport performers. This section of the research will also include the stages of development of expert performers, deliberate practice, deliberate play and motivation, and the social influences that affected the development of an expert sport performer; and finally the summary and purpose of the study.

Expert Performance

Inquiry about outstanding and exceptional achievements and performance has increased tremendously throughout the years (Ericsson & Charness, 1994). Researchers have tried to explore the topic by investigating geniuses (Gardner, 1993; Murray 1989; Simonton, 1984, 1988; Weisberg, 1986, 1993), prodigies (Feldman, 1986; Wallace, 1986), and exceptional performance and performers (Howe, 1990; Radford, 1990; Smith,

1983). Ericsson and Charness (1994) explained that expert performance reflects the highest performance possible that an individual can achieve, given the knowledge and training methods in their specific domains. The difference between expert and non-experts are evident in the skills, knowledge and physiological adaptations that they acquire through training, except for height (Ericsson & Charness, 1994). Expert performance reflects critical adaptations accomplished through a life-long effort.

There are two dominant approaches to studying expert performance. First, the human information-processing approach, or the skills approach, has aimed to explain the relationship of exceptional performance to skills and knowledge acquired through experience (Newell & Simon, 1972). According to this approach, the information-processing system with its basic information processes and capabilities remains intact in skill acquisition, and exceptional performance is the result of cumulative increases in knowledge and skill attributed to the effects of experience (Newell & Simon, 1972). Others believe that to reach an exceptional level of performance, individuals must undergo a long period of active learning, where they improve and refine their skill (Chase & Simon, 1973).

Historically, the research of de Groot (1978) on differences between world-class chess players and local chess club players has influenced a great deal of this line of research (Chi, Glaser, & Farr, 1988; Ericsson & Smith, 1991). In the 1970's and 1980's, Simon and Chase (1973) developed and formalized de Groot's framework and eventually generated a theoretical perspective that dominated the concepts of expertise in a range of domains. Simon and Chase's theory proposed that world-class chess players were not different from their less accomplished counterparts in terms of their basic mental abilities

and general capacities when it comes to their limits of short-term memory and speed of processing. They found that the experts had an advantage on performance because of their vast storehouse of knowledge and complex patterns held in long-term memory, which are attributed to their many years of experience in their respective domains of activity.

The other main approach highlighted the impact of individual differences of expert performers that allow them to succeed in their specific domain of expertise. Gardner (1993) argued that exceptional performance is a result of the individual's intelligence profile and the demands of the particular domain. A very important issue in this approach is the early identification and nurturing of children who possess high intelligence for the specific domain. Several researchers like Sir Francis Galton (1869/1979) believed that excellence in diverse fields and domains are possible because of innate ability, eagerness to work (motivation), and enough power of performing laborious work (effort).

Talent or giftedness is particularly dominant in such domains of expertise such as chess, sports, music, and visual arts, where a great number of individuals are active but only a few individuals reach the highest level of performance (Ericsson & Charness, 1994). Furthermore, Gardner (1983) discussed that the salient aspect of talent is the potential for achievement and the capacity to rapidly learn material relevant to one's domain. These traditional assumptions of basic abilities and capacities (talent) do not translate to superior performance acquired over years and decades in a specific domain (Ericsson & Charness, 2004).

Additionally, Bloom (1985) stated that in the development of expert performance, those who become expert performers do not begin in their domain of expertise with being experts right away; they became experts because they were exposed to the activity at an early age. Also, the level of performance of future experts continues to advance during years of active involvement in domain related activities. Their skill acquisition involves a continued search for how to develop their cognitive representations of certain tasks and situations. Experts can observe these developed mechanisms as tools to achieve higher levels of access to relevant aspects of performance whenever they desire (Ericsson, 1996, 1998).

Most domains of expertise today have a fairly long history of continued development (Ericsson & Charness, 2004). Years ago, the first Olympic Games were held, and results on standardized events were recorded. These results have been continuously broken and improved over the years. Expert performance is defined as consistent superior performance on a specified set of representative tasks for a given domain (Ericsson & Charness, 2004). For this literature review, the researcher will focus on further examining expert performance in the sport domain.

Domains of Sport Expertise

Expert performance in sport is defined as consistent superior athletic performance over an extended period of time (Starkes, 1993). Before athletes can become experts, they must excel in no less than four domains: physiological, technical, cognitive, and emotional regulation/psychological skills (Starkes & Ericsson, 2003).

Expert physiology. Sir Francis Galton (1869) conducted one of the earliest studies on exceptional (expert) performance. He argued that exceptional performance in a field must be passed on from parents to their children. He argued that hereditary factors decide the limit of the attainable performance of an individual. Additionally, others have argued that that the degree of adaptability is restricted and the limits imposed are predominantly genetically determined (Boucharrd, Dionne, Simoneau, & Boulay, 1992; Bouchard, Malina, & Pérusse, 1997; Klissouras, 1997; Swallow, Garland, Carter, Zhan, & Sieck, 1998). Complementary to Sir Francis Galton's research, Book (1924) discovered that championship-level typists who can tap their fingers faster than their normal counterparts attribute their skill to genetic factors.

In relation to expert performance in sport, physiological components of expertise include factors such as height, flexibility, body segment size, aerobic capacity, anaerobic power, and general aesthetics (Wilmore & Costill, 1999). But the physiological aspect of performance is unique to sport compared to other domains. Despite the previously mentioned studies, physiological superiority may not be as relevant in other expert domains such as chess, music, mathematics, and computer programming. The specific physiological necessities are different amongst sports. For example, the physiological requirement for expertise in skating is different from skiing although they have similar movements.

Furthermore, some researchers have proposed that genetic traits are thought to account for up to half of the variation in performance between individuals (Hopkins, 2001) and some still believe that innate factors, such as genes, provide a potential for the development of expertise, together with external factors (Tucker & Collins, 2012).

Tucker and Collins (2012) believed that both the genetic factors (intrinsic) and extrinsic factors (nurture) contribute to the development of an athlete. In their study, the genetic factors are sex, height, VO2 max, and skeletal muscles, while the extrinsic factors are training, coaching, practice, competition, socio-cultural issues, finances, motivation, and talent identification. Essentially, the intrinsic variables mentioned earlier are somewhat modifiable but by and large, these factors are stable because they mainly come from genetics. In short, the intrinsic factors contribute to someone's potential and then it's up to the extrinsic factors to determine up to what level of expertise the individual achieves in terms of their potential. For example, Athlete A, who has a high amount of innate ability, has a high potential threshold for their talent but doesn't put any training factor into it. Meanwhile, Athlete D who has a lower potential regarding the innate factors can reach a similar point with Athlete A because they put effort in their training.

These two combined factors can determine where someone's potential is and how far they can go with their potential.

Technical expertise. Technical expertise is the result of the development of technical expertise is a result of coordinated, refined, and efficient movement patterns that emerged due to several years of extended and systematic training or deliberate practice (Helsen, Starkes, & Hodges, 1998; Starkes, Deaking, Allard, Hodges, & Hayes, 1996). In a study regarding self-paced events (e.g. golf and bowling), Singer (2001) found that execution becomes effortless and expertise is achieved when decision-making, response selection, and action processes are enhanced through a well-rehearsed pre-and during performance routine by integrating goal intention with visual and proprioceptive mechanisms. Further, Ward, Williams, and Bennett (2002) compared the focal cues of

experienced versus inexperienced tennis players. Their study revealed that experienced players recorded faster decision-making times as compared to the inexperienced players. In addition, eye-movement recordings revealed that experienced players focused on different sources of movement information (e.g. head, shoulders, trunk, and hips) compared to inexperienced players (e.g. racket, ball, and contact point). As performers acquire efficient skilled movement patterns over time, their ability to perform these movements automatically increases (Fitts & Posner, 1967; Logan, 1998; Schneider & Shiffrin, 1977).

Cognitive expertise. Research has shown that expert sport performers exhibit both superior motor skill execution and response selection performance (tactical decision-making). Experts have well-structured mental representations in long-term memory as well as a mechanism that allows information from those representations to be effectively brought into working memory when needed (Ericsson & Kintsch, 1995). Expertise studies have shown that individuals develop different problem representations as a function of the knowledge that they have regarding the domain and their specialization in that domain (Ericsson, 1996).

McPherson (1994) discussed that sport specific knowledge bases are exclusive in that both tactical and motor executions have aspects of declarative (knowing what to do) and procedural knowledge (knowing how to do it). McPherson (1994) also proposed that more years of higher level competitive play experience was linked to more sophisticated specialized memory adaptations for making decisions during competition. Additionally, McPherson (1999) proposed that in high strategy open skill sports (i.e., tennis), the problem representations of experts are tactical because of two specialized memory

adaptations (action plan profiles and current event profiles). Action profiles consist of knowledge about shot selections based on the current environmental context (e.g. player position and ball location) and knowledge of how to perform, regulate, or enhance some aspects of motor executions. On the other hand, current event profiles involve updating and modifying information during the competitive event (e.g., updating information about an opponent's weakness as competition advances). Both of these profiles are stored in the long-term memory of the individual and are readily available if needed.

For example, in an investigation of expertise in baseball players, McPherson (1993) found that baseball experts generate condition and action concepts more tactically (e.g., some concepts were considered important), and associated (e.g. concepts emerged as patterns), as compared to the novice players. Additionally, the experts used different cues in the problem-solving situation. " Experts' knowledge structure for batting preparation, guided the mapping of current information together with past events onto situation prototypes such as (a) it provided more links and connections between stored knowledge and incoming information; (b) it facilitated more complete or extensive diagnoses of current situations; and (c) it assisted in planning the most appropriate response selections" (McPherson, 1993, p.321).

Furthermore, elite athletes are able to attend and extract relevant cues in their sport environment without being distracted by irrelevant information. Perceptual skills involve pattern recognition, the use and extraction of anticipatory stimuli, visual search strategies, and signal detection (Starkes & Ericsson, 2003). Decision-making skill is based mostly on the interpretative value of information acquired through perceptual skills and its suitability for effective response selection (Starkes & Ericsson, 2003).

Williams and Davids (1998) investigated a group of soccer players, highlighting how experienced and less experienced athletes noticed different aspects of the same environmental information. They found that performers with more experience use their well-organized task-specific knowledge to determine the quickest and most accurate information and response for a given situation. Meanwhile, their less experienced counterparts have a tendency to focus longer on the more obvious aspects of environmental information (e.g. the feet of the opponent), regardless of the situation (Schmidt & Wrisberg, 2004).

Emotional expertise and Psychological Skills. Emotional regulation involves any activity that influences the start, offset, extent, period, intensity, or quality of one or more aspects of the emotional response (McRae, Ochsner, & Gross, 2011). Several studies have confirmed that emotion regulation is important for the individual athlete (Lane, Beedie, Jones, Uphill, & Devonport, 2012; Uphill, McCarthy, & Jones, 2009), the team (Tamminen & Crocker, 2013; Wagstaff & Weston, 2014), and the organization (Wagstaff, Fletcher, & Hanton, 2012) when it comes to performance outcomes in sport. This is in support with the substantial literature focusing on the performance implications of emotions experienced before and during sport competition (Hanin, 2010). Meanwhile, psychological skills include a wider range of factors, all of which can influence emotional readiness (Starkes & Ericsson, 2003).

The development of psychological skills is important to expert performance (Starkes & Ericsson, 2003). In a study that combined the use of both interviews and surveys, Orlick and Partington (1988) discovered the psychological skills to which Olympic athletes attribute their successful performances. They discovered that mental

skills were extremely important in an athlete's performance. A quantitative analysis revealed that an athlete's mental readiness was the only significant factor, among physical, mental, and technical readiness, that was linked to their final Olympic ranking. As for the qualitative analysis, their study revealed that the common elements of success were that emanated for the best athletes (i.e., Olympic medalists and world champions) in virtually all sports were: "(a) total commitment to pursuing excellence, (b) quality training which included setting daily goals and engaging in regular competition simulation and imagery training, and (c) quality mental preparation for competition, which included a refined competition plan, a competition focus plan, an ongoing post-competition evaluation procedure, and a plan for dealing with distractions" (Orlick & Partington, 1988, p. 129). He also discussed the three major performance blocks that interfered with high-level performance, including changing patterns that worked, and an inability to refocus in the face of distraction. Eventually, Orlick (2000) summarized his findings into what he referred to as the Wheel of Excellence. The wheel has seven elements, which includes all the mental skills drawn from his previous research as well as over 25 years of consulting experience (Orlick, 1980; Orlick & Partington, 1988, 1999). The psychological skills identified in the wheel were commitment, positive images, mental readiness, full focus, distraction control, and constructive evaluation. Eventually in 2008, Orlick placed focus at the center of the wheel of excellence. According to Orlick (2008), focus affects and connects all other components of the wheel of excellence.

Other researchers have supported the significant effect of mental skills in sport performance. In a questionnaire-based study assessing the psychological skills relevant to exceptional athletic performance, Mahoney, Gabriel, and Perkins (1987) compared

successful and non-successful athletes and had several findings. First, the successful athletes were less anxious. They were better able to concentrate more and were self-confident. These athletes also relied more on kinesthetic imagery (internal), which involved how they would *feel* themselves performing from their own perspective. Moreover, these successful athletes focused more on their own performance instead of comparing themselves to others. Lastly, they were highly motivated.

Elite athletes need strong mental skills in order to reach a high level in their respective sport and perform well under pressure. How do athletes reach a high level of performance? In determining what separates expert and non-expert performers in their respective domains of excellence, a strong amount of evidence implies that irrespective of their innate talent, hereditary predispositions, and genetic limitations, high levels of skills cannot be acquired without years of deliberate practice (Starkes & Ericsson, 2003; Ericsson, 1998; Ericsson, Krampe, & Tesch- Römer, 1993).

Deliberate Practice

"The difference between expert performers and normal adults reflect a life-long period of deliberate effort to improve performance in a specific domain" (Ericsson, Krampe, & Römer, 1993, p. 400). Research on expert performance has proven that the important characteristics in the superior performance of experts are acquired through experience and a large portion of that involves the effect of practice (Chi, Glaser, & Farr, 1988; Ericsson & Smith, 1991). Elite athletes progress toward excellence in a similar way as expert musicians (Lehmann, 1997; Sloboda & Howe, 1991), chess players (Charness, 1992; Charness, Krampe, & Mayr, 1991; Gobet & Simon, 1996, 1998), and scholars

(Simonton, 1999, 2000). Results of the vast array of studies suggest that experts adhere to a strict regimen of extended practice. Such practice consists of effort and concentration, that does not automatically lead to financial or extrinsic rewards, and that are not inherently enjoyable (Ericsson, Krampe, & Tesch-Römer, 1993).

Practice is deliberate if it consists of the following: (a) a difficulty level tailored to the individual; (b) informative feedback is available; (c) being able to correct errors and engage in repetition of performance; (d) requires effortful concentration; (e) is aimed at improving skills one already has; (f) working on one's weakness; (g) is aimed at not only improving one's skill deliberately but also learning how to think deliberately (Ericsson, Prietula, & Cokely, 2007; Guest, Regehr, & Tiberius, 2001; Tashman, 2013).

Non-deliberate practice may enable the individual to reach the autonomous stage of learning where skills can be automatically performed, but without deliberate and intentional practice, the individual will not likely become an expert performer (Ericsson et al., 2007). Ultimately, Ericsson et al., (1993) stated that elite performance is "the product of a decade or more of maximal efforts to improve performance in a domain through and optimal distribution of deliberate practice" (p. 400). One of the most generalizable findings about practice throughout the different domains of expertise is its gradual increase during the development of expert performance (Starkes, Deakin, Allard, Hodges, & Hayes, 1996). After a decade, the total amount of practice has increased to almost 25-30 hours per week (Starkes, 2000).

A large amount of evidence has shown that elite performances require around 10 years of practice to obtain the skills and experience that are needed to perform at an

international level (Starkes & Hodges, 1998; Ericsson, 1990). However, before performing at an international level, all athletes tend to first experience sport through fun and playful games. Côté (1999) conceived the term *deliberate play* to characterize a form of sporting activity that involves early developmental physical activities that are intrinsically motivating, provides immediate gratification, and are purposely devised to maximize enjoyment.

Development of Expertise, Deliberate Play, and Motivation

The difference in deliberate structured practice and deliberate play is in the amount of time that is spent actively engaged in the activity. Additionally, Psychological development of elite athletes takes place over a long period and is influenced by several individuals and factors (Bloom, 1985; Csikszentmihalyi, Rathunde, & Whalen, 1997). Bloom (1985) suggested that the experts in their fields started out by engaging in playful activities in their respective domains during childhood. Deliberate play shares the contextual characteristics of more primitive forms of physical activity. This often involves running, climbing, jumping, and rough-and-tumble play (Denzin, 1975; Pellegrini & Smith, 1998; Piaget, 1962), but has more organized behavioral patterns. Deliberate play situations allow children the freedom to discover different movements and have the opportunity to learn, innovate, improve, and strategically respond. Pellegrini and Smith (1998) formulated that in play, the flexibility and creativity become important factors in the development of elite athletes, especially in team sport settings. From a skill acquisition standpoint, deliberate play is a medium for the youth to explore their physical capabilities (Côté, Baker, & Abernethy, 2007).

Motivational theories based on self-regulation (Ryan & Deci, 2000; Vallerand, 2001) support the idea that intrinsically motivated behaviors (e.g., play) have a positive effect over time on an individual's overall motivation, which will eventually lead to the individual's interest to engage in more externally controlled activities (e.g., deliberate practice). Even though sports have become more organized in the last few years (De Knop, Engström, & Skirsta, 1996), the first experience in sport of expert team sport athletes is still connected with the importance of playing and experimenting with different behaviors that eventually led them to reach their goal. The athletes' early involvement in deliberate play activities were prerequisites to their motivation to pursue more specialized training and achieve the performance that they wanted.

After a few years of enjoyable experience, young athletes start to manifest "talent". At this point, parents suggest the start of instruction by a teacher and a few hours of deliberate practice. The parents teach their children about the importance of acquiring regular habits of practice by noticing improvements in their performance. The next phase of athletic expertise development (Bloom, 1985) is specialization in the main sport, which includes an extended period of preparation. In this period, the time spent on deliberate practice is increased together with seeking help from advanced teachers and training facilities. The third phase is the full-time commitment of the individual to enhancing performance and ends when the individual has become a professional in their chosen field or terminates full-time engagement in the activity. In this phase, Bloom (1985) discovered that most individuals who reach an international level of performance have worked with teachers who are experts themselves or individuals who have reached an expert level or had previous experience in training elite athletes.

Despite outlining a phase approach for the process of becoming an expert performer in sport, Bloom (1985) did not systematically discuss the factors that could influence individual differences gained during the performance of top-level athletes that have similar developmental opportunities (Côté, Ericsson, & Law, 2005). Therefore, Côté (1999) identified three stages of development specific to sport from childhood to late adolescence (see Figure 2.1): the sampling years, the specializing years, and the investment years.

Côté (1999) suggested a progression from play and involvement in several sports during the sampling years to more sport-specific practice activities during the specializing and investment years as an appropriate approach to elite performance in sport. To gather more information regarding the later years of training of elite athletes, Orlick and colleagues (McCaffrey & Orlick, 1989; Orlick & Partington, 1988) interviewed international-level athletes to assess their actual practice behaviors and perceptions of their training. Their studies revealed that the athletes consistently mentioned the need to focus on specific training goals as well as the importance of concentration and intensity of practice. This activity, called quality practice by Orlick and Partington, has a few similar characteristics with deliberate practice, which was subsequently proposed by Ericsson et al. (1993).

Following up on this research, Durand-Bush and Salmela (2002) examined elite athletes who won at least two gold medals in the Olympics, finding that early patterns of development of the Olympians were similar to those found by Orlick and Partington (1988) and Côté (1999). Additionally, Durand-Bush and Salmela suggested the *maintenance years* as a stage that followed Côté's investment years. During the

maintenance years, the athletes have already achieved the highest level in their sport and have indicated that they focused their effort in improving small aspects of their performance instead of increasing the number of hours in practice.

Although the positive relationship between training and elite performance is found in sport research, some dimensions of the theory of deliberate practice have not been supported (Abernethy et al., 2003). Baker and Côté (2006) revealed when it is only deliberate practice that is being considered in training and in athlete development, it does not comprehensively characterize the complexity of the relationships among developmental, motivational, and psychosocial aspects of human abilities. One model that discusses the importance of developmentally appropriate training patterns and social influences is the developmental model of sport participation (DMSP) by Côté and colleagues (Côté, 1999; Côté et al., 2003; Côté & Hay, 2002).

Côté and Fraser-Thomas (2007) suggested a modified version of the DMSP that identified possible sport participation trajectories. These trajectories are outlined in Figure 2.1 as:

(a) Recreational participation through sampling and deliberate play, (b) elite performance through sampling and deliberate play, and (c) elite performance through early specialization and deliberate practice. The different stages within a trajectory are based on changes in the type and amount of involvement in sport, deliberate play, and deliberate practice. Two of these trajectories (recreational participation and elite performance through sampling) have the same foundation from ages 6

to 12. After the sampling years, sport participants can opt to either stay involved with their sport at a recreational level or proceed on a path that mainly focuses on performance (specializing years, ages 13 to 15; investment years, age 16+). These two trajectories have different outcomes in terms of performance but are expected to lead to similar psychosocial and physical health benefits. A third possible trajectory consists of elite performance through early specialization (right side of Figure 2.1). Even though this trajectory leads to elite performance, it has also been shown to result in a reduction in both enjoyment and physical health. (p. 196).

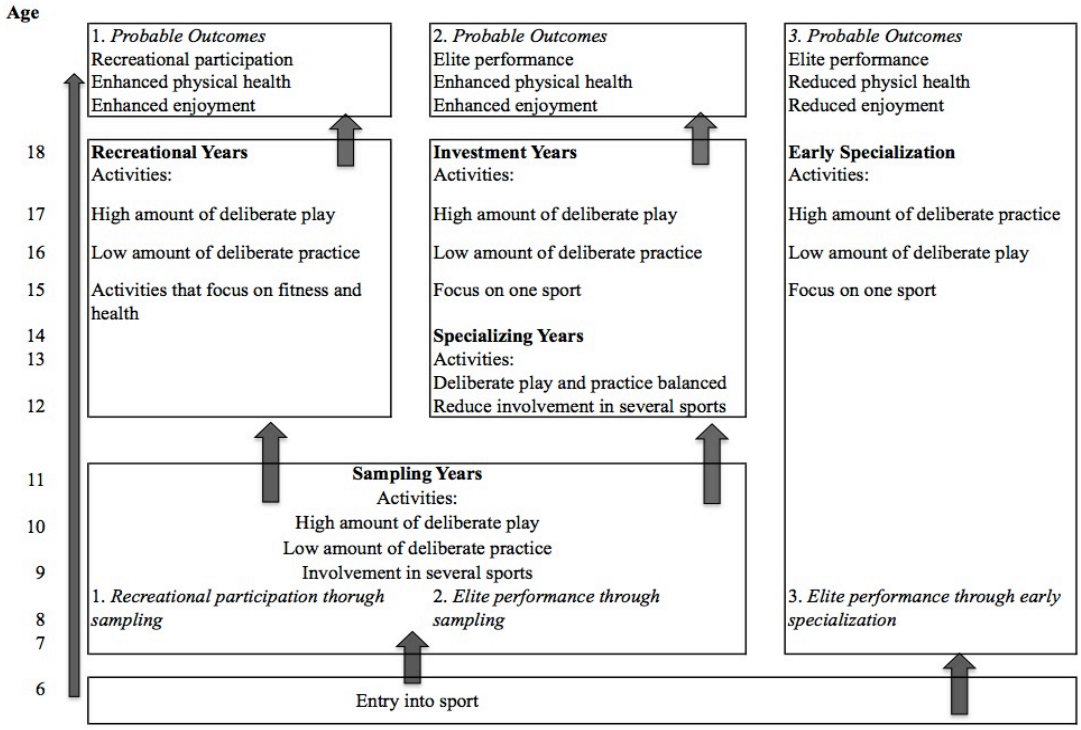

Figure 2.1 Developmental model of sport participation. *Adapted from the Handbook of Sport Psychology. Third edition (2007).*

The recreational outcome of the DMSP was discussed by Robertson-Wilson, Baker, Derbyshire, and Côté (2003) in their examination of active and inactive adult females. They found that active females participated in significantly more physical activity than inactive females from ages 6 to 18, but there were no significant differences found between the two groups relating to their involvement in other nonphysical structured leisure activities (e.g. music and art). From ages 6 to 12 (i.e., sampling years) the active females participated in a variety of sports that focused primarily on deliberate play activities. These years were considered fundamental building blocks for them to continue their participation in recreational sport. The recreational years (age 13+) are mostly viewed as an extension of the sampling years, with enjoyment and health as the primary goals. The activities involved during the recreational years involves deliberate

practice and deliberate play, together with flexible sport programs that adapt to the ages and interests of individuals.

Several studies (Bloom, 1985; Côté, 1999; Côté, 2003) have supported the second trajectory of the DMSP, which is geared towards a more performance-oriented path. It suggests that specialization occurs around age 13, after the sampling years. The specializing years (ages 13-15) are deemed as a transitional stage to the investment years (age 16+). Youth in the ages of 13-15 engage in fewer activities, whereas youth from age 16+ commit to just one activity and participate primarily in deliberate practice. Athletes in this trajectory experience positive physical and psychosocial outcomes (Korell & Côté, 2005).

Research (Ward et al., 2004) has shown that early specialization is mostly necessary for sports that involve peak performance before puberty (e.g., women's gymnastics & figure skating). When elite performers specialize at an early age, they usually do not experience the enjoyment associated with sampling and playing (Law et al., in press). Some findings report that early specialization is associated with higher levels of attrition at all levels of ability (Gould, 1987; Gould, Udry, Tuffey, & Loehr, 1996; Korell & Côté, 2005; Wall & Côté, in press). Moreover, an early focus on structured training may have negative effects on the physical health of the athlete (Caine, Cochrane, Caine, & Zemper, 1989; Law et al., in press). For instance, too much training during the important periods of biological development can greatly increase the risk of overtraining injuries (Caine et al., 1989; Dalton, 1992). Overall, the variation of ages of peak performance in different sports may be a critical constraint on the type of training performed during the athlete's development (Baker & Côté, 2006). It is mostly difficult

for a 16-year-old to invest in a sport if he or she hasn't been specializing in that sport around the age of 13.

In order to gather more knowledge regarding the later years of an elite athletes' training, McCaffrey and Orlick (1989) interviewed international-level athletes and assessed their actual practice behaviors and perceptions of their training. They found that expert golfers (i.e., professional tour golfers') current practice activities included elements of "quality practice" and were different from the activities of other professional, but less skilled golfers (i.e., golf professional at golf clubs). The "quality practice" of Orlick and Partington (1988), which shares several characteristics with deliberate practice, involves the need to focus on specific training goals and the emphasis on the importance of concentration and intensity in practice.

Additionally, Durand-Bush and Salmela (2002) proposed the "maintenance years" where athletes have achieved the highest level in their sport (e.g., gold medal at Olympics). The maintenance years succeeds Côté's investment years where the athletes reported that they focused their effort on improving small aspects of their performance rather than increasing the number of hours in practice.

In summary, qualitative research on the development of elite athletes show distinct stages of development involving different types of activities and resources. Moreover, the early years of involvement for elite athletes mostly involved the introduction to various sports through playful activities that had the elements of enjoyment and immediate reward. After this stage is a period that focused more on sport-specific training and more objective measure of achievement and performance. Lastly, a

period of maintenance and investment was needed, which usually involved the individuals' total involvement in training activities and will to be able to perform at a high level (Côté, Baker & Aberbethy, 2007).

Social Influences on Development in Sport

Based on the developmental model of sport participation, it was mentioned that children have three main social influences throughout their development in sport: coaches, parents, and siblings/peers (Starkes & Ericsson, 2003).

The relevance of receiving social support has been related to dealing with competitive stress (Crocker, 1992), slums in performance (Madden, Kirby & McDonald, 1989), and burn-out (Gould, Tuffey, Urdy, & Loehr, 1996).

Coaches. Coaches have been shown to provide both physical and social resources to overcome the effort and motivational constraints related with deliberate practice (Salmela, 1996). A positive coach-athlete relationship can enhance the psychological and social well-being of an athlete. Previous research (Smith & Smoll, 1978) has revealed that children who have played for highly reinforcing and encouraging coaches have significantly higher levels of self-esteem. The results suggest that training programs designed to assist coaches, teachers, and other adults occupying leadership roles can positively influence a child's personality development.

Salmela (1996) found that the coaches had an important role in identifying and training various skills that contributed to the athletes' achievement of exceptional performance. The coaches were also concerned with creating opportunities for athletes to become more autonomous and self-regulated (Salmela, 1996). Also, the important issue

of how elite athletes spend their time during practice emphasizes the important role that coaches have in setting up optimal learning conditions (Côté, 2002; Côté, Salmela, Trudel, Baria, & Russell, 1995; Kalinowski, 1985; Salmela, 1996).

The role of a coach changes accordingly depending on the different levels of an athletes' sport participation. Bloom (1985) identified three distinct stages of talent development, including: (a) the early years or stage of initiation, (b) the middle years or stage of development, and (c) the late years or stage of perfection. During the stage of initiation (i.e., early years), where children were engaged in playful activities, Bloom (1985) found that children depended on their coach/ teacher for guidance and support. Coaches mostly adopted a process-oriented approach, which means encouraging and rewarding children for their effort rather than the outcome of their participation. Teachers and coaches at this stage provided positive reinforcement to children.

In the stage of development (i.e., middle years), children were more serious and higher levels of dedication were observed. They became more achievement-oriented as practice time increased significantly and competition became the benchmark for progress. Coaches at this stage were more technically skilled compared to the previous stage. They focused more on the development of proper technique, provided children with opportunities to evaluate their performance and results were evident through hard work and discipline. Bloom (1985) found that teachers and coaches have a strong personal interest in the development of children at this stage, and respect replaced the loving relationship the children had with their coaches during the previous stage. During the stage of perfection (i.e., late years), the children became experts, Bloom (1985) revealed

that the mentors or master teachers at this level were sometimes feared, but were also respected.

Additionally, Csikszentmihalyi, Rathunde, and Whalen (1993) also investigated the development of expertise and the role of teachers in this process. Their study revealed that the participants believed that the most influential and memorable teachers in their lives were those who: (a) loved their work, (b) perceived their emerging needs and interests, (c) provided a secure environment for extending their skills, (d) gave them freedom to make choices, (e) inspired them to recognize intrinsic rewards, and (f) minimized extrinsic pressures like competition, grades, rules, and bureaucratic procedures. The participants also preferred teachers who gave immediate and constant informational feedback rather than controlling feedback.

Partington (1995) also researched the role of teachers or master coaches. Results from his study revealed that during the early stages of development, the participants had teachers who nurtured their creativity, believed in the performers' potential to succeed, gave constructive feedback, and made learning fun. Research has shown that coaches who believe and have confidence in their students have a positive impact on their performance. This is often referred to as the Pygmalion effect (Horn & Cox, 1993; Sinclair & Vealey, 1989). This effect happens when the expectations of teachers or coaches lead to the actualization of these desired expectations.

Additional research has shown that coaches who have significantly contributed to the development of expert performance often adopt a constructivist model of teaching (Bloom, 1996; Durand-Bush & Salmela, 1996; Salmela, 1996). This constructivist model

"places students at the center of the process – actively participating in thinking and discussing ideas while making meaning for themselves" (King, 1993, p.30). Teachers encourage critical thinking and develop problem-solving approaches in this model and they also allow students to interact with information, manipulate, and relate it to what they already know (Gladersfeld, 1985; King, 1993).

Coaching behavior is an important factor in the sport environment (Côté & Sedgwick, 2003). Coaching behaviors are experienced by athletes and are one of the few elements in sport that can be controlled by the coach (Cushion, 2011). Fraser-Thomas and Côté (2009) enumerated categories of negative coaching behaviors such as using poor communication, having favorites, being intimidating, modeling poor work ethic, and exhibiting inappropriate actions.

Parents. For most individuals, the family has the strongest impact in their development (Horn & Horn, 2007). Moreover, the environment of the individual shapes their performance and behavior (Bronfenbrenner 1993; Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 1998)**.** Research has been conducted to examine critical role that parents play in the development of a youth athlete. In additiona, Bloom (1985) found that in the demanding stages of development, the parents served as a provider of financial and moral support to support their children's involvement in their activity.

To gain more insight on the role of families in the development of young athletes, Côté (1999) found that during the sampling years, parents were involved with coaching their child, helping to structure their child's deliberate play activities, involvement without actual input on activities, observing and giving feedback. Parents encouraged

their children to experiment with different sports and games for pleasure rather than for attaining specific goals. The parents were concerned with providing their children with opportunities to have fun and develop fundamental motor skills, positive identities, motivations, values, and beliefs about sport and physical activity.

Uniquely, parents in this study revealed that they felt their child had a special gift for sport during the sampling years. This can suggest that parents' beliefs can reinforce their children's self-beliefs, which according to Dweck (1986) are the origins of progress and persistence.

In the specializing years, parents become supporters of their child's decision to be involved in a limited number of sports. Instead of supporting their deliberate play activities, they started supporting their child's deliberate practice activities and became involved with them and their activities. Specifically, parents proved to be an important source of emotional support when or if athletes faced sport-related setbacks that they had to overcome (Côté, 1999).

Moreover, their role as followers became more evident during the investment years where some parents even made sacrifices in their personal lives and in their family's lives to allow their child to train in the best conditions. The parents also helped their children cope with setbacks such as injuries, failure, and lack of motivation. In general, research studies have proved that parents' exhibition of encouraging, supportive, and facilitative behaviors are important factors that can affect the performance and psychosocial well-being of their children and adolescents in the sport domain.

Researchers have long recognized that parents have an impact on their children's sport experiences (Greendorfer, 1977). This impact can be positive or negative in nature. For example, it was found that the parents of committed athletes are mostly happy and willing to attend their child's competition or tournaments and are also mostly present during practice sessions (Csikszentmihalyi, Rathunde, & Whalen, 1993; Monsaas, 1985; Sloan, 1985). Further, VanYperen (1995) found that parental support acted as a buffer to alleviate performance stress.

Negative parental influence, which is perceived as pressure placed on the athlete, can contribute to competitive anxiety (Gould, Horn, & Spreeman, 1983), increased stress (Stein et al. 1999), lower levels of perceived performance and ability (Hoyle & Leff, 1997) and decrease the athlete's desire to remain participating in their sport (Coakley. 1992; Gould. Tuflfey, Udry. & Loehr.1997: Hellstedt. 1987.1990: Leff & Hoyle, 1995; Rotella. Hanson. & Coop. 1991). Parental influence on children's sport experiences has repercussions for the immediate and long-term attitudes that their children have toward sport participation.

Siblings and peers. Abernethy, Côté, and Baker (2002) believed that during the early stage of the elite athletes career; they all mentioned having a group of friends who were involved in their sport. Additional studies have supported that having peers was one of the main reasons why children participated in their respective sports (Weiss & Petlichkoff, 1989). In the sampling years, athletes interact with their peers because of their need for stimulation through deliberate play. During the investment years, peer relationships are more intense and fulfill motivational and emotional needs that may facilitate deliberate practice activities.

Furthermore, siblings play a substantial role in the development of a child's personality and emotions (Berk, 2003; Boer & Dunn, 1992; Cicirelli, 1995; Dunn, 1988; Patterson, 1984). Numerous studies also revealed that siblings have a positive social influence in an individual's sport and physical activity participation (Côté, 1999; Stevenson, 1990; Stuart, 2003; Wold & Anderssen, 1992). Some of these studies found that siblings may serve as role models (Stuart, 2003; Wold & Anderssen, 1992). Younger siblings participate because their older siblings do or because younger siblings have seen their older siblings experienced positive experiences in sport (Horn & Horn, 2007). Additional studies revealed that a sibling's social or emotional support is an important factor to children's and adolescent's own sport participation, work ethic and commitment (Côté, 1999; Stevenson, 1990). The results of the studies by Côté and Stevenson found that the influence of siblings are greater during the adolescent years, while parental influence is greater during the childhood years.

In summary, the studies mentioned above indicate that siblings can be a great source of influence through role modeling and provision of social and emotional support. Other studies such as Côté (1999) found that siblings did experience some feelings of bitterness and jealousy during their investment years because the talented child receives more of the parents' and family's resources. Therefore, it is obvious that siblings can be both a positive and a negative force in reference to a child's and adolescent's sport participation.

Psychological Characteristics of Elite Athletes

A great amount of research has shown that successful athletes have strong achievement drives, which helps them achieve their goals (Bull, Shambrook, James, & Brooks, 2005; DeFrancesco & Burke, 1997; Gould, Dieffenbach, & Moffet, 2002; Orlick & Partington, 1988). This skill involves the ability to set goals, planning, time management, and prioritization, and willingness to sacrifice and being personally responsible for training (Durand-Bush & Salmela, 2001; Gould et al., 2002). Expert performance in athletes requires hours of specific and focused training at a higher level (Baker, Côté & Abernethy, 2003; Surand-Bsuh & Salmela, 2002).

Specifically, Orlick and Partington (1988) revealed that successful athletes had (a) the ability to focus attention, (b) control of performance imagery, (c) a total commitment to pursuit of excellence, (d) set practice goals, (e) used competition simulation, (f) engaged in mental preparation, (g) detailed competition plans, and (h) developed distraction plans. Less successful athletes are not able to cope with distractions, changed things that worked, experienced late team selection, and were not able to focus after distractions.

A more recent research regarding mental skills conducted by Williams and Krane (2001) also found that peak performance was associated with mental skills and psychological skills, which are (a) having well developed competitive and routine plans, (b) high levels of motivation and commitment, (c) coping skills for dealing with distractions and unforeseen events, (d) increased concentration, (e) a high degree of self-

confidence, (f) the ability to self-regulate arousal, (g) the use of goal setting, and (h) high visualization.

Further, in Durand-Bush and Salmela's (2001) investigation of 10 champion athletes, they found that the ability to focus on the process of performance rather than the outcome was critical in maintaining athletic success. Moreover, in their research regarding psychological characteristics and their development in Olympic champions (Gould, Dieffenbach, & Moffett, 2002) although perfectionism has been associated with athlete burnout (Gould, Urdy, Tuffey, & Loehr, 1996) and anxiety (Hall, Kerr, & Mathews, 1998), it was found that Olympians were "moderately perfectionistic relative to their overall disposition scores" (Gould, Dieffenbach, & Moffett, 2002, p. 198). The athletes scored moderately high on personal standards and organization, but low on concern over mistakes, parental expectations, parental criticism, and doubts about action. The athletes also scored high on the Life orientation test-revised (LOT-R), meaning that these athletes were optimistic and positive in their orientations, which supports the conclusion that dispositional optimism has an effect on the physical and psychological well-being in a variety of areas (Scheier & Carver, 1992; Schneider, 2001; Seligman, 1990). Optimism is a stable personality disposition described by a common expectancy that good things will happen (Scheier & Carver, 1992). These Olympians also reported high level of dispositional hope, which is consistent with the research of Curry and Snyder (2000), indicating that athletes who are higher in hope perform better academically and athletically, after controlling other possible influences such as self-esteem. Hope as a construct was developed by Charles Snyder (2000), and is defined as a "thinking process in which people have a sense of agency and pathways for goals"

(Snyder, Cheavens, & Michael, 1999, p. 207). It is a way an individual sets, seeks out, and achieves goals. Research has shown that hope is positively related to psychological adjustment, achievement, problem solving, and health (Snyder, 2000; Snyder et al., 1999). Consistent with previous research, being able to focus was mentioned as one of the most characteristics of these Olympians, together with mental toughness and sport intelligence. Sport intelligence involved "the ability to analyze, being innovative relative to one's sport technique, being a student of the sport, making good decisions, understanding the nature of elite sport, and being a quick learner" (Gould, Dieffenbach, & Moffett, 2002, p. 199).

The psychological skills mentioned above are difficult to control when it comes to golf. "Golf is perhaps the most challenging of all sports in terms of mental control" (Dosil, 2006, p. 304). In a round of golf, which usually takes four to five hours to accomplish, it is easy to lose concentration, get distracted, or feel anxious. Most golfers doubt their skills (especially after a bad shot), implement negative self-talk, and over-analyze their skills to a level that interferes with their automatic execution of their strokes (Docil, 2006).

Mental Skills of Professional Golfers

"Golf is not a game of perfect" (Rotella, 2007, p.7). During the past few years, there has been a lot of discussion about the game of golf and how golfers can improve their scores. In general, the more skilled the player is, the higher the possibility that he will attribute his success to the mental side of the game. Since the topic of this research is focused on golfers, there is a need to review what kind of metal skills golfers usually use

to aid them in their game in order to better understand the experience of becoming a professional golfer in the Philippines.

As mentioned earlier, the development of psychological skills is important to expert performance. In a study conducted by McCaffrey and Orlick (1989) that explored the mental strategies utilized by top professional golfers, they found that there were common mental factors related to excellence among the top touring pros (see Table 2.1).

Table 2.1 Elements of excellence for professional golfers (McCaffrey & Orlick, 1998)

1. Total commitment
2. Quality rather than quantity of practice
3. Clearly defined goals
4. Imagery practice on a daily basis
5. Focusing totally on one shot at a time
6. Recognizing, expecting, and preparing to cope with pressure situations
7. Practice and tournament plans
8. Tournament focus plan
9. Distraction control strategies
10. Post-tournament evaluations

Source: McCaffrey, N. & Orlick, T. (1989). Mental factors related to excellence among top professional golfers. *International Journal of Sport Psychology, 20,* 256-278.

McCaffrey and Orlick (1989) established that the touring pros believed that commitment was the first essential factor that contributed to their success. For them, commitment meant that their lives revolved around their golf and that it was their priority in life. In addition to allotting several hours a day to hone their skills, they also mentally prepared themselves for high quality practice.

Another skill that they had in common was the ability to clearly define goals. They set daily practice goals (e.g., *my goal is to have fun)*, daily tournament play goals (e.g., *play one shot at a time)*, tournament goals for the week, and long-term goals for the year (e.g., *my goal was to make the Ryder Cup Team and I've achieved that)*. Their goals

are identified in three categories: 1) attainable, 2) attainable only if pushed to the maximum effort, and 3) lofty goals that may or may not be possible, depending on the situation outside of the individual's control.

They also revealed that (McCaffrey & Orlick, 1989), mental imagery was used on a daily basis for several purposes, which includes putting imagery, shot making imagery, best round imagery, practice imagery, winning imagery, synchronization imagery, simulation imagery, and recall imagery. Furthermore, the top touring professionals have detailed individualized plans for practice and tournament play. A practice plan involves the routine of warming up prior to the tournament, going to the driving range to hit balls after a day of competing, or the sequence followed on a practice day before and after they play. Examples would be "I always come out here an hour before I play and putt first, hit balls, then putt again and go", "I hit a few balls to loosen up, but not as many as I would before a tournament round. I hit more balls before the round on a tournament day than I would on practice day." (McCaffrey & Orlick ,1989, p. 263).

The golfers in their research (McCaffrey & Orlick ,1989) also have a very structured pre-tournament plan. According to one golfer:

> My tournament pattern is always the same. My pre-competition plan is getting up three hours before tee-off time. When I get up, I do some stretching and exercise bike to warm up, and some exercise-weights for the rotator cuff. I eat two hours before. I get to the course one hour before tee-off and hit balls and putt until I have the feel. On the first tee, waiting to go, I visualize the shot and recall the feel. My cue is smooth" (p. 263).

These golfers also competed in each tournament with a focus plan for best play. The tournament focus plan includes the mental focus and thought processes during the tournament. These are the first tee, during the round, between rounds and in the zone. During the first tee, the golfers are focused on that one shot while entering an emotionally focused state. During the round involves being able to focus on one shot at a time and trying not to dwell on a shot whether it is good or bad. Most of them do not try and change the game plan in between rounds. They stick to what they have and do the same things that have been successful for them in the past. Lastly, they are able to relate feelings of playing well with being in the zone, which requires a special depth of concentration or focus. They report to have a tunnel like vision when they are really into the game; nothing else entered their mind except the shot that they were hitting. The feeling of being relaxed and confident in whatever they were going to do.

In general, top touring professionals are self-directed individuals, with a positive attitude and confidence in them selves (McCaffrey & Orlick ,1989). They have also developed effective ways to deal with distractions yet they still need constant reminders to stay focused on the task at hand and to refocus. Also, after every game, they carefully analyze what went well and what they need to improve on. They identified important lessons, and have an action plan on those lessons in practice if they need to improve something before the next game. Also, instead of focusing on errors they point out the lessons learned and move on.

Another research done by Cohn (1991) on peak performance in golf concluded that peak performance in golf is associated with positive psychological states. The golfers in this study executed their skill automatically, had the feeling of being in control of their

performance and were good at emotion regulation, thoughts, and level of arousal. Heightened arousal was an indicator that the athlete was prepared. Moments of peak performance were distinguished by high self-confidence, with the golfers paying little attention to the consequences of a bad shot. Physical and mental relaxations were also employed by the athletes during their peak performance, as was the experience of enjoyment in playing the sport and achieving their goals.

In relation to the previous studies mentioned, researchers have acknowledged the need for valid, reliable measures of component skills underlying performance in golf and have suggested that questionnaires should be developed for this purpose (Cohn, 1991; Cohn, Rotella, & Lloyd, 1990). To address this need, Thomas and Over (1994) developed self-report measures of attributes associated with performance in golf, and they named this survey the Golf Performance Survey. The golf performance survey had 95 items assessing psychological and psychomotor skills, and the level of involvement in golf. The survey had 9 subscales, and five of these subscales differed significantly between lower handicap golfers and higher handicap golfers. Golfers with lower handicap showed increased mental preparation, heightened concentration, higher level of automaticity, greater commitment, and less negative emotions and thoughts. Successful amateurs and professionals also demonstrated great commitment and mental preparation. Aside from employing a consistent pre shot routine, the golfers see themselves as mentally tough and can perform well under pressure.

Success in the golf seems to involve not only-domain specific psychological skills, such as focusing and refocusing attention, visualization, and emotional control, but also a great commitment of time and effort in working towards accomplishing defined goals.

Summary and Purpose

The purpose of this study is to examine the experience of becoming a professional golfer in the Philippines. There have been numerous studies regarding the development of expertise in the sport domain, yet most of these studies were focused on the Western population. Specifically, there is no research done on the population of Filipino elite golfers. Furthermore, there has been a need to increase research regarding racial and ethnic diversity in sport psychology (Kontos, 2009), which hopefully this study will help shed some light on the topic.

Based on the literature, there has been numerous studies discussing the performance of elite athletes, how they became experts and what helped them become experts. Modern research revealed that expert performance in sport is a combination of nature and nurture. Athletes have the genetic factors that will help them achieve elite status but they will need the support of coaches, parents and peers. They also need to undergo deliberate practice and the proper use of psychological skills.

CHAPTER III

METHODS

This qualitative study was designed to investigate the experience of becoming a professional golfer in the Philippines. In this phenomenological study, the experience of the golfers will be investigated as to how each athlete recalled their experience towards their path to becoming a professional golfer in the Philippines. This methodology can be characterized as descriptive, interpretive, or social phenomenology. Part I of this chapter will give background to existential phenomenology and its development and Part II will address procedures for the current proposed research study. More specifically, Part II will discuss in detail methodology, participants, data collection, and data analysis.

Part 1- Existential Phenomenology

Existential Phenomenology is a result of the combination of two interrelated philosophical perspectives- existentialism and phenomenology (Valle, King, & Halling, 1989). "This combination is concerned with a certain perspective on human existence and a certain mode of investigating that existence" (Dale, 1996, p.309). Both philosophies stem from a mutual interest in human experience in the world of everyday life, as is evident in its first-person concreteness (Pollio, & Thompson, 1997).

Phenomenology seeks to describe the essence of the experience and the experiencing person in the world, and this is possible by gathering and interpreting data (Henderson, 1992). In other words, phenomenology was an empirical method that seeks to understand a person's unique experience. Meanwhile, existentialism is the philosophy

concerned with who people are and how they may come to live an authentic life according to Soren Kierkegaard (1813 – 1855).

Eventually, Martin Heidegger (1889-1976) combined existentialism and phenomenology. This was called existential phenomenology, which meant combining a certain perspective on human existence with a certain mode of investigating that existence (Pollio, Henley, & Thompson, 1997). This combination resulted in a holistic psychology that seeks to gain a first-person description of experience (Giorgi, 1970). When existential phenomenology is specifically applied to studies in human psychology, existential phenomenology becomes a sub discipline that seeks to explain the form of structure of human behavior and experience through descriptive techniques (Valle et al., 1989). Thompson, Locander, and Pollio (1989) explained: "Existential phenomenology seeks to be a descriptive science that focuses on the life-world of the individual" (p.136). Description implies what is to be included and what is to be excluded (Ihde, 1986).

Proponents of existential phenomenology would view an athlete as being intricately linked to his or her world whether it is in practice or competition. The two do not exist apart from each other and each individual. Thus a person's encounter with people, places, and things are significant, as are the encounters of those events with the person. Polkinghorne (1989) calls this type of encounter world experience. Henderson (1992) states that if the encounters define experience and if existence depends upon world and person, then experience and existence are inseparable. You cannot really talk about an athlete without talking about his or her world (Dale, 1996). That is why "being" in existential phenomenology is invariably referred to as "being-in-the-world" (Heidegger, 1962). This interdependency is from the notion that existential

phenomenologists feel takes place on a continual basis between the athlete and the world. Either the world is acting upon the person or the person is acting upon the world (Dale, 1996).

Existential phenomenology views an athlete as having a "situated freedom" where the opportunity and obligation is present for the athlete to make choices within the framework of the given situation that is being presented by the world (Valle et al., 1980). Existential phenomenological research is the precise, clear, and systematic description of the meaning of human consciousness (Polkinghorne, 1989). The activity of consciousness is related to the phenomenological concept of intentionality, a consciousness where the phenomena show themselves or are revealed (Valle et. al., 1989). According to Ihde (1986), every experienced object reflects the experiencing, and intentionality is the term used to describe the interrelatedness of the experienced and the experiencing. Ihde (1986) believes that intentionality describes the directional shape of the experience. Consequently, an existential phenomenological researcher, then is concerned with description, experience, and intentionality; and these must be considered as the researcher seeks the structural essence of some event as experienced by some person.

Part Two- Procedures

The procedures that were used for the research were consistent with the recommendations of Pollio et al. (1997) and Thomas Pollio (2002). These methods were: *Exploring Researcher Bias and Bracketing Interview, Data Collection, Data Analysis, and Confirming Thematic Structure.*

Exploring Researcher Bias and Bracketing Interview

The researcher participated in a phenomenological bracketing interview to be aware of her own biases regarding the experience of becoming a professional golfer in the Philippines. Subsequent analysis of the bracketing interview revealed several biases, which included the belief that deliberate practice is a key element to the experience of an elite athlete, the belief that elite athletes have been exposed to the sport at a young age, and the belief that elite golfers use mental skills to enhance their performance. The researcher's knowledge about the stage of an athlete's development might affect how follow up questions were asked during the interview. Based on these results the researcher made an effort to avoid introducing her biases when conducting the interviews, and during the process of data analysis (Thomas & Pollio, 2002).

Participants

Participants were eligible to participate in this phenomenological study by having experienced the phenomenon and their willingness to talk to the researcher regarding their experiences (Thomas & Pollio, 2002). Two types of sampling were used to identify and recruit participants for the study. Criterion sampling was used in order to assure the quality of the participants. The specific criteria included: (a) must be at least 18 years of age, (b) born and raised in the Philippines (have lived in the Philippines for more than 10 years), (c) have participated or is currently participating in the Philippine golf tour, and (d) must be able to express themselves in English since the interview will be conducted in English. Additionally, snowball sampling was used which allowed the researcher to

access additional respondents by way of referral within the circle of professional golfers in the Philippines (Berg, 1988).

After getting the contact information of the participants, the researcher sent them a mobile message regarding the study. The message contained the purpose and inclusion criteria of the study. Since PGT is the main circuit of professional golf in the Philippines (PGT, 2012), the researcher chose PGT members as participants. There were 8 golfers who agreed to participate in the study.

According to PGT, in order to qualify for the tour, the golfer must have a handicap of two (max 2.4 index) under the USGA handicapping system issued by a golf club under the Unified National Handicapping System. Additionally, members need to earn their tour cards before they can participate in the tour. A Filipino golfer can become a member of PGT by succeeding in an entry tournament which is called qualifying school.

Data Collection

An interview schedule was set for golfers who have met the inclusion criteria and those who have agreed to participate in the study. The interviews were conducted over Skype due to the geographical location of the interviewer and the interviewee, and all interviews were digitally audio-recorded. Furthermore, all interview transcripts and audio files were stored on a password-protected computer, maintained for 5 years and then destroyed.

Before each interview, the researcher asked the participant to sign the informed consent form. Additionally, the researcher went through the demographics form (Appendix C) with the participants at the start of the interview. The demographics form

will included information such as the age, gender, ethnicity, number of years on the PGT, number of competitions competed on the professional tour, age they started playing golf, and average number of hours spent on practice per day and per week. Each participant was given a pseudonym for the purposes of keeping their identity anonymous.

The researcher began each interview with the following question: "When you think about your experience of becoming a professional golfer in the Philippines, what stands out for you?" This open-ended question encouraged participants to answer with a wide variety of undirected responses regarding the question (Dale, 1996). Based on the answer of the respondent, follow up questions were asked. A second question was asked based on the response to the initial question, and this continued throughout the interview (Dale, 1996). This method allowed the participant to be the expert on the subject and in control of the interview, while it was the researcher's responsibility to focus on the process of asking relevant and effective questions (Dale, 1996).

The goal of the interview was to acquire first-person description of some specified domain of experience (Thompson, Locander, & Pollio, 1989). It was also different from other qualitative approaches because it emphasizes the participant's experienced meaning rather than a description of his or her explicit actions or behavior. It tried to make the distinction between what constitutes itself as part of a person's awareness and what might exist "outside" of that experience (Dale, 1996). All participants controlled the length and content of the interviews, while the researcher asked follow up questions that clarified the participants' previous comments (Polkinhorne, 1989). Interviews lasted from 30 – 60 minutes. To ensure the participant has covered he/she wants to discuss in relation to their experience a final question was asked "is there anything else you would like to add

regarding your experience." This question was asked several times until the participant was entirely happy that they have been about to discuss what was most important to them.

Additionally, an implicit assumption of this procedure is that central or personally relevant issues will emerge repeatedly throughout the dialogue (Polkinghorne, 1989). In this process, the researcher was impartial to the different experiences of the participant. Additionally, the structure of the theme emerged by focusing the interview on distinct situations and action sequences that are particular to the theme (Dale, 1996). According to Parker (1994), when the statements of a participant are ambiguous, the interviewer should ask prompting questions. These prompting questions should be descriptive in natures and phrased in the participant's vocabulary (e.g., phrases such as " how did you feel when"). Asking the question "Why?" was not encouraged as this type of question can be perceived as requests for rationalizations and can render feelings of prejudgment and prompt defensive responses (Argyris, 1982).

Data Analysis

After each interview, the audio recording was transcribed verbatim, and a copy of the transcript was sent to the participant in order to verify the accuracy and the content of the transcription. After the approval from the participants, an interpretive research group at Barry University reviewed the transcripts and assisted in the analysis.

The interpretative group was composed of Barry University faculty members and graduate students who helped in the analysis (Thomas & Pollio, 2002). All members of the group accomplished a third party confidentiality form (Appendix B) before engaging in the analysis of data. Each member was provided with a copy of the transcripts and

were encouraged to take down notes. One of the members of the group read the transcript aloud, while one of the group members read the transcripts silently. During the readings, the group paused from time to time to discuss themes, and interpret meanings that have emerged from the transcripts. The transcripts were collected at the end of the session by the researcher for an in depth analysis of themes.

The interpretative group supplemented different perspectives that were needed for data analysis to avoid any biases that the researcher had. Thomas and Pollio (2002) stated, that "All proposed thematic interpretations are continuously challenged until group members agree that an interpretation is supported by text." (p.34)

The objective of empirical phenomenological research is to discover the meaning and commonality of a phenomenon as revealed by several individuals through their personal experiences (Creswell, 2007). Thus, the first step in the data analysis process was to read each transcript multiple times in order to gain a sense of the experience as a whole entity. After this, significant statements that were directly related to the phenomenon being studied was extracted. During this phase, *meaning units* (Côté, Salmela, Baria & Russell, 1993) emerged from significant statements. These formulated meaning units were put into clusters of themes or categories (Tesch, 1990). Hermeneutic procedures were used to cluster meaning units into distinct subthemes and major themes. Also, efforts were made to interpret specific *meaning units* in relation to the participant's entire transcript (Gadamer, 1975).

Dale (1996) suggests that during this time, it is important that the researcher referred to the original data to see if anything has been deleted or added. If contradictory

themes emerged, they were considered because they might be important indications of something that was missing in the earlier part of the analysis. Next, the results of the analysis were taken and a detailed description of the phenomenon and a statement of the basic structure were formed (Polkinghorne, 1989).

Developing/Confirming Thematic Structure

To interpret data, Pollio et al., (1993) indicated that there are two primary interpretative procedures that needs to be considered when interpreting lived experiences: (a) bracketing and (b) the hermeneutic circle.

Bracketing. The bracketing interview allowed the researcher to engage in self-reflection of the phenomenon under investigation and her involvement, knowledge, and presuppositions concerning the phenomenon. To aid in overcoming obstacles, the researcher rendered the interpretation of the data in the participant's language or conduct an interpretation of data in a group setting.

In interpreting data in the participant's language, the experience was allowed to stand on its own without the researcher attempting to add other experiences described by another athlete in a different situation. The objective was to understand the meaning of this athlete's "context of the reflected experience" (Thompson et al., 1989, p.140) and used his words in describing the experience. Being able to stay at the level of the experience of the participant and use his own words when describing the experience, assured the researcher a more experienced-near description.

In addition, the use of a research group allowed the researcher to remain at the level of the experience of the participant, which was unique to the phenomenological

interview method. A research group (Dale, 1994; Thompson et el., 1989) was composed of the researcher and other individual s that were familiar with the methodology of phenomenology. The research group facilitated bracketing of the researcher's assumptions by offering a broader perspective than that of a single individual and noticed patterns that the researcher might have missed. The group followed a step-by-step approach that included familiarization with the data, searching for themes, reviewing themes, defining and naming themes, and analysis of data. Members of the group were given transcripts of the interview. During the interpretation of the transcripts, a member of the group read aloud the questions asked by the researcher. After that, the researcher read the remarks of the participant aloud to allow the group to have a more defined picture of the nature of the data. In addition to bracketing, more accurate information of interview text in the group was facilitated by using the hermeneutic procedure, which was the procedure in which there is a continuous process of relating a part of the text to the whole of the text (Dale, 1996).

Hermeneutic procedure. Hermeneutic procedure was implemented by using idiographic interpretation and nomothetic interpretation (Dale, 1996). Idiographic interpretation involved taking the transcript of each participant as a case study and describe in thematic detail the experience of that certain individual. The descriptions provided a summary of interpretations, such as relations and patterns of each interview.

Nomothetic description was a process that required the researcher to interpret each participant's interview in relation to all of the other interviews. Researchers found ways wherein one experience resembles another. After determining these nomothetic

themes, a description was done to capture what the experience meant for each participant and rendered this meaning in terms of the participant (Dale, 1996).

After bracketing and implementing the hermeneutic procedure, the researcher then developed a list of significant statements. These statements contained information about how individuals have experienced becoming a professional golfer in the Philippines. These significant statements (horizonalization of the data) were listed and were treated to be of equal value. Eventually, a list of non-repetitive and non-overlapping statements emerged. These significant statements were grouped into a larger unit of information, called *meaning units or themes.* Consequently, a description of *what* the participants in the study experienced regarding the phenomenon was written. This was known as a *textural description* of the experience, which often included verbatim examples of what happened.

After the textural description, the researcher wrote description of *how* the experience happened. This involved reflecting on the setting and context in which the phenomenon was experienced (also called as *structural description)*. Lastly, the researcher combined both textural and structural descriptions in order to come up with a composite description of the phenomenon. This part was the *essence* of the study, which involved a long paragraph that informs the reader *what* the participants experienced with the phenomenon and *how* they experienced it (i.e, the development of a final thematic structure).

CHAPTER IV

RESULTS

For this study, the final sample of participants (see 4.1) was composed of 8 professional golfers in the Philippines (males) who have played or are still playing on the Philippine Golf Tour (PGT). Participants ranged in age from 23 to 27 years (M= 25; SD= 1.3). The participants on average practiced 40 hours per week (SD = 8.7) and they have been playing at the professional level for an average of 2.8 years with 4 years being the highest and two years being the lowest.

Table 4.1 *Descriptions of Filipino Professional Golfers*

Pseudonym	Years on PGT	Age	Gender	Practice hours per week	# Years Playing Golf
Andy	4	26	Male	42	11
Magic	2	24	Male	40	14
Toffer	4	27	Male	48	17
Bean	4	23	Male	32	12
Beast	2	25	Male	28	14
Hansel	3	26	Male	33	17
Milo	2	25	Male	52	14
Steve	2	24	Male	48	17
(N= 8)	(M= 2.8)	(M= 25, SD=1.3)		(M= 40, SD=8.7)	(M= 14.5, SD= 2.3)

The Thematic Structure

Qualitative analysis of the results revealed 304 meaning units, which were grouped into subthemes and major-themes (See Figure 4.1). The experience of becoming a professional golfer is expressed in five major themes: *Game Development, Support System, Mental Skills, Pressure, and Emotions*. In the following sections, these major themes and their respective subthemes will be discussed in detail.

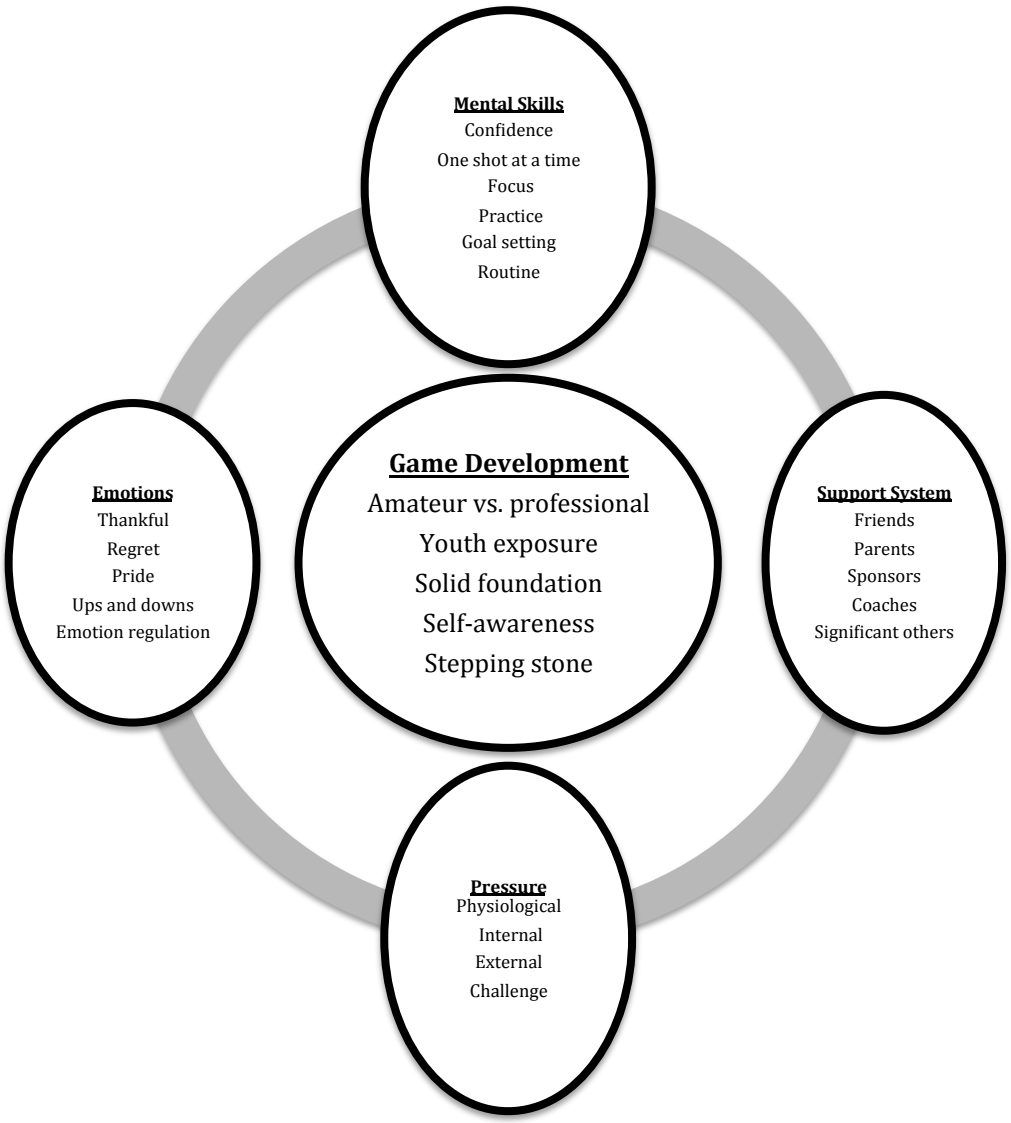

Figure 4.1 Major Themes and Subthemes of Participants' Experience of Becoming a Professional Golfer in the Philippines

Game Development

For all the participants, developing their golf game throughout their years as athletes was a central feature of their experience of becoming professionals on the PGT. Game Development included five subthemes: *Amateur vs. Professional, Youth Exposure, Solid Foundation, Self-Awareness, and Stepping Stone* (see Table 4.2).

Table 4.2 Subthemes and Meaning Units of Participants' Experience of Game Development

Major Theme	Subthemes	Representative Meaning Units
Game Development	Amateur vs. Professional	Comparing amateur vs. professional How making the cut has an impact as to how much money they make Having the opportunity to play in nice golf courses Label as a professional golfer
	Youth exposure	First exposure to the game Junior golf experience Representing the Philippines in international competitions Developed the love for the game
	Solid foundation	Exposure to the game for a long period of time Trusting your swing Trusting your instincts
	Self-awareness	Game evaluation Process oriented
	Stepping stone	Gain experience in the local tour in order to make it to bigger tournaments in Asia

Amateur vs. professional. A main feature of the participants' experiences of becoming a professional was the comparison most of them made regarding what it means to be an amateur versus a professional. Being a professional meant that they passed qualifying school and had moved on to the next level. They were no longer playing just for the love of the game and competition, but they were also playing to earn a living for themselves.

The main difference the participants highlighted was the money that they earned when they made the cut and won a tournament. This is one of the topics that stood out the most during the interviews. For example, Magic mentioned, "Because when you're a pro, your life earning depends on how well you play for the week. Rather than when you were playing amateur, you just love what you're doing and you don't care about the money. That's it."

For some of them, being on the tour meant having the opportunity to compete in tournaments every week. The PGT was more organized and more structured compared to the tournaments that they were exposed to when they were amateurs. Additionally, being able to compete regularly also helped the participants in developing their game because they were exposed to competitive players on a weekly basis. Some of them have realized that playing against the best golfers in the country was an indication that they were no longer amateurs. As described by Andy:

> The fact that I get to play with a lot of good players, which separates the amateur field. I think that's the one that gets me excited and drives me to work hard to be as good as them. When I first turned pro and played my first tournament, I was so

> shit and then looking at these guys play and the scores, it got me to think that hey, this is a different game now, it's not an amateur game anymore, you just have to step it up and it's something that got me to work harder for it.

This perception of the differences in status between the two levels of play and the opportunities that are afforded to professional players was an element that was mentioned by all the participants. For example, when asked about his experience of becoming a professional golfer, Milo stated, "If you're an amateur, things are different, things are more lax, things are easier. But when I started being a professional, everything I did was magnified. Everything came to focus, everything means something."

Further, Andy stated:

> Every time I talk to someone who has a corporate job, they would say, gosh that's so cool. You guys get to travel around, play golf for a living. We play in golf courses around Asia in topnotch condition. You don't play in golf courses that are shitty. That's one experience that I got excited about in turning professional. You get to play on nice greens, nice fairways, long roughs, nice bunkers.

Youth exposure. Before becoming professional golfers, the participants were once children trying to hit the golf ball for the very first time. All of the participants had been playing golf for more than ten years. This meant that they were exposed to the sport at a young age (ages 7-15). Thus, early exposure to the sport was a critical factor in their experience of becoming a Professional Golfer in the Philippines. Their junior golf experiences involved spending their summer vacations on the golf course, playing golf against their friends, and going to the driving range on a daily basis trying to master the

biomechanics of their swing by spending numerous hours hitting golf balls. Milo referred to his junior golf experience by stating, “it’s very important to me because that’s where I developed my love for the game.” Playing as a junior golfer in the Philippines was something that all of the participants had in common. The experience of being a junior golfer was very memorable to Milo because that’s when he started scoring under pars. Milo elaborated on this by saying, “when I qualified for junior world, I was able to finish top 3 in the Philippines to make it. I really felt like I improved a lot because that was the time I was hitting under par. For the first time in my life, I was hitting under pars”.

The manner in which they were exposed to the sport, but more importantly the impact it had on them was explained by Hansel:

> When I started out he would bring me to the range, up to the point that I got hooked, and he put me into the junior golf program, which had its own program in terms of developing junior golfers. To a point that I would join international tournaments where we would fly to Thailand, Malaysia, and Singapore and I was exposed to international competitions and I saw where their levels were at and it pushed me to try harder.

Their exposure to the sport at a young age fueled a love and passion for the game. For example, Bean referred back to his experience as a junior golfer when he was trying to explain his love for the game: “Actually I think I have loved the game the same way when I was a junior golfer. I loved it so much that my room was like a pro shop before. It had a lot of clubs, and gadgets.” By continuing to play the sport as they aged, the golfers were able to acquire a solid foundation for their swing and further develop their love for the game.

Solid foundation. Developing a solid foundation meant that they were working hard to acquire a consistent and automatic swing, and a good short game. In order to achieve consistency, they spent hours practicing on the course and driving range. Andy highlighted this aspect of his experience by stating, "I remember trying to get better everyday and almost every night after school I would go to the driving range and I would hit and work on the things with coach. I'd probably would hit like um 200 balls to 400 to 500 at the range every night."

Additionally, Toffer viewed solid foundation as an importance process enabling him to develop a high level of play. Without the basics, he would not be able to trust his intuitions, which according to him was important in the professional level. He stated, "You got to fix the mechanic part of it, that's the basic, the foundations. But if you want to play at a high level, you have to feel it. It's a two way process, you got to have a good foundation and then you just have to let it flow." Having a good solid foundation for Toffer enabled him to develop his game to the point that he could just play and trust his instincts during competitions.

Some of the participants related the notion of solid foundation to honing a particular part of their game. For example, Steve placed a lot of importance on putting. For him, putting would set him apart from his competition. He mentioned, "it's where I want to improve on the most so that I can gain the competitive advantage because everyone on the tour can hit the ball well and long." Steve wanted to focus his training on putting because for him, it all comes down to putting at the end of the day. Thus, developing a solid foundation allowed them to develop their game in order to be competitive.

Self-awareness.A critical component of developing their game was to critically reflect on themselves and their performance. Thus, for most participants self-awareness involved constantly evaluating their golf game. They knew what it entailed in order to perform better, and did this after a competition and during practice. They were also able to recognize if they had a good game regardless of the outcome.

Out of all the participants, Toffer was the only participant who was able to compete on the Asian Tour, and was able to win a championship. From the local tour, he was able to take his game to the next level because he never stopped challenging himself. He wanted his game to be better than his previous game, and for this to happen, he needed to constantly evaluate his performance. “Each step along the way, you just have to figure out your game and get better. Not everyone does it. It’s like a personal thing, you have to figure yourself out”. Additionally, for Toffer, being aware of what he is capable of was one of the things that was important to him. He cited, “part of being a good golfer is being real. You need to think about who you are as a player, what your skills are, where you stand, and you try to get better from there.”

Being self-aware also meant focusing on yourself and the positive aspect of your game regardless of the outcome. For example, Magic said during the interview that “you know, that feeling that you actually played well instead of comparing yourself to others, you know deep inside that despite with the score that you had for that day, you know you played really well”. Steve also talked about being content with one’s game and score. He said “Your mind will be at peace and then you’ll be more content with yourself because you know you did what you can and that’s it.”

According to Steve, he learned this notion of being content with oneself from reading Dr. Bob Rotella's books. Similarly, Bean talked about how reading the book "The Way of a Superior Man" (Deida, 1997) helped him reconnect to his purpose. He stated, "The last few months, I read the book. I reassessed my purpose and went for it. The love for the game, for golf came. I felt that I really want to move forward with golf" (Bean). Thus, a key aspect of self-awareness for some of the participants was to utilize resources in order to gain a better perspective on the game and connect to one's motivation.

Stepping-stone. The participants' increased self-awareness led them to realize that the PGT was a good tour in which they could harness their skills, and work on their foundation to prepare them for bigger tours around the world. All of the players mentioned that the PGT was a stepping-stone for other tournaments in Asia (e.g., Asian Tour and Japan Tour). Since the standard of living is not high in the Philippines, they discussed that it was cost effective to gain some experience on the PGT first. Toffer, four year veteran of the tour, expressed this most effectively when he talked about his game development on the PGT. According to him:

> Being a tour player in the Philippines allows you to really develop your game no matter what level you're in. You know you're competitive, you've done something in amateur golf, you want to get better. There's no other place to get better, in the most cost effective way than in the Philippine tour and then move on to the Asian development tour and then the Asian tour and you know, go from there. It's a great stepping-stone for aspiring golfers to play and get better. I got

> better each year. Every year constant progress, I mean nowhere in the world is that possible unless you're willing to spend 50 – 60 thousand dollars a year.

Magic, a 24 year old professional golfer, also saw the PGT as an essential means to achieving his ultimate goal. He said, "I saw it as a stepping-stone for something better like the Asian tour, or probably making it to the PGA". For most of the participants, they knew that the PGT could help them build their confidence, gain more experience, and have the freedom to try out new techniques. They discussed that the level of play may not be as high as on the Asian tour but there's still good competition because some of the players that compete on the Asian tour also play on the PGT.

A final aspect the participants mentioned regarding the use of the PGT as a stepping-stone was the ability to focus on a natural style of play in order to develop one's game further. For example, Bean mentioned:

> It's very natural in the Philippines, you get less guys who are cluttered mentally. You get less information technically, less studies on how you play the game. It's more natural, based on homegrown players. That's a big difference.

Since the PGT is made of local talent and some of the players do not have access to technology that is readily available to players in other higher-level tours, such as the Asian tour and PGA tour, the participants mentioned that this allowed them to use this level of play to as an uninhibited means of preparing themselves to progress to the next level.

Support System

Due to the amount of time that they spent with each other, the participants were able to develop friendships within the tour. They motivated each other and were each other's support system. Aside from their friends, the participants also received support from others. Support System included five subthemes, highlighting the key individuals besides friends from whom they got support: *Friends*, *Parents, Sponsors, Coach, and Significant Others* (see Table 4.3).

Table 4.3 Subthemes and Meaning Units of Participants' Experience of Friends

Major Theme	Subthemes	Representative Meaning Units
Support System	Friends	Shared experiences Motivation Negative influence
	Parents	Monetary support from the parents Emotional support Negative aspect
	Sponsors	Tournament organization Supply of golf clubs and gear needed for playing Monetary support from individuals
	Coaches	Mentors Parents as first coach Chemistry between athlete and coach Physical, Technical and Mechanical aspect of the game
	Significant Others	Inspiration Pressure

Friends. The most relevant to their experience of social support was their relationships with their friends. As professional athletes, all the participants spent a lot of time on the driving range and at the golf course. Since golf is an individual sport, they don't have teammates but they all mentioned the importance of having friends that played the same sport as they did, and the influential role that this played in various aspects of their experience of becoming a professional golfer.

Most of the participants have known their golf friends for a very long time. All of the participants reported having been friends with the other professional Filipino golfers for more than two years, and some friendships even go back to their days as junior golfers. Toffer , the oldest amongst the participants, valued the friendships that were formed on his path to becoming a professional golfer in the Philippines. He said:

> It's the friendships you form along the way. You see your buddies going through the same thing. You're close to them because you see them in all their forms. Travelling together in tournaments you're with them 24 hours, you see everyone's personalities, and you get closer. You spend more time with them more than your girl friends, your wives, and your family. The friendships, the bonds that I made with my buddies, the China tour, Asian tour, Philippine tour. The Wolfpack, these are the closest dudes I ever had in my life, I'm inviting them to my wedding. It's because of the challenge we go through together in golf and the time we spend with each other.

All of the participants were able to travel, compete, and practice together. These were their shared experiences, and they also had a common goal. Spending a significant amount of time with each other enabled them to form a connection. This bond

strengthened every time they would compete in tournaments because they were all experiencing the ups and downs of the game together. They understood each other because they were all golfers. For example, Andy stated "When you're playing against friends, you can talk to them, it's more comforting. You talk while walking down the fairway, it makes a difference, playing with someone you know versus with people that you don't know."

A key feature of this shared experience was the comfort in knowing each other and having the same goals. For example, Beast stated:

> You know they say golf is a solo sport, but knowing that you have friends on tour, friends who help you out, friends that have the same goal, is good. It's a feeling you don't get that often compared to different tours, like I'd imagine myself being different if I were in the Asian tour, or in the US where everyone is to be killed or to be eaten alive.

Hansel best highlighted the role of these shared experiences in the paragraph below:

> When we travel, when we compete, we would always be in the same room. Every time we played in tournaments, we were still together after so we talk about what happened in the day. You share all that, it really helped our bond as a group. Experience wise we were at the same footing. It was really nice to have a group where you experience the tour in the same way. It was good, it wasn't just a group that we practiced with. It was also a support group, mentally and emotionally.

Not only did they find that their friendships enabled them to share their experiences of becoming professionals, but they also highlighted the motivational role of

these relationships. For Milo, who was still new on the tour, watching his friend succeed, motivated him to improve as a golfer. He said, “Like Carl’s wins, inspires you to be better than them, inspires you to do the shots that you can do. Inspires you to learn from them.” Steve also highlighted this when he stated, “They motivated you because you can see all of them working hard and we all share the same goal to be the best out there.” He continued, “We play other courses together, so we can get out of the norm, we will try to play a different course every week so we learn more about where we are going to play. We basically keep on pushing each other.” Thus, they also used their friendships to elevate the level of play for each other.

It is noteworthy to mention that the participants didn’t always view having friends on tour as having a positive outcome. Only one participant mentioned the negative influence of one of his friends on the tour. However, it seemed like a key part of his story regarding his experience of being a professional. Rather than the shared experience and goals or motivational influence of friends, Milo mentioned that friends can sometimes be a distraction. He stated, “Distractions are anything that’s gonna hinder you from trying to practice as much as you can so that’s going out, clubbing, drinking, that’s hanging out with friends.”

Parents. There was a constant support experienced by all the participants from their parents. The participants described how the parental support was at times negative and other times positive. Magic experienced both negative and positive support from his parents. He narrated it as:

> Of course, if you want to be a top class athlete, the support needs to come from your parents because in the beginning any athlete would never make it. There’s no

> overnight victory, it's a gradual process and it takes time and commitment. Now if your parents aren't as dedicated and they have the old school mindset of thinking where you have to put in the time now. You're young earn money in order to support yourself. In a way, they saw it as who else is capable of helping out the business as of the moment. There came a time where I had to choose between playing golf and helping out in the family business.

Magic eventually quit playing golf and when asked why he chose to quit golf, he said, "because all the pressure came from them" [parents]. Later on he added that he ended up choosing the family business over playing golf because his parents forced him.

For another participant (Milo), he sees his father as someone that he looked up to, who sacrificed and supported him in both emotional and tangible ways in order to help him achieve his golf goals:

> My dad is my idol, ever since when I was a kid, me and my sisters would always be involved in a lot of physical activities because my dad was an athlete, so we wanted to achieve a lot of things in sports. So me being the only boy in the siblings, I was encouraged to do well. I also wanted to prove something, if I can be greater than what my dad achieved in sports so, he's very influential, he was always there to back me up, he gave up a lot of things, um to sustain my junior golf career. My dad is in the military in the government and if you're in the military, you're not really going to earn a lot of money and golf being a very expensive sport, he kind of gave up a lot of things in life like his collection of guns and all that.

Hansel discussed the different support that he got from both of his parents. He said, “In terms of support in the sport, on how to get better, my dad was there. In terms of emotional support, when I had a bad tournament, I had my mom.”

Sponsors. The participants also mentioned that sponsors were a key feature of the support they received while becoming a professional. Sponsors came in different forms. Some participants received sponsorships from known golf brands, while some received sponsorships from different individuals. Milo explained this when he said:

> At that time I was ready to work after graduating and then something came up. My dad's friend, who's still my sponsor told me, "*You know what, after graduating, I'll support you, I'll support your training, I'll take you to the States and all that*". Then I asked him why are you doing this, and then the guy said, “*I was a baseball player before for the national team and then I gave up on it and started business and all that. So I'm giving you this chance to see what you can do in golf, see what you can do professionally, see if you can do something with it"*. I discussed this with my dad and my dad said give it a try, for two years, play amateur golf.

Sponsors not only provided financial support, but participants also mentioned that getting sponsors motivated them to put more effort in the game. “Just being sponsored by Titleist means a lot to me. It also motivated me to put more effort into it and try to improve my rank this year, that’s why I’ve been grinding it out for the past few months” (Milo).

Toffer also said, “sponsors play a big role in allowing the players to develop”. Moreover, Andy associated sponsorships with playing well, as a means of getting external feedback on one’s success and level of play as well as a benefit of added resources:

> You know, sponsorships come in when you start playing good. For me that would be Ping that came to me since 2013. I get clubs, gloves, caps, and golf balls for free. Golf bags, clubs I mean it, from drivers to putters. It’s been a really big help, adjustment for the clubs that I need to do. Change grips, everything they will do it for me. It is something, that when you turn professional you get free stuff, if you’re playing good you’re getting free stuff. It’s one thing you really work forward to” (Andy).

Some of the participants discussed the role that the tour has played in elevating the level of golf in the country and providing a greater opportunity for one to become a professional golfer. They mentioned that the PGT would not have been possible without the help of ICTSI, the company that organized the PGT. Toffer narrated, “ICTSI was huge for them to put up tournaments like that help players a lot. Since this tour has been established you’re really seeing some results in the competitiveness of Philippine Golf in the world stage, there’s progress there.”

Coaches. Coaches have been very influential in the development of the participants’ golf games. They discussed the trajectory of coaches they’ve had over the years as well as the various influences coaches had in their becoming professionals from

teaching them the fundamentals of the game and helping them develop their golf swings to providing guidance and serving as their mentors.

Sometimes coaches were chosen for purely game-related, technical reasons. For example, Andy mentioned that he was really concerned about the mechanical aspects of his swing. Thus, he chose a coach that had the technology to analyze his swing. "J3 is my coach and he has a trackman. It analyzes the numbers of everything, swing path, swing direction, angle of attack, how many degrees, and it's really popular now in the PGA tour and China tour" (Andy).

For other participants, however, coaches had a broader impact on them and their game. For example, Toffer's experience with his coaches is best understood in the paragraph below:

> You know, good work ethic, basic foundations of the golf game. He was like my second father the way he took care of me, played so much with his son. Then you got TB here who was a mentor. They were more than just my coaches, they were also my mentors. They super cared about my golf game, looked after me, I'm grateful to them that they cared so much and made sure I was in the right track.

Throughout their golfing career, the participants experienced being coached by different coaches for different reasons. For Hansel, his first coach was his Dad. "I remember before my dad would be the one teaching me and then it came to a point that he told his friends that I wasn't listening to him anymore. Technically I'm better than him already. He would make sure that I got better coaching" (Hansel). He further explains his

experience with coaches and highlights the importance of the coach-athlete relationship by saying:

> Throughout my career I had four coaches pretty much, one coach started me out you know the basics. One coach was more advanced, and one coach was Bong Lopez. Even until now he was one of the top coaches in the Philippines. Bong was more expensive compared to the two and that's when I realized my dad really wanted me to get better. After that I'm with Andrew. I would say, as a coach it's not just enough that all your instruction is technical. Your coach has to teach you a lot about the sport. In terms of how to compete at a higher level, mentally, so I was fortunate enough to be coached by Andrew because he's one of the coaches in the Philippines and he's a nerd. I guess we kind of jived in that sense, in how he teaches. Yeah, I think it helps that you jive with your coach in terms of how he does instruction and how you receive and analyze information.

Significant others. The last group of individuals that were mentioned by the participants involved the support received from significant others. Just as was described regarding the role of parents, significant others had both positive and negative impacts on the golfers.

For example, Magic discussed how he was motivated by his girlfriend. "I guess one of the factors that motivated me was my current girlfriend at that time. I saw it as an opportunity to earn money. But at the same time, it was time consuming, that I really had to put in a lot of sacrifices which ended up with me breaking up with my girlfriend at that time." Meanwhile for Steve, who was one of the rookies on tour, realized that his

significant other was a source of pressure. “Like my ex, like it or not, she wasn’t really helping, before, I would think what would happen if I hit a bad shot, what would she think, now it’s just me. I started to see myself more, started focusing on myself more” (Steve).

Having a good support system was one of the key elements in becoming a professional golfer in the Philippines. They were present throughout the experience of the participants. Another key element that was impactful throughout their experience of becoming professionals was their use of mental skills.

Mental Skills

The third theme that played a role in the participants’ experience of becoming a professional golfer was *Mental Skills.* All participants described having used mental skills on their road to becoming a professional golfer on the PGT. Mental skills consisted of six sub-themes: *Confidence, One shot at a time, Focus, Practice, Goal Setting, and Routine* (see Table 4.4).

Table 4.4 Subthemes and Meaning Units of Participant's Experience of Mental Skills

Major Theme	Subthemes	Representative Meaning Units
Mental Skills	Confidence	Execution of a shot Committing to a shot Self-belief Scoring under par Making the cut Winning tournaments Finishing on the top 10
	One shot at a time	Being in the present moment Letting go of a bad shot
	Focus	On and off switch Experiencing flow Emotion regulation
	Practice	Perfect practice Discipline Motivation Thought process
	Goal setting	Short-term goals Long-term goal
	Routine	Cross training Physical and Tactical

Confidence. All of them had an overall belief in their ability to execute a shot, which meant they were able to commit to their shots more. Hence, making confidence the number one mental skill that was frequently discussed by all of them. Further, confidence for them meant that they were competent, and these were supported by their achievements.

Trust was a key feature of the participants' confidence in their golf game and their development. Confidence for Bean, who is the youngest amongst the participants, meant that he believed in his execution of his shot because he is relaxed. He discussed it in detail by saying, "Confidence is like a relaxation when you know everything. I mean when you know that when you execute, the result is going to be more to your favor than not. It's more of trust in the execution."

For one participant, confidence also related back to the advantages of having built a solid foundation. Specifically Toffer mentioned that playing at a higher level meant that you have the basic foundations that will enable you to trust your intuition. As narrated by Toffer:

> You got to fix the mechanic part of it, that's the basic, the foundations. But if you want to play at a high level, you have to feel it. You have to trust your intuition. You have to kind of just get the ball in the hole, and getting the ball in the hole, there's not a perfect way to do it. You just got to have the feel, that's why you got to have the, instead of having the tool in your hand, you got to have a paintbrush. You have to say, I got this down. It's a two way process, you got to have a good foundation and then you just have to let it flow.

Steve also mentioned trusting himself more in the statement below:

> Trusting myself more, sort of with putting. What I like to do now is I'd like to call it "see it and roll it", so when I putt, I see the line and I just putt it. I go with my first instinct on reading greens because when you start thinking twice, that's when

things start to go wrong, you start doubting and then the nerve comes into it because you're unsure.

Trust was clearly a key consequence of having confidence in oneself and one's game. With regards to what helped them develop this confidence in order to have this trust, the participants discussed the role of accomplishment. Their achievements were proof that they were competent. The first time scoring under par, winning a tournament, and the first time making a cut are some of the achievements that helped increase the participants' level of confidence. For example, Beast, 25 years old, described that his confidence came the first time he scored under par in a tournament. He stated, "Finishing under par is a good feeling because you know you have broken the barrier between being an amateur and being a professional because of your score and having it more consistent is a nostalgic feeling."

For some participants, accomplishment was more of a general sense of one's achievement. For example, Magic explained how believing that you played a good game is one of the factors of why he liked playing professional golf. As explained by Magic: "You know, that feeling that you actually played well instead of comparing yourself to the others, you know deep inside that despite with the score that you had for that day, you know that you had played well."

Other participants mentioned the role that the accomplishment of playing in higher level tournaments had in developing confidence. For example, after winning a major tournament in the Philippines, Toffer was able to compete in other Asian tours, which increased his confidence because of his status. As Toffer said:

> I took my game to the next level that allowed me to play Asian tour events. Gave me exceptions to Asian tour events and then after a few months I told myself I think I can play web.com. Then I went through Q-school in 2014, went through the first, second, and final stage of Q-school. I was a member of the web.com tour because of my status.

Finally, confidence was discussed as something that came from the accomplishments that one had at particular times during their journey toward becoming a professional. For example, Milo's confidence was really high during his last year in junior golf. According to him:

> I'd say during my last year at junior golf, I qualified for junior world. I was able to finish top 3 in the Philippines to make it, that's the time when I was about to enter college. I trained during summer for two months, and I really felt like I improved a lot because that was the time I was hitting under par.

One shot at a time. Most of them placed a significant importance on their ability to let go of bad shots and how it was able to help them perform better. Lastly, being in the present moment helped them develop a more positive attitude towards the game.

When asked about his mindset, Beast related it to being in the present moment. As described by Beast:

> Mindset can be explained in a lot of ways, depending on what kind of attitude you take when you play golf. For me, mindset is how to stay calm, how to be more neutral, how to be more in the ground than thinking more about. It's basically living your shot at the moment.

Additionally, Bean also talked about how being in the present moment helped him relax. Bean stated, “When you’re in the moment, you just accept it and you just let it go, it’s like everything seems to be fine”.

Being able to stay in the present moment and then move on from moment to moment was also related to the development of one’s confidence. For example, Steve thought that his ability to move on from shot to shot and recognize his positive experiences helped him build his confidence.

> Before I did a three putt, I wouldn’t care, I move on and birdie the next hole. I forget the bad things that happened, and then I would cherish the good things that happened, that’s where I built my confidence and I see myself playing well and the ability to forget bad shots. Yeah, the ability to forget the bad shots is going to help you more.

Focus. Focus can be a general term for a lot of factors in golf. But focus for the participants meant having an off and on switch and being able to experience flow. For example, Andy talked about how being able to shift his focus benefited his performance: “You know when you’re in the zone sometimes, when you don’t talk to anyone, it’s really bad to stay in the zone for a really long period of time, that’s why a lot of us have that on and off switch.”

Another participant got over his bad shots by focusing on his momentum. Magic explains it more:

> Like I said, I believe in momentum. I do my best in the next hole to just break-even and try to slowly get back into my momentum instead of forcing myself to

> get back. There are two ways to do it. It's either you mess up more or you play better but if you slowly get back to your momentum then you get a better result out of it.

For Toffer, experiencing flow meant that almost everything was automatic. Everything went his way and he never really had to force himself to focus. "I was hitting it so well, one of the rare times where I don't even have to think about my swing and then making putts like crazy. Yeah, converting birdies, going 16 under in three rounds so including 65, 65 in the last two" (Toffer).

Practice. Practice for the participants was practicing with a purpose or a goal in mind. It helped them to effectively utilize the time that they spend in practice and become more self-aware. They paid more attention on what they wanted to achieve in practice, instead of focusing on how long they should practice.

For example, Beast described how purposeful practice had an effect on his performance on the golf course:

> Effort is not saying that you need to practice a lot. It means that you have to have a perfect practice while doing the effort. Perfect practice is understanding what you're doing while you're practicing. While others just tend to practice because they want to fix something. Others just practice without learning anything from it, but knowing what to fix knowing what to do after is different from just hitting balls everyday. Because if you know what you're doing in practice, it helps you realize what to do in the golf course as well.

Deliberate practice entails discipline. Some of the participants were not just disciplined during practice, it carried into the way they lived their life. Milo spoke about discipline and practice when he was younger, and related it to being a good player and sacrificing to achieve one's goals. He explained:

> When you're trying to make it to the national team and you're trying to make it in competitions abroad, you have to have discipline, you have to practice, you have to have practice and all that so growing up I was never allowed to go out. If I go out, that happens once in a blue moon. Everything was measured down to a schedule.

Now that he's older, Milo described how dedicating time for practice has shown results in his game which he realized would get him closer to his goal:

> Before that tournament, I gave myself 2 weeks to practice. From 7am-4pm and I told myself, let's see what you can do with that. I haven't done that in the past two years. I was a slacker basically, so I saw what it could do in 2 weeks you, can be in 10th place. I realized what if I did this for a month or two or even three months? Let's see what it can do for me.

Another participant placed a high amount of value on practice based from what he said, "For me it's practice, practice, practice. I could take a week or two off. But I need it. I would say I have to practice" (Andy). For Andy, one of the most experienced participants, practice meant having the opportunity to improve on a particular part of his game. He stated:

> I think about a lot of things during practice. I think about my swing and because I've always worked as a mechanical way, I always think about the proper

positions for me. Trying to improve, you know there are days when things don't work and right away I would be like, gosh how do I fix that, it's just a constant thing that goes in my head. I gotta fix this, I gotta fix that.

Goal setting. Most of the participants had short-term and long-term goals, which they mentioned in the interviews. Their goals were related to their ongoing game development. Their short-term goals mostly involved making cuts and having goals related to their game performance, while long-term goals mostly involved being able to compete in tours that were more competitive like the Asian Tour and the PGA.

Some participants discussed how short term goals would help them achieve their long term goals. For example, one participant's short-term goal was related to his swing that he believes will eventually lead to his long-term goal. As Bean described, "Like say, say, three months from now, I wanna be like this with my golf swing. I wanna have these attributes when it's like now I wanna do this to my game. So from this, I set this, and I maintain."

Other participants discussed maintaining a sole focus on short terms goals. For example, Bean doesn't have a long-term goal because he would rather focus on improving and achieving his short-term goals. He said, "Day by day and achieve my short-term goals, and then I believe that if I achieve my short-term goals and I set new ones, the big picture will look good."

Regardless of the focus, the participants discussed that their goals were key for helping them to continue on their path of pursuing higher levels of professional play. For Beast, his short-term goal is to be a good player on the PGT, while his long-term goal is

to be able to compete in the Asian tour. “My goal is to become a knowledgeable player in the PGT and to be able to compete in the Asian Tour” (Bean). A few minutes later, Bean added “I want to make it in the Japan, Asian, and the local tour. Japan tour because money wise, it’s very life sustaining when you make the cut. Asian Tour is for its publicity.”

Finally, goals were also connected to the bigger picture of sport and life as well as one’s passion for the sport. For example, Milo mentioned “ My short term goal is to become a champion, but my long term is to be able to be successful in the sport long enough to support my own, my family in the future. Get paid to play the sport that I love.”

Routines. The experience of the golfers of becoming a professional golfer in the Philippines also included having routines. Routines for them were the activities they perform that were not directly related to golf but could eventually help their golf game. Other routines that were directly related to golf were mental strategies and technical routines. According to Bean, “having a routine is good. When you’re presented with a situation that you know is chaotic, you would know how to deal with it”. Bean also had workout routines to integrate other forms of training into his game development. He mentioned “like yesterday, I played and I practiced and then I went to the gym and I did yoga after. That’s kind of like my routine and then depending on my playing schedule during the week, I’ll rotate the three”.

Lastly, Steve discussed how having a consistent physical and tactical routine has helped him in with the mental and physical aspect of his golf performance. As thoroughly narrated by Steve:

> Actually, with every shot, you do your physical routine. You take your practice swings, and see where you want to aim. Then go to your address position, look at your target and as soon as I get back to the ball, exhale and then just hit. That prevents any negative thoughts from entering my mind because I only see the target that way.

Having a routine incorporated in their deliberate practice, as well as the use of mindfulness has helped the participants cope with pressure. Pressure came in many forms and has affected their game in one way or another.

Pressure

Most of the participants have experienced pressure towards becoming a professional golfer, and while they were competing on the PGT. The participants felt pressured when they thought about the weight of the shot, or how important it was to make that shot. They were aware that it was self-imposed, so most of them came up with coping strategies to handle pressure. Even though they were aware that they needed to approach it one shot a time, they couldn't help but feel pressure because of the external elements that factor in (e.g. parents, media, and money). Pressure consisted of four subthemes: *Physiological, Internal, External, and Challenge* (see Table 4.5).

Table 4.5 Subthemes and Meaning Units of Participant's Experience of Pressure

Major Theme	Subthemes	Representative Meaning Units
Pressure	Physiological	Cold sweats Pulse increases
	Internal	Self-imposed pressure Self-doubt Managing pressure Improve as a golfer Course management
	External	Expectation of other people Earning money Making the cut/ ranking in the tour Winning tournaments Media Situational - tournament
	Challenge	Playing against other skilled players Challenging oneself to be better Simulation of pressure (betting)

Physiological. When discussing the pressure they experienced on their journey towards becoming professional golfers, the participants highlighted the physiological aspects. For example, one participant knew that he was feeling pressure because he saw and felt a physical response to pressure. He stated:

> That was really difficult, walking off the 18th hole. I remember I was having cold sweats, it was a par 3 um I was 1 under at that point. The hole was on the left side of the green, then I put my ball on the hazard on the right, 30-40 yards to the right. I felt pressure right there because I knew that I had the chance to make the cut, but I made my bogey so even for the day. So all I had to do on the next hole was to put it on the fairway. It was a par 5, 3 on 2 putts and I managed to do that

and I made the cut.

One participant talked about the manifestation of pressure through increased heart rate. Beast stated how he doesn't want that extra pulse during high-pressured situations. "So knowing that I need to make a putt because it will make a difference, for sure it will give you that little doubtness and that little pulse that you don't want" (Beast).

Internal. Most participants were aware that pressure is mostly mental. Throughout the interviews, the participants discussed pressure and how it was inextricably connected to confidence and self-doubt. Thus, it was clear that on their road to becoming professional golfers, the internal pressure that was experienced as well as the positive and negative effects of that pressure were key aspects of their development. For example, Toffer loved the rush that came with pressure. He believed that "Golf for fun is nice, but tournament golf is like a rush. It's addiction for me. It's the pressure you put on yourself. I love playing good for myself, playing good against myself and against competition".

To add to what Toffer mentioned, Beast put a lot of importance on handling pressure. "How to deal with golf under pressure is a bonus because it brings me one step closer to achieving my goal" (Beast). If you are able to perform under pressure then you are confident, this is according to one of the participants. For Bean, confidence is "sort of the peace of mind that you can execute under pressure". Additionally, Steve related pressure to self-doubt and was able to describe it as:

> Pressure is something we create in our minds. For example, you watch kids play, they do it because they because they are having fun. They do it, they go out there, there's no pressure. Whereas you reach a certain level, you get older, and you

> know what could go wrong. You know the consequences of your actions. So in sports, you react to a given situation. You have to stop thinking twice, do what you have to do, believe in your ability because you're there already. So doubting yourself creates pressure.

With this notion of the pressure that one puts one oneself, some of the participants mentioned particular instances in which they realized this was the case. For example, Hansel recalled his first shot as a professional and the pressure that one shot created. He said, "Ok, this is your first shot as a professional, there is pressure there, which is I think some of the pressure that we feel is pretty artificial in a way. We just put it on ourselves".

External. The participants also discussed how external sources of pressure affecting them, their game, and their development. For example, one of the most salient external sources of pressure the golfers experienced came from the media. Relating pressure to the tournaments, Andy was particularly concerned about the media exposure he received from one of the tournaments. As Andy described:

> I remember being in the newspapers, it was my first time leading in my professional career and I was freaked out. I couldn't sleep that night, well obviously, I was thinking, oh my god, I'm here, I have a chance, it's obviously the first day, I'm overthinking ahead, jumping into conclusions.

External pressure also came from perceptions of the expectations others have for their performance. For example, Hansel felt the pressure of disappointing other people. He further talks about it below:

> I might disappoint people who support me, like family, your coach, especially if you're a club player and if you started out as a club player, in federation, once you

> turn pro everyone is trying to root for you cause you're from their club. Ok so Thursday you miss the cut and then Friday, they see you in the club practicing, they tell you "so what's going to happen, you missed the cut.

Money was another external factor that was brought up very often by the participants. For Beast, he was particularly concerned about the importance of one putt on the amount of money he will receive and his position on the leaderboard. As explained by Beast:

> One good example is making a putt from ten feet, you know it's going to cost you a lot if you miss it. Plus it's a birdie putt, knowing that it's gonna make you probably a thousand dollars more compared to the second putt that you do missing that putt money wise, it will put more pressure.

For some of the participants the pressure felt was multidimensional. For example, for Andy it had three forms. One was parental pressure, second was being in the spotlight, and third was pride. As Andy describes it:

> When I'm not on the spotlight, I'm not pressured at all, I just have fun but when I know that I'm on the spotlight and if I know that I'm leading or something, sometimes I'm chill sometimes I'm pressured in a way that it's hard to control. Parental pressure also since they're the ones supporting, obviously you want to show them that you are doing something good with their money. Yeah pride also.

When asked to elaborate more on the relationship of pride and pressure, Andy narrated:

> Well of course, a lot of people look up to you, especially in your professional career, a lot of people support you. Of course you want to show them, whether

> you like it or not, at the back of your head, you don't want to think about it, it's still there that you want to show them that you're doing good and that you're capable of doing it.

Challenge. In their discussion of their experience with pressure, the participants also discussed the impact of one's perspective of the pressure. For example, in comparison to the other participants, Toffer viewed pressure in a positive lens. Toffer shared that he views pressure as a motivation, a challenge. He likes to put pressure on himself as stated, "It's like a drug, it's like my gambling addiction, especially tournament golf. Golf for fun is nice, I love that too, but tournament golf is like a rush."

Further, interestingly some of the participants discussed trying to induce pressure in order to create a sense of challenge. For example, Hansel placed a great value on simulating pressure in order to help him with his golf game. His friends would help simulate tournament conditions during practice by betting against each other in order to create a pressure situation. As explained by Hansel:

> Before it was just a small amount, if you win it, it was for pride. Then we try to raise it, the betting gives us the same pressure. One of our older peers who have been in the tour longer told us that it was one of the ways to make your heart stronger. We realized it made a lot of sense, so we raised the stakes to stimulate tournament pressure on our practice days.

Steve also described his experience of using betting as a means of simulating pressure. His description highlights the dual nature of the external pressure. On the one hand it helped to create a sense of confidence, however, on the other hand it created more pressure at times when preparing for an upcoming tournament:

> Yeah, for a couple of weeks or three, I've been taking their money regularly. They call it the [Steve] trust fund they call it my trust fund because they just keep on giving me money. It's a good confidence builder because I know I have been playing well. I admit the pressure of the upcoming tournament, it sort of took me away from my new ways. I went back to my old ways and then I had to put myself back on track and then I realized I was doing the wrong things.

For some of the participants, being able to handle pressure has increased their confidence in their game, and their self-confidence. Being able to improve their self-confidence is a mental skill that most of the professional golfers have done in their path towards becoming a professional.

Emotions

The final component to emerge of the participants' experiences of becoming professional golfers in the Phillipines was the role of emotions. All of the participants experienced a range of emotions throughout their experience of becoming a professional. Being able to accept strong emotions such as excitement was a key element in their experience as professional golfers. They were able to weather the storm of the highs and lows they experienced, and use the emotions that they felt to motivate them and help them improve rather than allowing them to interfere with their game. *Emotions* consisted of four sub-themes: *Thankful, Regret, Pride, Ups and downs, and Emotion Regulation.* (see Table 4.6).

Table 4.6 Subthemes and Meaning Units of Participants' Experience of Emotions

Major Theme	Subthemes	Representative Meaning Units
Emotions	Thankful	Opportunity to improve Fortunate to play in the tour Happy for their wins
	Regret	Missing the game Walking away from the game
	Pride	Playing golf as their job Having sponsors Winning tournaments
	Ups and downs	Emotional ride Jitters Excited
	Emotion regulation	Awareness that they need to regulate their emotion in order to help their performance

Thankful. Even though the participants experienced a range of emotions, being thankful for the opportunity to be able to compete on the tour was a common emotion amongst the participants. As explained by Milo, "The connections that I made in my time as a professional, my sponsors, all the people I meet, all these things, I tend to look at as a blessing. I'm just really happy even though I'm not on top of the money list yet".

The participants have also realized that the tour is more organized now compared to a few years ago. According to Hansel, "I think we were really fortunate to be in this time where we have so much tournaments, sponsorships, and the prize money has gone up, we are really fortunate".

Ultimately, the participants were thankful for the opportunities they had to develop their game and advance to higher levels of play. For example, while talking

about his biggest win in the tour, Toffer mentioned that he was thankful for the PGT. His most memorable experience was finishing first in one of the local tournaments, which automatically secured a spot form him in the Asian Tour. “But that really elevated me (talking about his championship win) to a top 10 player in the PGT, I was coming from a guy who just wanted to make cuts before. That’s really what I’m thankful for in the PGT giving me the opportunity to get better as a player” (Toffer).

Regret. A couple of the participants are no longer playing golf or competing on the golf tour. Thus, their emotions centered around the loss they feel regarding the feeling that playing golf at a high level gave them. Three of the participants no longer play on the tour due to their own personal reasons. Toffer stopped playing because he wanted a higher paying job, and Magic ended up working for the family business. Since they have been playing golf for a very long time, they are bound to experience some emotions that are related to career termination. Hansel stated, “I miss playing, I miss challenging myself, and I miss the feeling of competition. I miss the feeling of tournament pressure. In a perfect world I would come back”. Moreover, Toffer felt that he needed to start working on a real job. He said, “Not everyone can make big bucks. I would have loved to keep going but the window was closing for me to start something”.

Additionally, Magic described his emotions as something that he will miss experiencing as a professional golfer. He noted, “I miss the actual feeling of making and missing a putt. The whole world, that feeling of having the whole weight of the world on your back and then sinking that putt is just priceless.”

Pride. One salient emotion that was evident in the participants' discussion of their experience of becoming professional golfers was pride. Pride was something that they related to the value placed on the label of being a professional golfer. "Playing golf is a career, something you don't see an average person do. Wearing a pair of pants makes you look more professional and having that label on you, hey I'm a professional golfer, you know it stands out better" (Andy). Meanwhile for others, they experienced pride when they get sponsorships, which also helped their confidence because it was a proof of their achievement. "You know, sponsorships come in when you start playing good. For me that would be Ping that came to me since 2013" (Andy).

Accomplishments were also associated with being proud. For Toffer, it was his most memorable experience. He said, "I had two wins, one was a three way playoff win, that was nerve wracking and the other was a blowout win."

Ups and downs. One key aspect of the role of emotions was the impact of having to deal with the highs and lows of the game and one's journey when pursuing goals of playing professionally. Toffer showed resiliency and optimism when he was talking about experiencing the ups and downs in the tour:

> It's hard when you're chasing your dreams, when you're chasing big goals, you're putting yourself out there and so it's like when you want to date Ms. Universe, it's gonna be hard and you're gonna get rejected and rejected all over again. That's the hard part, you know, the dealing with the ups and downs. Mostly downs. That you just have to keep making the downs until you get the ups.

Additionally, he described the unique feelings and emotions that made his experience memorable. According to him:

> It's a feeling like no other, you get a range of emotions in golf. You get excitement, the nerves, a lot of uncertainty. Every tournament was a drug, it was so addictive that I wanted to play 12 weeks in a row. Money was good because I could make the cut every week but money but it was really more of the adrenaline that I got from playing golf seeing how much better I get each week each week. It's just a rush, the emotional ride, I don't think you get that anywhere else other than the golf course.

Similarly, Hansel compared his emotions to a roller coaster:

> Golf is really, I remember talking about it with them. It's really taxing. In the span of 18 holes, you will feel a roller coaster of emotions. One hole you hit a really good drive, you feel good, and then you hit a bad second shot, and then you hit a good third shot.

Despite these emotional highs and lows, the participants mentioned that being able to ride them out and accept it as part of the journey was key. For example Beast stated that the experience was, "Mind boggling because it's a new feeling. So your head and your body can't react to it normally, so the jitters are normal".

Emotion regulation. Besides the emotional roller coaster that the participants described and the key emotions that stood out for them during their professional development, they also discussed the role of regulating their emotions. For example, Steve, who is relatively new to the tour, believed that regulating his emotions facilitated

optimal performance. The ability to recognize an emotion and regulate it was one of the mental skills that Steve was describing in detail:

> Well, you can't be too happy, you can't be too sad, you know you have to keep a certain level, you should not be hard on yourself when things don't go your way. Golf is not a game of perfect right? So there are days that you don't feel the same and things don't quite click and when you start being hard on yourself, it's not good on the course I believe that anger is the enemy of focus so if you get mad, you're focusing on the wrong things. Deal with what you have in front of you, play the shot and execute and at the end of the day when you know you've gone through your mental routine, you've done it, when you execute it, every shot you have the right frame of mind, you've played it well.

For Magic, who has been playing golf for 14 years, regulating his emotions happened over time. Further, he learned that focusing on his game and the next shot helped him to regulate his emotions. "Of course it comes with the frustrations, but I learned through the years of playing golf, it comes and goes and one simple birdie can actually change that frustration into another positive reaction."(Magic). Similarly, Toffer spoke about his experience with Dr. Rotella. One thing that he learned from him was emotion regulation, specifically the art of letting go and moving on. "It's hard, you have to learn to let go. You got to be chill. You got to let it go, you deal your emotions throughout the entire process" (Toffer).

Some participants suggested that the ups and downs of the game was what helped them to learn how to regulate their emotions and performance. And, ultimately, their

emotional experiences were what connected them back to their love and passion for the game. Specifically, participants mentioned the positive role that all their emotional experiences had in learning how to not only better handle them but develop their game and themselves as professional golfers. For example, Hansel stated, "it's also what's really fun about it and I guess it really strengthened us mentally and emotionally with all the experience of how to handle it."

Summary

There were five themes major themes that emerged in this study. These were: *Game Development, Support System, Mental Skills, Pressure, and Emotions*. The major findings reflected that *Game Development* was a central theme to their experiences. Under game development, the sub-theme *Amateur versus professional* was the most impactful in their experience. Additionally, *Friends* as a key source of support was also mentioned by all of the participants in their experience of becoming a professional golfer in the Philippines. Lastly, all participants reported that they have used mental skills to facilitate their athletic performance with confidence being the most prominent mental skill.

CHAPTER V

DISCUSSION

The purpose of this research project was to provide an in-depth examination of the experience of becoming a professional golfer in the Philippines. The goal was to provide insight into the participants' own perspectives of this journey and highlight commonalities in their experiences. Not only does this add to previous research on the psychological factors related to golf, more importantly it provides insight into the unique experiences of being a professional athlete in Asia, which may help aspiring young Asian golfers in their game development. Thus, it adds to the research in sport psychology regarding marginalized groups.

This study is relevant because the western perspective dominates sport psychology research (Schinke & Hanrahan, 2009), reviewing sport psychology from a multicultural perspective helps us view the world from a different lens, enriches our practice, and advances sport psychology for a more global public interest. Moreover, the recent increase in golf tourism in Asia (Golfbenchmark, 2012), and worldwide (IAGTO, 2013) were some of the reasons to study this phenomenon. The increase in golf tourism worldwide creates a need for sport psychology practitioners to understand golfers who come from a different culture in order to advance sport psychology in this particular group.

As discussed above in the results section, five themes were found that demonstrated the experiences of the eight Filipino golfers on their path to becoming professionals. Game development was the central theme of this study because all the

other themes revolved around it. One particular theme that was relevant to the participants was the role that their friends had in their experience as golfers. They also received support from their family, coaches, and other significant people in their lives. Years of experience have also led the participants to use mental skills to benefit their performance as they experience pressure and deal with their emotions in developing their golf game, with confidence being a salient piece of their experience.

The first major theme that emerged was the *game development* of the participants. All of the participants were exposed to the sport at a young age. Most of them were junior golfers and have been playing for more than 11 years. This supports Blooms' (1985) assertion that experts in their respective domains were exposed to the activity at a young age. Further, consistent with Côté and Fraser-Thomas (2007), they all progressed through the early specialization stage of development. During this stage, the child is focused on one sport, and has invested a substantial amount of time for deliberate practice. The early specialization stage of development was when the participants developed their love for the game. Their passion towards golf has fueled their motivation throughout their game development. Some participants were describing how they have developed harmonious passion. Harmonious passion happens when an autonomous internalization occurs for individuals, which leads them to freely accept the activity as important for them (Vallerland et al., 2006).

The participants spent a considerable amount of time on the driving range everyday, after school, while working with a coach. They also talked about spending their summer vacations playing golf on a daily basis. For some, it was a positive experience, but for some, they felt that they didn't get to do the normal activities that kids their age

were able to do. As the participants talked about their game development, a key feature of the discussion was the comparison they made between what it meant to be an amateur versus a professional. For them, being a professional was a status because the professional circuit was more organized than amateur tournaments. As amateurs, they weren't as serious towards the game, but as professionals everything they did was magnified and had more purpose. They wanted to become professional golfers because they wanted to continue playing the sport that they loved and at the same time, they were at that age where they had to earn a living for themselves. Their experience of transitioning from amateur to professional collaborates to Super's (1980,1990) on identity. According to Super, identity (especially during adolescence) and the involvement in activities (occurring between 18 and 24 years of age) related to eventual career choices are the two key factors that determine vocational decisions. It follows that participation in such activities between 18 and 24 years of age allows for the exploration and the development of skills related to one's future job. Hence, Blustein and Philips (1994) asserted that individual planning and skill exploration are essential factors of sound career intentions in athletes. According to this perspective, decision making is based on a goal-setting process that influences the athlete to establish expectations for his or her future (Nuttun & Lens, 1985); these expectations may relate to factors such as eventual profit (Saunders & Fogarty, 2001) and the emotional value attributed to a career intention (Husman & Shell, 2008). This notion was evident in the experiences of the participants. For example, one participant was particularly concerned about the money that he was earning as a professional and another was anxious about his age and the tour not providing a stable source of income.

Their exposure to a structured environment in their early lives (e.g., junior golf competitions, and practice routines), as well as strong role models (e.g., coaches, and fellow athletes), not only influenced their career intentions but also contributed to their development of a sold foundation for the sport and an identity as a golfer. Athletes mostly base their identities on their experiences with sport and develop self-fulfillment from the successful assumption of an athlete's role (Brewer, Van Raalte, & Linder, 1993); this is termed athletic identity (AI). AI, which is directly linked to the time and effort devoted to sport activity, is a form of identity that is grounded in the level of importance, strength, and exclusivity ascribed to one's role as an athlete (Brewer, 1993).

Spending a considerable amount of time developing their golf game led to an increase in self-awareness for the participants. This was evident through their post-game evaluations of themselves, and the constant need to be better. This supports the notion that the ability to engage in honest self-appraisal to enhance self-awareness has been recognized as an important mental skill by elite athletes (Calmels, d'Arripe-Longueville, Fournier & Soulard, 2003). Constant self-monitoring and self-evaluation are critical precursors to effective self-regulation and success in sport (Chen & Singer, 1992; Kirshenbaum & Wittrock, 1984).

Another key feature of the participants' experiences of becoming professional golfers was the support they received from others.

The above-discussed findings provide great insight into the participants' experiences of becoming professional golfers. However, the most notable finding to emerge from this study, particularly given that the focus was on highlighting becoming a

professional specifically in the Philippines, was the emphasis the participants placed on the role of friends. This was a key element to the experience of the participants because all of them mentioned that the relationship that they had with their friends on tour was one of the experiences that was most memorable for them. The friendships that they built towards their path to becoming a professional golfer in the Philippines had an effect on the way that they experienced life on the tour. All the participants mentioned that their friends on the tour provided social support since they were going through the same experience as a professional golfer in the Philippines. They valued the opportunity of competing against their friends because they are familiar with how they play. They were motivated by the accomplishments of their friends and they didn't mind playing against them. This sense of friendliness against competitors is mentioned in Church's (1987) research regarding the personality of Filipinos. Church (1987) argued that the Filipino accommodative surface value of pakikisama (companionship) as a cultural trait, influences achievement motivation. When Filipinos exercise pakikisama, getting ahead which is the opposite of pakikisama, is seen as harmful to group harmony and achievement motivation is lessened.

Being able to travel together, miss cuts together, bet against each other and have fun together were some of the things that they valued about their experience of having friends on the tour. This finding is relevant because according to Enriquez (1994), kapwa is a core aspect of Filipino personality. Kapwa or *pakikipagkapwa,* meaning *being with others,* determines a Filipino's personality and personhood. He elaborated that for Filipinos, "Without *kapwa,* one ceases to be a Filipino. One also ceases to be human" (p.63). This means that the Filipino self loses its value without the context of the other.

The sense of being with others explains why their friendships were important to them and their athletic development.

This focus on friendships is a key consideration for sport psychology practitioners working with athletes from Asian cultures. According to Kitayama and Markus' (1997) model of Asian norms for the self that is based on a cultural framework of interdependence, the "self-in-relation-to-other" (p.97) is the focus of the individual experience. They suggested that this interdependent view of self is the same in Japan, China, Korea, and in Southeast Asia, with a strong possibility of reflecting some cultural commonalities or influences between the Philippines and these countries.

Although the experiences of the participants regarding the friendships that they made on tour were mostly positive, one participant mentioned friends as a form of distraction. They would go out to clubs, sleep late, and drink alcohol. Peers are one of the most significant influences on substance use (Alexander, Piazza, Mekos, & Valente, 2001). Further, some studies show that that participation in sports can lead to increased alcohol use (Eccles & Barber, 1999). Thus, while friends overwhelmingly provided a key form of social support for these golfers, there were times when that support detracted from their pursuit of their professional golf goals.

Further, all of the participants received monetary (i.e., tangible) and emotional support from their parents. This is consistent with Horn and Horn's (2007) assertion, that for most individuals, the family has the strongest impact on their development. Similarly, Côté (1999) suggested that parents have proved to be an important source of emotional support. Parents also provide an important source of tangible support. This was evident

for the participants as some of them discussed the sacrifices their parents made in order to provide the resources needed for them to continue playing the sport. This collaborates what Côté (1999) suggested that the role of the parents as followers is more evident during the investment years. In order to fulfill this role, parents make sacrifices to allow their children to train in the best conditions (Côté, 1999).

Another form of support that the participants discussed was the role of sponsors. The participants talked about the impact ICTSI (International Container Terminal Services Inc.) had on the tour. ICTSI was in charge of the prize money won by the participants. Aside from the prize money, they were also in charge of organizing the tournaments from time to time so it had a big impact on the experience of the participants. They also mentioned how the sponsorships that they have received from PING and Titleist have motivated them. This supports Atkinson's (1974) theory about extrinsic motivation. Extrinsic motivation refers to engaging in a particular behavior for external rewards or reinforcements. Extrinsic factors have generally been considered to be important in initiating and influencing athletic behavior (Pedersen, 2002).

The participants also discussed the coach as an important provider of social support. This supports the study of Smith and Smoll (1996) that a positive coach-athlete relationship can enhance the psychological and social well-being of an athlete. According to them, children who have played for highly reinforcing and encouraging coaches have higher levels of self-esteem. The role of the coach in the lives of the participants varied depending on what stage of skill development they were in. One participant regarded his coach as a second father for him. This was during his early years or stage of initiation. Similar to Bloom (1985), during this stage, the athlete depends on the coach for guidance

and support, which is similar to the job of a parent. As the participant matured and reached his collegiate years, the role of his coach changed. According to him, his college coach made sure he was on the right track. His experience matches the role that the coach plays during Bloom's (1985) middle years or stage of development. During this stage, coaches have a strong personal interest in the development of the student.

Most literature about the role of social support has focused on the role of parents, peers, and coaches. There was limited research on the role of significant others. However, their impact can be understood using Ryan & Deci's (1991) self-determination theory, specifically the role of our need for relatedness. Relatedness involves the basic need to relate to other people, have others care for you and to care for others (Cox, 2012). This was evident with how the participants briefly discussed the manner in which significant others affected their performance negatively and positively. For one participant, he viewed his significant other as a source of pressure. Meanwhile, another participant regarded his girlfriend as his motivation.

In general, all of the participants discussed the use of mental skills in their experience of becoming professional golfers. Specifically, confidence, one shot at a time, focus, practice, goal setting, and having routines seemed to play a role in their development. This is consistent with an early study done by McCaffrey & Orlick (1989) in which they revealed ten common mental factors related to excellence among the top-touring professionals. These ten elements were: (a) total commitment, (b) quality rather than quantity of practice, (c) clearly defined goals, (d) imagery practice on a daily basis, (e) focusing totally on one shot at a time, (f) recognizing, expecting, and preparing to cope with pressure situations, (g) practice and tournament plans, (h) tournament focus

plan, (i) distraction control strategies, and (j) post-tournament evaluations. Further, consistent with Cohn's (1991) research, peak performance is associated with having narrow focus of attention, immersion in the present, and being confident.

The participants consistently mentioned *confidence* as a key aspect that affected their performance as professional golfers. This is consistent with Gould, Dieffenbach et al. (2002) and Durand-Bush and Salmela (2002), who proposed that confidence consistently appears as a key skill possessed by successful elite athletes. For this study, the participants related confidence to trusting themselves, and the development of their confidence through their achievements. Nideffer (1985) believed that consistent athletes had faith (belief in the absence of results) and confidence (belief based in the results achieved). Most of the participants had the ability to focus on the process of performance rather than the outcome. Further, confident athletes have the ability to tolerate periods of time without results if they trust that they are on the right path (Balague, 2012). One participant talked about trusting that the result will be on favorable for him. Optimism is one of the key elements of confidence. It is an inclination to expect the best possible outcome or believe on the most hopeful aspects of a certain situation (Williams, 2010).

Participants also communicated their sources of confidence. One participant discussed how their achievements helped develop their confidence. Performance accomplishments have been shown to have the strongest effect on self-efficacy and performance (Feltz, Landers, & Raeder, 1979; McAuley, 1985). Another, participant described his one shot at a time as trusting the execution of a shot and being in the present moment. This translates to using psychological strategies, which is also a source of sport-confidence. Top golfers are able to focus on one shot at a time by being able to

deal with most distractions but they still needed constant reminders to stay focused on the task (McCaffrey & Orlick, 1989).

Interestingly, the participants mentioned the goals they had (e.g., competing on the Asian tour), but they only seemed to focus on long-term goals. None of the participants mentioned outlining or focusing on the more short-term steps needed to reach those goals. Since the goals of the participants were not specific in nature, this contradicts past literature that specific goal setting enhances athletes' performance (Burton & Naylor 2002). A possible explanation for this is the lack of mental skills training of the participants. Their lack of mental skills training is directly related to the limited number of sport psychology participants in the Philippines

Another mental skill that was discussed by the participants was having routines. For some, the routines related to the execution of a shot. This is consistent with Boutcher (1990) who suggested that routines act as a preparation phase prior to skill execution and are crucial in determining whether the performer achieves a good performance or not. One of the participants talked about his routine in detail, creating an automatic routine consisting of a practice swings, a visual target and ball impact. This is consistent with Logan's (1998) proposition that performers acquire efficient skilled movement patterns over time and their ability to perform these movements automatically increases. Moreover, Lidor and Tenebaum (1993) supported the use of a structured routine prior to performance, which is linked to helping performers attain a high level of achievement in sport. The use of a structured routine was also supported by Boutcher (1990) and Lobmeyer and Wasserman (1986) who proposed that the development of a consistent

pre-performance routine was an applicable tool to prepare for performance and deal with possible distractions.

Another key theme underlying the experience of pursuing a professional level of golf performance was *pressure* and its impact on their experiences and performance. Pressure came in many forms for the participants. Most of them recognized that pressure was something that they created in their mind. Some of them discussed the kind of pressure they felt during competition, specifically in situations where one putt can make a difference in one's score, status, and earnings. This supports the study of McCaffrey and Orlick (1998) that recognizing, expecting, and preparing to cope with pressure situations is one of the elements of excellence for professional golfers. Moreover, the participants have related cold sweats and increase in heart rate to low levels of performance. This supports the research that athletes have identified "normal nervousness" and optimal emotional arousal with high-level performances, meanwhile associating inappropriate or negative emotional states as associated with low levels of performance (Eklund, 1994, 1996).

For some, pressure was discussed as at times negatively impacting their golf performance and development. Others, perceive pressure as a challenge instead of a threat, and even in some instances created pressure situations in practice to help them better prepare. This supports the theory of Lazarus (2000), which places a value on how cognition affects the way an athlete responds to a certain situation. The state of anxiety of some of the participants depended on how they perceived the situation. When confronted with a theoretically stressful situation, the athlete instantly evaluates the situation. Appraisal of the situation occurs on two levels: (a) primary appraisal, and (b) secondary

appraisal. During primary appraisal the athlete determines if they have a stake in the outcome, once the athlete decides that the appraisal has value for her, then secondary appraisal becomes important. In secondary appraisal, the athlete evaluates her personal coping resources to deal with the competitive situation. The end result of the primary and secondary appraisal will conclude if the stress response will occur or not.

Participants who were more skilled were able to handle pressure better than their less killed counterparts. This is consistent with Ericsson's (1996) study on experts; specifically that individuals develop different problem representations as a function of the knowledge that they have about the domain and their specialization in that domain (Ericsson, 1996). Lastly, some participants reported that they didn't compare themselves to others. This supports the study of Mahoney, Gabriel, and Perkins (1987). They argued that successful athletes focused more on their own performance instead other the performance of others.

Emotions also surfaced as a key element of the participants' experiences of becoming professional golfers. The most common emotion that was experienced across the participants was being thankful. This is consistent with Hanin (2004) and Robazza (2006) who found that in competitive sports, the most relevant emotions are usually personally significant, task specific, and functionally helpful or harmful emotions really experienced by athletes. For the participants, the emotions that stood out for them were being thankful, regret, and pride. These emotions were related to self-directed emotions, including individual differences in traitlike characteristics (Hareli & Weiner; 2002). According to them, these emotions were related to achievement needs, anxiety, mastery orientation, cognitions (expectancy of success), and incentives related to goal orientations.

Self-directed emotions include pride, gratitude, shame, guilt, and hopelessness, wherein pride and gratitude were experienced by most of the participants. Further, participants were able to deal with the ups and downs by accepting what was happening to them. This supports the research of Gardner and Moore (2004), which emphasized that enhancement of athletic performance was achievable through strategies and techniques that focused the development of nonjudgmental present-moment acceptance of internal experiences, which includes thoughts, feelings, and physical sensations. Lastly, the participants also experienced regulating their emotions when it changed from time to time. Learning to relax was key to regulating these responses in order to avoid any unfavorable effects on performance (Williams, 2010).

One interesting finding related to the emotional experience of becoming a professional golfer in the Philippines was the golfers' discussion of being thankful. McCaffrey and Orlick (1989) studies elite golfers but the results mainly highlighted what the golfer did to achieve performance excellence. They failed to mention how the golfers felt about having the opportunity to play in a professional tour and how it might have impacted their performance. Thus, the current study adds to the understanding of elite golfers by not only focusing on what they do to achieve their level of performance but also how they feel about their experiences of becoming professional golfers.

Practical Implications

The results of this study provide insight into several practical implications for working with golfers who are working towards becoming professionals, particularly golfers of Asian descent. First, sport psychology practitioners should note that friends

play a big role in the game development of Asian athletes. They can use this information to help motivate and understand clients better in order to improve their performance. Since being with others is a core aspect of a Filipino's values, practitioners need to know who is the client in relation to his peers, and how can the practitioner use the role of their friends to their advantage. Second, their parents are their main sponsors and source of support on the tour. Thus, consultants might have to deal with the parents of the athlete as well. It is important to remember who their client really is and set boundaries right from the start in order to avoid confusion. Further, practitioners should be mindful of the positive and negative influences that parents can have on the athletes.

Third, since Sport Psychology is a new field in Asia particularly in the Philippines, the practitioner needs to be patient in dealing with Filipino athletes. Most of the concepts in sport psychology are new to them so it might take them longer to learn how to use mental skills to their advantage. Even though the results of this study provide support for the fact that they are using mental skills already, learning how to optimize these skills would help them to further enhance their development and performance. Thus, practitioners can also introduce mental conditioning techniques to aid the athletes in systematically developing key aspects highlighted by the participants such as enhancing their confidence, managing internal and external pressure, optimizing social support, focus, and the use of goal setting, managing emotions, and staying focused on the present moment. However, since sport psychology is new and rare in the Philippines, practitioners should realize that they may first need to focus on educating the athletes on what sport psychology is and get buy in for the role that it could have on their performance. Further, since money was mentioned as a key aspect of their transition from

amateur to professional as well as an external source of pressure, consideration of fees for sport psychology services is warranted. Additionally, sport psychology practitioners should be aware that developing one's game and becoming a professional is a multidimensional experience in which exposure as a youth and building a solid foundation are key features. Most importantly, utilizing early experiences as stepping stones and progressing in status from amateur to professional will need to be considered when working with athletes who are on a path towards becoming a professional. Lastly, the results suggest that practitioners should be careful to assume that cultural differences will play a role in the experiences of the athletes. While culture is certainly something that needs to be taken into consideration to best develop a trusting and effective relationship with one's client, it cannot be assumed that culture will have impacted the athletes' use of mental skills or sport experiences.

Limitations and Future Directions

The limited research on the mental aspects of sport performance for Filipino athletes demands further research to determine what type of mental training is suitable for Filipinos. Several limitations may have impacted the results of this study, including the lack of experience in phenomenological interviewing by the lead researcher. Moreover, the major themes and subthemes that were found could be researched more in-depth, particularly the role of friends, with a greater number of diverse participants to have a better understanding of this phenomenon.

Relatedly, since the participants were limited to speaking in English, the participants might not be able to express themselves fully. Some words in Tagalog do not

directly translate into English, which might have hindered the researcher to fully understand their experience. Practitioners need to take this in consideration when working with participants from a different culture.

A final limitation was technology. Due to the nature of the study and the researcher residing in the US at the time of the study, only participants who had access to technology were able to participate in the study. Thus, the sample size of the study as well as the diversity in participants could have been affected by this limitation. Also, some of the interviews were interrupted by technological difficulties, which may have impacted the results. Additionally, due to these technological challenges one participant failed to continue participation in the study and thus could not be included in the results.

Future research should include female participants in order to have a holistic understanding of the experience of becoming a professional golfer in the Philippines. It is noteworthy to mention that female Filipino golfers were contacted but they were either too busy or were not interested to participate in the study. Thus, future research might want to explore the female athlete perspective. Additionally, since most of the participants were in their 20's, it is imperative that future research should be done on the older generation of Filipino professional golfers in order to get a more broad range picture of this phenomenon. Lastly, future research should also be done on the difference between the experiences of being an amateur golfer in the Philippines versus the experience of being a professional golfer in the Philippines in order to help aspiring golfers have a smoother transition from being an amateur to a professional.

Conclusion

The game development of the participants was a central theme to the experience of becoming a professional golfer in the Philippines. Filipino athletes throughout this study had different experiences, but there were several similarities found throughout all the participants. These similarities are explained in five themes: *Game Development, Support System, Mental Skills, Pressure, and Emotions.* One theme stood out as being key to their experience of becoming professional golfers, namely the role of friends. Findings showed that all the previous research about the mental skills employed by elite athletes are congruent to what the participants have experienced. It is crucial for practitioners to look at the cultural aspects of sport and sport psychology but not make the assumption that the experiences of the athletes are going to be different because they come from a different culture.

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Appendix A

Barry University
Informed Consent Form
For use with Skype

Your participation in a research project is requested. The title of the study is "The experience of becoming a professional golfer in the Philippines". The research is being conducted by Christel Janine Mamaril, a Master's student in the Sport, Exercise, and Performance Psychology program at Barry University, and is seeking information that will be useful in the field of Sport Psychology. The aims of the research are to attain in-depth first-person accounts of the lived experience of becoming a professional golfer in the Philippines, in an effort to understand the true nature of the experience. The researcher anticipates the number of participants to be approximately 10-25, depending upon data saturation.

Your consent to be a research participant is strictly voluntary and should you decline to participate, answer any questions, or should you choose to drop out at any time during the study, there will be no adverse effects to you. Also, there are no known risks to you presented through involvement in the study. Although, there are no direct benefits to you, your participation in this study may help our understanding of the experience of professional golfers in the Philippines, as well as increase the depth of your own understanding of the issue through the exploration of your personal experiences.

As a research participant, information you provide will be held in confidence to the extent permitted by law. As this project involves the use of Skype, to prevent others from eavesdropping on communications and to prevent impersonation or loss of personal information, Skype issues everyone a "digital certificate" which is an electronic credential that can be used to establish the identity of a Skype user, wherever that user may be located. Further, Skype uses well-known standards-based encryption algorithms to protect Skype users' communications from falling into the hands of hackers and criminals. In so doing, Skype helps ensure user's privacy as well as the integrity of the data being sent from one user to another. If you have further concerns regarding Skype privacy, please consult the Skype privacy policy. To ensure confidentiality, the researcher will establish a separate Skype account for this research project only. After each communication, the researcher will delete the conversation history. Once this is done, the conversation cannot be recovered.

In accordance with these aims, a detailed description of the issue will be sought through an interview, which will later be analyzed to draw meaning from your experiences. Should you decide to participate in this study, you will be asked to participate in one in-depth interview at a time of your choice via Skype. The interview will be conducted in English and during the Skype interview, the researcher will go over the demographics form with you. The demographic form will include information such as the age, gender, ethnicity, number of years on the PGT, number of competitions competed on the professional tour, age they started playing golf, and average number of hours spent on practice per day and per week. Moreover, you will also be asked to describe in as much detail as possible your experiences in becoming a professional golfer

in the Philippines. I may occasionally ask follow-up questions to gain further clarification or to obtain additional details to previous statements. The interview should last approximately 30-90 minutes depending on the depth of your responses. I will digitally audio record the interview and then transcribe it (i.e., type it out on paper) for further analysis. The primary researcher will do all interviews and transcriptions. Once your interview has been transcribed, it will be returned to you electronically. This will allow you to look at your transcript to be sure it accurately portrays what you were trying to say in your interview. You may choose to omit, add, or modify any part of the interview in order to provide a more accurate description of your experience**.** I will select a pseudonym (fake name) to represent you for this study, which I will substitute for your real name whenever you make comments that might identify you.

Any published results of the research will refer to you by your pseudonym; no real names will be used in the study. All interview transcripts and audio files will be stored on a password-protected computer, maintained for 5 years and then destroyed. Any other information that could potentially be used to identify you or other participants/individuals will be changed or excluded from the transcripts. This is done to help preserve the confidentiality of your responses. I will only share your interview (not contact details or real name) with members of the research group assisting me in this study. Members of the research group will never have access to any materials, which might identify you. Each member of the research group will sign a third party consent form (See Appendix B) which states that they understand the obligation to maintain confidentiality and also agree to the terms listed in the form.

If you have any questions or concerns regarding the study or your participation in the study, you may contact me, Christel Janine Mamaril (562-505-7704 or Christel.mamaril@mymail.barry.edu), my supervisor Dr. Lauren S. Tashman, at (305) 899-3721 or LTashman@barry.edu, or the Institutional Review Board point of contact, Barbara Cook, at (305) 899-3020 or BCook@barry.edu. If you are satisfied with the information provided and are willing to participate in this research, please signify your consent by signing this consent form.

Voluntary Consent

I acknowledge that I have been informed of the nature and purposes of this experiment by Christel Janine Mamaril and that I have read and understand the information presented above, and that I have received a copy of this form for my records. I give my voluntary consent to participate in this experiment.

_____	_____	_____	_____
Signature of Participant	*Date*	*Signature of Researcher*	*Date*

Appendix B

Third Party Confidentiality Agreement

As a member of the research team investigating the experience of becoming a professional golfer in the Philippines, I understand that I will have access to confidential information about study participants. By signing this statement, I am indicating my understanding of my obligation to maintain confidentiality and agree to the following:

- I understand that names and any other identifying information about study participants are completely confidential.

- I agree not to divulge, publish, or otherwise make known to unauthorized persons or to the public any information obtained in the course of this research project that could identify the persons who participated in the study.

- I understand that all information about study participants obtained or accessed by me in the course of my work is confidential. I agree not to divulge or otherwise make known to unauthorized persons any of this information unless specifically authorized to do so by office protocol or by a supervisor acting in response to applicable protocol or court order, or otherwise, as required by law.

- I understand that I am not to read information and records concerning study participants, or any other confidential documents, nor ask questions of study participants for my own personal information but only to the extent and for the purpose of performing my assigned duties on this research project.

- I understand that a breach of confidentiality may be grounds for disciplinary action, and may include termination of employment.

- I agree to notify my supervisor immediately should I become aware of an actual breach of confidentiality or situation which could potentially result in a breach, whether this be on my part or on the part of another person.

_____	_____	_____
Third Party Signature	Date	Printed Name
_____	_____	_____
Primary Researcher Signature	Date	Printed Name

Appendix C

Demographics Form

Age: _____

Gender: M / F

Ethnicity:

# of Years on the Philippine golf tour_____

At what age did you start playing golf?_____

Average # of Hours of practice per day _____

Per week _____

Appendix D

Journal Article

The Experience of Becoming a Professional Golfer in the Philippines

Christel Janine Mamaril, Dr. Lauren Tashman

Barry University

ABSTRACT

There have not yet been any studies conducted on the experience of professional golfers in the Philippines. This investigation involved existential phenomenological interviewing of 8 participants ranging in age from 23 to 27 to determine experience of professional golfers in the Philippines. Qualitative analysis of the transcripts revealed a total of 304 meaning units that were further grouped into themes and subthemes. A final thematic structure revealed that there were five major themes: *Game Development, Support System, Mental Skills, Pressure, and Emotions.* The findings revealed that game development of the participants was a central theme to the experience of becoming a professional golfer in the Philippines. Filipino athletes throughout this study had different experiences, but there were several similarities found throughout all the participants. The results suggest that mental skills were used by elite athletes no matter which culture they come from and that practitioners should be aware of this.

Elite athletes attract great followings, enormous media attention, and the mutual appreciation of coaches, competitors, and teammates. This visibility is obvious in the fact that the most popular national and world events tend to involve sport competitions, from the Olympic Games, the World Cup, the Masters, and the Super bowl. From these competitions, we can see the massive popularity of sport and the extensive opportunity to view expertise in action (Starkes & Ericsson, 2003). However, despite being observed on

a regular basis, it is still difficult to characterize the factors that predispose, describe, and lead to the development of an elite athlete.

Inquiry about outstanding and exceptional achievements and performance has increased tremendously throughout the years (Ericsson & Charness, 1994). Expert performance in sport is defined as consistent superior athletic performance over an extended period of time (Starkes, 1993). Before athletes can become experts, they must excel in no less than four domains: physiological, technical, cognitive, and emotional regulation/psychological skills (Starkes & Ericsson, 2003). Some researchers have proposed that genetic traits are thought to account for up to half of the variation in performance between individuals (Hopkins, 2001) and some still believe that innate factors, such as genes, provide a potential for the development of expertise, together with external factors (Tucker & Collins, 2012).

Technical expertise is the result of the development of technical expertise is a result of coordinated, refined, and efficient movement patterns that emerged due to several years of extended and systematic training or deliberate practice (Helsen, Starkes, & Hodges, 1998; Starkes, Deaking, Allard, Hodges, & Hayes, 1996).

Emotional regulation involves any activity that influences the start, offset, extent, period, intensity, or quality of one or more aspects of the emotional response (McRae, Ochsner, & Gross, 2011). Several studies have confirmed that emotion regulation is important for the individual athlete (Lane, Beedie, Jones, Uphill, & Devonport, 2012; Uphill, McCarthy, & Jones, 2009), the team (Tamminen & Crocker, 2013; Wagstaff & Weston, 2014), and the organization (Wagstaff, Fletcher, & Hanton, 2012) when it comes

to performance outcomes in sport. This is in support with the substantial literature focusing on the performance implications of emotions experienced before and during sport competition (Hanin, 2010). Meanwhile, psychological skills include a wider range of factors, all of which can influence emotional readiness (Starkes & Ericsson, 2003).

The development of psychological skills is important to expert performance (Starkes & Ericsson, 2003). In a study that combined the use of both interviews and surveys, Orlick and Partington (1988) discovered the psychological skills to which Olympic athletes attribute their successful performances. They discovered that mental skills were extremely important in an athlete's performance. A quantitative analysis revealed that an athlete's mental readiness was the only significant factor, among physical, mental, and technical readiness, that was linked to their final Olympic ranking.

Another factor that affects an athletes' performance is deliberate practice. Deliberate practice is " the difference between expert performers and normal adults reflect a life-long period of deliberate effort to improve performance in a specific domain" (Ericsson, Krampe, & Römer, 1993, p. 400). Research on expert performance has proven that the important characteristics in the superior performance of experts are acquired through experience and a large portion of that involves the effect of practice (Chi, Glaser, & Farr, 1988; Ericsson & Smith, 1991).

In summary, qualitative research on the development of elite athletes show distinct stages of development involving different types of activities and resources. Moreover, the early years of involvement for elite athletes mostly involved the

introduction to various sports through playful activities that had the elements of enjoyment and immediate reward.

The benefits of social support in sport have been discussed overtime (Hardy & Crace, 1991; Richman, Hardy, Rosenfeld, & Callanan, 1989). The three main social influences are coaches, parents, and peers (Starkes & Ericsson, 2003). The relevance of receiving social support has been related to dealing with competitive stress (Crocker, 1992), slums in performance (Madden, Kirby & McDonald, 1989), and burn-out (Gould, Tuffey, Urdy, & Loehr, 1996).

Methods

Participants

The sample was comprised of 8 male professional Filipino golfers who have been playing on the Philippine Golf Tour (PGT) for more than two years. Their ages ranged from 23 to 27, and all of them have been playing golf for more than 10 years. A more detailed description of the participants is provided in Table 1.

Table 1 *Descriptions of Filipino Professional Golfers*

Pseudonym	Years on PGT	Age	Gender	Practice hours per week	# Years Playing Golf
Andy	4	26	Male	42	11
Magic	2	24	Male	40	14
Toffer	4	27	Male	48	17
Bean	4	23	Male	32	12
Beast	2	25	Male	28	14
Hansel	3	26	Male	33	17
Milo	2	25	Male	52	14
Steve	2	24	Male	48	17
(*N*= 8)	(*M*= 2.8)	(*M*= 25, *SD*=1.3)		(*M*= 40, *SD*=8.7)	(*M*= 14.5, *SD*= 2.3)

After obtaining approval from the University Institutional Review Board, the first author contacted professional golfers in the Philippines regarding the study. For the purposes of this study, four criteria were used for initial inclusion. Specifically, participants had to (a) must be at least 18 years of age, (b) born and raised in the Philippines (have lived in the Philippines for more than 10 years), (c) have participated or is currently participating in the Philippine golf tour, and (d) must be able to express themselves in English since the interview will be conducted in English. Additionally, snowball sampling was used which allowed the researcher to access additional respondents by way of referral within the circle of professional golfers in the Philippines (Berg, 1988). The final number of participants was determined by the saturation of the data. This is a point at which additional interviews reveal no new information or themes than those mentioned in previous interviews (Guest, Bunce, & Johnson, 2006).

Procedures

The procedures used in this study were based on Thomas and Pollio's (2002) recommendations for conducting existential phenomenological research. They included these steps: *Exploring research bias, Data collection, Data analysis, and Developing/confirming thematic structure*.

Exploring Researcher Bias

The primary researcher participated in a phenomenological bracketing interview to be aware of her own biases regarding the experience of becoming a professional golfer in the Philippines. Subsequent analysis of the bracketing interview revealed several biases, which included the belief that deliberate practice is a key element to the experience of an elite athlete, the belief that elite athletes have been exposed to the sport at a young age, and the belief that elite golfers use mental skills to enhance their performance. The researcher's knowledge about the stage of an athlete's development might affect how follow up questions were asked during the interview. Based on these results the researcher made an effort to avoid introducing her biases when conducting the interviews, and during the process of data analysis (Thomas & Pollio, 2002).

Data Collection

The interviews were conducted over Skype due to the geographical location of the interviewer and the interviewee, and all interviews were digitally audio-recorded. Before each interview, the researcher asked the participant to sign the informed consent form. Additionally, the researcher went through the demographics form with the participants at the start of the interview. The demographics form will included information such as the

age, gender, ethnicity, number of years on the PGT, number of competitions competed on the professional tour, age they started playing golf, and average number of hours spent on practice per day and per week. Each participant was given a pseudonym for the purposes of keeping their identity anonymous.

The researcher began each interview with the following question: "When you think about your experience of becoming a professional golfer in the Philippines, what stands out for you?" This open-ended question encouraged participants to answer with a wide variety of undirected responses regarding the question (Dale, 1996). Based on the answer of the respondent, follow up questions were asked. A second question was asked based on the response to the initial question, and this continued throughout the interview (Dale, 1996). This method allowed the participant to be the expert on the subject and in control of the interview, while it was the researcher's responsibility to focus on the process of asking relevant and effective questions (Dale, 1996).

All participants controlled the length and content of the interviews, while the researcher asked follow up questions that clarified the participants' previous comments (Polkinhorne, 1989). Interviews lasted from 30 – 60 minutes. To ensure the participant has covered he/she wants to discuss in relation to their experience a final question was asked "is there anything else you would like to add regarding your experience." This question was asked several times until the participant was entirely happy that they have been about to discuss what was most important to them.

Data Analysis

After each interview, the audio recording was transcribed verbatim, and a copy of the transcript was sent to the participant in order to verify the accuracy and the content of the transcription. After the approval from the participants, an interpretive research group at Barry University reviewed the transcripts and assisted in the analysis.

The interpretative group was composed of Barry University faculty members and graduate students who helped in the analysis (Thomas & Pollio, 2002). At these sessions, these sessions, the transcripts were read aloud pausing from time to time for group discussion of possible themes that materialized from the text. Since the group members had different views and all had earlier read and interpreted the researcher's bracketing interview, they were able to identify any biases the researcher might have introduced during the interviews or when interpreting the interview transcripts.

Developing/confirming thematic structure.

Analysis of the transcripts resulted to the development of a thematic structure. This process involved the identification of meaning units, which led to the forming of subthemes, which then led to forming major themes. Metaphors were also used in the transcripts that might serve as labels or descriptions for the themes. The thematic structure was refined further during group discussions until consensus on a final structure was accomplished. To establish the validity of this research, the boxers' own language was used most of the time in describing the dialogue and labeling the themes (Dale, 1996; Polio et al., 1997).

Results

The Thematic Structure

Qualitative analysis of the transcripts revealed a total of 304 meaning units, which were further grouped into subthemes and general themes. The final thematic structure revealed five major themes that characterized the experience of becoming a professional Filipino golfer: *Game Development, Support System, Mental Skills, Pressure, and Emotions.*

Game Development

For all the participants, developing their golf game throughout their years as athletes was a central feature of their experience of becoming professionals on the PGT. Game Development included five subthemes: *Amateur vs. Professional, Youth Exposure, Solid Foundation, Self-Awareness, and Stepping Stone.*

Amateur vs. professional. A main feature of the participants' experiences of becoming a professional was the comparison most of them made regarding what it means to be an amateur versus a professional. Being a professional meant that they passed qualifying school and had moved on to the next level. They were no longer playing just for the love of the game and competition, but they were also playing to earn a living for themselves.

This perception of the differences in status between the two levels of play and the opportunities that are afforded to professional players was an element that was mentioned by all the participants. For example, when asked about his experience of becoming a professional golfer, Milo stated, "If you're an amateur, things are different, things are

more lax, things are easier. But when I started being a professional, everything I did was magnified. Everything came to focus, everything means something."

Youth exposure. Before becoming professional golfers, the participants were once children trying to hit the golf ball for the very first time. All of the participants had been playing golf for more than ten years. This meant that they were exposed to the sport at a young age (ages 7-15). Thus, early exposure to the sport was a critical factor in their experience of becoming a Professional Golfer in the Philippines.

The manner in which they were exposed to the sport, but more importantly the impact it had on them was explained by Hansel:

> When I started out he would bring me to the range, up to the point that I got hooked, and he put me into the junior golf program, which had its own program in terms of developing junior golfers. To a point that I would join international tournaments where we would fly to Thailand, Malaysia, and Singapore and I was exposed to international competitions and I saw where their levels were at and it pushed me to try harder.

Solid foundation. Developing a solid foundation meant that they were working hard to acquire a consistent and automatic swing, and a good short game. In order to achieve consistency, they spent hours practicing on the course and driving range. Andy highlighted this aspect of his experience by stating, "I remember trying to get better everyday and almost every night after school I would go to the driving range and I would hit and work on the things with coach. I'd probably would hit like um 200 balls to 400 to 500 at the range every night."

Additionally, Toffer viewed solid foundation as an importance process enabling him to develop a high level of play. Without the basics, he would not be able to trust his intuitions, which according to him was important in the professional level. He stated, "You got to fix the mechanic part of it, that's the basic, the foundations. But if you want to play at a high level, you have to feel it. It's a two way process, you got to have a good foundation and then you just have to let it flow." Having a good solid foundation for Toffer enabled him to develop his game to the point that he could just play and trust his instincts during competitions.

Self-awareness. For most participants self-awareness involved constantly evaluating their golf game. They knew what it entailed in order to perform better, and did this after a competition and during practice. They were also able to recognize if they had a good game regardless of the outcome.

For Toffer, being aware of what he is capable of was one of the things that was important to him. He cited, "part of being a good golfer is being real. You need to think about who you are as a player, what your skills are, where you stand, and you try to get better from there."

Stepping-stone. The participants' increased self-awareness led them to realize that the PGT was a good tour in which they could harness their skills, and work on their foundation to prepare them for bigger tours around the world.

Magic, a 24 year old professional golfer, also saw the PGT as an essential means to achieving his ultimate goal. He said, "I saw it as a stepping-stone for something better like the Asian tour, or probably making it to the PGA". For most of the participants, they

knew that the PGT could help them build their confidence, gain more experience, and have the freedom to try out new techniques. They discussed that the level of play may not be as high as on the Asian tour but there's still good competition because some of the players that compete on the Asian tour also play on the PGT.

Support System

Due to the amount of time that they spent with each other, the participants were able to develop friendships within the tour. They motivated each other and were each other's support system. Aside from their friends, the participants also received support from others. Support System included five subthemes, highlighting the key individuals besides friends from whom they got support: *Friends*, *Parents, Sponsors, Coach, and Significant Others.*

Friends. The most relevant to their experience of social support was their relationships with their friends. Since golf is an individual sport, they don't have teammates but they all mentioned the importance of having friends that played the same sport as they did, and the influential role that this played in various aspects of their experience of becoming a professional golfer.

Toffer, the oldest amongst the participants, valued the friendships that were formed on his path to becoming a professional golfer in the Philippines. He said:

> It's the friendships you form along the way. You see your buddies going through the same thing. You're close to them because you see them in all their forms. Travelling together in tournaments you're with them 24 hours, you see everyone's personalities, and you get closer. You spend more time with them more than your

girl friends, your wives, and your family.

Parents. There was a constant support experienced by all the participants from their parents. The participants described how the parental support was at times negative and other times positive. Magic experienced both negative and positive support from his parents. He narrated it as, “Of course, if you want to be a top class athlete, the support needs to come from your parents because in the beginning any athlete would never make it”.

Magic eventually quit playing golf and when asked why he chose to quit golf, he said, “because all the pressure came from them” [parents]. For another participant (Milo), he sees his father as someone that he looked up to, who sacrificed and supported him in both emotional and tangible ways in order to help him achieve his golf goals:

> So me being the only boy in the siblings, I was encouraged to do well. I also wanted to prove something, if I can be greater than what my dad achieved in sports so, he's very influential, he was always there to back me up, he gave up a lot of things, um to sustain my junior golf career.

Hansel discussed the different support that he got from both of his parents. He said, “In terms of support in the sport, on how to get better, my dad was there. In terms of emotional support, when I had a bad tournament, I had my mom.”

Sponsors. The participants also mentioned that sponsors were a key feature of the support they received while becoming a professional. Sponsors came in different forms. Some participants received sponsorships from known golf brands, while some received sponsorships from different individuals. Milo explained this when he said:

> At that time I was ready to work after graduating and then something came up. My dad's friend, who's still my sponsor told me, "*You know what, after graduating, I'll support you, I'll support your training, I'll take you to the States and all that*".

Sponsors not only provided financial support, but participants also mentioned that getting sponsors motivated them to put more effort in the game. “Just being sponsored by Titleist means a lot to me. It also motivated me to put more effort into it and try to improve my rank this year, that’s why I’ve been grinding it out for the past few months” (Milo).

Coaches. Coaches have been very influential in the development of the participants’ golf games. They discussed the trajectory of coaches they’ve had over the years as well as the various influences coaches had in their becoming professionals from teaching them the fundamentals of the game and helping them develop their golf swings to providing guidance and serving as their mentors.

For some participants, coaches had a broader impact on them and their game. For example, Toffer’s experience with his coaches is best understood in the paragraph below:

> You know, good work ethic, basic foundations of the golf game. He was like my second father the way he took care of me, played so much with his son. Then you got TB here who was a mentor. They were more than just my coaches, they were also my mentors. They super cared about my golf game, looked after me, I’m grateful to them that they cared so much and made sure I was in the right track.

Significant others. The last group of individuals that were mentioned by the participants involved the support received from significant others. Just as was described regarding the role of parents, significant others had both positive and negative impacts on the golfers.

For example, Magic discussed how he was motivated by his girlfriend. "I guess one of the factors that motivated me was my current girlfriend at that time. I saw it as an opportunity to earn money. But at the same time, it was time consuming, that I really had to put in a lot of sacrifices which ended up with me breaking up with my girlfriend at that time." Meanwhile for Steve, who was one of the rookies on tour, realized that his significant other was a source of pressure. "Like my ex, like it or not, she wasn't really helping, before, I would think what would happen if I hit a bad shot, what would she think, now it's just me. I started to see myself more, started focusing on myself more" (Steve).

Mental Skills

All participants described having used mental skills on their road to becoming a professional golfer on the PGT. Mental skills consisted of six sub-themes: *Confidence, One shot at a time, Focus, Practice, Goal Setting, and Routine.*

Confidence. All of them had an overall belief in their ability to execute a shot, which meant they were able to commit to their shots more. Trust was a key feature of the participants' confidence in their golf game and their development. Confidence for Bean, who is the youngest amongst the participants, meant that he believed in his execution of his shot because he is relaxed. He discussed it in detail by saying, "Confidence is like a

relaxation when you know everything. I mean when you know that when you execute, the result is going to be more to your favor than not. It's more of trust in the execution."

For one participant, confidence also related back to the advantages of having built a solid foundation. Specifically Toffer mentioned that playing at a higher level meant that you have the basic foundations that will enable you to trust your intuition. As narrated by Toffer, "You got to fix the mechanic part of it, that's the basic, the foundations. But if you want to play at a high level, you have to feel it. You have to trust your intuition".

One shot at a time. Most of them placed a significant importance on their ability to let go of bad shots and how it was able to help them perform better. Lastly, being in the present moment helped them develop a more positive attitude towards the game.

When asked about his mindset, Beast related it to being in the present moment. As described by Beast:

> Mindset can be explained in a lot of ways, depending on what kind of attitude you take when you play golf. For me, mindset is how to stay calm, how to be more neutral, how to be more in the ground than thinking more about. It's basically living your shot at the moment.

Additionally, Bean also talked about how being in the present moment helped him relax. Bean stated, "When you're in the moment, you just accept it and you just let it go, it's like everything seems to be fine".

Focus. Focus can be a general term for a lot of factors in golf. But focus for the participants meant having an off and on switch and being able to experience flow. For example, Andy talked about how being able to shift his focus benefited his performance: "You know when you're in the zone sometimes, when you don't talk to anyone, it's really bad to stay in the zone for a really long period of time, that's why a lot of us have that on and off switch."

Practice. Practice for the participants was practicing with a purpose or a goal in mind. It helped them to effectively utilize the time that they spend in practice and become more self-aware. They paid more attention on what they wanted to achieve in practice, instead of focusing on how long they should practice.

For example, Beast described how purposeful practice had an effect on his performance on the golf course:

> Effort is not saying that you need to practice a lot. It means that you have to have a perfect practice while doing the effort. Perfect practice is understanding what you're doing while you're practicing. While others just tend to practice because they want to fix something. Others just practice without learning anything from it, but knowing what to fix knowing what to do after is different from just hitting balls everyday.

Goal setting. Most of the participants had short-term and long-term goals, which they mentioned in the interviews. Their goals were related to their ongoing game development. Some participants discussed how short term goals would help them achieve their long term goals. For example, one participant's short-term goal was related to his

swing that he believes will eventually lead to his long-term goal. As Bean described, "Like say, say, three months from now, I wanna be like this with my golf swing. I wanna have these attributes when it's like now I wanna do this to my game. So from this, I set this, and I maintain."

Routines. The experience of the golfers of becoming a professional golfer in the Philippines also included having routines. According to Bean, "having a routine is good. When you're presented with a situation that you know is chaotic, you would know how to deal with it". Lastly, Steve discussed how having a consistent physical and tactical routine has helped him in with the mental and physical aspect of his golf performance. As thoroughly narrated by Steve:

> Actually, with every shot, you do your physical routine. You take your practice swings, and see where you want to aim. Then go to your address position, look at your target and as soon as I get back to the ball, exhale and then just hit. That prevents any negative thoughts from entering my mind because I only see the target that way.

Pressure

Pressure consisted of four subthemes: *Physiological, Internal, External, and Challenge.*

Physiological. When discussing the pressure they experienced on their journey towards becoming professional golfers, the participants highlighted the physiological aspects. For example, one participant knew that he was feeling pressure because he saw and felt a physical response to pressure. He stated:

> That was really difficult, walking off the 18th hole. I remember I was having cold sweats, it was a par 3 um I was 1 under at that point. The hole was on the left side of the green, then I put my ball on the hazard on the right, 30-40 yards to the right. I felt pressure right there because I knew that I had the chance to make the cut, but I made my bogey so even for the day.

One participant talked about the manifestation of pressure through increased heart rate. Beast stated how he doesn't want that extra pulse during high-pressured situations. "So knowing that I need to make a putt because it will make a difference, for sure it will give you that little doubtness and that little pulse that you don't want" (Beast).

Internal. Most participants were aware that pressure is mostly mental. Throughout the interviews, the participants discussed pressure and how it was inextricably connected to confidence and self-doubt.

With this notion of the pressure that one puts one oneself, some of the participants mentioned particular instances in which they realized this was the case. For example, Hansel recalled his first shot as a professional and the pressure that one shot created. He said, "Ok, this is your first shot as a professional, there is pressure there, which is I think some of the pressure that we feel is pretty artificial in a way. We just put it on ourselves".

External. The participants also discussed how external sources of pressure affecting them, their game, and their development. External pressure also came from perceptions of the expectations others have for their performance. For example, Hansel felt the pressure of disappointing other people. He further talks about it below:

> I might disappoint people who support me, like family, your coach, especially if you're a club player and if you started out as a club player, in federation, once you turn pro everyone is trying to root for you cause you're from their club.

Challenge. In their discussion of their experience with pressure, the participants also discussed the impact of one's perspective of the pressure. For example, in comparison to the other participants, Toffer viewed pressure in a positive lens. Toffer shared that he views pressure as a motivation, a challenge. He likes to put pressure on himself as stated, "It's like a drug, it's like my gambling addiction, especially tournament golf. Golf for fun is nice, I love that too, but tournament golf is like a rush."

Emotions

All of the participants experienced a range of emotions throughout their experience of becoming a professional. Being able to accept strong emotions such as excitement was a key element in their experience as professional golfers. *Emotions* consisted of four sub-themes: *Thankful, Regret, Pride, Ups and downs, and Emotion Regulation.*

Thankful. Even though the participants experienced a range of emotions, being thankful for the opportunity to be able to compete on the tour was a common emotion amongst the participants. For example, while talking about his biggest win in the tour, Toffer mentioned that he was thankful for the PGT. His most memorable experience was finishing first in one of the local tournaments, which automatically secured a spot form him in the Asian Tour. "But that really elevated me (talking about his championship win) to a top 10 player in the PGT, I was coming from a guy who just wanted to make cuts

before. That's really what I'm thankful for in the PGT giving me the opportunity to get better as a player" (Toffer).

Regret. A couple of the participants are no longer playing golf or competing on the golf tour. Thus, their emotions centered around the loss they feel regarding the feeling that playing golf at a high level gave them. Hansel stated, "I miss playing, I miss challenging myself, and I miss the feeling of competition. I miss the feeling of tournament pressure. In a perfect world I would come back". Moreover, Toffer felt that he needed to start working on a real job. He said, "Not everyone can make big bucks. I would have loved to keep going but the window was closing for me to start something".

Pride. One salient emotion that was evident in the participants' discussion of their experience of becoming professional golfers was pride. Pride was something that they related to the value placed on the label of being a professional golfer. "Playing golf is a career, something you don't see an average person do. Wearing a pair of pants makes you look more professional and having that label on you, hey I'm a professional golfer, you know it stands out better" (Andy).

Ups and downs. One key aspect of the role of emotions was the impact of having to deal with the highs and lows of the game and one's journey when pursuing goals of playing professionally. Toffer showed resiliency and optimism when he was talking about experiencing the ups and downs in the tour:

> It's hard when you're chasing your dreams, when you're chasing big goals, you're putting yourself out there and so it's like when you want to date Ms. Universe, it's gonna be hard and you're gonna get rejected and rejected all

> over again. That's the hard part, you know, the dealing with the ups and downs. Mostly downs. That you just have to keep making the downs until you get the ups.

Emotion regulation. Besides the emotional roller coaster that the participants described and the key emotions that stood out for them during their professional development, they also discussed the role of regulating their emotions. For example, Steve, who is relatively new to the tour, believed that regulating his emotions facilitated optimal performance. The ability to recognize an emotion and regulate it was one of the mental skills that Steve was describing in detail:

> Well, you can't be too happy, you can't be too sad, you know you have to keep a certain level, you should not be hard on yourself when things don't go your way. Golf is not a game of perfect right? So there are days that you don't feel the same and things don't quite click and when you start being hard on yourself, it's not good on the course I believe that anger is the enemy of focus so if you get mad, you're focusing on the wrong things.

DISCUSSION

The purpose of this research project was to provide an in-depth examination of the experience of becoming a professional golfer in the Philippines. The goal was to provide insight into the participants' own perspectives of this journey and highlight commonalities in their experiences. Game development was the central theme of this study because all the other themes revolved around it. One particular theme that was relevant to the participants was the role that their friends had in their experience as

golfers. Years of experience have also led the participants to use mental skills to benefit their performance as they experience pressure and deal with their emotions in developing their golf game, with confidence being a salient piece of their experience.

The first major theme that emerged was the *game development* of the participants. All of the participants were exposed to the sport at a young age. Most of them were junior golfers and have been playing for more than 11 years. This supports Blooms' (1985) assertion that experts in their respective domains were exposed to the activity at a young age. Their experience of transitioning from amateur to professional collaborates to Super's (1980,1990) on identity. According to Super, identity (especially during adolescence) and the involvement in activities (occurring between 18 and 24 years of age) related to eventual career choices are the two key factors that determine vocational decisions. Their exposure to a structured environment in their early lives (e.g., junior golf competitions, and practice routines), as well as strong role models (e.g., coaches, and fellow athletes), not only influenced their career intentions but also contributed to their development of a sold foundation for the sport and an identity as a golfer. Athletes mostly base their identities on their experiences with sport and develop self-fulfillment from the successful assumption of an athlete's role (Brewer, Van Raalte, & Linder, 1993); this is termed athletic identity (AI).

Spending a considerable amount of time developing their golf game led to an increase in self-awareness for the participants. This was evident through their post-game evaluations of themselves, and the constant need to be better. This supports the notion that the ability to engage in honest self-appraisal to enhance self-awareness has been recognized as an important mental skill by elite athletes (Calmels, d'Arripe-Longueville,

Fournier & Soulard, 2003).

Friends was a key element to the experience of the participants because all of them mentioned that the relationship that they had with their friends on tour was one of the experiences that was most memorable for them. The friendships that they built towards their path to becoming a professional golfer in the Philippines had an effect on the way that they experienced life on the tour.. This sense of friendliness against competitors is mentioned in Church's (1987) research regarding the personality of Filipinos. Church (1987) argued that the Filipino accommodative surface value of pakikisama (companionship) as a cultural trait, influences achievement motivation. When Filipinos exercise pakikisama, getting ahead which is the opposite of pakikisama, is seen as harmful to group harmony and achievement motivation is lessened.

Further, all of the participants received monetary (i.e., tangible) and emotional support from their parents. Similarly, Côté (1999) suggested that parents have proved to be an important source of emotional support.

The participants also discussed the coach as an important provider of social support. This supports the study of Smith and Smoll (1996) that a positive coach-athlete relationship can enhance the psychological and social well-being of an athlete. According to them, children who have played for highly reinforcing and encouraging coaches have higher levels of self-esteem. The role of the coach in the lives of the participants varied depending on what stage of skill development they were in. One participant regarded his coach as a second father for him.

Most literature about the role of social support has focused on the role of parents, peers, and coaches. There was limited research on the role of significant others. However, their impact can be understood using Ryan & Deci's (1991) self-determination theory, specifically the role of our need for relatedness. Relatedness involves the basic need to relate to other people, have others care for you and to care for others (Cox, 2012).

In general, all of the participants discussed the use of mental skills in their experience of becoming professional golfers. Specifically, confidence, one shot at a time, focus, practice, goal setting, and having routines seemed to play a role in their development. This is consistent with an early study done by McCaffrey & Orlick (1989) in which they revealed ten common mental factors related to excellence among the top-touring professionals.

The participants consistently mentioned *confidence* as a key aspect that affected their performance as professional golfers. This is consistent with Gould, Dieffenbach et al. (2002) and Durand-Bush and Salmela (2002), who proposed that confidence consistently appears as a key skill possessed by successful elite athletes.

Participants also communicated their sources of confidence. One participant discussed how their achievements helped develop their confidence. Performance accomplishments have been shown to have the strongest effect on self-efficacy and performance (Feltz, Landers, & Raeder, 1979; McAuley, 1985). Another, participant described his one shot at a time as trusting the execution of a shot and being in the present moment. This translates to using psychological strategies, which is also a source of sport-confidence. Top golfers are able to focus on one shot at a time by being able to

deal with most distractions but they still needed constant reminders to stay focused on the task (McCaffrey & Orlick, 1989).

Another mental skill that was discussed by the participants was having routines. For some, the routines related to the execution of a shot. This is consistent with Boutcher & Zinsser (1990) who suggested that routines act as a preparation phase prior to skill execution and are crucial in determining whether the performer achieves a good performance or not.

Another key theme underlying the experience of pursuing a professional level of golf performance was *pressure* and its impact on their experiences and performance. Pressure came in many forms for the participants. This supports the study of McCaffrey and Orlick (1998) that recognizing, expecting, and preparing to cope with pressure situations is one of the elements of excellence for professional golfers.

For some, pressure was discussed as at times negatively impacting their golf performance and development. Others, perceive pressure as a challenge instead of a threat, and even in some instances created pressure situations in practice to help them better prepare. This supports the theory of Lazarus (2000), which places a value on how cognition affects the way an athlete responds to a certain situation.

Participants who were more skilled were able to handle pressure better than their less killed counterparts. This is consistent with Ericsson's (1996) study on experts; specifically that individuals develop different problem representations as a function of the knowledge that they have about the domain and their specialization in that domain (Ericsson, 1996). Lastly, some participants reported that they didn't compare themselves

to others. This supports the study of Mahoney, Gabriel, and Perkins (1987). They argued that successful athletes focused more on their own performance instead other the performance of others.

Emotions also surfaced as a key element of the participants' experiences of becoming professional golfers. The most common emotion that was experienced across the participants was being thankful. This is consistent with Hanin (2004) and Robazza (2006) who found that in competitive sports, the most relevant emotions are usually personally significant, task specific, and functionally helpful or harmful emotions really experienced by athletes. For the participants, the emotions that stood out for them were being thankful, regret, and pride. These emotions were related to self-directed emotions, including individual differences in traitlike characteristics (Hareli & Weiner; 2002). Lastly, the participants also experienced regulating their emotions when it changed from time to time. Learning to relax was key to regulating these responses in order to avoid any unfavorable effects on performance (Williams, 2010).

One interesting finding related to the emotional experience of becoming a professional golfer in the Philippines was the golfers' discussion of being thankful. McCaffrey and Orlick (1989) studies elite golfers but the results mainly highlighted what the golfer did to achieve performance excellence. They failed to mention how the golfers felt about having the opportunity to play in a professional tour and how it might have impacted their performance. Thus, the current study adds to the understanding of elite golfers by not only focusing on what they do to achieve their level of performance but also how they feel about their experiences of becoming professional golfers.

Practical Implications

The results of this study provide insight into several practical implications for working with golfers who are working towards becoming professionals, particularly golfers of Asian descent. First, sport psychology practitioners should note that friends play a big role in the game development of Asian athletes. They can use this information to help motivate and understand clients better in order to improve their performance. Since being with others is a core aspect of a Filipino's values, practitioners need to know who is the client in relation to his peers, and how can the practitioner use the role of their friends to their advantage. Second, their parents are their main sponsors and source of support on the tour. Thus, consultants might have to deal with the parents of the athlete as well. It is important to remember who their client really is and set boundaries right from the start in order to avoid confusion. Further, practitioners should be mindful of the positive and negative influences that parents can have on the athletes.

Third, since Sport Psychology is a new field in Asia particularly in the Philippines, the practitioner needs to be patient in dealing with Filipino athletes. Most of the concepts in sport psychology are new to them so it might take them longer to learn how to use mental skills to their advantage. Even though the results of this study provide support for the fact that they are using mental skills already, learning how to optimize these skills would help them to further enhance their development and performance. Thus, practitioners can also introduce mental conditioning techniques to aid the athletes in systematically developing key aspects highlighted by the participants such as enhancing their confidence, managing internal and external pressure, optimizing social support, focus, and the use of goal setting, managing emotions, and staying focused on the present

moment. However, since sport psychology is new and rare in the Philippines, practitioners should realize that they may first need to focus on educating the athletes on what sport psychology is and get buy in for the role that it could have on their performance. Further, since money was mentioned as a key aspect of their transition from amateur to professional as well as an external source of pressure, consideration of fees for sport psychology services is warranted.

Limitations and Future Directions

The limited research on the mental aspects of sport performance for Filipino athletes demands further research to determine what type of mental training is suitable for Filipinos. Several limitations may have impacted the results of this study, including the lack of experience in phenomenological interviewing by the lead researcher. Moreover, the major themes and subthemes that were found could be researched more in-depth, particularly the role of friends, with a greater number of diverse participants to have a better understanding of this phenomenon.

Relatedly, since the participants were limited to speaking in English, the participants might not be able to express themselves fully. Some words in Tagalog do not directly translate into English, which might have hindered the researcher to fully understand their experience. Practitioners need to take this in consideration when working with participants from a different culture.

A final limitation was technology. Due to the nature of the study and the researcher residing in the US at the time of the study, only participants who had access to

technology were able to participate in the study. Thus, the sample size of the study as well as the diversity in participants could have been affected by this limitation.

Additionally, since most of the participants were in their 20's, it is imperative that future research should be done on the older generation of Filipino professional golfers in order to get a more broad range picture of this phenomenon. Lastly, future research should also be done on the difference between the experiences of being an amateur golfer in the Philippines versus the experience of being a professional golfer in the Philippines in order to help aspiring golfers have a smoother transition from being an amateur to a professional.

Conclusion

The game development of the participants was a central theme to the experience of becoming a professional golfer in the Philippines. Filipino athletes throughout this study had different experiences, but there were several similarities found throughout all the participants. These similarities are explained in five themes: *Game Development, Support System, Mental Skills, Pressure, and Emotions.* One theme stood out as being key to their experience of becoming professional golfers, namely the role of friends. Findings showed that all the previous research about the mental skills employed by elite athletes are congruent to what the participants have experienced. It is crucial for practitioners to look at the cultural aspects of sport and sport psychology but not make the assumption that the experiences of the athletes are going to be different because they come from a different culture.

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