1   Running head: MAKING WEIGHT

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3   Using a daily diary approach to understand the psychological experiences of making

4   weight

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Abstract

Making weight refers to the process of reducing body weight to compete in weight categorised sports. The current study explored judo athletes' psychological experiences of making weight. Six International standard judo athletes participated for the length of time they required to make weight. An unstructured diary was used to collect data daily, supported by a follow-up interview. Data was analysed using a holistic content analysis. Emergent themes included initiating the making weight process, competing demands of dual roles, temptation, impacts of restricted nutrition, and the desire for social support. Athlete stories provided rich descriptions of their experiences, revealing the extent to which difficulties were concealed and the process of making weight was normalized. Their accounts highlight the challenges associated with social support but the value of emotional disclosure. Future research should explore the potential uses of diaries as a form of disclosure.

Keywords: making weight, diary, stress, coping, weight categorisation

48 It has been well documented that the ability to cope with stress is crucial to success in

49 sport (Nicholls & Polman, 2007). An emerging body of research has sought to examine

50 the stressors and subsequent coping responses in a variety of sports, including cross-

51 country running (Nicholls, Levy, Grice, & Polman, 2009), cricket (Thewell, Weston, &

52 Greenlees, 2007), decathlon (Dale, 2000), golf (Nicholls, 2007), rugby (Nicholls,

53 Backhouse, Polman, & McKenna, 2009), sailing (Weston, Thewell, Bond, & Hutchings,

54 2009), soccer (Finn & McKenna, 2010), volleyball (Holt, Berg, & Tamminen, 2007), and

55 wrestling (Kristiansen, Roberts, & Abrahamsen, 2008). Overall, this research has

56 indicated that although there are a number of common stressors in sport, there may be

57 some stressors that are of particular relevance to certain sports. Thus while themes such as

58 relationships with important others and pressure to succeed may be commonly cited

59 general stressors, for some sports (e.g., cricket) more specific themes such as the behavior

60 of the opposition (Thelwell et al., 2007) are also cited as stressors. One specific stressor

61 that has been highlighted as important across a number of sports is the ability to make

62 weight prior to competition (Kristiansen et al., 2008). Despite the number of sports

63 requiring an athlete to make weight (e.g., horse racing, wrestling, amateur and

64 professional boxing, taekwondo, rowing, judo) it is surprising that current understanding

65 of the psychological stressors and strategies used to cope with making weight is sparse.

66   The process of making weight has been suggested to include frequent, rapid, and

67 large weight loss and regain cycles (Steen & Brownell, 1990). In Smith's (2006)

68 physiological profile of amateur boxers making weight, all 156 athletes reduced their

69 body weight by 1.7% to 2.7% over the final 24 hours before weigh-in. Similarly, Dolan,

70 O'Connor, McGoldrick, O'Loughlin, Lyons, and Warrington (2011) reported that the

71 majority of jockeys in their study lost 2kg, 24-48 hours before a race day to make weight.

72   In order to achieve such rapid weight loss a variety of aggressive methods have been

73   cited, including dehydration, food restriction, fasting, and for some, vomiting, laxatives,

74   and diuretics (Steen & Brownell, 1990). Dolan et al. (2011) described that gradual, rapid,

75   passive, and active methods of weight loss were employed by athletes, often putting their

76   health at risk. Although weight categorisations in sports such as judo are intended to make

77   competition fairer, it has been argued that this categorisation puts pressure on athletes to

78   cut body weight down to a minimum in order to compete in the lowest possible division

79   under the belief that an advantage will be gained over opposition (Hall & Lane, 2001).

80   Research into the practices of jockeys has suggested that 50% of female jockeys

81   attempting to make weight will experience difficulties (Leydon & Wall, 2002). Similarly,

82   applied reflections such as those by Wilson and Close (2013) suggest that some methods

83   jockeys employed to make weight (such as rapid dehydration) may not be essential and

84   may be largely cultural practice.

85   While research on the psychological impact of making weight has been limited,

86   existing research has tended to focus on the negative emotional impact (Choma, Sforzo, &

87   Keller, 1998; Filaire, Maso, Degoutte, Jouanel, & Lac, 2001; Hall & Lane, 2001; Koral &

88   Dosseville, 2009; Landers, Arent, & Lutz, 2001). Koral and Dosseville (2009) examined

89   the impact of a four-week weight loss strategy on 20 judo athletes' emotions and fitness.

90   Results demonstrated that although there was no reduction in performance, athletes

91   experienced a significant increase in negative mood states (anger, fatigue, and tension).

92   Similarly, Choma et al. (1998) suggested that wrestlers using rapid weight loss methods

93   experienced greater mood negativity as well as impairment of short term memory. More

94   specifically, Filaire et al. (2001) reported that negative mood states included increased

95   tension, anger, fatigue, and confusion, as well as decreased vigour. Further, this study also

96 suggested that food restriction adversely impacted the physiology of the judo athlete and

97 consequently impaired performance. Although such studies indicate the negative

98 emotional impacts of making weight there is little current research that focuses on the

99 athlete experience of making weight.

100 In addition to the psychological impact of making weight, research has also

101 suggested that participation in weight restricted sports, specifically horseracing, may be

102 related to the development of eating disorders (Hausenblas & Carron, 1999). In

103 comparison to the three percent prevalence of eating disorders reported in refereed sports

104 (Zucker, Womble, Williamson, & Perrin, 1999) Leydon and Wall's (2002) study

105 examined the dietary habits of 20 professional jockeys, finding that four of these jockeys

106 showed signs of disordered eating. This was attributed to the repeated use of extreme

107 weight loss practices and inadequate dietary intake. Further, their study also suggested

108 that male jockeys had a similar risk to female jockeys of developing an eating disorder.

109 More recently, Caulfield and Karageorghis (2008) examined the impact of making weight

110 on mood and attitudes towards eating amongst 41 professional jockeys. Their study

111 reported significantly elevated negative mood profiles and the presence of disordered

112 eating attitudes when jockeys were at a minimal weight. Consequently, conclusions from

113 these studies were that endeavours to make weight put considerable strain on the

114 psychological wellbeing of jockeys. Whether this strain is also experienced in weight

115 categorised sports such as judo remains unseen and requires further research.

116 In summary, research that has focused on the making weight process has

117 suggested the negative impact of making weight on the physical and psychological

118 wellbeing of athletes, with some research also indicating performance impairments.

119 Despite these research suggestions, little more is known about the psychological impacts

120   of making weight, particularly in sports other than horseracing. It is here that an important

121   distinction should be made regarding the weigh-in practices of different sports. In judo

122   and other weight categorised sports the weigh-in occurs before competition, providing a

123   period for athletes to take on fluids and energy prior to competing. A distinction should be

124   made between this process of making weight and that which occurs in weight restricted

125   sports such as horseracing, which require the athlete to remain within a weight restriction

126   for the duration of competition. Athlete's experiences of making weight are likely to vary

127   according to this distinction. This study will focus on judo which has a variable length of

128   time between weigh-in and competition, ranging from minutes to 12 hours.

129   The current research aimed to qualitatively explore the psychological experiences

130   of judo athletes during the making weight process. Against the backdrop of previous

131   research it was proposed that stress and coping may be useful determinants to enhance our

132   understanding and consequently participants were asked about the stressors they faced

133   during this time period and the associated coping strategies that were used. Yet in line

134   with a narrative approach participants were asked to narrate their own stories through the

135   use of unstructured diaries and interviews, thus results include but are not restricted to

136   these themes of stress and coping. We look to present the lived experiences of judo

137   athletes making weight.

138   Method

139   *Participants*

140   Participants were three male and three female International standard judo athletes

141   who were actively competing at the time of the study. Participants were aged between 18-

142   28 years (M=23.3, SD=3.6) and had between 5-18 years of competitive judo experience.

143   All participants had vast previous experience of making weight, reporting previous use of

144   dehydration, food restriction, fasting, saunas, and vomiting. In order to meet the aims of

145   the study, participants were required to be competing in the upcoming season in a weight

146   category that was lower than their usual body weight. This inclusion criterion ensured that

147   all participants would need to make weight prior to competition.

148   Following institutional ethical approval, participants were recruited through

149   information letters that were sent to a number of judo clubs. These letters outlined the

150   aims of the study and the requirements of participation. Participants were informed that

151   this was a longitudinal study that would involve their participation for the length of time

152   that they deemed necessary to make weight for one self-selected competition. The start of

153   the making weight process was classified as the first day that any conscious effort was

154   made towards the end goal of losing weight. Participants varied greatly in the time that

155   they required to make weight from 5-42 days. While it is recognised that this length of

156   time demonstrates great variation between participants, it also highlights the differing

157   practices and methods of making weight that may take place among judo athletes.

158   Because the aim of the study was to examine the individual experiences of making weight

159   this variance was seen as a strength that would add to the richness and variety of the

160   stories that were generated by participants.

161   *Procedure*

162   In line with a narrative approach we sought to understand each participant's

163   experiences during the process of making weight. The use of narrative inquiry has been

164   well advocated in sport and exercise psychology, with research illustrating the

165   contribution that such an approach may make to our understanding. As Douglas and

166   Carless (2009) highlight, the creation of personal stories will allow individuals to make

167   sense of their lives, communicate their experiences, and reflect on future possibilities.

168   Narrative inquiry focuses on the meaning that is actively construed through the creation of

169   stories (Smith & Sparkes, 2009) allowing us to focus on both *what* and *how* a story is told

170   (Sparkes & Smith, 2013). This narrative focus on story telling holds exciting possibilities

171   when considering that stories may not only be portrayed through verbal expression, but

172   may also be presented in written form. Predominantly, sport and exercise psychology

173   research has focused on the use of verbal narratives, through the use of interviews and life

174   history interviews. Yet written forms such as diaries lend themselves well to a narrative

175   approach, encouraging participants to write in a storied structure.

176   To supplement the use of written diaries and to gain an understanding of the

177   complexities of making weight, this study used multiple methods of data collection. In

178   accordance with Lazarus (1999), it is suggested that single methods of data collection may

179   not fully capture the complexities of the stress and coping process. In particular, Lazarus

180   highlighted that research methodologies should consider how to capture both changing

181   and stable variables as they occur over time. Given the number of potential changes that

182   might be suggested to occur during the process of making weight, this study aimed to

183   follow Lazarus' recommendations, using hand-written diaries as the predominant method

184   of data collection, as well as additional follow-up interviews.

185   *Research Diary*

186   Previous research has suggested that participant research diaries may be used to

187   capture stressors and coping strategies as they occur, and to highlight fluctuations across

188   time (e.g., Almeida & Kessler, 1998; Day & Thatcher, 2009). In addition, Day and

189   Hudson (2012, p25) suggested that "the use of diary methods allows for a range of stories

190   to be told, to a variety of intended listeners, and for a variety of reasons". Thus

191   suggestions are that the use of written diaries will allow the participant to select and tell

192   their stories and experiences of making weight in their own words and style.

193   While there are a number of advantages to the use of research diaries (Alaszewski,

194   2006; Day & Hudson, 2012), of particular relevance to this study is the suggestion that

195   diaries may be especially useful when researching on potentially sensitive topics. As

196   Hydén (2008) proposed, sensitive topics will often be defined and influenced by the

197   power relations between interviewer and participant. The research diary may serve to

198   lessen the dominant position often assumed by the researcher, by allowing the participant

199   more control. Diaries can allow participants a more empowered position, promote

200   awareness and advocacy (Ryan, 2006), and facilitate the expression of emotions (Hudson

201   & Day, 2012). Furthermore, it may be suggested that diaries offer an appealing alternative

202   to interviewing, which currently serves as the predominant qualitative method of data

203   collection. The use of written diaries may allow participants an alternative method of

204   communicating their experiences. For example, as Day and Thatcher (2009) reported,

205   diaries can often prompt written internal dialogue and allow for a greater understanding of

206   meaning making as individuals strive to make sense of their own stories

207   Despite the growing frequency with which diaries have been used as a method of

208   data collection, their design has varied considerably from using highly structured, pre-set

209   questions to more unstructured, free writing designs (Furness & Garrud, 2010). Structured

210   diaries used to assess coping have included checklists of potential coping strategies and

211   ratings of their effectiveness. While this approach has been well used in sport and exercise

212   psychology, Somerfield (1996) criticised this, emphasising that a structured style may fail

213   to fully capture participants' experiences of coping and the meanings and intentions that

214   underpin coping strategies. In contrast, an unstructured approach may allow for greater

215   insight into the emotional and cognitive process of coping, yet in doing this the

216   researcher's ability to control and direct content towards the research aims is limited. The

217   current study used an unstructured approach. This choice was driven by the limited

218   previous research and understanding in this area, resulting in the need for exploration,

219   depth of detail, and for the researcher to engage as an active listener (Creswell, 1998).

220   Following institutional ethical approval, participants met with the researcher for an

221   initial briefing session. The aim of this meeting was to explain the use of the diary. Each

222   diary contained an instruction sheet asking participants to record their making weight

223   experiences as well as suggesting that participants should describe and explain the

224   stressors that occurred as a result of making weight and the strategies used to cope with

225   these stressors. During the initial meeting it was highlighted to participants that the

226   researchers were interested in both positive and negative experiences. This clarification of

227   coping was strongly emphasised after initial diary pilot testing revealed an emphasis on

228   positive coping strategies and suggestions from pilot participants that the term coping

229   implied that only successful strategies should be recorded. Following suggestions from

230   Day and Thatcher (2009) it was also outlined that there was no correct or standard way of

231   completing the diary, that anything could be written or drawn in the diary, and that any

232   writing style could be used. Apart from the instruction sheet and the prompt questions on

233   stress and coping, there were no further specific questions or prompts, allowing each

234   athlete to narrate their own experiences while making weight. Each page of the diary

235   contained a dated heading as an encouragement for participants to complete the diary each

236   day.

237   Diary data collection started at the point that athletes began to make a conscious

238   effort towards losing weight and lasted up until their final weigh-in. During this period of

239   making weight the researcher maintained frequent contact with participants through text

240   message, e-mail, and informal meetings at training sessions to establish rapport and trust.

241   This focus on rapport building follows the reflections of Day and Thatcher (2009) who

242   highlighted the importance of maintaining participant commitment and interest whilst

243   undertaking longitudinal diary based research, in order to avoid the traditionally high drop

244   out rates found in similar diary based studies. Yet the establishment of rapport in diary-

245   based research may be somewhat challenging given the limited presence of the researcher

246   while data collection takes place. In addition, the challenge presented here was to create a

247   balance between being present at training sessions to establish rapport, but to avoid

248   assuming the position of scrutineer by continually referring to and checking diary entries.

249   Instead the researcher aimed to establish a more authentic relationship with participants

250   through his presence at training sessions, allowing participants to engage both in informal

251   discussions and those that focused on diary writing.

252   *Interviews*

253   A diary-interview method was used in order to ensure sufficient depth and clarity

254   of data. Participants handed the research diary back to the researcher after the final weigh-

255   in and a follow-up interview was arranged within a one-week time frame. Day and

256   Thatcher (2009) suggested that participants will often expand on the information written

257   in diaries, using them as an aid to memory and adding further information. Prior to the

258   interview the researcher immersed themselves in the diary data, and attempted to achieve

259   the qualitative posture of indwelling (Maykut & Morehouse, 1994) through the process of

260   reading and re-reading the diary content. Indwelling is suggested as a reflective process

261   whereby the researcher identifies those characteristics of the situation or person most

262   relevant to the issue being pursued. Theoretical and procedural memos were taken

263   regarding themes that arose and any entries which required more clarity or explanation

264   were highlighted. Questions were then formed to explore the participants' experiences of

265   making weight, with interviews focusing on the themes that were detailed in the written

266   diary. The use of an interview allowed participants to further narrate their experiences of

267   making weight. The aim of the interview was not to triangulate the data from the diaries

268   but rather to add depth and detail, allowing the researcher further understanding of the

269   participants' experiences. This practice follows recommendations from Lincoln, Lynham,

270   and Guba (2011, p5) who endorse that the use of multiple methods will add "rigour,

271   breadth, complexity, richness, and depth to any inquiry". In addition, it is proposed that

272   the use of supporting, follow-up interviews allowed dialogue between researcher and

273   participant and further maintenance of rapport and mutual understanding, which may be

274   challenging to gain from diary methods alone.

275   Follow-up interviews were audio recorded and lasted between 40-80 minutes.

276   Interviews were transcribed verbatim, including notes which would allow the researcher

277   to make links between diary pages and interview discussions.

278   *Data analysis*

279   Content analysis has been shown to be the dominant form of analysis in sport and

280   exercise psychology (Culver, Gilbert, & Sparkes, 2012) and is often associated with

281   structured diagrams and hierarchical themes, which are ranked in accordance with their

282   frequency of occurrence. Consequently, this method of analysis is often central to post-

283   positivistic qualitative methods. Yet, it may also be proposed that content analysis can

284   provide a flexible and appropriate method of analysis for an interpretive paradigm by

285   taking a more inductive approach and allowing for patterns and themes within a narrative

286   to emerge (Day, 2013; Lieblich, Tuval-Mashiach, & Zilber, 1998). In this study a holistic

287   content analysis was used. This method of analysis focuses on the themes of the narrative

288   as a whole, thus in the context of this study, this analysis was used to examine the

289   emerging themes in the context of the overall athlete story of making weight.

290   The first stage of analysis focused on gaining understanding and familiarity with

291   the story of each participant. Diaries and follow-up interviews were re-read together

292   alongside notes from interviews and interviewer reflections to gain immersion in the data.

293   As themes began to emerge analytical memos were written and discussed between the

294   researchers. For example, the researchers focused on discussing the meaning of an

295   emerging theme and the impact this theme had on identity and relationships. For each

296   theme that began to emerge, the data from both interviews and diaries was examined.

297   Each theme was viewed in the overall context of the story that was told and emerging

298   themes were arranged chronologically. For each theme that emerged the researchers

299   questioned the associated meanings (e.g., how does the participant present this theme?),

300   the implications and changes that may have occurred as a result of the theme (e.g., how

301   does the emergence of this theme impact the relationship with family?), and the overall

302   context of the theme in the participant story (e.g., how does this emerging theme fit with

303   existing understanding?).

304   *Authenticity and Trustworthiness*

305   The criteria suggested below for enhancing the quality of this work were grounded

306   in a relativist ontology. Consequently it is suggested that knowledge is subjective and

307   constructed and that our understandings will be relative to our cultural and social frames

308   of reference and thus open to a range of interpretations. Guided by Lincoln et al. (2011)

309   and Tracey (2010) this study used a number of criteria, taken from an ongoing list of

310   characteristics suggested to enhance the quality of qualitative research. These criteria are

311   not proposed as absolute or universal, rather as suggested by Sparkes and Smith (2013)

312   such lists of characteristics may be open-ended, subject to constant reinterpretation, and

313   derived from the adopted standpoint of the researcher. Consequently, the selection of

314   criteria was based on the context and purpose of the present study.

315   First, the study used an audit trail to enhance the transparency of the work. The

316   aim here was to provide a clear and detailed pathway of decisions (Johnson & Waterfield,

317   2004) which was maintained by the first author and regularly scrutinised by the second

318   author to ensure clarity. Authenticity was improved by increasing self-awareness through

319   the use of a reflexive journal (Tracy, 2010). In keeping this journal the first author

320   examined and noted their perceived impact on the research process and provided a self-

321   reflective commentary about their subjective feelings and concerns after each interview

322   (Emerson, Fretz, & Shaw, 1995). The purpose of this was twofold. Initially, this was used

323   as a tool to increase the researcher's awareness of their own subjectivities while

324   interviewing and analysing the data (e.g., where the researcher identified with themes that

325   were present in their own sporting experiences). Secondly, reflections were used during

326   analysis as themes were developed. This served as a memory aid for each interview and

327   provided useful insight where discrepancies occurred. The second author acted as a

328   critical friend throughout the research process, a role in which the researcher provides a

329   theoretical sounding board to encourage reflection (Sparkes & Smith, 2013). In this role

330   the second author regularly reviewed the data collection and analysis and fostered

331   reflections on decisions and interpretations, as well as challenging assumptions and

332   emerging themes. During data analysis, an independent analyst was also used. The role of

333   this individual was to examine and challenge interpretations of the data. Where

334　disagreements occurred during data analysis, the original transcripts and diaries were

335　revisited.

336　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　Results

337　　　　　Results are presented as evolving themes that portray participants' experiences of

338　making weight. In line with previous research on making weight in sport (e.g., Koral &

339　Dosseville, 2009), the experiences of participants in this study were inherently negative,

340　portraying the difficulties associated with making weight. Participants' stories not only

341　uncover these difficulties and their attempts to cope with them, but also reveal the extent

342　to which they attempted to disguise problems from others and normalised the process of

343　making weight.

344　*Initiating the making weight process: From well-planned intentions to early difficulties*

345　　　　　For the majority of participants, the initiation of making weight was well planned

346　in an attempt to avoid previous strategies that had resulted in negative physical and

347　psychological consequences. For example, Jane exemplified this decision making:

348　　　　　I've done that before [rapid weight loss] and it makes me feel like crap! Like

349　　　　　literally like crap! Because really the day before I'm fighting I do not want to be

350　　　　　up till 2 in the morning in a sauna, not at all, I want to be in bed by eight. (Diary

351　　　　　entry, 14 days till competition).

352　For all participants, rapid weight loss strategies were viewed as inherently negative and

353　were avoidable by using gradual methods which were perceived as more adaptive,

354　appropriate, and easy to maintain. Yet while intentions were well planned "I'm at a good

355　starting weight… I'm not too worried about my weight" (Jane, diary entry 13 days till

356　competition) subsequent difficulties with making weight and tracking weight often led to

357　changes, not only in participants' strategies but also in their positive interpretations of

358 these strategies. This was exemplified in Jane's initial positive outlook concerning the

359 ease of making weight, which notably changed soon after starting the process, focusing

360 instead on her difficulties "I got made to eat chocolate- depressed… training hurts, I'm

361 really light to be fighting these people [during training], plus it makes me really hungry"

362 (diary entry, 9 days till competition). These difficulties were reported early in the process

363 of making weight, for example on day two Ollie wrote "when I got to the gym I felt

364 STRESSED (emphasis participant's own) as I was tired and really didn't feel motivated to

365 train."

366   Although planning, preparation and avoiding the use of previous strategies were

367 all perceived as important to participants at the start of the making weight process, these

368 did not negate the difficulties that were experienced once the process of making weight

369 began. All participants eventually required the use of rapid weight loss methods, but for

370 two participants (Karen and Louise) time constraints and other life stressors meant that

371 these rapid methods were the only methods used. During interview Louise suggested:

372   There was a voice in my head saying 'no, you can't do it' [make weight] that

373   made me feel really bad. But at the same time I wanted to prove myself wrong I

374   was willing to do anything to get under the weight, so I stopped eating.

375 As a consequence of their choice of rapid strategies, these two participants initiated

376 weight loss with an awareness of the potential negative impacts of their behaviours.

377   Although planning and preparation may be well advocated strategies for reducing

378 stress in sport, their effectiveness was limited when weight loss failed to reach expected

379 goals. Consequentially, all participants reported an increase in negative thoughts and

380 adjustments to their weight loss strategies. This theme highlights the potential difficulties

381   of planning and preparation when progress and success may be measured by factors such

382   as weight loss which may be difficult to control.

383   *Competing demands of making weight and maintaining life roles*

384   Throughout diary entries, the difficulties associated with balancing training,

385   external commitments, and making weight were frequently discussed. In this sense, a

386   disparity was highlighted between participants' usual ability to cope with their dual role

387   (as an athlete and as a parent/worker/student) and their increased difficulty coping while

388   making weight. Similar to all participants, Karen wrote about these competing demands:

389   I weighed myself and I saw I was over my weight and it really worried me because

390   I thought I wouldn't make it, I started to lose hope a bit. By this time I was tired,

391   I've had a lot of mock exams and balancing the two was hard...they weighed us at

392   training I was [weight]. I got worried and started reducing what I ate and drank but

393   the consequence was that I had lost a lot of energy to train all day, which resulted

394   in me going to sleep in the car when I was supposed to be revising for an exam.

395   (Diary entry 4 days till competition).

396   Karen's comments demonstrate how making weight was seen to negatively impact her

397   role both as an athlete and as a student. Although making weight was an accepted and

398   inherent part of her role as a judo athlete, the need to make weight threatened her ability

399   to succeed not just in the athletic domain but also in her other life commitments.

400   Similarly, Ollie also discussed the negative impact of balancing making weight with other

401   life commitments: "I've been turning my alarm off in my sleep, then I wake up late for

402   work. I have literally been finding it a lot harder to get out of bed… it's just shattering"

403   (diary entry, 22 days till competition). Thus the impact of making weight was not

404   restricted to the athletic domain but also the ability to maintain usual life roles. This

405   impact provided a difficult dilemma as successfully making weight often meant that the

406   athletic role needed to be prioritised over other life roles.

407   The difficulty of balancing dual roles while making weight was often attributed to

408   the increased time and focus on eating behaviours. Jane described during interview:

409   If I am just focusing on that [making weight] then it's easy. Like if I have nothing

410   else to do, nothing else going on, no training camps, nothing like that, everything

411   is fine you just get on with it... it's when everything else comes along at the same

412   time that you get stressed.

413   Rather than focusing on her dual role, Jane demonstrates the difficulties of balancing

414   making weight and training. Thus although making weight was perceived as an integral

415   part of competition preparation, it was also perceived to demand an increased focus and

416   consequently detracted from other important aspects of preparation.

417   For participants, making weight also required high levels of control, which were

418   not always possible because of other commitments. For example, Neil lost control over

419   his diet schedule as a result of work, training, and family commitments, writing: "the

420   main stress was time, not having time to eat the controlled meals that I had arranged for

421   myself, just trying to fit everything in" (diary entry, 19 days till competition). Thus while

422   participants initially attempted to plan and prepare their weight loss strategies, there were

423   often uncontrollable events or demands that proved difficult.

424   *Temptation*

425   As a result of having a restricted diet all participants experienced temptation while

426   making weight. This temptation generally took one of two forms, being either prompted

427   by others or unprompted. Participants were then either successful or unsuccessful at

428   resisting this temptation.

429   Unprompted temptation was described as an increased awareness of food and

430   drink opportunities unprompted by the deliberate actions of others. Mark provided an

431   example of this temptation: "I went into the petrol station, looked around at what I wanted

432   to eat and then came out with nothing and felt instantly better. Not any less hungry but

433   just satisfied, instantly better that I had self-control" (diary entry 15 days till competition).

434   Diary entries suggested that this form of temptation was easier to cope with and was

435   usually always successful, particularly as Mark suggests, because unprompted temptation

436   could be resolved through self-control.

437   The second form of temptation was prompted by others and was experienced when

438   being offered food or drink. For participants, it was this form of temptation that was

439   suggested as more difficult to resist. Participants described that this form of temptation

440   was often associated with perceived societal norms and expectations to accept food and

441   consequently the negative perceptions associated with not eating. Participants' responses

442   to this form of temptation were often influenced by timing. For example, when this

443   temptation was experienced in the early phases of making weight a common response was

444   to have a small portion, avoiding the negative perceptions of others. As Jane described

445   during interview:

446   I think when it's a couple of weeks before you can kind of like, have we call them

447   cracks, you can afford to crack a little bit away from your diet, you think that a

448   square or a couple of squares of chocolate isn't going to have that much impact.

449   Yet, this type of strategy became increasingly difficult in the later stages of making

450   weight. Karen described feeling pressured by others two days before her weigh in:

451   My mum ordered a takeaway and I looked at her like THANKS!!!… I ate it. I had

452   the chips and stuff and then I wanted to make myself sick but I knew I couldn't,

453   my mum would kill me. And so I had another sauna, shower, I had two that night.

454   My mum wasn't very happy about it…but I can't believe that she's done this and

455   I'm going to be over regardless of what I eat. (Diary entry 2 days till competition).

456 Similarly, Mark described the difficulties associated with being offered food by others:

457   The temptations are there and it's rude not to. Like at kids' parties, or someone's

458   birthday and someone will say 'oh have a piece of cake' and I will reply 'really I

459   am dropping weight for this competition' and they are thinking oh, well you

460   shouldn't be here then. (Diary entry, 35 days till competition)

461   Temptation prompted by others was frequently associated with a need to accept

462 food and an aim to avoid drawing attention to what may be perceived as unhealthy eating

463 behaviours. During interview Jane described: "I think there is also pressure with bulimia

464 and stuff, there's this whole thing, especially with saying no to food that there is

465 something wrong". Participants demonstrated awareness that their eating behaviours may

466 be perceived negatively by others, but often felt that such perceptions were ill informed.

467 In particular, this perception was also highlighted by male participants, for example

468 during interview Neil suggested:

469   Someone would offer me beer or a bit of cake, something I know I shouldn't be

470   eating and I just have to say no. I know it's a bit lame, I'm a guy and I just have to

471   sit and have fruit, it's lame so I just have to say I'm trying to be healthy or

472   something… That's better than saying I'm on a diet.

473   As a consequence of their concerns, efforts were often drawn towards hiding

474 eating behaviours in an attempt to appear "normal", but such actions were then

475 underpinned by guilt and the need to engage in further actions towards weight loss.

476 Although participants recognised that their behaviours were often unhealthy, the everyday

477 temptations offered to them by others often made them feel isolated and that others lacked

478 understanding. As Louise described: "My room mate didn't really understand, she was

479 100 kilos … to her it didn't really matter. She was just sitting there eating chicken and

480 crisps. She was just sat there watching TV while I was worrying" (diary entry 4 days till

481 competition). This limited understanding from others often caused participants to hide

482 their weight loss behaviours and avoid discussions.

483 *The Impact of Hunger and Restricted Nutrition*

484 Participants described the difficulties associated with coping with increasing levels

485 of hunger and thirst. At the start of the making weight process participants were more able

486 to cope with hunger. For example, Mark specifically selected unhealthy foods:

487 I almost cut out what is good for me, or better for me. So less quantity and more

488 calorie, more satisfying (laughs). Things that I have been craving.... something

489 small but sweet, even if it's a nice healthy bar I have it covered in chocolate (diary

490 entry, 20 days till competition).

491 Strategies such as selecting unhealthy food were useful in the early phases of making

492 weight but more difficult in the later stages where weight loss often needed to be more

493 drastic. For example during interview Jane suggested: "in the last week I don't want to see

494 food". Despite attempts to cope participants often struggled with strict dietary regimes: "I

495 just needed something, just something better than what I had been eating... when I am

496 making weight I don't cook, I just prepare cold food" (Jane, diary entry 12 days till

497 competition).

498 For participants the implementation of dietary restriction often also had emotional

499 implications. Participants reported experiencing heightened depression, frustration,

500 agitation, and anger in response to hunger and having a restricted diet. Louise described:

501   I'm in a bad mood and I tell people to just give me some space and let me get on

502   with what I am doing. And then I think that after a little while they realise that

503   I'm under a lot of pressure and they say sorry. It's horrible but I get through it, I'm

504   just cranky from not eating. (Diary entry 3 days till competition).

505   Similarly Jane described her emotional responses: "I get a bit needy, I know I am being

506   stupid and it's just neediness but you want someone to sympathise with you... it's those

507   sort of feelings where you haven't got anything to smile about" (diary entry, 7 days till

508   competition). Participants described a range of negative emotions and events where

509   relationships with others were adversely impacted. Yet in addition, these emotions were

510   accompanied by an awareness that often prompted them to explain to others why they

511   were behaving in these ways. Thus from previous experiences participants were able to

512   minimise the impact of their negative emotions by understanding the causes and

513   explaining these causes to others.

514   As a consequence of restricted food and drink participants described increased

515   levels of tiredness and physical fatigue. For example, Ollie's descriptions of making

516   weight focused heavily on his tiredness. He reported becoming increasingly tired and

517   fatigued over the four week period to the extent that it impacted both his psychological

518   and physiological wellbeing. He described during interview how being tired made him

519   more stressed at work, feel more irritable and aggressive towards colleagues, suggesting

520   that "it got to the point where I was so tired some mornings, where I couldn't even be

521   bothered to go and get a drink".

522   Although restricted nutrition and hunger was an expected and previously

523   experienced stressor participants still cited this as a key difficulty while making weight.

524   Although initial strategies allowed for the consumption of some desired foods, the later

525 need to lose weight often resulted in increased frustrations, reports of mood disturbance,

526 and the use of distraction techniques to avoid thoughts of food and drink. In addition,

527 participants described that their low mood was accompanied by feelings of physical

528 fatigue and tiredness. Although the consequences of a restricted diet had a number of

529 negative impacts, participants in the current study demonstrated awareness that their low

530 mood was explainable (and consequently acceptable) to others. Thus emotional disclosure

531 was used as an effective stress reducing strategy.

532 *Desire for Social Support*

533   Although all participants were experienced athletes and had made weight on

534 many occasions, all described times or events during the process when they desired social

535 support that was often unavailable. On occasions where support was received participants

536 were able to recognise the motivation that this support provided. For example, Karen

537 described: "I was so tired, I really felt like giving up, but I didn't, I had my Dad standing

538 at the side and he was cheering me on... I think that that was the only thing that got me

539 through" (diary entry, 2 days till competition). Yet often, participants felt in need of

540 support but were unsure where to seek it. Jane exemplified this difficulty, suggesting

541 during interview that others often did not recognise the difficulties that she was going

542 through while making weight: "when you get bruises you have something to show for it, I

543 have something to complain about, but when you are dieting you don't really have

544 anything to show for it". Thus social support was often needed to help participants to cope

545 with the emotional impact of making weight.

546   The second reason for needing social support was to increase motivation while

547 making weight. Jane highlighted this theme writing

548   When you are on your own and you are stressed it's like 'oh my god' and you

549   think you are going insane and you don't have anyone there to just tell you no, it's

550   fine go on this run with me, give you a bit more motivation… it's such a lonely

551   process, going to the gym and you don't have people who are doing it as well and

552   [friend] comes in with a plate of pizza. (Diary entry, 8 days till competition).

553   Although social support was needed to motivate participants to achieve their goals, it was

554   also frequently recognised that existing support networks may not support them in the

555   unhealthy behaviours that they were engaging in. As Louise described:

556   My housemates, for instance, they keep saying it is really unhealthy and you

557   shouldn't be dropping weight so regularly. And I just keep saying that I am doing

558   it for my sport which in a way is unhealthy, keep going up and down. So it's still

559   in the back of my head that it's unhealthy but I know that if I want to do what I

560   want to do in judo then I will have to overcome this and make weight. (Diary

561   entry, 3 days till competition)

562   Although support was not gained for the unhealthy eating behaviours in which

563   they were engaging, participants did describe experiences when others noticed their

564   weight loss:

565   "there's a photo taken of me on [social networking site] the night after I made

566   weight and everyone is commenting on it saying 'you look really skinny' I do look

567   skinny, I look tiny… but when people say you look skinny you feel happy that

568   people are noticing" (Jane, interview).

569   Thus although participants recognised that existing support networks were present, people

570   in these networks did not always understand the demands and necessities of making

571   weight. Further, unhealthy eating behaviours were often hidden from those within support

572   networks but the results of these behaviours (i.e. weight loss, change in body shape) were

573   evident and the resultant praise was perceived as satisfying.

574   Discussion

575   Employing a diary-interview method of data collection, this study explored the making

576   weight experiences of six judo athletes. Investigating the day to day diary entries of these

577   athletes has provided an understanding of their lived experiences and revealed their

578   difficulties associated with making weight. We now reflect on some of the main

579   characteristics of these experiences and illuminate the contribution that the use of written

580   diaries can make to sport and exercise psychology research.

581   For all participants, planning and organisation were perceived as key to

582   successfully making weight. As suggested by Leyden and Wall (2002), experienced

583   athletes will refine their making weight strategies based on previous experiences. Yet

584   despite well-planned intentions, the process of making weight often presented unexpected

585   stressors and difficulties. Although all participants had vast experience of making weight

586   this did not prevent them from experiencing unexpected stressors. This confirms findings

587   from earlier research by Dugdale, Eklund, and Gordon (2002) who suggested that over

588   two thirds of their Olympic level participants reported their main stressor experienced was

589   unexpected. For participants in the present study, unexpected stressors included

590   difficulties in losing weight, temptation, and difficult relationships with others.

591   Devonport, Lane, and Biscomb (2013) proposed that unexpected stress may produce

592   stronger emotional responses and impaired coping in comparison to expected stress.

593   Indeed, participants in this study were more willing to accept those stressors that were

594   expected (e.g., emotional changes as a consequence of hunger) using more adaptive

595   coping strategies, but reported difficulties coping with unexpected stress. Further, in

596 similarity to participants in Dugdale et al.'s study, although stressors were unexpected

597 they were also often familiar and had been previously experienced. As suggested by

598 Thatcher and Day (2008), truly novel (or unfamiliar) stressors may be uncommon in high

599 level sport, particularly given the competitive experience needed to achieve a high

600 performance level. Yet Thatcher and Day continued that sporting experience may also

601 allow athletes to develop pre-conceived expectations regarding competition, which may

602 make them susceptible to stress when these expectations are no longer met. In accordance

603 with this, participants' initial positive expectations regarding their plans for making

604 weight often meant that they did not expect many of the stressors encountered, despite

605 having experienced these before.

606   In addition to the unexpected nature of some stressors, results also further

607 highlighted two main factors which ameliorated the difficulties in coping while making

608 weight. The first of these factors was the dual role experienced by participants. Previous

609 research has suggested that dual roles may be an enriching experience, but that tensions

610 may exist when balancing competing role demands (Leberman & LaVoi, 2011). As

611 Baxter (1990) suggested, in order to negotiate the tensions of duality, choices often need

612 to be made between selecting one identity over another, or satisfying neither role.

613 Although participants were accustomed to coping with a dual role, the need to make

614 weight added an increased demand on the athletic role over other roles, often leading to

615 feelings of guilt, particularly where such choices were made to the detriment of other

616 people.

617   The second factor which was described to ameliorate difficulties while making

618 weight was the constant temptation that was experienced by participants. Previous

619 research has suggested that a combination of behavioural and cognitive coping efforts will

620   be most effective in preventing temptation (Humke & Radnitz, 2005). Although such

621   studies advocate the use of cognitive strategies such as willpower and self-punitive

622   thoughts, in the current study this form of coping was problematic given the influence of

623   others. Whereas previous research has focused on the influence of temptation on negative

624   stimuli (such as smoking and alcohol), in this context eating was actively encouraged by

625   others. As a consequence participants were able to engage in behavioural coping

626   strategies such as avoiding particular situations, but described the use of cognitive

627   strategies as more problematic.

628   Although participants described a range of strategies for coping with making

629   weight, one consistent concern was the need to hide, avoid, or disguise their unhealthy

630   eating behaviours. Previous literature has suggested the presence of disordered eating

631   attitudes (Caulfield & Karageorghis, 2008) and the relatively high percentage of eating

632   disorders (Leydon & Wall, 2002) in weight restricted sports. Although it is beyond the

633   scope and remit of the current study to suggest the presence of disordered eating, diary

634   entries often focused on the need to hide eating behaviours and the knowledge that while

635   making weight was necessary, weight restrictive behaviours were also, at times,

636   unhealthy. Busanich, McGannon, and Schink (2012) suggested marked differences in the

637   narratives used by physically active males and females to describe their relationship

638   between eating and exercise. Indeed, in the present study, although both males and

639   females hid their weight loss behaviours from others, the intention of this avoidance often

640   differed. For female participants, the perceived stigma of being labelled with an eating

641   disorder often led them to hide or disguise their eating habits. On the other hand, male

642   participants engaged in similar behaviours but their aim was to uphold a masculine image.

643   In particular, male narratives suggested that while it was acceptable for women to diet,

644   men should care less about eating and diet. This has similar connotations to Smith (2013),

645   who described the health stories of disabled men, suggesting a notable theme that "real

646   men" do not care about health, but women do. Such health stories were seen to uphold

647   hegemonic masculinities, similar to the male response to dieting in this study. Further,

648   research such as Papathomas and Lavallee (2006) has highlighted the self-presentation

649   concerns associated with disordered eating, illustrating the fear of stigmatization and

650   consequent engagement in secretive behaviours. Disordered eating behaviours may be

651   perceived as a stigma from mental illness, contradicting athletic identity (Papathomas &

652   Lavallee, 2010). Yet, in particular, for this population of judo athletes, weight loss was

653   important and necessary for their sport, thus providing a contrasting ideal to the image

654   that was portrayed to others outside the sport.

655   Following the need to disguise unhealthy eating, participants' narratives often

656   focused on the paradox of hiding behaviours while describing the desire to be supported

657   by others. Dovey (2010) suggested that eating disorders will often be characterised by

658   such contradictions regarding social interactions. He emphasised that although

659   relationships with others are craved, individuals will often withdraw when this is offered,

660   placing a negative interpretation on what others say. Such examples of interactions with

661   others were frequently described in participant diaries, highlighting the isolation

662   associated with making weight and the perception that others would not understand.

663   Papathomas and Lavallee (2010) also highlighted this withdrawal from relationships,

664   suggesting that withdrawal may be perceived as easier than concealing the disordered self

665   from others. Further, their research suggests that lack of understanding may be a strong

666   barrier to receiving social support, particularly as psychological issues are often covert

667   and taboo. Yet given this lack of understanding it is surprising that participants rarely

668   described seeking support from others involved in the sport. Instead, they tended to

669   withdraw from weight related discussion, focusing on support opportunities that were not

670   available rather than seeking those who might understand. The receipt of social support

671   has been theorised to enhance coping performance, and buffer against threatening stress

672   appraisal (Lakey & Cohen, 2000). Participants described that when there was a match

673   between what was perceived as required and received the support of others was positive,

674   yet when there was a mismatch social support was viewed negatively. This view of social

675   support resonates with the stress-support matching hypothesis (Cutrona & Russell, 1990)

676   which proposes that the effectiveness of social support in promoting coping and reducing

677   stress appraisal is based upon how well the support provided matches the demands of the

678   stressor. The view of social support here emphasises the value of the receipt of support

679   and the requirement that the support provider should be empathetic to the demands of

680   making weight.

681   Interestingly, while participants often concealed their weight loss behaviours from

682   others, the disclosure of emotions was perceived as more acceptable. Further, when

683   participants did engage in emotional disclosure, this was suggested to be an effective

684   strategy. The use of emotional disclosure has been well supported in the research

685   literature as a method for improving health (Lepore & Greenberg, 2002) and

686   psychological well-being (Sloan & Marx, 2004). Thus results here are consistent with

687   previous research that advocates the use of such a strategy. Schüler, Job, Frohlich, and

688   Brandstätter (2009) suggested that disclosure changes the emotional and cognitive

689   processing of stressful experiences. Disclosing emotions to others may foster the

690   integration of our experiences into a coherent narrative that may render the stressful

691   experience more meaningful (Pennebaker & Seagal, 1999). For participants, becoming

692 aware of their emotions and discussing these with others may have acted as a stress buffer

693 for their behavioural weight loss strategies. As suggested by McLeod (1997) the stories

694 we tell allow us to contextualise or locate our feelings and emotions within a broader

695 framework of meaning. Thus, while participants may tell stories of sadness or envy, the

696 context provided by the experience of making weight provides justification and a sense of

697 meaning. Yet for these participants the stories told to others remained highly censored,

698 focusing on a plot that would be acceptable to the listener and avoiding the fear associated

699 with telling a story that may be challenged or not accepted. As Smith and Sparkes (2008)

700 suggested in their discussion of tellability, the listener may legitimise the types of stories

701 that are deemed acceptable. Here, participants sought to tell the part of their story that

702 could be affirmed and accepted by others, but silenced those aspects that which might not

703 be honoured and truly listened to. While emotional disclosure provided participants with

704 some affirmation, it may be beneficial for practitioners to consider the conditions that can

705 be created to allow the telling of less acceptable and fear provoking stories.

706   In addition to the understanding the process of making weight, this study also

707 provides insight into the use of the diary-interview method. Previous research such as

708 Leydon and Wall (2002) had noted some under-reporting of the methods to make weight,

709 suggesting that of those participants who reported using no weight restriction methods,

710 most had energy fluctuations consistent with food restriction. The present study used a

711 more participant centred, unstructured approach, which aimed to allow the participant to

712 write freely about the process of making weight. All participants completed the study,

713 although despite utilising the suggestions of Day and Thatcher (2009) to maintain

714 commitment, those that took longer to make weight did experience a declining

715   compliance. This is perhaps unsurprising given that the longest time to make weight was

716   42 days.

717   The strength of the diary-interview approach was in the depth of data collected

718   and the ability to collect data in the here and now. Diary entries often contained emotive

719   content that may have been missed using retrospective interviews. Further, for many

720   participants, the diary also allowed for increased reflection on the process of making

721   weight and was perceived as a useful addition to training. This is an interesting point to

722   consider, and the relative merits may differ for the researcher and applied practitioner.

723   From a research perspective, the increased awareness afforded by the daily diary may

724   have prompted participants to make changes during the data collection phase of the study.

725   Indeed, a number of participants reported realisations of ineffective coping while writing

726   the diary. Although this may be problematic for any researcher who aims to capture a

727   static picture of reality, it serves as a poignant reminder that human stories will be in a

728   constant state of change. Consequentially, it may be suggested that methods capturing

729   data over time need to be flexible and adaptable to account for (and embrace) such

730   changes. For the applied practitioner, such changes may be more readily welcomed,

731   supporting previous research (e.g., Hudson & Day, 2012) that has indicated the

732   therapeutic possibilities of writing.

733   In conclusion, it is hoped that this study provides some insight into the experiences

734   of the individuals presented, highlighting the difficulties that may be associated with

735   making weight in sport. Although all six participants had vast previous experiences of

736   making weight, their stories describe the complex struggle with the impacts of hunger,

737   tiredness, and negative emotions. Yet for these participants, the stressors experienced are

738   set within a narrative that encourages secrecy and avoidance in order to present a

739   "normal" relationship with food. The stories told by participants also allow us to suggest a

740   number of considerations for those providing psychological services to athletes making

741   weight and to their coaches. First, although preparation and planning may be key

742   components of a weight loss strategy, goals should be flexible and plan for deviations

743   from expected progress. Further, it must be acknowledged that strategies may be impacted

744   by the difficulties associated with balancing dual roles and consequently this balance may

745   need to be considered when setting goals. Second, it should be recognised that the

746   achievement of weight loss goals may be threatened by temptation, particularly

747   temptation initiated by friends and family. Assisting athletes in gaining awareness of their

748   coping options and the range of cognitive and behavioural options that are available may

749   help to prevent avoidance and withdrawal. Third, participant stories highlight the

750   importance of social support. In particular, although this support is often desired the

751   stigma associated with weight loss, impact on athletic identity, and perceived lack of

752   understanding from others may all act as barriers to receiving support. Overcoming these

753   barriers may present difficulties, but the value (and possible increased acceptability) of

754   disclosing emotions over behavioural strategies may be emphasised to athletes.

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