



*Understanding the demands of
the coach athlete relationship
within professional cycling.*

*What does it take to be an elite
level director sportif?*

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Please cite as

Martin, J. (2023). Understanding the demands of the coach athlete relationship within professional cycling. What does it take to be an elite level director sportif? *SportRxiv*.

ABSTRACT

The art of coaching can be defined as the interaction of two people: the coach and the athlete, where they both show elements of connection, understanding, shared experiences and trust to help bring the best out of each other and achieve a common goal. Whilst there has been a large amount of research focusing on the how the coach

athlete relationship is built, there is currently no research exploring the perceptions of both the coach and the athlete regarding the how the coach athlete relationship functions in the context of professional cycling. The aim of this research study was to explore the role of a cycling director sportif and identify how they use elements of the coach athlete relationship to achieve a common goal with their athletes and achieve the best performance possible within their team environment. The participants were three males and one female who were purposefully sampled for this study due to their extensive experience in being a director sportif. Participants took part in a single semi structured interview lasting 45 minutes in order to gain a deep understanding of their perception and experiences of the coach athlete relationship. The data were thematically analyzed using interpretative phenomenological analysis. A total of six super-ordinate themes were uncovered during the analysis process and were defined as previous experience, coaching behaviors, education, communication, potential and team culture and ethos. The results indicate that there is a lack of clarity regarding the role of a director sportif and their function within the greater performance support team. There is also a critical lack of understanding focusing on the best form of education for newly appointed director sportifs, it is also unknown if previous experience as a professional cyclist provides a sufficient level of knowledge and skills to be an effective coach. This present study also highlights a change in the way that coaches measure the performance of their athletes within the context of professional cycling, and how both coaches and athletes heavily rely on communication and more interpersonal skills as

their primary source of motivation during training and races. Future research should attempt to further define the role of a director sportif and identify whether just informal learning and mentoring is a sufficient form of education for newly appointed director sportifs.

Keywords: *Coach athlete relationship, Cycling. Director sportif, Communication. Education, Coaching behaviors, Leadership*

INTRODUCTION

An effective coach athlete relationship is a critical factor that enables the successful functioning and overall performance of a sports team or an individual's sports performance. Whilst there has been a variety of research on the well-established elements of the coach athlete relationship, there is currently a lack of research exploring the role of the coach athlete relationship within the context of professional cycling. Professional road cycling requires both the coaches and the athletes to be away from their home for extensive periods of time and often, athletes train independently from their coaches creating many complex issues and placing additional strain on the coach athlete relationship.

At its simplest form, coaching is the interaction of two people: the coach and the athlete with the coach attempting to teach the athlete a new skill or to help them progress in their sport. The coach and the athlete have the opportunity to form a unique connection in which they form

trust, a deep level of understanding, and shared experiences whilst attempting to achieve a common goal. Jowett (2017) suggested that in the past the coaching process related solely to the process where coaches are responsible for changes in their athletes physical performance and wellbeing. However, recent research suggests that the coaching process is more focused on the coach athlete relationship as this is at the heart of establishing successful coaching. Observing and analyzing the coach athlete relationship is important for not only understanding the entire coaching process but equally the quality and effectiveness of the coaching the athlete receives and the quality of the relationship the athlete has with their coach. In more simplistic terms the coach athlete relationship is at the heart of the more general coaching process and the outcomes of the “coaching” is heavily influenced by the coach and the athlete's ability to function as a unit and develop a strong connection.

The coach athlete relationship

There are many definitions that relate to the coach athlete relationship. However, most coaches and sports psychology researchers have defined the coach athlete relationship as all of the situations in which a coach and athlete share interactions including shared experiences, feelings and behaviors (Jowett & Cockerill 2003). Feltz et al., (1999) attempted to explore some functions of the coaching efficacy model, in which they suggested that the coaching efficacy model included four primary dimensions. The first dimension stipulated by Feltz et al., (1999) focuses on the teaching technique efficacy which relates to the coach's ability to instruct other individuals. The second of the four dimensions is defined as game strategy in which game strategy refers to the coach's ability to generate athlete buy-in to the coaching process (Becker,

2009; Henning & Dimeo 2018) as well as the coach's ability to achieve whole team success (winning a match or witnessing a notable increase in performance). The third dimension highlighted by Feltz et al., (1999) is motivation efficacy and relates to the coach's ability to use psychological skills to promote athlete well-being and for the coach to motivate their athletes to achieve a predefined goal. The fourth coaching dimension is character building, this solely relates to the coach's ability to influence athletes' personal development and positive attitude toward sports.

Building on from this research by Feltz et al., (1999), Jowett's (2007) highly regarded research article titled "Interdependence Analysis and the 3+1Cs in the Coach–Athlete Relationship Learning Objectives" attempted to fully understand all of the elements and functions of the coach athlete relationship Jowett's (2007) work sets out a framework that included four major constructs that relate to the most prominent elements of the coach athlete relationship. The four main constructs suggested by Jowett (2007) are closeness (this relates to how much the coach and the athlete care support each other), commitment, (this relates to the how committed the coach and or the athlete is in relation to maintaining the relationship for an extensive period of time), complementary (the extent to which the behavior of the coach and athlete are similar to each other) and lastly co-orientation (this relates to whether the coach and the athlete have been able to establish a common view regarding how the athlete will progress in their sport). The framework proclaimed by Jowett (2007) can be summarized as how the coach perceives the athlete's ultimate personal and sporting potential (summarized as the coach's perceptions of the athlete's overall performance). A strong coach athlete relationship is one of the key factors for overall sporting performance (Jowett & Cockerill 2003) and happiness for both the athlete and

coach (Lafrenière et al., 2001). Another outcome of a positive coach athlete relationship is that the coach and or athlete are better able to understand what emotions they are experiencing during training or competitions (Lafrenière et al., 2001). A positive coach–athlete relationship has been shown to promote participation, athlete satisfaction, self-esteem, and improved performance (Jowett and Poczwardowski 2007; Sánchez et al., 2009)

Jowett and Cockerill (2002) proposed that the coach–athlete relationship can be heavily influenced in equal ways by both the coach and the athlete. Subsequently, Jowett (2005) developed the “3 C’s” model to objectively measure how successful a coach athlete relationship is. The “3 C’s” included; (1) ‘closeness’: which focuses on how deeply the coach and athlete are connected and how mutual trust, respect, and appreciation are expressed; (2) ‘commitment’: can be defined as the desire to maintain the relationship over time and; (3) ‘complementarity’: The interaction between the coach and the athlete that is perceived to be cooperative and effective. The final “C”, ‘co-orientation’ was added to assess how reciprocal the coach and athlete perceptions of the relationship were. The addition of ‘co-orientation’ resulted in the model being currently referred to as the “3+1 C’s” model (2007b). The “3+1 C’s” model suggests the more an athlete and coach are satisfied with the relationship, the higher the quality of the relationship, and the greater the athletic outcomes as a result of the relationship (Jowett & Cockerill 2003).

What is a director sportif

In the sport of professional cycling, each team has a support vehicle which typically contains a Director Sportif (DS), a mechanic (in some cases this may be the job or the role of the DS), spare parts e.g. wheels, bicycle tools, and food and drink for the riders. It is the DS's job to communicate with their athletes (in this case the cyclists) in the race either by using race radios or by having riders come back to the team car in the middle of races to discuss race strategy, weather updates, nutrition interventions or more generic coaching in an attempt to motivate the riders to achieve a common goal for the team in that particular race. Previous research exploring the role of a DS is extremely limited with only one prior research article investigating what elite female cyclists expect from their DS. Research conducted by Salmon et al., (2017) attempted to examine the role that a DS has in relation to situational awareness and teamwork in the context of an elite women's cycling race. Salmon et al., (2017) conducted interviews with riders regarding their perception of the role of a DS and recorded significant parts of race radio communication between the riders and the DS. The results from Salmon et al., (2017) proposed that riders expect the following characteristics from their DS: Good communication, the ability to provide mechanical and nutritional support, provide updates to the riders regarding what's happening in the race, provide a platform for communication within the team of riders, mentor the riders and motivate them to achieve a common goal within the team. The analysis and results from Salmon et al., (2017) suggests that a DS has a unique and important role in relation to establishing effective teamwork . Salmon et al., (2017) suggested eight unique behaviors and characteristics that a good DS needs for them to function effectively within a professional cycling team. These characters were: leadership, mutual performance monitoring, back up behaviors, adaptability, team orientation, shared mental models. Mutual trust and communication.

As previously mentioned within professional cycling the DS also takes on the responsibilities of the coach. Due to the limited amount of research that has focused on the role of DS's and coaching in professional cycling, it is currently unclear which aspects, if any, of the pre-existing definitions of the coach athlete relationship (Fonteyn et al., 2022; Jowett. 2007; Lyle. 2005) will apply to the context of professional cycling.

Leading research question:

Amongst the current scientific literature, there is a significant lack of research exploring the role of a cycling DS and their role and function within the coach athlete relationship. Whilst there are several research articles which have explored the concept of the coach athlete relationship, there is currently no research which explores the coach athlete relationship within the context of professional cycling. Due to the unique team environments, international race schedules and the fact that the athlete and coach are often in different countries or locations there is the potential for the coach athlete relationship to function in different ways than has already been depicted by existing research.

The clear lack of evidence regarding the role of a DS and how the DS (coach) and the cyclists (athletes) build and maintain elements of the coach athlete relationship leaves a large gap in the research literature. Due to the lack of a coherent evidence base, the primary aim of this research study was to explore how the DS and the cyclist build and maintain elements of the coach athlete relationship. The secondary aim of this research article was to build on the

work of Salmon et al., (2017) to help further define the behaviors and interpersonal characteristics that are expected from DS's.

METHOD

This present study adopted an interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA approach). An IPA approach is a well-established approach to qualitative research in sports psychology and greater psychology research. The specific aim of this approach is to gain an understanding of the phenomena under investigation from the participant's perspective. This phenomenon being the experiences of DS's in their job role specifically within the context of building relationships with the riders that they coach. Subsequently, the phenomena also focuses more generally on exploring elements of the coach athlete relationship. The IPA approach to data collection was chosen due to its ability to invite participants to articulate stories, their experiences, feelings and thoughts regarding a specific situation or phenomenon. The approach follows a systematic procedure without having too many elements of the prescriptive methodology. Subsequently, using an IPA approach allows for flexibility and an individual approach for data collection. The approach offers a detailed analysis of the personal accounts of participants, followed by a presentation and discussion of the generic experimental themes that were paired with the researcher's own interpretation.

Ethical approval for the study was gained via the internal university ethics committee at the institution, where the author was a resident whilst the study was being conducted. All the participants opted to take part in the study by giving their signed informed consent.

Participants

A homogenous sample was purposely selected for this study. The participants were selected based on their experiences as elite (professional) cycling director sportifs. Specifically, participants for this study were recruited from continental, pro-continental and world tour cycling teams (elite national and international teams with a professional status). This specific approach was adopted in accordance with Smith and Osborn's (2003) guidelines for IPA research. There were 4 participants (three male, one female, Mage = 45.5 years, age range 28-62 years; Mexperience = 8.5 years working as a DS in a professional cycling team). Whilst all four participants had been a DS at a continental team, two of the participants had additionally been a DS at a world tour team. Three of the participants in this study were still actively involved in professional teams being a DS, whilst one had recently retired from being a DS at a world tour team.

Procedure

The participants were interviewed to gain an insight into their experiences as director Sportifs in professional cycling teams and how they used aspects of the coach-athlete relationship in their role. This study adopted a semi-structured interview approach, as highlighted by Smith and Sobborn (2003). The researcher developed a specific interview schedule for the study, but this was used as a rough guide rather than a way of forcing the interview in a strict direction regarding themes and concepts. This approach is consistent with the phenomenological approach, where the participants are considered the "experts' ", and it is the meaning that they associate with their experiences that is of interest to the researcher (smith

1996). The specific process for developing the interview schedule adhered to a four-step approach developed by Smith and Osborn (2003). This approach suggested that the researchers (a) think about a broad range of issues; (b) put these topics in the most appropriate sequence; (c) think of appropriate questions relating to these areas, and (d) think about possible probes and prompts. examples of interview questions included as part of the interview schedule are: "Can you give me an example of how trust and respect between staff and riders has been formed?" and "What has been the greatest challenge you have experienced in your role as a director Sportif" and "What do you think makes a great director Sportif? Can these attributes or values be learned, or do you think they are innate values". All the interviews, which lasted between 30 and 60 minutes, were recorded and transcribed verbatim to produce an accurate record of the conversations that took place. The interview transcripts were then returned to the participants to check the accuracy of the transcription process, after which IPA was used to describe the key themes and concepts that were discovered during the interviews.

Data analysis

The interpretive phenomenological analysis (IPA) method (Smith & Osborne, 2003) was used to analyze data in this study. The researcher engaged in an interpretive relationship with the transcript, reading each one several times to become familiar with the participants' answers and experiences. The researcher then searched for emerging themes and concepts that could be used to answer the research hypothesis. Initial comments and reflections regarding significant themes and concepts were made digitally on a copy of each interview transcript. Subsequently, a list of

key themes from each interview was recorded, and any segments of the interview transcript that supported the key themes were noted.

Checks were made with the original transcripts to make sure connections still worked with the primary source materials. This step led to the development of a coherent table of themes. Once the transcripts had been analyzed by the introspective process, a final table of superordinate themes was constructed. These superordinate themes were translated into a narrative around the analysis and subsequently became more expansive.

Table one: Table one shows graphical representations of how the interview transcripts were analyzed in line with the IPA approach. In the first column is a reference to which participant that particular interview transcript came from. Column two shows the raw data that is an extract from their interview transcript. Column three is the researchers first reflections about the raw data, during this phase the researchers looked at the raw data through different "lenses" to figure out what elements of the coaching and the coach athlete relationship the raw data was related to. The fourth and final column is the most prominent theme that the raw data referred to. Later on in the analysis phase of this research these prominent themes were characterized as the subordinate themes which in turn were all characterized into six large themes which were defined as the superordinate themes.

Table one: an example of the initial transcript analysis process.

P?	Raw data	First reflection	Theme/Keyword
P2	But you you get your kicks in other ways, you know about the whole group being successful.	Success, passion, challenge, complacency	challenge
P2	They go in because they love the sport inside. That's what drives them. And it's such a powerful drug that drug, I guess that it it kind of masks all of the shit stuff that you have to do you know To get there so	passion, challenge, reward, hard work, resilience, mental strength	resilience
P2	So yeah, I run a kids program and then I kinda left a sport for a while, but then I came back into it and if I do anything I like to do it as well as I could	previous experience, passion, rider development, Potential	rider development / Potential
P2	I got slightly bored of that, Jack. So I found new ways to become involved in racing.	passion, self development, personal goals, challenge	self development
P2	Kind of expands from there a really. I just started taking up opportunities in the team car when they were given to me. And it just progressed from there obviously. For me it was kind of like a progression model. I just kept on taking opportunities and worked my way up over time until I got to where I was today.	A fluid progression, informal learning, opportunities	informal learning
P2	I'm sure that may change in the next few years. I think the more research that comes out will try and give DS's much more education which I think is what it needs. Yeah. I just like to see it turn into profession.	research, change, education, job role, understanding, progression, development	development
P2	So the first thing I'd like to do, I like everybody to learn everybody else's role. That's not in a race. Sorry, that's not obviously. If you got a climber, you can't do the Sprint's job, but we like to swap job roles.	respect, understanding, learning, knowledge hard work, resilience	respect
P2	So you know myself or Steve Lamphere who you know heading up the team at the moment, you know, he's gotta do some mechanic and he's gotta do some of the commercial stuff he's gotta do. He's gonna do things that he really doesn't want to do. But he just has to get them done so that the team can function	resilience, mental strength, respect	resilience
P2	To understand what it takes to run a team. So if you've got that understanding that builds ethos and a good culture so that you know when things go wrong, you don't blame people, you get rid of the blame culture.	Understanding, opportunities, team culture, team ethos, trust respect, humility	humility
P2	We have to remember that we are custodians for the sport.	trust, respect, knowledge, progression, Potential, guidance	guidance
P1	Advice my dad gave me years ago is just be yourself, you know? Don't try and be someone else. Just be yourself. And I was always friendly and welcoming and tried to treat people how I want to be treated in life and. I think that that's always been enough really	Friendly open, accepting, trust, compassion, communication	accepting
P3	You sound like a knob head, but I don't know how many Welsh vests like loops, right? I represented in Britain	Experience, respect, modesty, guidance, education,	Experience
P3	And, you know, you could see more things and we'd be chatting from the team buses and and just both really loved the racing.	Passion, hunger for success, progression, Experience, winning, team work	winning
P3	I'll do whatever I can to help you because it's a good little project. And he said, well, I've been meaning to chase you up. Let's meet to chat over this project. We did that in the setting like this and he said I want you to be the DS. We talked enough about racing. I know how you race yourself. I know how you watch the race in between the two of us, of how you have. And sort of train you to do this, show you what to do.	Passion, guidance, mentor, Experience, trust, belief, self belief	mentor
P3	Umm. And you might get a little local rider to help you out. Go to the feed. But all of these people are just doing it for the love of the sport really. They are getting limited money from it but they are just so in love with the sport so they don't mind.	Passion, progression, hard work, opportunities	opportunities
P3	Even if you have the passion for the sport and the job. I don't think most people understand just how hard you have to work.	hard work, determination, hunger for success, progression, Experience, winning, mental strength, resilience	determination

Results and discussion

The IPA analysis of the data highlighted six superordinate themes, all of which have been used to form the basis of the following discussion, and a total of 106 subordinate themes. The superordinate themes (figure 1) include previous experience, Passion for the sport, Education, Communication, Potential and Team Culture and ethos.

Figure one shows the results for the thematic analysis of all four interview transcripts. Figure one shows the six superordinate themes of: previous experience , coaching behaviors, education, communication, potential and team culture and ethos. On the right hand side of figure one is a visual representation of all of the secondary sub-ordinate themes that emerged. Several of the sub-ordinate themes were present in more than one super-ordinate theme.

Superordinate theme one:

The superordinate theme of previous experience primarily related to the DS's desire for self improvement and additionally their desire to set themselves new challenges either in a coaching context or within a business context. All of the participants recounted their experiences of being high level professional athletes (cyclists or runners) before they transitioned into becoming a DS. The results from the IPA interview transcripts analysis suggest that some of either the coaching behaviors or the characteristics that were defined as part of the team culture were taught to the DS informally in their previous careers as coaches or athletes in an informal manner.

Superordinate theme two:

The second super ordinate theme centered around the DS's perception of their own coaching behaviors and equally some of the behavioral characteristics that the athletes expected from the coaches. Most of the sub-ordinate themes centered around building relationships and would be historically considered some skills within coaching (Baron & Morin 2010). Some examples of these soft skills that were uncovered during the IPA analysis are: humility, accepting, determination, resilience and respect.

Superordinate theme three:

The third super-ordinate theme was defined as education with the term education referring to informal education (the DS's typically defined this as learning on the job), formal education (formally study for coaching qualifications or studying the DS coach education course with the UCI) or mentorship (this was typically described as having either a high level coach or DS guide the participants for the first few years whilst they first started out in their role as a DS). Many of the remaining sub-ordinate themes are related to defining what the role of a DS actually is. Having the DS's attempt to self define their role was extremely useful due to the limited amount of knowledge and academic research regarding cycling DS's and their role.

Superordinate theme four:

The fourth superordinate theme that was highlighted during the data analysis was communication. Communication was defined as how both the DS's and the athletes expected each other to talk and share ideas. Many of the DS recounted their experiences in establishing good communication practices with the athletes that they coach which enabled a deeper level of trust and support in the coach athlete relationship. Additionally, three out of the four coaches

spoke about how they would often use communication as a tool to help motivate riders during races and hard training sessions either by talking to them one-to-one or by using the team race radios. Whilst the context of race radios are unique to the sport of cycling, using communication as a form of motivation is not uncommon in coaching practice (Buning & Thompson 2015; Gilley et al., 2009).

Superordinate theme five:

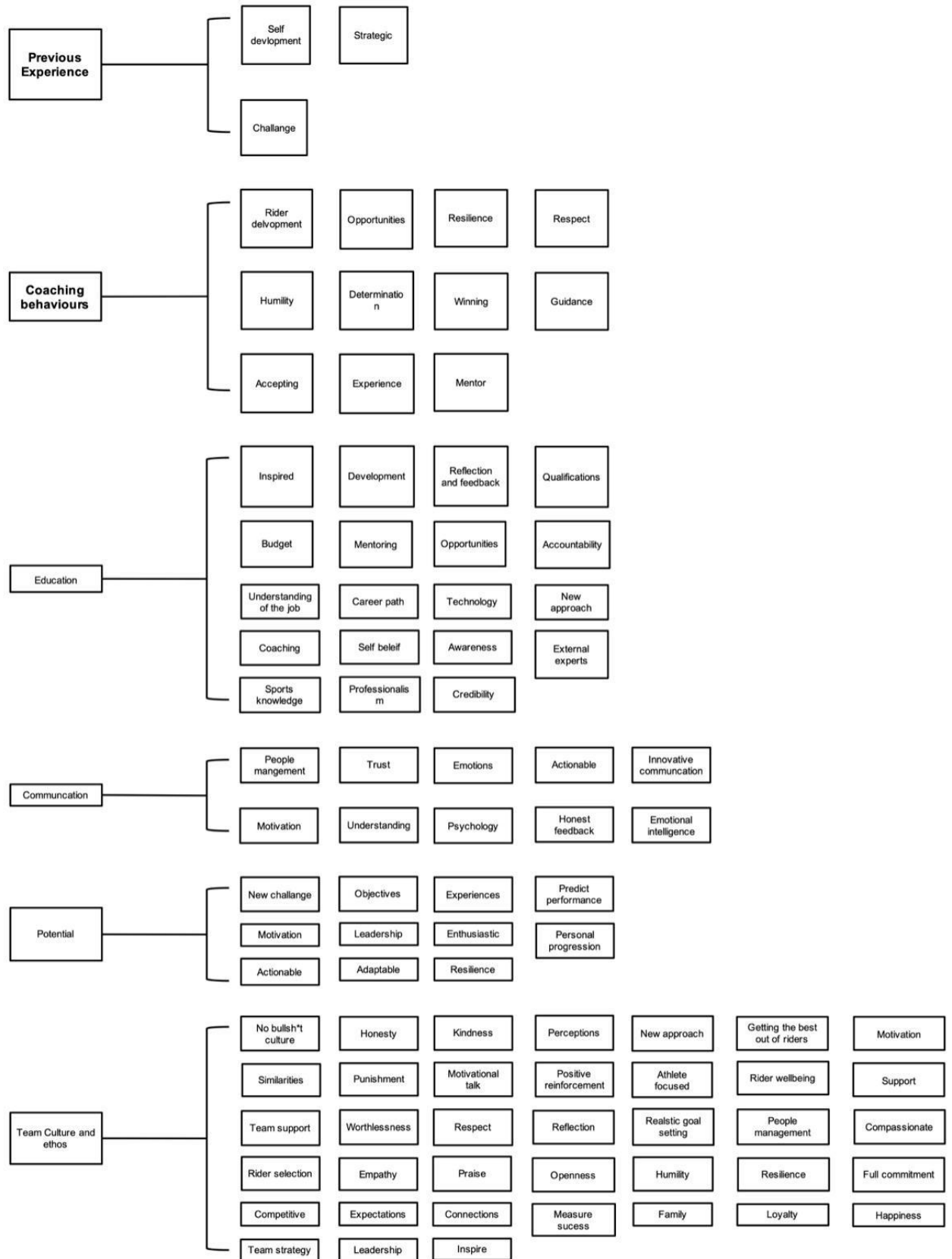
The fifth superordinate theme focused on the topic of potential. Whilst interviewing the participants it became apparent that there can sometimes be a disconnect between the athletes perception of their ability and the coaches perception of the athletes ability. Many of the participants recounted their experiences as a DS when they had to convince their athletes that they were capable of more than they thought they were capable of. Additionally, some of the DS talked about how they would measure success and more generally potential. In the past many DS's and coaches have relied only on a cyclist's power numbers as a way of measuring their potential (Schumacher et al., 2006; Van Bulck et al., 2021). However, all of the participants in this research study stated how they now use an athlete's happiness to measure success (Baumeister et al., 2003).

Superordinate theme six:

The sixth and final super-ordinate theme was team culture and ethos. This superordinate theme focused on the values and characteristics that both the DS and the athletes wanted to have in their team environment. Many of the subordinate themes that were suggested by the

DS's aligned with team values that have been highlighted in pre existing academic research
(Schaubroeck et al., 2007)

Figure 1. Superordinate and subordinate themes.



Previous Experience

The superordinate theme of previous experience focused on the coaches (DS) desire for self development and seeking new challenges either within sport or within a more general business context. There were a total of three sub-ordinate themes that came under the superordinate theme of previous experience. The first super-ordinate theme related to what previous experience the DS's had either as professional cyclists, or professionals in other sports before they transitioned into becoming a DS. A number of clear aspects regarding this role emerged including, self development, strategic and challenge.. In particular self development was an extremely important attribute for DS's especially in relation to how they create elements of the coach athlete relationship with the people that they coach. For example participant two highlighted the following:

“So yeah, I run a a kids program and then I kinda left a sport for a while, but then I came back into it and if I do anything I like to do it as well as I could”

Participant one stated that

“They go in because they love the sport inside. That's what drives them. And it's such a powerful drug that drug, I guess that it it kind of masks all of the shit stuff that you have to do you know To get there so”

The assumption that previous professional experience in a sport is sufficient experience to then manage people in that sport is a common concept and can be seen across multiple sports including football. Kelly, (2008) discovered a similar phenomenon within the context of professional football managers. The research conducted by Kelly (2008) states that “The findings highlight the lack of formal management training and the widespread assumption within football that previous playing experience is sufficient preparation for entry into management”. Extejt et al (2009) proclaimed that for the sport of NBA basketball there was no correlation between the number of seasons a player played and the magnitude of leadership experience that they gained. It should be assumed that the same correlation should apply to professional cycling meaning that although having previous experience as a professional cyclist will give a coach some degree of knowledge, it fails to fully prepare them for when they first start to manage a professional team as a DS.

Passion for the sport

The second superordinate theme was coaching behaviors and this focused on what the DS's thought their coaching behaviors were and equally some of the coaching behaviors that the athletes expected from their coaches. Many of the subordinate themes can be for coaching behaviors can be grouped into mentoring (Guidance, rider development, mentor, experience, opportunities and winning). Other subordinate themes can be grouped under the coach's ability to form a deep meaningful connection with the athletes that they coach (Humility, accepting, determination, resilience and respect). For this superordinate theme there were a total of 11 sub-ordinate themes that emerged from the analysis. The sub themes relating to passion for the sport included: challenge, resilience, rider development, self development, informal learning,

respect, humility, guidance, accepting, Experience, winning, mentor, opportunities and determination.

The second superordinate theme was coaching behaviors and focused on the DS's self-perception of their coaching style as well as the behaviors expected by the athletes they coached. The subordinate themes that emerged from the analysis could be grouped into two distinct categories: coaching behaviors and passion for the sport. Under coaching behaviors, there were a total of six sub-ordinate themes: guidance, mentorship, resilience, respect, determination, and humility. These themes centered around the coach's ability to connect with their athletes on a deep level and support their development as riders, while also fostering a sense of humility and respect in their interactions. Under passion for the sport, there were a total of five subordinate themes: challenge, self-development, informal learning, experience, and winning. These themes related to the coach's dedication to the sport and their desire to help their athletes achieve their goals, while also striving for personal and professional growth.

Several of the most prominent themes for this superordinate theme can be grouped by the term mental strength. In this case the term mental strength relates to characteristics of resilience, determination and challenge. All four participants gave examples of how they have had to use elements of mental strength in their daily role as a DS.

Participant four highlighted:

“Even if you have the passion for the sport and the job. I don’t think most people understand just how hard you have to work.”

Participant two highlighted:

“So you know myself or Steve Lamphere who you know is heading up the team at the moment, you know, he's gotta do some mechanics and he's gotta do some of the commercial stuff he's gotta do. He's gonna do things that he really doesn't want to do. But he just has to get them done so that the team can function.”

Under the superordinate theme of passion for the sport, the participants have shared their experience of needing to have a significant interest in the sport and developing young riders in order to have something to offset all of the negative elements that come with the job. It is not uncommon for coaches to need a high level of reliance. Research into tennis coaches has shown that they also need a similar level of resilience to be able to coach effectively. Young, (2014) suggests that all coaches from all sports will at some point in their career as a coach go through emotional hardship by stating “Resilience refers to effective coping and adaptation although faced with hardship, loss, stress, adversity, change and negative life events. Coaches are not immune from such experiences. While some coaches are more fortunate than others, all coaches are likely to go through very traumatic experiences such as verbal abuse from parents, financial pressures, job loss, relocation, relationship breakdown, discrimination, unexpected loss of a loved one or illness.” Young, (2014) is suggesting that coaches will face many difficulties through their coaching career and will need to find a way of coping with those so that it does not affect their ability to coach. Several studies have suggested that coaches must employ a

positive mindset and use their passion for their sport and their passion for coaching in order to not be heavily affected by any emotional hardship or stress that they may face within their role (Lafrenière et al., 2011; White & Bennie 2015).

Education

The third super-ordinate theme of education related to the coaches (DS) desire to acquire new knowledge about the sport, sports science, coaching methods and how to motivate and get the best out of the athletes that they work with. There were a total of 19 subordinate themes. The 19 subordinate themes relating to education can be grouped into informal learning vs formal learning (qualifications, external experts, mentoring, opportunities, sports knowledge, professionalism, accountability and credibility). Most of the remaining subordinate themes could be grouped under the heading role of a DS. With the extremely limited amount of academic research regarding the role of a cycling DS and a more general lack of understanding what the role of a DS entails in the context of professional cycling. Most of the DS talked about how they are continually learning what the role of a DS is and how everyone has a slightly different interpretation of what a DS does (Understanding the job, coaching, career path, self belief, reflection and feedback, awareness and new approaches).

The third superordinate theme that became apparent from the analysis was the theme of education. The theme of education focused on how DS's gained the skills and knowledge to fulfill their job role and also how they learned to do the things they need to for their job.

One of the main subordinate themes under the superordinate theme of education was informal learning vs formal learning. All of the participants highlighted that although they had either been on the UCI DS education course or had studied their coaching qualifications with BC, all of the participants equally stated that they gained even more knowledge and experience by learning on the job in the form of informal learning.

Another subordinate theme of qualifications became apparent whilst analyzing all of the transcripts. The subordinate theme of qualifications related to the participants desire to undertake formal education and complete industry recognised qualifications that would give them the knowledge and the skills to become a DS.

Additionally, external experts and mentors were also mentioned as important sources of education for the DS's. The participants highlighted that they were always looking for opportunities to learn from others who were more experienced or had different areas of expertise. The subordinate themes of sports knowledge, professionalism, accountability and credibility were also discussed by the participants. They highlighted that in order to be an effective DS, they needed to have a deep understanding of the sport and the technical aspects of cycling. Professionalism was also seen as important, as DS's need to act as role models for their athletes and represent their team in a positive manner. Accountability and credibility were also seen as important, as DS's need to be able to make tough decisions and have the trust of their athletes and team management.

The final set of subordinate themes under the superordinate theme of education related to the role of a DS. As there is a lack of academic research regarding the role of a cycling DS, the participants talked about how they are continually learning about their job and how to best fulfill their role. This includes understanding the job itself, the coaching aspect, the career path of a DS, self-belief, reflection and feedback, awareness, and new approaches.

Participant two stated that

“I did do some of the lower level qualifications like my coaching qualifications and stuff like that but I haven’t do some of the big qualifications that is needed to DS a world tour team”

Whereas participant three stated that

“We're lucky in the UK that we can do it through on the job training. On one hand getting to do on the job training reduces some of the barriers to entry but on the other hand you always have that thought in the back of your mind if you are doing the right thing or not.”

Participant three stated

“I think part of our team ethos for all the staff and the DS’s on the team is that we all buy in to the approach of CPD continued professional development. You know the sport is always changing and we need to change as DS’s at the same time. We need to constantly want to get better at our roles to help the team develop as a whole. It’s a team culture thing. I think where the sport is now, if you aren’t willing to put in the work and keep learning than maybe this sport isn’t for you. “

All of the participants from this research study commented on how they have experienced both formal and informal education throughout their role as a DS and that they valued both in different regards. Vargas-Tonsing, (2007) interviewed coaches to better understand their needs regarding coaching CPD and general coach education. The results from Vargas-Tonsing, (2007) suggest that whilst coaches value both formal education and informal education they often found informal education, such as on the job learning, to be a more effective form of education as it allowed them to better transfer their newly acquired knowledge directly into their way of coaching.

Another key sub them that emerged from analyzing the interview transcripts was “mentor”. The sub theme regarded the participants

Participant one spoke about their experienced being inspired and eventually mentored by a famous coach peter keen.

“Yeah, he he worked very closely with Chris Boardman and and was Dave Brailsford's kind of mentor. I think in many ways. So I used to study Peter Keene and his methods quite a lot, and I used to go to conferences whenever I could and and listen to all the, you know, the the speakers.”

Whereas participant three spoke about the role that reflection has in education regarding how participant three would often reflect to their coaching mentor.

“We don’t reflect enough I don’t think about what we need to change what the good bits of our job are and how we make and create relationships with the people around us. It think there are a few that are like Ohh, look at me I’m working for this big team.”

The concept of having a coaching mentor is equally common in a variety of sports and different businesses. Learning through a mentor or just a more experienced coach can provide new coaches with a way of quickly gaining sports and coaching knowledge and directly improve how they utilize elements of the coach athlete relationship within their own coaching (Banwell et al., 2021; Jones et al., 2009; Nash, 2003)

Communication

The fourth superordinate theme that emerged from analysis of the interview transcripts was “communication”. Within the more general superordinate theme of education the sub-ordinate theme of communication relates to how a DS uses communication to form a relationship with the riders that they coach. Amongst the super-ordinate theme of communication a total of 10 sub-ordinate themes emerged. The 10 sub-ordinate themes were: people management, trust, motivation, emotions, actionable, innovative communication, motivation, understanding, psychology, honest feedback and emotional intelligence. The vast majority of the subordinate themes could be grouped together under the heading of using communication to establish a relationship (motivation, people management, trust, understanding, emotions, psychology, honest feedback and emotional intelligence). In total there were 10 subordinate themes for the super-ordinate theme of communication.

One of the most prominent subordinate themes that emerged from the analysis was “motivation”. Motivation referred to how the DS communicated with their riders during meetings, races and more general daily activities. Many of the participants spoke about verbally coaching their riders using race radios.

Another important subordinate theme that emerged under the superordinate theme of communication was “trust”. The coaches highlighted the importance of building trust with their riders in order to effectively communicate and work together towards their goals. They discussed how trust can be built through consistent communication, honesty, and respect. The coaches also emphasized the importance of being able to adapt their communication style to the individual needs and preferences of each rider. Another subordinate theme that emerged under communication was “emotional intelligence”. The coaches spoke about the importance of being able to understand and manage their own emotions as well as those of their riders. They highlighted the need to be able to recognize when a rider may be struggling with mental health or personal issues, and to provide support and guidance in those situations. The coaches also discussed the importance of using empathy and active listening skills to better understand their riders and communicate effectively with them.

Overall, the theme of communication highlighted the critical role that effective communication plays in the relationship between a DS and their riders. It emphasized the importance of building trust, understanding individual needs, and using emotional intelligence to effectively motivate and guide riders towards their goals.

Participant one stated

“But her GC position of 7th, which was a remarkable achievement for a young rider. In a pretty much an amateur team. And I wanted to defend that. Anyway, We did to cut a Long story short, I coached them. “

Participant four talked about using a combination of emotion and motivation to verbally coach their rider through some of the hard final moments of an important race.

“To achieve that and for instance, on the last on the very last climb, they were all ***** all of them. But she was over. She was really overachieving. She was the underdog and she was really gritty Yorkshire rider. She was the underdog and she was really gritty Yorkshire rider. And I just told her on the radio to imagine that her boyfriend Johnny was at the top of the climb.He road for Lotto Soudal and Sky, Jon Dibben. Johnny Dibben, you know. So I said, look, Johnny, she knew he wasn't. But, you know, John's at the top of the climb. Come on. Abby may. This is the last time of the day. Let's do it for Johnny, you know.”

It is not uncommon for coaches to use communication as their primary method of motivation. Buning and Thompson (2015) found that female softball athletes heavily relied on verbal communication from their coaches as their primary source of motivation during both training and competitions. The results from Buning and Thompson (2015) suggest that “Perceptions of coach-athlete communication (including verbal communication) were the greatest influence on athlete motivation. Athletes were more motivated to perform when the head coach’s communication was clear and direct”. The finding suggested by Buning and

Thompson (2015) matches the findings put forward within this research article that demonstrate that in order to achieve motivation through the coach athlete relationship, the athletes need their coaches to verbally communicate with them in a way that plays on either positive emotions or strong emotions that can illustrate the correct behavior response from the athlete (Abu Samah et al., 2013; Ntoumanis et al., 2017). This concept shares several similarities with that of positive self talk. Positive self-talk is defined as an internal dialogue that enables a person to feel good about themselves (Hardy et al., 2005; Weinberg et al., 1984).

Several participants spoke about how they would use communication as a key part of the coach athlete relationship building process in regards to how they might form trust and connections with the athletes that they coach. Equally, communication was also mentioned as a motivation tool during races with many of the participants stating that they would often use certain styles of communication in addition to playing on certain emotions of the athletes to motivate them through a hard part of a race.

Potential

Potential was the fifth superordinate theme and related to the athletes expectations of their potential and the coach's ability to push the athletes to exceed their expectations of their potential. In total there were 11 sub-ordinate themes that related to potential. Several of the sub-ordinate themes can be grouped under the heading of goal setting (new challenge, actionable objectives, predict performance and personal progression). The remaining sub-ordinate themes focused on the concept of expectations vs potential, with several of

participants stating that one of their main roles as a DS (coach) was to try and get their athletes to exceed their own personal perceptions of what their potential was and to achieve greater goals than they originally thought was possible.

Participant one stated

“But her GC position of 7th, which was a remarkable achievement for a young rider. In a pretty much an amateur team. And I wanted to defend that. Anyway, We did to cut a Long story short, I coached them.”

Participant two said

“I think that we maybe measure success in a different way to most other teams. Making people feel good about your organization, which is what makes us unique as a professional team.”

Participant four stated that

“So it's the relationship that we develop with the riders that's paramount. Basically a happy Smiley Rider is a well performing rider. “

Participant four said

“I think the most important thing for me is to see the white stuff. I wanna see the smile. I wanna see smiles at people and it actually, you probably have asked the question at the moment, but the real question is how do you measure success?”

All of the participants commented that they measure the potential and the success of a rider through their emotional status rather than just their fitness and their power numbers which has not historically been the case (Giles et al., 2020; Shibli et al., 2013)

Team culture and ethos

The sixth and final superordinate theme was team culture and ethos. There were a total of 38 sub-ordinate themes that related to team culture and ethos. The super-ordinate theme of team culture and ethos related to the characteristics and values that need to exist in order to create a positive environment that prompted athlete development and how individuals wanted to establish and maintain positive coach athlete relationships. Regarding the more general theme of team culture and environments several subordinate themes can be grouped together including: no bullsh*t culture, team support, honesty, empathy, similarities, expectations, leadership, kindness, motivational talk. respect , praise, connections, positive reinforcement, reflection, openness, measurement of success, athlete focused, humility, family, getting the best out of riders, rider wellbeing, resilience, loyalty, support, compassion and happiness.

Participant two one stated

“And then there was a second group on the road. And then there was a third group on the road, which we had two riders in, like two or three minutes down on the winner, which was remarkable because they both went to work on the Monday. You know back to their regular 9-5 jobs which they had to do”

Participant three stated

“Umm And that they could pick up the phone. At any point.”

Participant four stated

“Yeah, I kept them happy and and and maintained their trust. You know, I delivered what I said I would for them completely straight and honest and yeah, yeah, that's, that's where I'd be with her.”

All participants talked about how one of the most important elements of team culture was that they needed to trust their athletes and respect them in order to fully support them. When participant one talked about the level of respect that he had for his amateur team completing at one of the biggest races in the world on Sunday, only for them to all have to go back into work on Monday, they are talking about how they deeply respect their riders and the passion that they have for the sport but also getting the best out of themselves. This shows how a deep level of support and compassion are needed in order for the coach athlete relationship to function as effectively as possible.

Conclusion

The purpose of the current study was to explore the perceptions and experiences of cycling director sportif (DS's) regarding how they utilized several elements of the coach athlete relationship. At this high level of professional cycling there appears to be a disconnect between the experience level of newly appointed DS's and what athletes perceive to be the required skills and characteristics of a DS. Additionally, it also appears that having even a high degree of experience being a professional cyclist or being a professional athlete in another sport does not necessarily mean that the individual will have the necessary skills needed to be an effective coach. This coupled with the overall lack of clarity regarding what is expected of cycling DS's

from a job role and experience standpoint means that athletes will find it extremely challenging to transition straight into being a professional DS without any formal coach education intervention.

Another major finding from this current research project was that certain elements of the coach athlete relationship are utilized more than other elements. The key elements that were defined during this research study were communication, formal vs informal education, the role of mentorship, how coaches measure success, and how coaches and athletes work together to form the key components of the coach athlete relationship. Particularly the present study highlights the importance of effective communication. Effective communication was cited as a crucial component of successful coaching, with coaches using various styles and techniques to motivate and support their athletes during races. The importance of both formal and informal education was also emphasized, with many participants highlighting the need for ongoing learning and development throughout their careers. Mentorship was seen as a valuable tool for new coaches, allowing them to learn from experienced colleagues and gain insight into the nuances of the job. However, the results from the present study also suggest that there is a significant gap between the perceived skills and characteristics of newly appointed DSs and the expectations of the athletes they work with. This gap may stem from a lack of formal coach education and training, as well as the absence of clear guidelines regarding the job responsibilities and experience required for the role. The results suggest that athletes may find it difficult to trust and respect their coaches if they feel that the coaches lack the necessary skills and knowledge to effectively support and guide them.

Further research is needed to further clarify the role of a DS and what athletes expect from their DS. Research should also aim to explore the role that informal learning has regarding how newly appointed DS learn as they make their transition from professional rider to team manager. Future research could also focus on developing more comprehensive coach education programs to better prepare individuals for the complex and multifaceted role of being a cycling DS. Ultimately, such research could help to improve the quality of coaching in the professional cycling industry, leading to better overall coach athlete relationships and athlete performance.

In conclusion, this study highlights the importance of formal coach education intervention for individuals transitioning into the role of a professional DS. The findings suggest that more emphasis should be placed on the development of the necessary skills and characteristics for an effective coach. Moreover, the identified elements of the coach-athlete relationship provide a framework for coaches to use when working with athletes to achieve success. Further research is needed to build on these findings and develop strategies to enhance the coach-athlete relationship and improve the performance of athletes at the professional level of cycling.

Limitations and recommendations for future research

There are several limitations that should be considered when putting the results of this research into context. Firstly, there were a low number of participants, this was due to the time in the racing season that the research project was conducted in. Due to the timescale that the research was conducted in, the data collection phase took place during July, August and

September which are arguably the three most busiest months for all of the professional cycling teams. Over potential participants were contacted numerous times in an attempt to get an interview with more DS's however, they didn't have enough time to fully commit to the research process. One recommendation for future research is that if this project were to be attempted again to undertake the data collection process during the professional cycling off season which typically takes place from November to February as this would allow more DS's to be available to take part in the search project. Having more participants may allow for some slightly different results to be discovered which could help further increase the knowledge about the job role of a DS and how the coach athlete relationship is built and maintained within the context of professional cycling teams.

It is important to acknowledge the limitations of this study in order to properly contextualize the findings. One of the main limitations is the relatively small number of participants. This was due to the timing of the research project, which took place during the busiest months of the professional cycling season. Despite efforts to recruit more participants, many were unable to commit to the research process. Therefore, the findings of this study may not be fully representative of the perspectives and experiences of all DS's in the professional cycling industry.

To overcome this limitation, future research could be conducted during the off-season of professional cycling (November to February), when DS's may have more availability to participate in research projects. Increasing the number of participants would provide a more

comprehensive understanding of the role of a DS and how the coach-athlete relationship is established and maintained in professional cycling teams.

Another potential limitation is the possibility of social desirability bias. This occurs when participants provide responses that are socially acceptable or desirable, rather than reflecting their true thoughts or experiences. To mitigate this, future research could consider using a more objective and standardized method of data collection, such as surveys or standardized interviews. Finally, this study focused solely on the perspectives and experiences of DS's in professional cycling. Future research could expand on this by including the perspectives of athletes, other coaching staff, and team management to gain a more comprehensive understanding of the coach-athlete relationship and team culture in professional cycling teams.

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Appendix interview one

J: So you've been busy this week with the tour of Britain. And with that being cancelled now that must be even more stress.

P1: The main reason is because of the policing, so they.

So the police.

So that's all the two shorties. So Hampshire set up north that went to the powers Scotland. They all put in one or two motorbikes.

J: Yeah

P1: Which obviously have the power to move the traffic and put the road closures on.

Umm. And then the National escort group, the LG. Then hold that closure. So because of what's going on, all the police officers have been recalled.

J: Yep

P1: To their home forces.

And so we didn't have any police. So there's no police in the race. You can't ensure the safety of the them to the public, the riders.

It's us.

I think the the term is that's the job.

But at the end of that, you know.

That's where we are right now.

J: Right. OK. I guess you're on a pretty tight time schedule today. So if it's OK with you, we'll just jump straight into the questions that I have.

P1: Yeah, no problem. I got I I've truly gotten 40 minutes. 45 minutes, just in case we were chatting.

J: Uh, yeah. So half an hour.

P1: Yes, fine.

J: Yeah, if you've got like 40 minutes and that's great.

P1: Yeah, it's fine. It's fine.

J: Cool, right? Umm, can you outline what experience you have as a DS and if you were a rider before becoming a DS, can you outline that experience as well please?

P1: Yeah, no problem. So in like chronological order or?

J: Yeah. What was he is probably start with chronological. So if you were a rider before becoming a DS started being rider and then maybe go into your transition to be becoming a DS.

P1: OK, OK. So.

Yes, I was a rider.

I got into it quite late, got into the sport late. Originally I was tracking field athlete in cross country runner.

In the 90s.

J: OK.

P1: And represented represented Wales on track, cross country Rd, captain Wales.

J: Yeah

P1: You sound like a knob head, but I don't know how many Welsh rests like loops, right? I represented in Britain.

Yeah. Yeah. It's a British international, I think. Yeah, I got injured before the Commonwealth Games in Kuala Lumpur.

Before 98, before the Games, 98 so I wasn't, I wasn't selected.

And the sport that it basically consumed my life obviously to be performed at that sort of level and kind of found out of love with it, got frustrated with it and moved to Spain clever Santa.

J: Yep

Yeah

P1: And and we're chatting allowed there and they should be put me on a bicycle. So as a as an athlete, I was always watching the cycling anyway, as being panada sport first.

Umm, but back then?

I couldn't possibly have vocalized or shared the fact that, you know, I have to do in that. I've had to cracker that. I could do that because our performance such a high level and that's such a support structure be high me, it would have appeared ungrateful or was I quit in? Did I not realize my full potential sort of thing?

She never did it. Chillo got to Spain where?

J: Yep

P1: My friends that were working with staff at Clevis, Anta said. Oh, you're engines gonna be pretty good putting on a bike and I was away.

J: Yeah

P1: Umm

2nd

Fast forward a couple of years. I didn't do much with it and I was OK. Didn't race or anything. That's just right. So Fast forward a few years, a friend had teased me because I had a really nice bike and I hadn't been riding it.

J: Yeah

P1: Uh, you know, you started doing a couple of local time trials.

Then move racing with your way up to the categories.

J: Yep

OK

P1: Umm, I represented Wales in a one day race, UCI 1.2 the Grand Grand Prix of Wales.

Umm

And it was around that time that I met magnus backstedt

J: OK. Yeah.

P1: Umm.

So If you wanted to I could maybe put you in contact with magnus backstedt if you were looking to do more interviews.

J: Yeah, that would be useful.

P1: We can fly off on that tangent if you want in a little bit, but I became I became friendly with Maggie.

And we stayed in regular contact all the time, just as mates and talk about the racing and how his racing and because I was watching at home.

And, you know, you could see more things and we'd be chatting from the team buses and and just both really loved the racing.

Umm

Yeah, we became mates. Now when he retired, he set up a team, small team funded by his sales of his coffee.

J: Yeah

P1: And

I saw the pressure he was under and kinda contracted him and asked if he needed any help with it.

Umm, let me know and I'll.

J: Yeah

P1: I'll do whatever I can to help you because it it's a good little project.

And he said, well, I've been meaning to chase you up.

Let's meet to chat over this project. We did that in the setting like this and he said I want you to be the DS. We talked enough about racing. I know how you race yourself. I know how you watch the race in between the two of us, of how you have.

And sort of train you to do this, show you what to do.

J: Yeah

P1: But I'd like you to do that.

J: OK

P1: All right. OK.

That would have been.

2009 maybe.

Yeah, eight 2008 or 9.

J: OK

P1: Umm

So yeah, no problem. I'll do that in the first weekend of racing, everything is all sorted. The first weekend of racing, he was gonna come.

And pick me up. See. Listen, Smith, where you're gonna pick me up? We travel to the race together with the vehicle.

Head over and he would try the first day and I could do the DSing whilst he drove the car.

J: Yeah

P1: And then the following weekend.

I would drive and he would do the DS role so that we could swap over.

J: OK

P1: And when the when the team car turned up at my house, there was no Magnus. It was just me.

J: Right. OK.

P1: And I didn't realise, I just thought you was driving another car or van or something in our team there when we got, when we got to France.

It wasn't until I was talking to some of the other staff on the team.

About Maggie

When they said

Oh yeah, about that. He's not coming. Cool.

And then it was like okay so there are a lot of unknowns here.

OK, I'm not being in a teen car before.

Umm

He had a friend that was the DS in a Danish team who knew me from clever Samantha. So we spoke. He said I would be fine and not to worry about it. You know, don't worry. You're gonna be fine. Just you.

You, you soon see how everybody moves and you'll be fine.

Really

Yeah. So the first DS meeting I had there, the first team managers meeting was in a town hall. I couldn't tell you where it was in northern France.

I was in like, a white Tesco's polo shirt that had been screened, printed with the team name on.

J: *Yep*

P1: *Uh, probably about 48 hours before.*

Umm

And he walks Mark Mario.

Full Francisci shirt with two busties, four or five cars out in the car park. Ohv. OK. Yeah.

Walks in and just sits alongside me and just.

It's one of those.

The whole managers meeting was in French.

J: *And I'm guessing you didn't understand the word of French at that point*

P1: *Not a fucking word.*

J: *Yeah*

P1: *Not a word, so I've got my pen and my road book.*

J: *So I try to copy the notes that the people around you are making.*

P1: *And I'm peeking over at Mario. Just whatever Mario, circle. I'll circle or whatever. He puts a star by. Yeah, copying homework.*

We raced nobody got killed, the car didn't get damaged. None of the riders got hurt. Nobody died.

So we're OK came home and I get a call from Maggy. Don't worry. Don't worry. Great job. Great job. I see you next week. OK? Blinding.

It comes to the race the following week.

No, same thing.

It turns out Maggy has taken some Eurosport commentary job.

So that's how I got into it.

J: *OK*

P1: *And then that would have been roughly 2008 or 9?*

And then I've had a team. Then in 2010 eleven, 1213.

14, 15 sixteen 8-8 years then.

J: OK

P1: All it Division Three. You know how the tears were, Jack, right?

J: Yeah, yeah, yeah.

P1: Yeah. So all all the Division Three.

J: OK

P1: Umm

Which obviously is is doing the budget actually determine. In fact there is your budget and your budget allows you to employ this the right staff alone. Riders get that backroom right and life becomes easier even if you just have a salaried.

Uh

J: Yes

P1: But we had everyone else on some sort of day rate. So our swanneys that year. This is same swanning and a new employee day rate to support the you know when you start. When I start out. I was doing pretty much everything. I've been washing the car. My meat would be the mechanic and we just do not debate. So he doing all the bikes in the vehicle. I'd be doing all the bottles.

J: Yep

P1: Umm. And you might get a little local rider to help you out. Go to the feed. But all of these people are just doing it for the love of the sport really. They are getting limited money from it but they are just so so in love with the sport so they don't mind.

J: Yeah

P1: And then obviously the the, the bigger the budget, the more staff, everybody's life becomes a bit easier.
Yeah

J: Yeah, I've heard similar stories of other DS I've interviewed for this project and I said yeah, right at the low level, everybody's doing everything hard, everybody's getting paid. And that's just the way it is.

P1: Yeah. So.

J: Yeah

P1: I don't know who they are, but they clearly not doing it right because they're not getting paid for doing it. So yeah, you should be having a day rate out of it, shouldn't you? There's one thing doing it for the love of the sport, but.

You know you do any in order to in order to secure that funding is, is your time better spent then?

Walking yourself around rather than, you know, filling up bottles or washing cars, is that that hour better spent in a meeting trying to secure funding? I don't know. Well, so we spoken to.

I've talked to one of the drops lecol DS's and the men's and women's st pairen teams.

P1: Right. So they both they both have the amateurs, those teams.

J: Yep

P1: So that would be what's his name to the wallpaper company? Was the owner of that money. She's named Bob Varney.

J: Yep

P1: And Piven mends you probably thought the lamp here.

Last year and Richard spoke to.

Asco riccipascoe.

J: *Yeah, yeah, yeah. Spoke to.*

P1: *Me. That would have been more than half an hour, wouldn't it?*

You know.

J: *Yeah. No, it was quite quick actually.*

We managed to cram it all into like 20 minutes.

P1: *Right. Umm, happy amateurs. They are Jack.*

J: *Yeah, I've got Megan Charles tomorrow from women St parents team.*

It's got hopefully.

Ian Stannard from Trinity on Monday.

Yep

I've got two as we got done, Colin Sturgess from what are then I'll river well, type or whatever their current team name is.

P1: *So he'll be struggling as they have no budget.*

J: *Yep*

Yep

P1: *Yeah, I know, because I I left Madison Genesis and stood went there. So I left metal tech and Sturge went there. I left Madison, Genesis and Sturge went there. So we've worked with the same people with the same sorts of budgets quite often. And the personality clash, especially maps and Genesis properly asks Verge about that. I couldn't believe me.*

J: *OK*

P1: *Yeah, but lovely guy. Lovely guy. Really good guy.*

Yeah

J: *Yeah. I mean, they would seem quite genuine. They've got incredible stories that they're telling. But obviously when they're on a strict budget, putting all the easiest jobs to do in the world.*

P1: *It's how you.*

J: *Yeah*

P1: *How you manage that budget versus the expectations of the person signing the cheque? Isn't it for Trinity? With Stannard, that's done right. That's done right. Yeah, that's.*

J: *Right. So next question, either as a rider or as a DS, what is the most impactful thing that you've experienced?*

P1: *Impactful thing.*

J: *Yeah. So if you were a rider, let's say back when you were a rider, what is the most impactful thing you had, a DSD for you or maybe what's the most impactful thing that you've done as a DS?*

P1: *Impact*

J: *The either the people that you coach, if you're looking at it from a DS or you yourself as a rider, if you're thinking about it as how you've impacted, how you've been impacted by DS.*

P1: *Like through the 2013 season.*

And the back end of 2012.

Team then was funded by the a really good friend of mine and the team was called Uk youth.

J: OK

P1: *And and he allowed me to recruit the people that I wanted to recruit in the positions and roles within the team that I wanted them to do so.*

Due to that, so it like impactful that sort of conversation. Where can I get my people? Can I do this and put what I think are the right people in the right places?

Umm

And he said, yeah.

That was impactful because then the 2013 season, I don't know if you were around then, but if you Google team called Uk youth in 2013

J: Gosh

Yeah

P1: *We wanted to win everything of course. The only thing Mansoor wanted to win, really, with the torties I made him right. I made him. So that's another impact. For one, he's I made him write that on the top of the contract was signed with him for that year. If you're gonna pay me this, what do you want? What I wanna be.*

You know, the smart thing this needs to be measurable.

J: *Yeah. Focused around goal setting and smart achievable goals.*

P1: *The specific and measurable. Yeah. What do you want? If I'm spending this money from your pocket, what do you what's gonna put a big smile on your face in the spring in your step? And he said just.*

See

J: *What did he want in terms of the return on his investment? He's giving you money to form the the staff and the team. What does he want back for that money? Yeah*

P1: *Yeah. So he wanted exposure for a national charity for which he was president of which was over 100 years old, and he was the first non-royal president.*

Of the charities so that to his his he succeeded Princess Anne.

So with the royal connections within that charity, the national charity that was so close to his heart.

Umm

That happens to be completely flawless. Spotless.

J: Yeah

P1: *In every aspect, it's appearance in a ride's behaviour social media is Jeff starting Twitter. What have you? Was Jeff starting to really. So the boys had to be really, really squeaky clean. Careful. Just as you were today, you'd expect any professional sportsman to be in case it was subject to scrutiny or.*

Uh

So it was.

J: Yeah

P1: *He wanted to win the tour series if he was sporting aspect. That was his sport and we weren't way more, which obviously didn't do it anymore. Didn't do us any harm that kept him happy, engaged, motivated to keep going.*

Umm

And.

Awareness and engagement for the charity.

And just get the name out there and spread the word about this charity. So that was the third of three years we reached with that month was 11-12 and 13, would that mean?

J: Yeah

P1: Umm

And between you and I.

And he never said it.

But

I think the ultimate aim was paid to get a knighthood.

J: Yep

Yeah

P1: I think.

But he didn't get it.

J: Jack Martin

OK.

P1: Yeah. So that's.

J: But

Kind of the same theme. What is the least impactful thing you've experienced? So maybe focusing as a rider. What's one thing that a DS did that maybe kissed you off or just wasn't helpful at all from a wider perspective?

P1: I think if you're not listening to you.

J: Yeah

Yeah

P1: You communication has to be two way thing. I think with some of the older guys or the.

J: Yeah, yeah.

Is that?

P1: Older could Sturges older than me, but like the generation before and herity wouldn't think you're not listening. It's once it or or hearing what they're saying doesn't mean the difference between listening and hearing. Yeah. Yeah, I can hear what you're saying. But what is he trying to tell you or what am I trying to tell you? And if they're not? If that communication isn't spot on then.

And so for the least I'm. Yeah, if somebody had a fucked me off or I think from a DS perspective, if I would treat you as a rider, I'm retreating you as much to make your personality as I am your sporting ability.

J: Yeah.

P1: And if you helped for any reason that you couldn't talk to me.

Umm

That would piss me off too.

J: Yep

P1: That's why 13 was so good. Because I I retreated who I wanted to work with the good riders. But the good personality perhaps fit within that, and we genuinely we were laughing all year.

J: Yeah

P1: The Happy ride bike riders. Fast bike ride.

J: Yeah, haha believe it or not that's not the first time I've heard that whilst doing these interviews.

P1: Not the first time you heard that either, is it?

J: No, it's not actually, which is. It's good to hear because I start on this research research project, I thought of all be about numbers and power output some what's per kilo and it's not, it's more about you know certain getting people in the right environment to perform well which is good to hear.

P1: Yeah, yeah.

J: So maybe instead of just listening, do you think maybe being understood and being understood of as about who you are as a human?

P1: Yeah

J: But maybe summarize that so other than being understood what would you say.

P1: Yeah, yeah. So I'm not a hugger.

J: Yep

P1: So those lads really were winning races to get a handshaking, a pat on the back.

J: Yeah

P1: And then there's a picture does around now and then. It's almost social media of me and Opie, and we're laughing after he's one of good, good race. The tour of the the reservoir premier calendar Thursday. He's won it.

Out of the race.

J: Yeah

Yeah

P1: And he's put Adam Yates away in like, the last 200 up hill and he's a sprinter.

J: Yeah

P1: And we're laughing, he saying that's gotta be worth a hard part. Gotta be worth a head because these guys are 20 years in. Well, 1015 years younger than me. So they will have a breakfast. They haven't seen each other since 10:00. O'clock last night. I missed you.

J: Yeah

P1: And but so then.

Then the running joke was, you know, could you race well enough to get a hug off me? So then you hug to have high value and then that has a bit of morale and a bit of crack. And if they get a hug and they back back on the campus slightly each lot give me a hug.

J: Yeah, yeah.

P1: You know, and they were laughing. And no, no, nobody saw that. It didn't happen, you know.

Umm

Yeah. So you you need to be that that human level has to be there.

J: Let's say.

P1: It has to be there, you hope it's there all the time. I've I've struggled with a few and really just could talented riders.

J: Never been in this situation where that human aspect isn't there.

P1: Yeah

*J: Or for some reason you as a DS maybe you don't click with a rider.
That you thought you would.*

*P1: Yeah, I've worked with.
I've worked with riders for sometimes couple of years where.
I know they don't really like me.
I know that I was tolerated each other.*

J: Yeah

P1: Just trying to have to just.

Umm

Yeah

And then just becomes increasingly frustrating.

J: OK

P1: Actually, yeah, a couple of times, a couple of times, primarily when they ride is that I haven't recruited.

And like Madison did it, Roger Hammond recruited the team that Madison Genesis.

J: Yeah

P1: And then I was dropped in. So all these guys have signed to work with Roger Hammond. Did that, you know, you sold them. Whatever is gonna happen. I come in. Then after the fact that they, they all stuff that's going on here. And then when Mike Northey took over for me for a couple of months.

J: Yeah

P1: Either treated the righteous and the following year, and then Sturge dropped in and I thought I wouldn't sign this case clock. I don't like him. I don't get on with his now, so he's overrated.

It's when the owners of the team.

And say that they want this rider in.

When somebody had finds them.

Yeah, it it. It does happen fairly regularly.

J: OK. Could you maybe give me an example of how or maybe in the past as a DS you?

They'll trust and respect between you and some of the riders you coach or some of the riders are on your team.

P1: Great communication.

J: Yep

P1: Praise when it's appropriate doesn't have to be when they win. If they done a job.

J: They would that be? What? Purely verbal praise or?

P1: For me.

J: Is that about to have you done enough to deserve a hug back on the thing?

P1: Yeah, yeah, yeah. That's that's the sort of thing. Praise on a 1 to 1. Something like this. If he's walking through to dinner.

Fantastic.

J: Yeah

P1: No, we didn't get the result what we did there there and there that's all we need. It's all done be done. We did everything we could. We'll do it again another day and it'll work out. Keeping in a row high.

Umm

Yeah, like that.

The communication.

Uh, praising him in front of the group.

J: Yeah

P1: As well.

Umm

Maybe praising them on social media so they may think from a grumpy guy sat in the corner of the bar and they go by. Then on social media craze, what fantastic job chapter today to pull that break back and give us the opportunity and we'll try again tomorrow.

I never know what a great job I did that.

J: And then other people see that you believe in your ideas.

P1: Yeah

J: They kind of beats the whole team environment, doesn't it?

Yeah. OK.

P1: Yeah, yeah.

Just making sure again it is coming back to the communication or time and making sure that you're understood and that you listen to them. So every time I ever did a a brief meeting pre race meeting, mine were always a conversation.

J: Yeah

P1: So I don't know how you're feeling each.

Are they feeling?

She should look. I've looked at this. This is what I think the plan is, given what we've got sat around the table.

It's kind of A doesn't work. This is what I'm thinking for Plan B.

What do you think?

J: Yeah

P1: And what do you think? Well, mill, because I I think this might be OK. So so if we go my A&B. And we end up running with Plan G, which I hadn't even considered.

J: Yeah

P1: As long as they're all buying it in and we could.

J: So

P1: Yes, fine. Right. Is that what we're going to do then we all going agreement. So there's two plan G or A or whatever. OK, so that's that's what we're going with.

Umm, because I don't want to leave that meeting saying Yep, this is what we're gonna do. Stamp you for quality on it and they go off and do their own sucking thing.

J: Yeah

Yeah

P1: Just going to go shipping it in the trusted shattered and the.

J: You need to get to get me to buy into your plant because if you, it's all good. You say in plant if they don't buy into it then just go off and do their own thing. Then it's just carnage.

P1: Yeah. So.

And then everyone's interest to to work to a common.

J: Yep

P1: Common goal and pain in the same way. So yeah, yeah, yeah.

J: If you were to maybe only with touch one communication just then, but if you were to maybe give five key skills or characteristics that you think make it good DS, what would they be?

P1: Communication

And

I don't know whether the correct word with the empathy or sympathy, trying to understand the personality.

J: OK

P1: Umm.

Patience

Honesty

J: Uh, three. So if you can get two more of that, great.

P1: So the question again 5 words for what?

J: Five characteristics that you'd make you think make good DS. Yeah. Other skills or characteristics. Do you got communication? You got patience. And then we'll say understanding for empathy and.

P1: Empathy, OK.

OK

Good time management.

J: Yep

P1: Mental resilience

Uh, I could organiser.

J: You know.

Maybe

P1: The management of people.

Everything. Yeah. Organizer. Travel planned. You do everything at this level.s

J: Yeah

OK, what is one of the greatest challenges that you experienced as ideas?

P1: Getting funding.

J: Yeah

It's a common answer to that question.

There's more people on the bike than ever before.

Yeah

P1: Nobody wants to fucking break it to them that they aren't at that level.

People seem to think that they would given everything.

Some people think that some social media influencers deserve more money than some of the proper bike riders.

J: Yeah

P1: That's two funding by far the biggest challenge.

Managing your own personal relationships and you're traveling so much.

J: Yeah

P1: Yeah, there's been the biggest challenges keeping sponsors happy.

J: Yeah

P1: Yeah

And managing expectations, perhaps.

J: OK, OK. So we'll briefly touch upon the first one and then we'll talk a bit more about managing expectations. So what are you, what are you looking at when you?

Bus to solide. You wanna ride it to join your team? Is it purely what race results they have is it?

Power outputs. What's kilo are you looking at them as their personality as well. How did you go about deciding what riders are a good fit for your team?

P1: Umm

Reuslts need to be there right at the top level.

The top level.

J: Yeah

Yeah

P1: I'm just happy phoning it could be the one real small team, so I called Connor Swift in May 2016 to try and get him on board for Madison, even though it wasn't sure I was gonna be there to try and work with the following year. The following year, when the Nationals were scared. But that conversation started with me in the May the previous year. You're gonna small team and he's making every breakaway selection, making every selection in the race key move and he was delivering good results for a guy with very little or no support.

Umm, in terms of staff and good guidance, so results.

Then attitudes that personality.

And

What I would say is headroom.

And

What I would say is headroom.

And room to grow.

How much? What? What can we do?

To to maximise an eke out every last bit from the potential of that goes.

J: Yeah

P1: Umm

J: OK, so if you were to maybe talk about managing expectations, is that managing expectations providers in terms of what when they join the team or they're development, what is that?

P1: Yep. So imagine you expectations have arrived as you can't promise in the world.

J: Yeah

P1: Yeah

Umm uh.

You need to be I here. You need to be very clear about the race program and the opportunities they will get.

J: No

OK

P1: He didn't need the others. Tell you why you Division Three is there. Why this continental level of team is there. Do you understand why that was introduced by the UCI a few years back? If they so the reason that level has been introduced is to give a young guy the opportunity to race and experience and learn like a whites program. Learn to be a pro cyclist. Learn to live out of a suitcase. Learn how to race. Give them the opportunity to display that Helen and ability in order to progress. So in an ideal world.

J: Yeah

P1: I would have a team of 12 and ideally 4-5 or six of those would be used on to a division two or Division One team every year or every other year. That's how you wanna be seen as doing feeding the bigger boys.

Umm. And that's the idea. That's what you that's the aim.

J: Yeah

Yeah

P1: Of that license level, not as some of these will say, well, I just want to be in this rural Britain riccipascoe, you know, that's what my aim is. I wanna be there. I wanna be seen in racing. No.

J: Yeah

P1: It's not about you. This is about developing young riders and passing them up the food chain and that's the reason we're here.

J: OK

P1: The only people.

I can see in the last 20 years it would do that is.

I tried my best but he was very good at it.

Umm and Trinity Mcquage team will will be good because they're doing it right.

J: Yeah

P1: And the only she did, only team doing it well at the moment.

J: OK. Would you think helps make a team do it right?

What? What are the processes involved or what is it that makes it team?

Different from doing a right to doing it wrong and helping every right to progress.

P1: It's

Basically, have a look across the car park at any and look at inos or jumbo. You know the big big budget successful teams.

J: Yeah

P1: And then you just try and water it down and try and look at what and why they are successful. And then just replicate the most important bits on a much smaller budget.

Shrink that budget.

And do everything you can to be as close as that with the budget would be got, so the clothing needs to be right, equipment needs to be right.

You'd be looking professional, Heidi. You need the right people working with them so that they are learning every weekend. They're away every week through the week. They're learning how to be.

J: Yep

P1: How to become a pro rider and which is way bigger than just riding the bike?

J: Yeah

P1: Which on the road 100 and 5000 and 7000 and 80 days a year.

And sometimes more living out of a suitcase.

The travel efficient travel, efficient packing, your bag. But when you sign the knee, I don't want to see you sad like you are now half an hour force for for race start.

J: Yeah

P1: With Yanto Baker sat alongside you like you. That's fine. You've been around. He knows what's fucking going on to your list of things. You need to be fucking stressing and flattening about would be this long.

J: Yeah

P1: And as the seasons go on.

J: What that list just gets shorter and shorter as you feel confident with more things.

P1: Should we worry about that? I know the match got that sorted. I trusted, yes. So then so then.

Yeah, it's the learning curve.

J: OK. Just once in my head was your opinion on?

Certainly World Tour teams taking younger and younger riders that maybe haven't even raced her like Conte level yet. So we've seen it this year with Anyos. I don't know if you are up to date with assigning to us. Yeah, they've they've just signed a young guy. Could Josh Harding. He hasn't even raised it once you. Yeah. So he hasn't even raced it Council level yet, has he might and saying.

P1: Yeah, but he's he's he's got the engine, and he's gonna track. He's got it on the track, isn't he? He'd be cheap. He's British. You know him? So you're gonna be the trust him. You're gonna have to gamble on you.

J: Yep

P1: Egan was a gamble when they took Egan TomTom Pidcock. Regardless, what you think, he's a sucking gamble.

J: I mean, Tom proved himself at quite a young age.

In his younger years with all the cross stuff

P1: No he was a massive gamble. Stopping for a piece with six K to go when the bunch gotta block headwind.

J: OK

This is that still a gamble then?

P1: Yeah, well, you don't gamble any the engine there, but you gotta learn.

J: Yeah

P1: And if that was any other race or that block headwind?

And you see him put it up. A lot of petrol. 6 Kate to go. I'm on the radio or he's open the taps. Let's go.

J: Yep

P1: Because sat on the back where he was, I was positioned on the back. It was really, really easy, really easy. You and I could have sat on there and done this.

J: Good. As hard as they could, yeah.

Yeah

P1: But where he was sat right on the back many would be struggling with that. But he knew he had the ability to just ride through bunch and make it to the front. And its like he could smell the finish line. He was super keen in the final ks. And he finished 5th on that stage. But just think what he could of done if he didn't stop at 6 k to go. He could have won it.

J: Yeah

P1: Yeah. OK. Now let's talk about that. But I spoke with my guests here at the race. I spoke with Brett the next day.

You know Brett fees with me, that's a conversation. Did you have a conversation last night?

OK, I'll get a conversation.

J: Yeah

P1: That he's like, he's still young, he's on the road, he's very inexperienced on the road. People forget that.

Umm

And again, they they, they're learning, developing him. Fred Wright is a good one. Haven't done enough reason.

J: Yeah

P1: So we got winning. He's always there, doesn't have to win

J: OK

P1: Does not finish the why? You always say always in the right mood. Always there and you're never winning. She's won one. One world tour thing.

J: Yep

P1: Had he done a seasonal 2 pro competitive?

J: But no, but yeah.

P1: Learn how to win these strong. I think he's good enough. You know what I mean? The engines there like that, but then.

J: Yeah, he's good engine uh, but he's not winning.

Yeah

P1: Yeah, yeah, she's either going too early. He he not sitting back and laying off to get the run on the guy and and you know in lot of bunch gallops but reduced Sprint or break away.

That's why he's not winning. No experience in that.

But

J: OK. How would you define your approach as a DS?

P1: You know what we're looking for? Yeah.

J: So maybe.

P1: We've touched upon the characteristics, but if you were to give maybe just one word, how would you define your approach to the DS?

J: Or or one like quick sentence you're looking at.

Long term development, are you looking at quick wins you looking we're looking at when you're in the?
Yep

P1: My approach I'm trying. I'm spend my life just trying to keep everyone safe and happy. Are you happy bike ride? Just happy sponsors.

Happy race organisers. So you get any invitations back to the just spend all your life fucking trying to make people happy.

J: Yeah

P1: So it's lonely and tiring

Because I didn't reach racing or being a DS at world tour level.

Uh or DS at World tour level? I often felt like.

J: Yeah

P1: Little bit of impostor syndrome, you know. Why the fuck is he gonna listen to me. You know, to do feel a little bit like that on occasion.

And

Yeah, just trying to just, you know, try to keep everyone happy.

J: OK

Yeah

P1: Uh, obviously you looking to win races. You stood for the riders speaking Chinese people, sponsors reinforces trying to win, but then?

J: We got.

P1: Yeah, that what you need for that one, I don't know again.

J: They're not believe that this one. What is one piece of advice you'd give to a current rider that is wanting to become a DS?

P1: Don't do it.

J: Every person I've interviewed has given that same answer.

But you it seems like it from the outside point of view, you will super passionate about their jobs, but as soon as you ask that question, everybody says don't do it.

Which is really really interesting.

P1: Really its It's so fucking hard.

J: Yeah

P1: Even if you have the passion for the sport and the job. I don't think most people understand just how hard you have to work.

J: Yeah

P1: Umm

Yes it's just so fucking hard.

J: Yeah

P1: Yeah, yeah. Don't do it. Go and learn how to do massage and be a swanny. Or go and get your licence and drive the team cars or the buses.

J: OK

P1: Learn to be a mechanic. Don't do this job, mate.

J: Yeah. OK.

P1: Yeah, don't do it.

They really all say that. Did they all say that, too? Everyone else? Yeah. Let me straight away.

J: Yeah, yeah, it should be the same answer. So it's it's great because you will seem so passionate about your job and being in the S and running a team and helping writers progressed. And then you ask that question and everybody has said don't do it.

Which I mean, I don't have the answer to whether it was.

So

P1: You take over your life, take over your life.

J: It does, yeah.

P1: In a very toxic way.

Yeah, toxically. It'll be the end of relationships. You won't see your friends.

Umm

You'll be on edge worrying about whatever they are is either doing or was concerned about whatever the else is doing instead of. Since I've been out with the game a little bit and look back and if I if I knew now what I knew if I knew then what I know now.

I could be better, so it's always worried about what somebody else is doing or what somebody else is thinking or saying it. You know what I mean? Money doing my way.

Yeah, and.

Yeah, it's, it's.

Toxic

If you were a big budget team, I can imagine you could crack good fun.

J: Yeah

P1: But increased pressure for the result then.

The bigger budget just means that you have more pressure and higher expectations placed upon you. So it's a catch 2022 situation.

J: OK

P1: More than anything else, I think so.

J: Well, just quickly, because our new time as a DS, how do you measure success of your riders?

P1: Ah

J: I know there are probably a million and one ways to do that but if you could maybe summarize it quickly, is it what is it? Race results? Is it happy face?

P1: Have they? Have they have they improved?

J: Yep

OK

P1: *In this sporting performance, their personality and may be confident or they learn something are they are they better for the experience or or are they worse off for that experience?*

And and I'd like to think if you interviewed the majority of my riders.

I would like to think that I had like just a little. If he took a little piece of work on the ME with him.

I would need more than a race result if I've impacted their life on like at home.

Yeah

J: *Who they are as a person rather than just a bike rider, yeah.*

Yeah

P1: *Yeah, I kept them happy and and and maintained their trust. You know, I delivered what I said I would for them completely straight and honest and yeah, yeah, that's, that's where I'd be with her.*

J: *Right. Final question then I'll let you go. If you were to think of in terms of legacy, so if you were to stop being a DS, what would you like to be known for? What would you like your riders to kind of think of you as a DS?*

P1: *Uh, actually, the easiest one in it because it's it's sort of links back to your last one, so that honest.*

Yeah

Hard working, straight talking.

Umm. Professional.

J: *Yep*

P1: *Umm*

And that they could pick up the phone.

At any point.

J: *Yeah, no matter what the situation is somebody there, OK? Right. Interesting answers. Well, that's all of the questions.*

P1: *Different to everyone else's or?*

J: *Umm*

Yeah. I mean, most of them are on on that final question about legacy. They're all talking about.

Wanting to be known for making a positive change in the world's life, whether that's helping the rest of World Tour or another avenue of Pro Cycling, or whether that's keeping them happy and still interested in the sport.

P1: *Yeah*

J: *So yeah, kind of similar answers to be honest.*

P1: *In that way.*

J: *Right. That is all my questions. I will let you go. Thank you very, very much for your time.*

P1: *You'll probably me. I know I was a ball like to try and nail down.*

J: *Alright, fine. You're you're, you're busy. We've taken the wrong point in the season to try and get these interviews anyway.*

Appendix interview two

Jack: My dissertation project focuses on how director sportifs use something called the coach athlete relationship to build kind of relationships and repors with the people that they coach. So we're looking to interview DS's from Conti, Pro Conti and World tour teams. And then yeah, just hopefully understand how the DS's help to provide support and facilitate relationships and leadership within their teams.

Can I get a brief history of your history as a rider and as a DS? I know you are currently based at Drops lecol, or Drops wahoo whatever the teams current name is.

P2: Yeah, our current team name is Lecol Wahoo.

J: OK, alright

P2: Yeah. And we're a British registered team with 14 riders.

J: OK.

P2: Uhm, competing at World Tour level.

I think last time I checked we were 12th in the world rankings and we are currently the UK's leading team. However, we like to think even though we may have developed a lot we still have a long way to go in terms of where we want to get to. We are now a fully professional team with all of our riders still getting paid.

J: Wow that's impressive

P2: Which is not where we were in 2016.

J: Yeah that's really cool

I guess there are a lot of UK based teams out there who make it look like their riders are getting paid but they actually aren't. If you look at it, I don't know for example, like Pro Conti or some of the continental teams in the UK, a lot of their riders aren't being paid or a lot of their stuff aren't being paid liveable wages.

P2: Yeah, no. Yeah, I'm fully aware of that. It's kind of what we are all about. It's one of the things we are leading.

J: Yeah

P2: **In terms of** teams, we are probably the leading team in the last six year in terms of shining a light on bullshit really We have a zero tolerance on bullshit

J: Yep

J: Yeah

P2: And I guess we closed the gap with wages through the marketing we have gained in the last couple of year. But we always said it how it was and we got quite a large following from all over the world really because of the way we approached it right from the get go.

J: Yeah.

I know you have had grown a big following in the last couple of years. Obviously last year you had the success of Joss Lowden's hour record.

P2: Yeah, we did.

J: Which is pretty good I guess her and Dan's hour recorded must have given you an increase in following.

I think a lot of people followed her and Dan's hour recorded.

P2: Yeah

J: Last year and was incredible to see how smashed the record as she did

P2: Yeah, absolutely. Joss joined us in 2019 and had three years with us and become virtually a friend, really? Her and Dan both become friends, which was, which is nice.

So I think that the thing that hits me first shooting straight from the hip of what you're gonna be doing is it's really interesting because you'll observe the diversity in experience of the DS is that you're gonna speak to. All of their experiences and stories would be quite different, I think. will be quite great, I would think.

UM and I would like to think that we've experienced quite a lot of that diversity in the last six years.

J: Yeah

Yeah

P2: It will be really interesting

J: Yeah

P2: Because depending on your budget, depending on your staff very much depends on the workload and the responsibilities of the DS. So in a small team which we certainly was in 2016, the DS could be doing pretty much everything you know from like booking the, the the air tickets.

Making sure the riders have got the right equipment, you know, chasing up the sponsors for extra nutrition for a race it hasn't come in, taking a phone call on the night the eve of the race that someone's got a cold or got sick. That rider is not coming and you gotta try to organize the reserve rider. And booked their flights and make sure that their bikes on the truck.

J: Yeah

P2: You know, there's a lot a whole list of things that a DS on a small team would do before they can even think about the tactics and the strategy for the race. A certain degree of it is done beforehand in terms of the selection of the right riders for a particular race.

J: Yeah

P2: You, you, you, you take light riders that can climb to a hilly race and you'll take stronger riders to the flat, windy races in Belgium and Holland. So you you know, your team selection is key beforehand, but then you have to deal with just so many things. And as the the one of the big words from our training camp this February was crossover at the more money you've got, the less crossover there is. So the DS actually has to you know now doesn't book any flights.

J: Yeah

OK

P2: We have a general manager who books the flights. Just recently the general manager has now gotten assistant, you know, because the general manager was really busy kind of looking after the sponsors. So the sport director on our team, now, we actually has an assistant as well. So we have a head of performance, he's our lead director sportif and he has a number 2 is a ex rider that used to ride for the last team he worked, Julia Soak. We thought it was really important to have a a female in that job

So yeah, here's responsibilities are much more diverse than many other people may think.

J: Yep

P2: It's Akin to perhaps one of the top men's teams, you know he's able to perhaps coach the riders on a more one to one basis.

And speak to them on a more regular basis than perhaps I did in 2016 when we first started.

J: Yeah, it's interesting. You mentioned that. So I probably can't say who it is over just cause we're trying to keep everybody's like credentials like private, but I had an interview with a Women's continental team the other day based in the UK and exactly as you, as you've said when on a lower budget, the DS is doing absolutely everything. Things that I personally before I came into this doing this research, I wouldn't have thought DS would have to do like their job responsibility.

P2: Yeah. And what you heard or experienced in that team, Jack, would be quite common on many of the other smaller budget men's teams. Certainly a a men's British elite level and all over the world, whether it be Belgium or France. People don't get into running cycle teams or bike racing teams for the money. They're doing it because they are passionate. They're used to ride bikes themselves, you know. And and it's addictive, you know. They like the feeling of winning and success.

J: OK

P2: But then, yeah, and I had a I had a beer with a guy called Danny Stam, who was the DS for the world number one women's team, which at the time was called bolds dolmens. In the first year we did eerrr the tour of California, which was a big world tour.

J: Its not on the calender anymore is it. They they've cancelled it. It's a shame that it isn't on there anymore.

P2: Yeah. So we did it in 2016, 2017 and 2018 and then 2019 was the last time they had no 2020. We did it as well. But Joss, 2019, we had Joss.

J: Because didn't she, she crash and break her collarbone or something?

Yeah

P2: Yeah, we did. She's separated a shoulder. We think, and her elbow, so.

J: Yeah

P2: And that was a case in point that I was the DS on that race, so before the begging of the race we're trying to coach her to success on stage two, which is the mountain top finish. But, on stage one, I'm sitting in the hospital with her till about 10:00 o'clock at night. And the, you know, the post-race rider debriefing meeting is then postponed to the next morning because we had to get back from the hospital late. And you have to be very agile and flexible and and fluid. Where are used to tell the girls are used 3Fs.

J: Yeah

P2: That's quite a lot. They all giggled and I said flexible is 1, fluid is another and I'll leave you to decide what the other one is. And it's true. You have to, you know, you have to be very agile and and move make you can't just be setting your ways. You have to be really open to change.

J: Yeah

P2: Understand that things do change. So yeah, I'll write a broken collarbone separated a shoulder, separated her elbow and we acted. Look after her because we didn't have a doctor on our team, you know,

in 2019 we had a smaller budget, so we had a volunteer swany that year and a volunteer mechanic. So I had to take her to the hospital.

P2: *Yeah*

But the point I was gonna try to make it in 2016, we were at the Tour of California for the first time. We were only like 4-5 months old as a team and all of the teams are staying in the same hotel and in the evening, after the riders had had their massage and we'd had a team meeting, I went down into the bar to have a beer. And Danny Stamm, the DS of the world's number one team, was at the bar. And he bought me a beer and was really friendly and really outgoing. And he's now become.

J: *Yep*

P2: *I wouldn't say a close personal friend, but he is certainly a friendly acquaintance. You know, we always catch up when we're at races.*

P2: *And he said to me, he gave me some advice and he said, Bob, really enjoy the first few years because that's the most fun.*

J: *Yeah*

Yeah

P2: *He said as you get more money and you get more staff, you end up doing less of what you really like. You know you end up looking after sponsors or looking after the banking or paying all of the riders in their salaries in six different countries. And I just laughed at him. I thought, yeah, we'll see, you know, it must be nice to have more money and more staff, but he's true. You know, I actually now go to less races.*

J: *Yeah*

P2: *But yeah, so that was an interesting little conversation.*

J: *Do you wish you had the opportunity to travel or go to more races or are you happy with the more operational role that you have now.*

P2: *No, I think, I knew you were going to ask me that.*

I was thinking about that. I mean, I'm in a lucky position. I can go when I want to go.

J: *OK*

P2: *And I went to the Tour de France.*

A part of it is giving people their own space to do their jobs there. There's nothing worse than a boss is constantly looking over your shoulder and saying we used to do it like this or we used to do it like that, you know? So I've known Nico for a long time. The the GM's, my son and business part of the Tom.

J: *Yeah*

P2: *He doesn't really DS a great deal. He does a bit occasionally. So he said, yeah, everyone's doing their job really. So when I go, I just go with a different responsibility. You know, I'll might look after sponsors. I'll make sure I was chat with the riders. Always chat with the staff to make sure they're OK, you know, chat with rival team owners. So yeah, the roles evolve. So no, I don't wish I was living out of a suitcase working 16 hours a day, getting stressed.*

J: *Yeah*

P2: *Put it on 20 kilos. Not riding my bike. So now you know I've lost weight. I ride my bike and I can go when I want so I don't regret that. But it is a drug, you know, it's a real, you know, if you're a*

competitive human being, it is quite a drug. When you're in the car calling the shots and talking with riders. And I'd be lying if I said I'd there's a part of me that didn't miss that.

But you you get your kicks in other ways, you know about the whole group being successful.

J: Yeah. Would you say that was your favourite part of being a DS, though? Calling all the shots and doing, all the strategy from the car.

Yeah

P2: Yeah, all the tactics and and and the and the prep and that was the bit I really like. And I think most DS would say that no one goes into cyclesport to book a lot of flights and to figure out a lot of logistics. They go in because they love the sport inside. That's what drives them. And it's such a powerful drug that drug, I guess that it it kind of masks all of the shit stuff that you have to do you know

J: Yeah

P2: To get there so

J: Yeah

P2: Yeah, definitely. That's certainly the driver I would suspect with 100% of the DS's that you're gonna talk to or if they don't say it was that, then I would suspect they're lying would be would be my, you know, my take on that

J: How did you get into your role as a DS? Were you were rider before? Did you race or anything like that?

Ok

OK

P2: Yeah, I raced, raced in the 90s as a second cat. In those days, we only had forth cat, second cat and 3rd cap. I was a second cat, so I was a handy enough rider, but I was never gonna be a superstar. I started too late and probably wasn't talented enough, although I was very dedicated. I've trained very hard and I looked after myself meticulously in terms of diet and weight and training, hard and resting, and I was running a business at the same time.

Racing is an amateur.

And I did all my coaching badges around the same time and I coached a youth. I started up a youth development squad in in Milton Keynes.

J: Yeah. So you say you did all your coaching badges, is that with BC British cyclone?

P2: Yeah, British Cycling and at the time there was a rival organization called the Association of British based cycled coaches.

J: Yeah

P2: And one of the leading lights at the time was a guy called Peter Keane, who was actually before I was.

J: He was working with BC. He wasn't he.

P2: Pardon

J: He was working with British Cycling at one point it was.

P2: Yeah, he he worked very closely with Chris Boardman and and was Dave Brailsford's kind of mentor. I think in many ways. So I used to study Peter Keane and his methods quite a lot, and I used to go to conferences whenever I could and and listen to all the, you know, the the speakers. So I love that. And I I turned that knowledge into coaching.

J: Yeah

P2: Young riders and we had a probably the number one youth development squad in the UK at the time in Milton Keynes. We became over two or three years, lots of British internationals. The star of that program was Ian Stannard, who went on to ride four or five, two to Frances for Sky.

J: Yeah

P2: We're still friends now, which is nice, and he's D acid now, actually.

We

J: Where is he based now?

P2: And he did DS for Trinity Racing.

J: OK, Pidcock used to ride for them. Tom Pidcock used to race for Trinity, right?

P2: Yes, yeah. If you wanted an introduction to Ian, I'll do that because that would be a nice story. A you. Yes, who used to be a rider, yeah.

J: If you could possibly send me or Richard the details that be really good because we're looking for a few more people we could interview.

P2: Yeah

J: So if you wouldn't mind, I'd be really helpful

P2: Yeah, I can do that.

So yeah, I run a a kids program and then I kinda left a sport for a while, but then I came back into it and if I do anything I like to do it as well as I could. I got involved with a local shop team. Corley drops it was a local armature team co sponsored by drops for a year. I was looking after the women's team and then took them to race in Belgium and then kind of got the the taste for it and started a team up from scratch in 2016.

J: Yeah

Right

P2: But it was never ever a club team you so. We went straight in as a professional team. But we were comfortable with the fact that we weren't paying anyone any wages, which was we.

Very common at the time I think. In those early stages no one was getting paid.

J: Yeah, I think that's that's still quite common. If you look at a lot of the elite teams in the UK, a lot of riders aren't getting paid. They might make it look like they are, but deep down they're not getting paid.

Yeah

P2: No, no, it's bullshit And we called it out, but we wanted to do it in a respectful way, so we made a strap line up that we aspired to be the most professional women's amateur team in the world.

J: Yeah

P2: And that kinda made everyone think of what we actually meant.

J: Yeah

Yeah

P2: So we were proudly armature, which meant that we didn't pay any anyone any money, but they had the best bikes, the best equipment we had good volunteer staff we had and we got invited to a lot of big races in rights right from the get go. So in April 2016 we were four months old and we rode the Tour of Flanders.

Which I still think is kinda crazy to think about.

J: Yeah, that that's a huge race. For onlty being four months old that's a huge thing, that new, that's a huge race.

P2: Yeah, and it will never happen again. Like one of the biggest races in the world and a small little British team blocked up with a second hand car and one Volkswagen van and and a lot of borrowed kit

J: Yeah

P2: We had two riders in the third group on the road, Lizzie Dynamo, one that race 2016. She won from Emma Johansson.

And then there was a second group on the road. And then there was a third group on the road, which we had two riders in, like two or three minutes down on the winner, which was remarkable because they both went to work on the Monday.

J: Yeah

It's quite a story to tell, isn't it? From racing one of the biggest bike races in the world at the weakened to being back at work on Monday. Its crazy.

Yep

P2: Yeah, we got. There's loads of stories throughout. That's why I think, Richard, you know, I met Richard in, in, in Switzerland in 2015 where I was taking the UCI course and he was teaching some parts of it and he got captivated by our story and was followed the team ever since. Hence I'm talking to you now I think.

J: Yeah, yeah, true. So just following on from that either as a DS yourself or kind of in the, I guess, operational role that you have now overseeing the whole team, what's the most insightful thing you've ever seen a DS say or do?

Or this maybe had most impacts to avoider?

P2: Good question. So.

J: If you can pick out either just one story or whatever.

Yeah. Yeah, we'll go to that.

P2: Gonna give you a slightly different answer, but I think it is a good story and it's closely linked to what you've asked. So what was the most impact? I as a DS of made with with a decision would be the 2017 women's tour where we had a rider.

J: Okay was that the tour of Britain.

P2: Yeah, yeah, the the men's race is called the Tour of Britain. The women's race is called the women's tour.

J: The Women's tour? OK?

P2: Yeah. So it was the 2017 women's tour and we had a a young rider called Alice Barnes on the team British rider, who was gonna clearly go on to greatness.

J: Yep

P2: And like a lot of budding great riders, they can be demanding with their personality. So I've said in many interviews, Alice kept everybody on their toes, including me. I liked that because we suited each other and I think we had. I had a good relationship with Alice and there's two things there. So my team selection for that race, I dropped one of our foreign riders who was the our Italian star, Susanna.

J: Yep

P2: Because I felt there was a little bit of a rivalry within the team between her and Alice, and I put my money for that particular race on Alice and picked a younger, more inexperienced team that I felt would 100% support Alice even if they weren't. Perhaps as good as some of our international riders, and that proved to be a very good decision by me, which I'm proud of because the girls all did rally behind Alice and Alice, I think felt.

My confidence and really road above and beyond her level at the time.

I think.

J: Yeah

P2: And we got to about Thursday and she was sitting 7th on overall on the GC Thursday or Friday and it was a tough stage and she had a bit of a bad day.

J: OK

P2: And she was out the back in the third or fourth group, and we were a long way behind and I told 2 girls to wait with Alice.

J: Yeah

OK

P2: Even though they will stronger than Alice at that time at which they did without any question, they were super loyal to me and to Alice. And then I played my blinder that I I coached them back to the front of the race. So they were three or four minutes behind in the third group, and normally they would just kind of give up and run to the finish and then she would get a position. She would finish the race and she would go to the next stage. But her GC position of 7th, which was a remarkable achievement for a young rider.

In a pretty much an amateur team.

J: Yeah

P2: And I wanted to defend that. Anyway. We did to cut a Long story short, I coached them.

J: Yeah

P2: To ride for Alice, protect Alice and Abby Mae Parkinson and Martina Ritter. They road Like 10 men. Although that's not politically correct. They're both 10/10 women.

J: Yeah

P2: And they brought the third group back to the second group, and then the second back group back to the first group. By the time we got to the finishing Chesterfield, Alice was back at the front of the race. She was back in 7th on GC. I did that with motivational coaching over the radio over the headphones. And just, you know, making them believe that they could close that gap where most people would have given up. And then as the the gap came down from 3 minutes to two minutes to 90 seconds to one minute, they all started to believe. And the next day or that evening in dinner in the in the hotel of the top team managers from rival teams. One being Danny Stam, world number one team said hit all of the girls on their team.

We're so impressed with our team and how they work for Alice and they never thought the third group would come back.

J: Yeah

P2: *And yeah, it we only saved 7th place, but for us it was like a world championship*

J: *That's a huge achievement, yeah*

P2: *Yeah. And for me, that's still my, you know, I've had a lot of proud moments over the years And then with the women's team, but that's probably my most proudest.*

J: *OK, cool.*

Yeah

P2: *Tactical motivational DS experience because she then held on to 7th to the end, but she'd had the best British rider jersey, but 7th on GC. I don't think she's had a result like that since.*

J: *OK*

I guess this is going to be the opposite of that question or the maybe it's something that you've done or something you've experienced. But what would you say was the least impactful thing you've ever seen in DS do not to like throw anybody under the bus, but if if a if you have an example to that question without naming names.

P2: *Yeah, I've got good one here. So we're in, we're in South of France stage race, you know, called our dash.*

J: *Yep*

P2: *And a rival DS from an Italian team small Italian team was so pissed off with his riders that they had missed the breakaway and they were all in the back group.*

That he made them all ride on the front.

And refused to give them any water.

J: *OK*

P2: *And wondered why the culture and the atmosphere in that team*

Was and still is completely shit

J: *Yeah, yeah, yeah.*

P2: *Because it aint rocket science Jack is it*

J: *No, no, no, no*

UM, OK. So what would you say are some of the key skills that you would need to be a DS?

P2: *Communication, I think would work.*

J: *What would you classify as successful communication? What does good communication look like to you?*

P2: *Good communication. Good clear basic communication is so important in the sport of cycling*

J: *Yeah*

P2: *Knowledge of basic human psychology is always handy, but communication I think if you could tell people what you want from them, I I used to. Sometimes I felt I used to treat the riders at the beginning of the race, almost like schoolchildren.*

J: *OK. What do you mean?*

P2: *So why would have objectives?*

But each rider, and collectively, so they have to have something that they can get their teeth in, that their job, a lot of the riders want to know, what do you want me to do? What's my job? And that is now the norm now. But it wasn't the norm six years ago.

J: So almost like a challenge that's either suited to their skill level or what type of rider they offer.

Example, yeah.

P2: Yeah, I think that's good. So you have to any goal has to be realistic goal. Now if I say to you right then Jack you, I've heard from Richard, you're a clever boy. I want you to build a rocket ship and fly it to the moon by the end of 2024. You probably not gonna be able to build a rocket ship and fly it to the moon, but so you. I'm setting you up to fail.

J: Yeah

Yeah

P2: But you know, if I set you a reasonable goal that you achieve, you then build confidence and you grow. So it was sensible goal setting achieve goals and then confidence naturally grew and then recruiting.

As we got a bigger budget.

We were able to recruit.

Perhaps not. Probably a little bit better talent, but also we would be more appealing where we'd be more attractive to a higher grade.

J: Yeah

P2: Younger riders, it might go to bigots, bigger teams, they would choose to come to us, which helped.

J: Yeah

OK

P2: And then it step by step really I call it the zipper effect. So we all we tried to give all of our riders two years right from the start. So they could actually adjust as opposed to just a one year contract. But then if it was evident that they weren't quite progressing or that reached the ceiling, they had no more growth. I tried to have a you know, a human conversation with them and one or two would drop off the bottom of the zip and then we would try to hire a couple of people on the top of the zip. So we.

See the zipper effect of just slowly getting better as opposed to trying to grow too fast.

J: Yeah. OK. That makes sense, yeah.

Yeah

P2: Yeah, but good communication. What do I expect from you today? Well, I'd like you to be in charge of coming back for bottles in the 1st 50K or I see it's really, really important that we get Alex in a good position for the finishing circuit and we go into the finishing circuit 100K. So everyone just hide, eat and drink and follow for 8090K. And then let's all be with Alice for that really important 1015 K and make sure she's in the first five or six wheels going into the finishing circuit.

Preferably with one of you with her. You know, on the finishing circuit. So yeah. Then they could. Then they know very clearly what their job is.

Patience.

J: OK, how so other than communication, would you say there's any other skills that you need so you've put communication patient patience? Yeah, maybe knowledge of.

P2: You, you know, you're dealing with whatever anyone says. I think that when you're coaching and mentoring women, it is slightly different to men.

J: Yeah

P2: *And I think it's a different skill set. I think that appreciate communication more. I think men are just grunt and get on with it. But I think the women prefer a conversation they wanna give you their input. While I might not better do that, you know, I'm on my period, you know, the first time someone said that to me is a as a mature man I thought, Blimey, yeah, you know you. So we had to really readjust that, you know. And then I had to study, you know, a little bit about, you know, performance.*

J: *Yeah*

P2: *Uh cycles around menstrual cycles. You know some. And I had a good relationship with the girls. So they trusted me. And with I was always honest, open and transparent. So I felt they were comfortable in my company and I was comfortable with them. So we could talk about anything, and some writers would actually perform well when they were having their menstrual cycle and others wouldn't, or a day before or day after or whatever it would be. So you've got to know them on a pretty intimate level, you know, and they would.*

You know, they would say no, I'm not, really couldn't. I'm not really top drawer for today. Perhaps Annie could do that and I'll come back and get bottles in the first part of the race. Perhaps Annie could be with Alice in the final.

J: *Yeah. OK.*

If you were to summarise your approach to your DS role or being a DS.

P2: *Uh*

J: *If you had, I don't know, maybe give five characteristics that you think you'd like to like embody as a DS, what would they be?*

P2: *Well, I've enthusiastic.*

J: *Yep*

P2: *I'd like to think I was strategic.*

J: *OK*

Yeah

P2: *We are plan would have to change depending on what race we were doing, so we're doing a UK race, we'd want to dominate, we'd want to be aggressive. You know, we'd want to be showing people we were a very good team and smashing it, but we were going the Tour of Flanders, we would have different expectations and we could, you know, we'd have to probably write a bit more defensively. So that would be certainly enthusiastic, encouraging positive. Always try to emphasize the positive, eliminate the negative, make people feel good about the whole experience and lift them up.*

J: *Yeah*

P2: *And it was like having a a rally driver, you know, Co driver in a in a rally, you know. So we will really, we've communicated well together and then I was able to communicate that to the riders during the race. You know, Abby Mae Parkinson I think got top 20 that race and we were able to really help her. To achieve that and for instance, on the last on the very last climb, they were all ***** all of them. But she was over. She was really overachieving. She was the underdog and she was really gritty Yorkshire rider. And I just told her on the radio to imagine that her boyfriend Johnny was at the top of the climb.*

J: *Right*

P2: *He wrote for.*

J: OK. Yeah, yeah.

Yeah

P2: He wrote for Lotto Soudal and Sky, Jon Dibben. Johnny Dibben, you know. So I said, look, Johnny, she knew he wasn't. But, you know, John's at the top of the climb. Come on. Abby made. This is the last time of the day. Let's do it for Johnny, you know. And then a couple of other girls that were like on the same radio link that were behind ABI. May was saying, yeah. Come on, ABI, do it for Johnny, you know? And and it was. Yeah, so little little things when you had absolutely knackered and chewing the handlebars, I think.

Focus the mind

J: Yeah, interesting

Right. We've got about 10 more minutes left, so only a few more questions

P2: Yeah, no worries

J: OK. So kind of we've already kinda spoken about it, but what would you say makes a great director sportif and can these attributes or values be learned or do you think they are kind of always within you? So do you think like going on a DPS course like Richard does as the UCI you think that helps people become DS's or do you think about those skills are always within you?

P2: Both. There's no direct answer that both. So I think that certain skills are within your human personality that you're born with. But I'm also a great believer, which I wasn't 30-40 years ago, that education is way more important than I appreciated as a young person. And now I feel that I'm learning now you can. You're never too old to learn new stuff. And I pushing myself, challenging myself to learn new stuff about sport science

J: Yeah

P2: You take the analogy about, you know, four or five decades ago, you as a sign of weakness, to drink water while she was running a marathon. And these were the top people of their generation that were saying this. You know, the top racers, the top coaches, the top sports scientists or whatever they were that time. It was a weakness to drink water and how much ***** that is now. You know, one of the things we had in the team was trying to get the girls to go from 2.

J: Yeah

P2: Water bottles to five water bottles in a race you know, and the direct correlation for improvement on performance so.

J: Yeah. There you go. If you're willing to kind of open up what? How did you get them to go from 2:00 to 5:00 or so? Throw away.

P2: Slowly and one of them, one riders. Difficult, but Alice Barnes, who I've mentioned her before. She refused to write it on the on her stem notes on her handlebar, and one of the, I think probably the most repeated sayings from any DS at any level will be move up good position, eat and drink. Come on guys. Don't forget. Eat and drink.

J: That

P2: And it's amazing how much that helps that simple instruction. You know, if they've not eaten and drinking, it's really gonna impact on their performance. And that's something that's very much more widely known now than it was even three or four years ago.

J: Yeah. So would you just say trying to keep up, I guess with the latest science and research that's going on and not always learning?

P2: Yeah, absolutely. And certainly with technology with course Recon. So there are various apps that we, we we subscribe to. And of course you know a young guy in his twenties, 30s that they're gonna know more about that than perhaps a guy my age. So that was something that I made sure that I spent some time, you know, learning and you have the the A live feed into the car.

J: Yeah

P2: On your phone with the wind direction

J: Yeah

P2: And the length of the climbs

J: Yeah, I guess

Yeah

P2: It's not new stuff, but it's it's new technology of getting that information. Whereas or we I would do all my research the night before and I'd have it all written down on notepad and it'll all be pinned on the front of the car. And you look at kilometer 28, you know, it really narrowed cobblestones and you tell the girls, but now you'd have it on a computerized app and it would come up on your iPad in the car that it comes of 28 narrows. Cobblestones win from the right.

But also it would tell you how fast the wind was right now

J: OK. Yeah.

P2: Supposed to what it was on the BBC Weather app when you looked at it 3 hours ago.

J: Yeah

P2: That's not to say that must be an absolute game changer. So if you've gotten a, I don't know in the team, but you have like a previous meeting and you you're gonna get cross wind and it's gonna come from left to right. So the echelon's gonna be that way. And then if you get a data in the car that suggests it's actually gonna be instead of left to right, it's now gonna be right to left. So it's going away. That must be yeah. Must be an absolute game changer.

J: Yeah

P2: Yeah, you've got up to date information at your fingertips, and that's modern technology and that's another good example of of of never stopping learning, you know.

J: OK, cool. Uhm, right. If you were to meet somebody, say I've current rider that wants to be a DS was one bit of information or advice you'd give them.

P2: Not to do it.

Get a proper job, no?

What advice is you got some good questions. So what would?

J: Yep

P2: I advise them to really major on good one to one communication, the riders and to really major on the culture of the team.

J: Yeah

P2: Because that to me that that really non negotiables they're red lines. You know, if you get a bad apple in the group.

Try to work with them, but if it becomes apparent that you're onto a.

You know it's not working out for either party. You're better off just moving away from that. Get the bad apple out of the group.

J: Yeah

P2: I wouldn't call Susanna Georgia bad Apple, but I didn't take her to the women's tour. She was really pissed off with me, didn't speak to me for months, but we succeeded with one leader, which was Alice. There was no Inter team rivalry.

J: Yep

P2: And yeah, that all comes to do with good communication and retaining a good culture within within the within the team because the the team ethic will always help.

Be you know.

Egotistical. Strong.

Solo type of riders that don't wanna work for the team.

J: Yeah. How would you kind of summarize or yeah, how would you summarize your culture that you try and create within your team?

P2: Uh. Honest.

J: Yep

P2: Pardon

Transparent. Friendly.

Welcoming. Competitive.

J: OK. And when you say competitive, is that uh individual or is that team or?

What do you mean about competitive? Is that just trying to win as many races as possible in a year or?

P2: We don't like losing.

J: Yeah, I can understand that

P2: OK, we'll be honest and open if we do lose, we'll be honest and open and and analyse, you know. So yeah, I I think you can still be. You can still have a super competitive environment but still be.

A friendly environment.

J: OK, sure.

Yeah

P2: No, I don't see, you know if need be all friendly and fluffy and and they're, you know, never mind. You know, I'm sure you tried your best to do this, but it didn't work out well. Perhaps you didn't try your best. Perhaps you could, you know, perhaps you could have tried a bit harder, but if you respectful and you're honest and say look, did you, did you really commit there to leading Alice out for that Sprint?

J: Yeah

P2: Did they start to hurt, you know, 2K S to go. And you sat up. Could you tried a bit harder than Alice would say? Look, I think you could have tried a bit harder there. I was in a really good position. If you would give me another 500 meter shelter from the wind or the podiums at that race.

J: Yeah. How do you say it?

P2: You know and and so it's an honest debate with among the group, you know, but it has to be respectful.

J: Yeah. How do you?

P2: Or else it just becomes divisive.

J: How do you create those sort of relationships with your riders, where you can be so open? Do you think that comes naturally or do you think there's something you have to work on?

P2: I think it came naturally for me.

J: OK

P2: But it might not come naturally for other people.

J: OK

P2: So there would be others skill sets that I probably had to work a bit harder on.

Like you know, the technology and the the all, all the new technology, technological changes for me to be up to speed with them, I found more difficult but communication with riders I always was just myself. Advice my dad gave me years ago is just be yourself, you know? Don't try and be someone else. Just be yourself. And I was always friendly and welcoming and tried to treat people how I want to be treated in life and.

I think that that's always been enough really.

J: Yeah, OK, interesting. One final question then I'll let you go.

As a DS and so thinking in terms of, I don't know when you retire.

If you were to look back on your career as a day S, what would you like to be known for? So if you were to have like a legacy.

As a DS, what would one thing or a couple of things? Maybe that you'd like to be known for?

P2: Uh. Inspiring my riders to high levels.

So 2018, we had a Dutch rider called Eva Berman on the squad, and here's the best year ever. She she she's never reached those levels. She went on to the world number one team for two years after us, but she never ever reached those levels. She's struggling to to reach those. Well, she'll never probably never will, so I think.

Getting the best out of riders and there are several instances I can think of where, you know, we've had riders that have gone on to.

To to to bigger teams for more money, but have never really repeated what they did for us.

And I could probably give you 3 or 4 examples, but I think either was is the standout version of that, so she signed for us. She loved the culture. She still is a big fan of the team and I think I inspired her to achieve.

Things that she didn't think she could achieve, certainly in the 2018 women's tour where she was never outside of the top ten and finished 8th on GC the year after we did exactly the same with Alice Barnes.

Everyone thought we wouldn't be able to do it, but we did it.

With another rider.

So yeah, inspiring people to overachieve.

I think I would love that to be my legacy and I think it would be something that I'd be proud of and I think that I have done over the years.

Hmm

J: OK, so try to I guess get the best out themselves or make them realize what they actually capable of.

P2: *Yeah, it is barring people to to be above the level that they think they can be at.*

J: *OK, right. OK, that is my final question.*

Yeah. Thank you. That is.

P2: *No worries. My pleasure. Good luck with it all. And I will pop in and stand out a message and ask him if he's happy for you to e-mail him.*

Appendix interview 3

P3: Hi mate

Jack: Hi, good morning

P3: Can you hear me. I'm in my own a cafe at the moment. Is it too noisy for your? If it is I can move next door and it might be less noisy. I can go there.

J: No, that's OK, that's OK. That's fine.

P3: I can go next door. I don't know how much time I have got. I'm on a bit of a time scale. That's normal in my life

J: How much time have you got, do you reckon?

P3: We can do at least a good half hour 40 minutes at least.

J: Yeah, sure. I can probably condense it down into like half an hour. If we need to

P3: Awesome.

J: Alright, let me know if we are running out of time and I'll try to speed it up.

P3: We can probably skip all of the how are you stuff and just jump straight to the questions.

J: Yeah

P3: Yeah, makes sense

J: So. So just so you know, I'm recording the audio for this just like get like the transcript just so it writes down everything that's been said, but there's no, I'm not recording the video or anything. It's just the audio.

P3: It doesn't bother me either way, but no worries, no stress.

J: OK, right. So the I don't know how much Richard has told you about the research project, but it's for my master's degree.

We are looking to interview DS from Conti Pro Conti and World Tour teams.

P3: Yeah

J: So we want to try and gain an insight on how they develop a, coach, athlete relationship with the people on their time and the riders that they coach.

So we'll just go straight into the questions because you are tight on time.

Uh

Right. Could you outline what experience you have as a DS?

P3: So my involvement in the world of cycling is firstly is a rider. I raced myself in my younger years.

J: Yep

P3: How is that over into that carries over into being a DS or running a team? Obviously this world, I guess 35 years have been involved inside of the sport.

Uh mentoring pro riders.

Some world champions.

I got slightly bored of that, Jack. So I found new ways to become involved in racing. So as a race organizer DS is a bit of a posh word really, but you know you start managing people at a regional level.

Then you move on to a national level.

J: Yep

P3: Kind of expands from there a really. I just started taking up opportunities in the team car when they were given to me. And it just progressed from there obviously. For me it was kind of like a progression model. I just kept on taking opportunities and worked my way up over time until I got to where I was today.

Just taking a step back, I did do some of the lower level qualifications like my coaching qualifications and stuff like that but I haven't do some of the big qualifications that is needed to DS a world tour team.

And I think, I think this is what you'll find when you or if you get to talk to some of the bigger team DS like the world tour teams is that whilst all the top DS's have gone through the UCI course with Richard for example, a lot of the smaller conti or elite level teams haven't. For us its much more of a hands on learning scenario as opposed to there's something more traditional the world tour level. Which means that two DS's may have very different experiences or perceptions or what being a DS is actually like.

Like the world tour DS's had a clear end to their careers as a riders before they changed to being a DS.

But for some of the smaller team DS's I don't think it's always like that.

J: OK. So would you say it was a lot more fluid? It wasn't like stop start. Yeah. OK.

P3: Yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah.

Defiantly

J: Umm, right. If you were a rider before which in your case you were, what is the most impactful thing you experienced from a DS?

P3: I guess.

J: in a positive sense.

P3: In a what sense?

J: In a positive sense. So like a, what what most positive impact that a DS has done for you for example?

P3: Yeah. So I'll say, and I was gonna come into, I would say.

When the DS starts to understand you.

J: Yeah

P3: You can deliver a lot more, so it's the empathy.

As opposed to just do a job role and that's it. If if if the DF could explain, that's why we're doing it or how that helps you team goals and then they didn't get something out of it yourself.

So I guess when a DS or coach really understands you. And how you are as a human and all the stuff like that really. It can really help to get the best out of your self.

J: In the in the same light, without trying to throw anybody under the bus or like bad talking. Anybody. What was the least impactful thing you experienced?

P3: I'll say most of my career, to be honest, because I felt we were treated as commodities.

J: OK

P3: So just ohh do a job. That's it. You're not that important in the grand scheme of things, and if you have got great results in the year because you.

You gave your effort to the team. You were discarded, so probably feeling worthlessness. It's probably the greatest impact.

J: Right. OK. So is that like you were treated like a number rather than a person or or just just to write it for example than a person?

P3: Yeah, yeah.

J: OK

What would you say is the importance of being trust and a relationship with the riders that are on your team. Or maybe new riders that wish to join the team.

P3: Ohh 100% so we will probably talk about it later but at our team we are rider centric.

I'd like to think that if someone where to observe the team. Then hopefully they would see that.

There's no outside involvement sponsors that dictate how we race or who we select for races.. So it's the relationship that we develop with the riders that's paramount basically a happy Smiley Rider is a well performing rider. It doesn't really matter what power numbers they are capable of or if they are a really good racer, if they are constantly unhappy they won't ride their bike fast or as well as they could do.

J: Yes

OK. Would you say obviously you need them to have high power numbers or a good W/KG. That's why they are in the team. But would you say that maybe sometimes happiness is maybe more important than their results.

P3: Yeah, this this sounds strange for for for me, our level results are actually immaterial and I'll be the only DS that probably says that.

It's a question how you imagine success and what real success is about.

I think that we maybe measure success in a different way to most other teams.

Making people feel good about your organization, which is what makes us unique as a professional team.

J: OK. Interesting. I can't say exactly who they were because we are trying to keep everyone's experiences private for some ethical research reasons. But I had an interview with a DS from a female World tour and the other day that said very similar thing to that actually.

It's quite interesting to have that perspective on performance. This whole concept of holist coaching and a holistic outlook on success.

P3: Yeah, I think all of the teams around the world measure success in a slightly different way.

The person I know, I mentored a guy called Tom South who is now a DS. Yeah, I mean, he's there in a big world tour team and he is really starting to bring some big values through.

I think, in my experience a lot of the new younger DS's that are joining teams now maybe bring a certain approach to being a DS that we haven't see ever before. So it's quite interesting to see how they go about certain stuff.

J: OK. Could you give me an example of how trust and respect has been built between staff and riders, so either as a DS or just any role within the team?

P3: So the first thing I'd like to do, I like everybody to learn everybody else's role. That's not in a race. Sorry, that's not obviously.

If you got a climber, you can't do the Sprint's job, but we like to swap job roles.

J: Yeah

P3: Everyone actually racing for the team and then in, in the team itself, we, we'd like people to do a bit of everything. So you know myself or Steve Lamphere who you know heading up the team at the moment, you know, he's gotta do some mechanic and he's gotta do some of the commercial stuff he's gotta do. He's gonna do things that.

J: Yep

P3: To understand what it takes to run a team. So if you've got that understanding that builds ethos and a good culture so that you know when things go wrong, you you don't blame people, you get rid of the blame culture.

J: OK. Would you say that?

It's like an ethos thing. Or would you say that a necessary thing because of the budget that you're on? In terms of having people to be fluid and flexible in their job role for the team.

P3: Ohh, that definitely ethos. You know. You know as much budget as you like, but you you you've gotta build a team ethos otherwise nothing works.

That was that unquantifiable factor of happiness.

J: Yeah

P3: You know? So I think that is going to be one of the troubles of your research. You know, how do you quantify your happiness?

But yeah, I think for us it's a core value.

J: OK, sure. Thank you.

Ohm, if you could pick out, I don't know. Maybe can you name five key characteristics or like personality traits that you think make a great DS.

P3: I'll think DS is.

I think I'm seeing understanding is is huge.

J: OK

P3: I would put this in the same sorta category I I think knowledge actually is important. You do need good knowledge of the races and so you gotta have credibility. So not credibility. They both support each other. You got to know the race calendar and what the races are like and maybe have some sorta creditably as a rider before being a DS.

So that's two key things.

Hard for me to say this but to be a good DS you need to be good at taking a step away from being a racer.

You've got to remember that you're not in the sport to be a racer anymore.

J: OK

Can you tell me a bit more about what you mean by that.

P3: They gotta be independent. Be able to look at things with a wide view point and see the big picture even in the most high pressure situations and always think what is best for the riders long term even if that means they may miss an upcoming race.

So yeah, I'd say independence.

And that independence could also be called strength. A great DS needs to be strong, you know.

J: OK

P3: I think the 4th characteristic is

The ability to dig in, when things are going tough and take it on your shoulders. To not let things get to you and take you away from performing at your best.

J: So like resilience maybe.

P3: Yeah, yeah.

J: Yeah

P3: And you, I think, Jack, you gotta be passionate about the sport. You have to really love what you do and be passionate about it. Not necessarily just passionate about winning all the time but passionate about helping people progress and getting the absolute best out of themselves.

J: Yeah. When you say your third one, stepping away from being a rider, can you just provide some more information what you mean by that?

P3: Yeah

The the mindset that is needed to be a great rider is very different from the mindset that is needed to be a great DS. You almost have to learn to think in a completely different way. IF you still think like on the boys, like a rider, then you can't deliver as a DS.

Unfortunately, sometimes you have to deliver. It's a very cruel sport. It's very hard sport.

It can be hard to remove some of the emotional aspects of the role and just think of it as making decisions.

J: OK

yeah

P3: As what the ladder you start building writers getting better one get a better one.

I think running a team or being a DS is like trying to climb a ladder. Every year you try and and get better and better riders so that the riders can progress and the whole team can progress. But there is a human cost to getting rid of people. I don't like that. I like to retain people for a long as possible within the organization, but you still have to be tough to say. Look, this is your level, but we want to try and take the team to an even higher level.

J: OK, yeah that must be quite hard to do especially if that rider has been on the team for a long time. Right next question, What is the greatest challenge that you've experienced as ideas?

P3: That's easy finance.

You know, the finance side to running a conti team is really hard. But a side from finance, would say But being 100% honest.

I think that Young people have an entitlement culture. I think that they have a certain sense of entitlements these days.

J: Yeah. What? What do you mean by that? Is that like them trying to get on the team when they're not at that level or is that riders within the team thinking they're entitled to stuff or?

P3: Yeah, just expectation, both both ways.

J: And How do you deal with that as DS?

Or in the context of trying to build a relationship with riders, or when you bring a new rider on the team.

P3: Make sure that your selection and interview criteria is good, and to be completely honest I don't think we've been really good at that in the past.

And then I think you have to try and be loyal to your riders. Which is something we've been good at in the past.

J: Yeah

P3: And how do we deal with it? You literally have to look at Rider in the eye and say.

I mean, here is our current package. We will offer all of this equipment, bikes ect, this is our target race plan for the year. We have a performance director. So rare our levels. So rare. But, you know, between a

between a DS, you know, and the various people that we've got almost directly to say, look, this is where you are, this is your capability.

Either this is or isn't for you. And just to be completely transparent and honest with them.

J: OK

When you try and bring a rider and you rider onto the team, do you try to get an understanding of what their personality is and how they might fit into the team.

What do you think? I've obviously they need like good power numbers or good watt per kilo and all of that. But do you try to look at the personality traits that they have as well?

P3: *That's become huge in the last 6 or 12 months. For me, that is now the over powering thing when we try and sign a new rider to the team. It's become almost more important than what power numbers they can do.*

Because I'm not just DS. I'm a team though team owner and there's a lot more to bike racing than just numbers these days.

J: *Yeah. OK. So would you say what equal or maybe more important than the numbers?*

P3: *Yeah, I'll, I'll pull. Unfortunately, you either got win big races or be great on social media. So I think it's probably becoming more.*

More important, sadly.

J: *Yeah I guess some of the younger riders that have a strong social media presences are good for sponsors at bringing*

What do you think makes a great DS and then can these attributes or values be learned? Or do you think they're like always part of you?

P3: *I think part of our team ethos for all the staff and the DS's on the team is that we all buy in to the approach of CPD continued professional development. You know the sport is always changing and we need to change as DS's at the same time. We need to constantly want to get better at our roles to help the team develop as a whole. It's a team culture thing. I think where the sport is now, if you aren't willing to put in the work and keep learning than maybe this sport isn't for you.*

I also think that this question depends on what level of team you are in. The bigger budget teams have access to more outside people, people like Richard for example, or other coach educators or experts at building relationships.

J: *OK. When you say they need to buy into the team ethos, can you maybe highlight what this is.*

P3: *Yeah. The key characteristics of come back again is you know you, you you want empathy and then you want great communication skills and that that's.*

J: *What do you think good communication looks like to you.*

P3: *Before the race, you know things like logistics that make people feel comfortable and you know, and then good communication during the race. You gotta develop their own strategies. And and none of this is taught. Either you have to learn it more or less on the job, so you have to read your own culture, you have to develop.*

Communication skills.

There's just one course to become a DS. Nobody says well, because you're a top rider for us you would make a good DS for us when you retire. There's so much more to it is more about technical the technical exam than it is as you're trying to point in your work. It's if there is a big human element to it.

J: Yes. OK, with the communication, can you give me an example of what that might be in the race? So as that is a race radio or when we're just about to.

P3: Yeah, in the big races we get to use radios. So like the UCI races.

You know, the more skilled the rider is, the more they can come back to the car, which is absolutely ideal.

You know, we've got various hand signals that we can use from, you know, and we can get some short messages out during the feed stations or in the pits or whatever. So we're using.

You know, like everybody else, we use the same tools, but we've been probably using them in maybe a more slightly creative way.

Although many teams don't develop their own hand singles because riders might use the hand singles wrong or they could be interpreted wrong. So you can never really rely on just using hand singles even at national level races where you don't have radios. But the best situation is to have riders come back to the car so that we can give them the big picture on what's going on.

J: Yeah, without serious about a key messages for just the wider is that for the whole team?

P3: But in each team you'll have a road captain whoever's coming back as he passes bottles up. He's then, you know, giving the rest of the team all the info but it's a very fluid situation. You can have 3 million plans but on race day something unexpected can happen and then it's up to the guys on the road to create a plan for themselves and execute on it. Which leads back into elements of our team ethos.

J: OK, UM.

Umm

A side from doing all the tactics and race strategy within the car, what do you think the most valuable thing a DS brings to a team?

P3: He's a reference point to what racing is. He's experienced it and been through all of the hurdles and challenges and will know the outcome of most situations. I think they bring lots of experience to the team that is sometimes needed to make the big decisions. But it also gets to a point where every year that the DS is away from racing, they lose a sense of what the racing is actually like. It's not like they are out of touch with it all but they don't know all the exact details of all the small things that are happening.

J: They are slightly out of touch I guess.

P3: No I say they just lose that that young connectivity.

Yeah. No, I didn't touch in terms of the racing,

Just the world changes, very rapid, you know, it's everything else that goes with, you know, gonna be social media, whatever. You can have a young mind, you know, you can have it in an older body, but you must have a young mind.

J: OK

P3: Yeah

J: Moving into the some of the final questions now. What is one piece of advice you give to somebody that's looking to become a DS?

P3: Don't do it.

J: Actually

P3: Don't don't type that. Hahah no don't put that on the transcript.

J: I had an interview the other day, I can't say say the name of who it was, but I had another DS say the exact same thing.

P3: Was he English?

J: He might have been.

P3: Would I know them. Is he one of the ones that I've mentored.

J: Uh, potentially. I can give you a clue. There's DS for a UK based women's World tour team that one of their riders may have broken the hour record last year.

P3: OK, so yeah, cool.

I'm

What would I say?

Be prepared for change.

I think what I like is is people like yourself now coming into our world and asking us all the questions and trying to get an understanding of what it is that we do. Because you know its

It's its needed to change for a while now.

J: Yeah

OK. And could you maybe go into a bit more detail about what you mean by change is what would you like to happen in the future maybe?

P3: For this more people communicating about what a DS actually does and what our role is about.

J: Yeah

P3: Education and research. The profession is very closed off and I just wished that we engaged with people like yourself more. WE don't reflect enough I don't think about what we need to change what the good bits of our job are and how we make and create relationships with the people around us. It think there are a few that are like Ohh, look at me I'm working for this big team. I think the big question is how do we engage more people into what we do? It's a privilege to have all the experiences what we have It's a privilege.

J: Yeah

I think we got. I think that's the main point in this research is. Trying to find about the

Really, nobody really knows what the role of a DS is. Obviously, you've got the strategy stuff from the team car, but apart from that, it's so wide, OK.

P3: I think I think it's something I'm really interested. I mean, sorry, I've been so all over the place, but you know.

You you got something really good and rich speaks highly of you. And he's a good man, you know. He's a good man. So we're trying to involve in more in our organization as well, so.

Yeah, but I'm.

Yeah

J: OK, right. Probably final question though.

As a DS, what would you like to be known for? So if you were to step away from being a DS or step away from the sport, what would you like to be known for?

P3: Really a really good, dad.

J: Yeah

P3: Yeah. So I'm 58 with 2 year olds. It's taught me a lot, but then?

The guys on the team, I see them like my kids as well to be honest.

So yeah, I'd just like to help people be the best version of themselves.

Just just young people. We have to remember that we are custodians for the sport.

J: Yeah

P3: Right. So whether you're gonna be journalistic research based admin based on the road, you know, whatever we're custodians, the sport. So we gotta look after the sport.

J: OK

P3: I think the most important thing for me is to see the white stuff. I wanna see the smile. I wanna see smiles at people and it actually, you probably have asked the question at the moment, but the real question is how do you measure success?

J: Yeah, how?

P3: What is that?

J: How do you measure success? Or how would you define success within your role or within your team?

P3: Yeah, that success for me is it's just saying the grass is about.

It's about happiest everything now, one while it's an error.

All brands you know, it's kind of like good racing program is.

Everyone's been part of it, you know, I was thing about being a family. It's not leading bullshit. You are just a family and you know, like yourself, you know what? You're gonna have available at the end of the phone? Pick up the phone, you know, using your bed, everything is 1 big family.

J: You think you were maybe prepared for that before you worried? Yeah. So obviously you were widest.

You may have experienced some of that, but I guess were you prepared for the amount of?

I don't know that pastoral support that you have to give and the all the emotional side.

Yeah

P3: No, it's it it. It's different to being around. Everything's different, everything different. So life is about to change these days, you know? And and changes happened very, very rapidly. You know, you find as a young guy, you know what you did in queen and she is. It's not what you do in 20s or 30s and then we're in a modern world with loads of devices and whatever. Yeah, every very.

P3: Very, very fluid, very much. That's changed. And you know, it's have you adapt to that change really.

J: Alright, interesting. And that is the all of the questions.

Have you got anything perhaps that you wanna say about being a DS or do you think you've covered it all?

P3: I think it's lovely. We've covered lots of stuff more than I thought we would.

More education. I'd like to see more education of riders and staff.

Umm

Good

But there isn't really any readily available training for people to become a DS. There is the big course at the UCI if you want to become a DS for a world tour company. If you want to go on the UCI course it's 3.5k and I think that's a massive barrier to entry to be honest. . I mean, what if you know this but world Tour level Pro tour? It's obligatory and all the work. We're lucky in the UK that we can do it through on the job training.

On one hand getting to do on the job training reduces some of the barriers to entry but on the other hand you always have that thought in the back of your mind if you are doing the right thing or not.

J: Yeah

P3: I'm sure that may change in the next few years. I think the more research that comes out will try and give DS's much more education which I think is what it needs.

Yeah. I I just like to see it turn into profession.

J: Yep

P3: But then that would have to be linked to your governing bodies, perhaps because we're protected teams at the moment and then go, Andy said. Well, we're not responsible to train up somebody in that organization. I think we gotta, we gotta change that because we could be DS is in our own right and Harris qualification and move from team to team, you know. So I think what you're doing in this research is a key element, one stack in that journey.

J: I'm not you maybe think that the three grand price to the UC IDs forces be stopping people from becoming a DS or maybe experiencing a high level of training to become a DS if that makes sense.

P3: Yeah, I'm going to think it's. Yeah, it's very rare that riders want to go that way.

I think now a days there are too many barriers to new riders becoming DS's. You do see it sometimes but it's very rare.

J: Yes, do you think that's a good thing or a bad thing.

Like why do less people become DS's.

P3:: Knowledge. I don't think the pathways there.

I know it's, you know.

Is that there's a lot. It's like it might, it might be financed, it might be knowledge, it might be, Career path recognition, you know, whole part of things really.

I don't think enough riders know how to become a DS.

J: And what do you do to change that? Is that a national level thing? Is that like a ABC thing, or is that UCI thing or?

P3:: Yeah, just don't think. I mean, if you think this, what 3?

3 or 4 conti teams in the uk.

Well I guess it's four with us. So maybe there isn't that big of a demand for it.

J: OK, right. That is all my questions. Thank you for your insight and information. We'll, I'll feedback to Richard and I will let you go now because you are busy being a dad.

So yeah, thank you for your insight and information.

P3:: Alright. Well listen, just drop me off for the unit and. Yeah, thank you for taking your time today. Really appreciate it.

J: Alright, thank you.

P3:: Alright mate. Take care. Cheers. Bye bye bye.

Appendix interview 4:

J: Hello

P4: Good morning

J: Thank you for taking the time to meet with me today. I'm excited to learn from your expertise as an elite level cycling Director Sportif.

P4: Yeah this project is, well this research project is so so interesting from my point of view. I don't think this has been done before has it?.

J: No. No, nothing like this has been done before.

P4: Wow yeah that's cool I think a lot of people have a lot to learn about our world.

J: Okay let's get started as I'm sure you are tight for time.

P4: I have a bit more time than usual today so we are in no rush.

J: Can you outline what experience you have as a DS and if you were a rider before becoming a DS, can you outline that experience as well please?

P4: Well where do you want me to start?

J: I guess maybe can you start chronologically

P4: umm yeah I have experience as a DS in a pro conti cycling team where I have been based there for nearly 5 years. And before that I was a coach to a few different riders for over 10 years. And even if you go beyond that then I was a rider for nearly 15 years riding for a few different teams.

J: That's really good. Could you maybe give me some examples of the types of teams you've worked for or the team environments that you've been part of?

P4: Throughout my career, I've had the opportunity to work with elite-level athletes, guiding them through training, race strategies, and overall performance optimization mainly within the context of physiology or optimizing around a specific race performance. .

Before transitioning into the role of a DS, I had a background as a professional cyclist myself. And eerr that lasted for quite a long time. I can't really remember a time where I wasn't involved in bike racing.

J: Can you give me some information about your experiences racing? Like when you were racing before you became a DS.

P4: I competed at a high level for several years, racing in the uk on the domestic scene as well as over in holland and parts of belgium. I was sort of a sprinter but only a small group sprinter, so I guess what modern day riders might describe as a puncher or an attacking breakaway rider. Towards the end of my racing I became a really numbers person and enjoyed learning about all the science and also the coaching side of things. Both the psychology and the psychology side of things.

J: Ohh, okay that's really interesting. I guess its not all that common for current riders to become interested in the coaching process. What about the science and the people management did you find interesting? And did you find all of that learning useful once you eventually became a coach after you stopped racing.

P4: Well umm yeah. I would say that my previous experience as a rider definitely shaped the way I coach, who I am as a coach and I guess parts of my coaching philosophy.

Being a rider first before becoming a coach definitely has allowed me to empathize with the athletes I work with.

J; in what ways?

Can you expand on what you mean by that?

P4: Well now I fully understand their needs and challenges because I was once in their shoes.

Like you know i've been on the journey that they've been on. I've already done all of the things that they are trying to do. So i like to still think that i've got something to teach the people that I coach.

I think its clear that all those years spent in the saddle as a rider definitely shaped my approach as a DS. I know what it's like to push your limits in a physical sense and also be pushed to your limits in a mental sense. I know what its like to be dealt with setbacks, and umm also strive for those epic victories.

I think if I'm honest it helps me connect with the athletes I work with on a deeper level. I guess because you know I truly understand what they're going through. Drawing from my own experiences, I can offer them the guidance and support they need to reach their full potential. Or I'd like to believe that I am capable of coaching like that anyway haha.

So yeah, my time as a DS, combined with my background as a rider, gives me a well-rounded perspective on the sport. It allows me to bring a mix of expertise, empathy, and insider knowledge to the table, helping my athletes thrive and achieve their goals, both on and off the bike.

J: It's really interesting to hear that you took so much from your time as a rider and made it be useful for your time as a coach and as a DS. I don't think many people have transferred their skills as well as you have.

So on to the next question

J: Umm err. What do you think it takes to be a good DS? I guess like what are the key characteristics that you need to be a successful DS in the sport as it currently is.

P4: What do you mean like personality characteristics or coaching characteristics?

J: Yeah a bit of both I guess what are the personality characteristics that you think you need to have to be a good DS.

P4: I think its all the personality skills that you need. I think with the sport as it currently is you spend so many days away from home, so trying to understand that people have a life outside of bike racing. I've learnt a lot from all the other people that i've been around whilst I was a pro. I have been fortunate enough to work with some exceptional coaches, team managers, and director sportifs who I guess taught me a lot.

I think a great coach must be able to adapt to all of the challenges that are thrown at you as a DS. I guess as a coach or mentor to a lot of people you are forced to deal with a lot of unexpected challenges. If its big changes in weather, riders getting injured or logistical issues, there are always a long list of challenges that you face when being a DS.

J: Yeah umm that makes sense. Yeah so what's the next one?

P4: I guess a good DS needs to be supportive of others. Its part of the role isn't it if you are mentoring riders or looking after them then you need to be supportive of their needs and you need to want to get the best out of them.

It's part of the job and it's part of racing at such a high level. When you spend so many days away from home each month or each year its easy to feel isolated or lonely if you don't have the correct support structure in place.

J: So making sure that you support your riders both when they are at races and not at races. And I guess that you have to take a different approach with getting the best out of each rider because they don't all respond in the same way.

P4: Yeah if you want your riders or people. I prefer to just call them people because at the end of the day they are all human and whilst racing is their job and they will spend most of their time involved with cycling in some form or another, they all have families to return to or other interests outside of the sport. If you want your riders to feel supported then you have to truly understand their needs as individuals and think about what motivates them and how their brain works.

J: I really like that. Referring to them as people rather than riders. It shows that you have built a strong report with them and that you care about their wellbeing on and off the bike.

P4: Well yeah, you want your riders to truly believe that they have a supportive coach who believes in them and encourages them. It's simply really it boosts their confidence and makes them better and happier bike riders.

J: In the in the same light, without trying to throw anybody under the bus or like bad talking. Anybody. What was the least impactful thing you experienced?

P4: Well yeah through both being a rider and as a DS or just working within a team I have seen a lot of bad coaching and leadership which is a shame to be honest. Because I don't think people understand the impact that bad coaching or mentorship has on people.

I've seen a lot of arrogance from DS who just think that the riders on their team are like performing monkeys and should just be able to perform at every opportunity. And well it's just not like that is it? Unfortunately I've seen it a lot. Some of the old school DS's have an over inflated sense of importance and they think they are the only ones that matter.

J: Yeah, it's a real shame to see bad coaching. And I know that you mean with an over inflated sense of importance. I think that sometimes they forget that it's the riders that do a lot if not all of the work. Yes the DS's make it all happen but without the riders they wouldn't have a team.

P4: Yeah, yeah for sure its such a shame to see. I've seen a lot of old school DS's be like that. Its just poor coaching, there's not really an excuse for it to be honest.

I think some Ds are overly negative as well. All they do is moan and complain about the situations that they find themselves in. It could be their race calendar, their team budget or sponsors or even the riders that they have. Some DS's will always have something to complain about. That sort of attitude has an impact on everyone. It de-motivates the riders, the support staff, everyone involved in the team.

J: Yeah I can imagine that sort of attitude can't be helpful when you are trying to create a positive performance environment.

P4: It's more for the riders, if all they hear is negative comms then you know the effect that's going to have on them. They don't want to be in a team that's constantly critical of them as a rider, not just their race performance but how they function as a rider and everything else that's involved in it.

J: Well yeah that makes sense. It's like any form of coaching or manganant. If it's overly negative then the outcome is probably also going to be negative. And when that happens no one really gets anything out of it. It's just not productive for anyone.

Moving onto the next question,

What would you say is the importance of being trust and a relationship with the riders that are on your team. Or maybe new riders that wish to join the team.

P4: Trust is everything really. I like to think of trust as the foundation for any successful athlete-coach , and it plays a significant role in achieving the athletes goals. But I guess what you are asking is what I think it takes to form a deep level of trust?

J: Why is trust between an athlete and their DS so important? And how would you begin to develop a deep level of trust between yourself and a rider on your team.

P4: Well, to be honest developing a strong bond of trust with a new athlete is critical to ensuring their success and growth as an athlete. However, I do appreciate that trying to build that level of high trust and support isn't easy. I guess that there are many things that enable a deep level of trust between a rider and their coach. I think that one of the most important ones is active listening. This is more of the coach listening to the riders that they coach. This could mean making sure that you give your rider your full attention and making a strong effort to understand their perspective and situation.

J: Yeah that makes sense, so really deeply listening to what the riders are saying and trying to engage with it and understand it so that you can help their situation. Are there any other personality characteristics that you think are needed to develop a deep level of connection? P4: Yeah, yeah. Erm It's a basic one but I think it's super important but empathy. To me empathy allows you to truly understand the feelings of the other person and when you can demonstrate empathy towards the athletes that you coach you can make them feel heard, seen and really appreciated. Which at the end of the day will make your athletes happier in the long run. And if you have happy athletes then they are more likely to perform better as a result. But I think that another truly important characteristic is making your coaching as personal as possible. Like you know that each athlete is unique they all have their own strengths and their own weakness and differences in their personality. So I think that the main art of coaching is all about what you can do as a coach to understand the people in front of you and the people that you coach. I guess that once you've truly got a deep understanding of the athlete that you coach, then you can work together and build a deep relationship which involves a lot of trust.

J: Yeah I think understanding the people that you coach is really really important. Probably one of the most important parts of the coaching process. If you don't have a shared level of understanding of each other then there won't be any trust between the two of you.

P4: yeah yeah. 100% totally that's exactly it.

J: And without that high level of trust the coaching process just won't be effective or efficient.

J: Can you give me some more examples of how you might build trust with some of the people that you work with.

P4: If I am thinking like a coach. To me there are several key behavior characteristics that allow for a deep level of trust to happen.

For me the first one and most important one is communication. An athlete and their coach must have some form of open communication. But what does that mean? Well I guess open communication means a space of honest feedback, a sound board for discussing different processes and goals and a space for reflection where anything goes. A place where you can say how you honestly feel without feeling like you have to be overly protective of what the other person will feel or say in response to your emotions.

J: I think having an open space where someone can say how they feel without needing to be overly protective of the other person's feelings is really important. If you constantly feel like you can't express how you feel because it may harm the feelings of someone else. Well that's not really effective communication. And it can sometimes do more harm than good.

P4: Yeah definitely I think part of effective communication and an effective coach athlete relationship is that you need the trust to say things just how they are sometimes. Because without you will never develop as people. It might be you are having a conversation with a rider after a stage and you think that they haven't tried their hardest and its having the trust between you to have that frank open discussion and say that actually I think you could have ridden a bit harder today and done a bit more work for your team mates. But it can also be the other way around where you are giving them more praise than they think they deserve. Like really well done today, I know that today was a hard stage and you have had to work really hard to achieve the result and I am proud of the work that you have put in. At the end of the day you are trying to achieve a common goal with the athletes that you are working with so you need to be on the page when something good or bad happens.

J: Yeah that makes a lot of sense. I guess in a lot of cases that might be quite difficult to do. Like having those bad conversations with people where you have to be really hard on them. But I agree with you when you say that it's important for everyone's development. And in the same regard if you haven't created that space for those difficult conversations to happen then no progression will occur.

If we were to move on to the next part of the interview.

P4: Yeah sure what's the next question?

J: As an elite level cycling director sportif what does good communication look like to you?

P4: Well I guess that good communication is all about being clear with the people who you are communicating with. It involves listening actively to riders and staff, responding to their needs and concerns, and keeping them informed about team plans and strategies. You know genuinely caring about what it is that they need from you, not just as a DS but from you as a person.

J: Yeah, listening to them as a person rather than as a rider or as a swanny or as a mechanic or whatever is going to make a huge difference in terms of how they perceive your communication. Can you maybe expand on what you think communication and what it looks like to you.

P4: I guess it's how you set the tone throughout the whole team. It might be in the pre race briefings in the morning. Getting everyone together in the mornings and setting out what the common goal is amongst the team for that day. That process is all about generating buy-in with the riders. How can you get them to work for each other so that you increase the chances of one person winning. And that leads into you knowing how to coach the person in front of you and understanding that not everyone responds the same way to your coaching or leadership so you need to tailor your approach to each individual.

J: As a team leader or team manager, could you list 10 key personality traits that you look for when taking on a new athlete or employing a new athlete into your team.

P4: Well, Well that's a difficult one. Obviously they need to be a bloody good bike rider but from a human, emotional standpoint I'd have to say they must have a competitive drive.

They need to have a desire to win and for success. Without that they aren't much use in our uber competitive environment. And with that they must have a positive attitude and by that I mean be a positive person most of the time like a glass half full not glass half empty kinda person. They also need to be positive when working with the other people in their team. That isn't just riders, that's riders support staff, everyone that makes the team function the way it does.

I guess they also need to be highly coachable. Especially when they are in the early stages of their racing career.

How many have I said so far?

J: I think that's three so far. What other characteristics do you look for?

P4: Okay, Well they must be a team player. Yes they will want to win themselves, but they also need to understand that sometimes their job is to do things for the team to boost the team's chances of winning. Things like spending all day going back and forth from the team car to get bottles and talk tactics. Doing this isn't going to help them win as an individual but it could differently help the team win.

They must also have a strong degree of personal integrity. They need to know what they believe in and stick to it.

J: What do you mean by that last one?

P4: Well it's about knowing what the right choices are and how you should treat people and sticking to your decisions because that's what you've chosen to do. You don't have someone on your team who constantly switches their mind on things because it limits the development of the team.

J: Oh okay yeah that makes more sense now. I think that's only five but I think we will stop there because you've made some really good points so far.

How do you go about striking the balance between their physical ability and their emotional maturity I guess we will call it. Is their skill as a bike rider more important than their emotional maturity or the other way around or what? Because I'm guessing even if they're the best bike rider in the world if they are a bad human being then you don't want them on your team?

P4: I think that when considering a new athlete for the team, it is important to evaluate both their athletic performance and emotional well-being. Yes you are right in saying that we want to work with good people but it's difficult because we also need to win bike races at the same time. I guess on the whole a happy athlete is likely to have better motivation, communication skills, and team spirit, which are all important aspects of a successful team. But yeah they still need to have the skills and the power to be a good rider. But it also depends on what role they are doing within the team.

An athlete's emotional well-being can have a significant impact on their performance, as well as the dynamics and success of the team as a whole.

J: Well now that we've covered what you look for in a new rider. What do you think are some characteristics that you think are needed to make a good DS?

P4: Hmm that's a hard one. I guess that a good DS needs strong leadership skills. A good DS needs the right skills to successfully manage a team. The desire to motivate and inspire others must come naturally to them. Then they also need to be really good at communication. Communication is such a key part of being a DS as we need to convey information to our riders effectively. We need to let them know about things like race strategy and feedback around their performances. But we also need to be able to provide support to them when it is needed.

Oh the other really important thing for us as DS's is that we need to be highly adaptable. We need to be able to react to so many situations. Things constantly change in this job. People get injuries, the weather changes, race plans change and a lot of things go wrong. As a DS you need to be able to quickly adjust race strategy and communicate changes effectively to your riders.

J: Yeah it's really interesting. I guess if you are going to lead a big group of people then you need to have really good leadership skills, that goes without saying. Also being adaptable I guess a lot of things can change so quickly, especially in big stage races and things like that. .

P4: Yeah I have been in some stage races which have been like a nightmare.

J: Yeah yeah I can imagine the amount of things that can change or go wrong.

We are onto the final few questions now.

From your experience and in your opinion how would you go about building a strong team ethos?

P4: That's a hard one because there are many ways to do it. But if we dig a bit deeper and think why you need to build a team ethos that might be a better answer for your question. You need a strong team ethos to create a sense of unity and to tie everyone into the same major objective, like trying to win a race, get a specific jersey in a stage race or even just to get one rider in that day's break.

I guess as a DS it's your job to create a sense of shared values within the team or group of riders. It's about developing and establishing a shared set of principles that the team must uphold. It could be that you are super supportive of developing riders right from the grassroots level to UCI level. Or that you want to give back to the cycling community.

J: Yeah that makes a lot of sense, so it's about trying to generate buy-in with people and get them to believe in all of your processes.

P4: Yeah exactly that. But that is more to it. I like to think that I lead by example and that helps to build team ethos. If I show my riders the behaviors that I want to have then maybe they will develop them themselves.

J: Moving into some of the final questions now. What is one piece of advice you give to somebody that's looking to become a DS?

P4: Wow, that's a tough one. I think that if you want to be a good DS then you really need to think about what it takes to be a good leader and motivator of people. I think if you're looking for a single piece of advice then I'd have to say that you need to understand the people that you coach on a personal level. You need to understand what motivates your riders and how they work mentally. Only once you are able to do that can you really start to get the best out of the people that you work with.

J: Okay that's really interesting. So would you say getting a deep connection with the people that you coach.

P4: Yeah it's exactly that

J: As a DS (Director Sportif), if you were to step away from the role or the sport is there anything that you'd want to be known for. Like in terms of legacy.

P4: Umm, that's a really really hard question.

I think that I'd like to be known for my holistic approach at developing people, not just riders. Yes we want them to win but we also want them to be good people and give back to the community.

I guess that I'd like to be known as a good mentor as well. Someone that dedicated themselves to helping other people progress and become better versions of themselves.

Ultimately, I would like to be remembered as a DS who not only achieved success in terms of race results but also had a profound and positive influence on the lives and careers of the athletes I worked with and on the sport of cycling as a whole.

J: That's an interesting point of view. I think a lot of people wish they had the same approach as that. Saying that the only thing that truly matters is that they have helped people reach their potential and development as athletes and overall people.