

It's only a game: experiences of sub-elite/recreational footballers at a Charity Tournament

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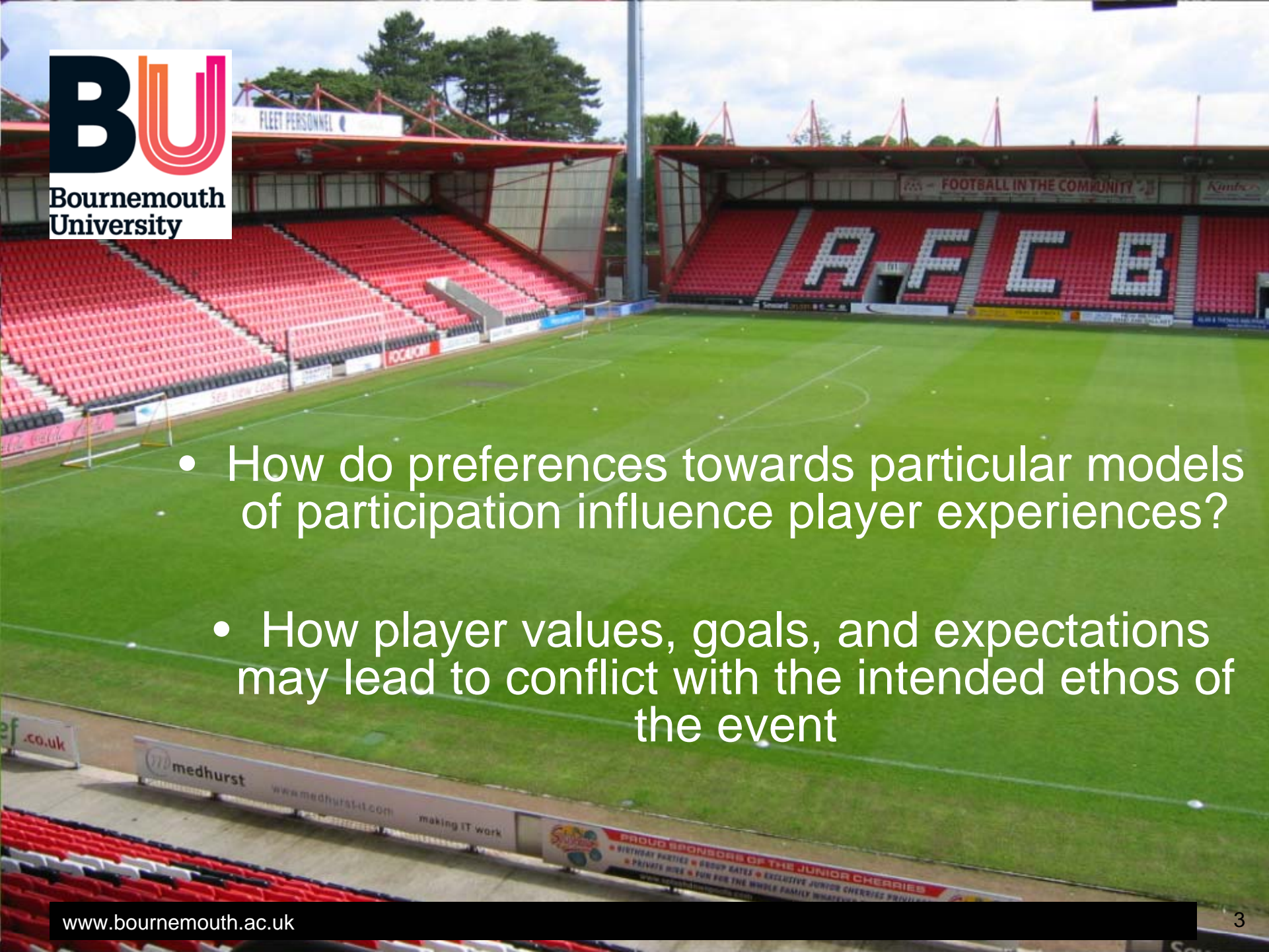
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Research aim

- To explore the experiences of sub-elite players in a small scale charity setting

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- How do preferences towards particular models of participation influence player experiences?
 - How player values, goals, and expectations may lead to conflict with the intended ethos of the event

- The limia Shoot for Business Five a Side Charity Tournament.
- Held at AFC Bournemouth



- Experiences - subjective, emotional states laden with symbolic meaning (Holbrook and Hirschmann 1982)
- Emotions – interaction between individual, values, and situation

Eitzen and Sage (1997) classified sport as

Informal

- Sport exists for enjoyment.
- Governed by flexible and participant driven rules.

• **Organized**

- Formal use of codified, inflexible rules and regulations

Dubois (1980) - Process and Product Model of Sport Participation.

Product orientation

- Winning is an end in itself
- Leads to feelings of superiority
- The pursuit of tangible rewards becomes important
- Participants seek admiration and approval of others
- Personal satisfaction in playing less important
- Opponents are dehumanized.

Dubois (1980) - Process and Product Model of Sport Participation.

Process orientation

- Intrinsic value to be gained from participation
- Extrinsic rewards are not sought
- Excellence is found in quality rather than winning
- Aesthetic aspects important.
- Participants focus upon present, not the potential outcome.
- Rapport exists between opponents because each is needed to bring out the best in the other.

Coakley (2001)/Aicinena (2002) - Models of Sport Participation

Power and Performance Model

- Strength, speed and power are emphasized
- Excellence equals success
- Winning valued more if sacrifice, risk and pain evident
- Participants should not be concerned with injury.
- Training should be technologically enhanced and scientific.
- Opponents are viewed as enemies.
- Only the best on a team should play.
- If an unskilled athlete plays, it may cost the team a victory and this is unacceptable.

The Pleasure and Participation Model

- Playing is the reason for involvement.
- There is a mind/body/spirit connection.
- Participants and opponents are valued and needed.
- The participant's control of body and equipment, and skilled movement give satisfaction.
- Domination and victory are not important.
- Inclusion of weak and unskilled are desirable
- Rules modifications to support pleasure acceptable
- Decisions and power are shared between coaches and athletes.

- Hermeneutic
- Case study
- In depth interviews
- Reflexive
- Inductive



Emerging Themes

Several key themes...

...Often experienced differently by members
of the same team

- “For us it was good PR ...winning or losing was irrelevant really”
- “I wanted to get the best players I could...but people I knew would be good ambassadors “
- I just want to be the best I can... it’s about performance level for me and results”



“They knew they were terrible...they were having a great time...the Uni team were having a great time too because they were playing so well. One way was shown in laughing and joking around and another in ‘yes we just scored a goal lets get some more’ “.

Competitiveness

“if there had been a 12 year old girl running around, then you let her score”

- **“I was glad to see it was competitive...shirt pulling, fouling, that’s part of the game”**
- **“you put a lot of blokes together in an environment like that and give them a ball and it’s going to get competitive”**



Reinforced by use of ‘Ringers’

- “it did become very competitive...when you have these corporate teams who do it for the prestige they get in ringer players”
- “I was surprised some teams didn’t enter into the spirit of it”

But...

- “if we had lost the tournament then I may be saying I wouldn’t have minded bringing in 1 or 2 ringers”



Legacies

“I would not join *Organisation X* as a result of that...and if I was a member I would probably have cancelled my membership because they behaved in such a bad fashion”

“I’ve had that before...we played against two or three teams who really had a negative impact on how we dealt with the company...often its not even players who work for the company”

Conclusions

Contrasting experiences of the event within a single, cohesive team

Experiences linked to individual values of sport (e.g. pleasure and participation/power and performance)

Rather than context of participation (charity tournament)

