

DREAMING OF BEIJING: EXPERIENCING THE CHANGING
LANDSCAPE OF ELITE WOMEN'S SOCCER IN CANADA

by

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Abstract

On April 9, 2008 the Canadian women's soccer national team secured its first berth into the 2008 Olympic Games in Beijing. Despite this great accomplishment, since its formation in July 1986 Team Canada has struggled to develop and maintain consistency at the international level. Furthermore, although soccer is currently the "game of choice" for young girls and women at the recreational level in Canada, there has been little support for women's professional development in Canada (Hall, 2004). Despite this limited support, however, a number of changes have taken place in recent years in an attempt to elevate the landscape of elite women's soccer in Canada.

More specifically, in 1999, the Canadian Soccer Association hired a full-time international head coach for the women's national program. In February 2006, the Vancouver Whitecaps FC also hired a full-time head coach for its amateur senior women's team. These fully-funded positions provided critical human and financial resources for the development of elite women's soccer.

My research objectives are two-fold; first, I construct a chronological account of the development of elite women's soccer in Canada focusing primarily on some major changes that occurred in 2006. Second, I examine how these changes have impacted the experiences and attitudes of female players and staff members involved in elite women's soccer in Canada.

In-depth interviews were conducted with two sample groups (players and staff) drawn from the 2006 Whitecaps FC women's team and the Canadian women's national team.

In general, participants from both groups expressed overwhelming support for the changes that took place, however deeper readings of the data revealed more complex themes and troubling issues such as the level of sacrifices players were forced to make in their personal lives and their sense of losing levels of control over their playing careers.

This research will complement an increasing focus on the socio-historical development of women's soccer globally and its effects upon players and coaches (Hall, 2004; Williams, 2003). More importantly, the findings will add to existing literature by offering a critical examination of how the professionalization of women's sport impacts the lives and experiences of elite female athletes.

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To my mother, Barbara Alvera Urie

Chapter 1

Introduction

In a devastating 2-1 loss to Mexico in March of 2003 at the Olympic Qualifying Tournament (CONCACAF) in San Jose, Costa Rica, the dreams and aspirations of the Canadian women's national soccer team were shattered.¹ The result: Canada would once again not compete at the Olympics Games.

Now, the 2008 Olympic Games hosted in Beijing, China, are fast approaching. Since its first appearance as an official sport in the 1996 Olympic Games in Atlanta, USA, no Canadian women's national team has experienced the glory and honor of an Olympic Games event.

In a post-Title IX era, women's soccer in North America and around the world has grown exponentially.² Appearing in communities all over Canada since the early 1970's, by 2002 soccer had become a female's 'game of choice' with almost 50% of soccer registrants across Canada being female (Hall, 2004). Not only are more and more young girls competing in soccer, but adult women's leagues comprised of varying levels of skill are competing for municipal, provincial, and national titles across the country. Yet despite the vast popularity of women's soccer at the community and youth levels in Canada, there have been fewer opportunities for female soccer players to compete at semi-professional, professional, and international levels.

¹ The Confederation for North, Central American and Caribbean Association Football (CONCACAF) hosts qualifying tournaments for the Women's World Cup and the Olympic Games.

² A discussion of Title IX and its specific impact on women's soccer in Canada and the U.S. is included below.

However, the landscape of women's soccer in Canada is changing. In 1999, the Canadian Soccer Association (CSA) hired a full-time Head Coach for the Canadian women's national team. For the first time since its inaugural performance on the international soccer scene against the USA in July 1986, the national team is being directed by an expert and well known international coach. His main objectives as head coach are to elevate women's elite soccer in Canada and to have the national team climb the rankings of international women's soccer with dominance and staying power.

In the following thesis, I examine how recent organizational changes in women's soccer, primarily within the Vancouver Whitecaps FC organization and the Canadian national program, are changing the landscape of elite-level women's soccer in Canada and at the same time impacting the competitive and life experiences of players and staff members involved.

Upon presenting the research questions that guide this study, this thesis is organized into the following chapters: Chapter 2 provides a literature review where I critically examine existing research on gender, sport, and women's soccer, and chapter 3 discusses the methodology selected for this study. Chapter 4 provides a comprehensive historical documentation of the development of elite-level women's soccer in Canada and provides the context from which to present the findings of my interviews with players, coaches and staff members in chapter 5. Chapter 6 discusses the implications of my findings and chapter 7 concludes with some future recommendations for further research in this area.

Research Questions

In light of the current context of elite women's soccer, this research explores the competitive and life experiences of elite female soccer players and staff members at a time when the landscape of women's soccer in Canada is changing and attempts to give voice to players and staff members influenced by such changes. The broad research questions that will guide an exploration of this topic are:

1. How is the landscape of elite women's soccer in Canada changing?
2. How is the changing landscape in women's soccer in Canada shaping the experiences of the elite female soccer players and staff members involved?

Chapter 2

Review of Relevant Literature

Research on women in sport has garnered considerable attention over the last three decades of the 20th century. Sociologists, feminists and cultural theorists have produced a plethora of research on women in sport that includes the history of women's involvement in –and exclusion from- sport including the development and impact of Title IX, the impact of a heteronormative climate in sport for lesbian and straight women, and the social, physical and psychological benefits of participation in sport and physical activity for young girls and women (Hargreaves, 1994; Cahn, 1994; Heywood & Dworkin, 2003). As well, researchers have focused on areas such as the study of sport as a male preserve, the impact of sport on traditional notions of gender (masculinity/femininity) and sexuality, as well as the exclusion of, misrepresentation/underrepresentation of, and perpetuation of women's sports and female athletes within traditional forms of media (Connell, 1987; Hargreaves, 1994; Theberge & Cronk, 1986).

My analysis of the changing landscape of elite women's soccer in Canada presented here is informed by various literatures that discuss; sport as a male preserve and examine how notions of femininity are implicated through the participation of women in sport; the impact that Title IX has had on increasing female participation in sport in general and women's soccer specifically; examine 'professional' sport for women and the professional female athlete experience; and, the lack of female leadership within sport organizations. Theories of gender and power frame this research.

Gender and Sport

Researchers agree that the institution of sport within Canada and the United States has long served as a male institution where young boys and men have preferential access to recreational and professional involvement in sport (Young & White, 1999). Sport has traditionally been seen as an arena where young boys and men learn the performance of masculinity and what it means to be a man in this culture. In this way, the institution of sport has been seen as an arena where traditional and ideal traits of masculinity (i.e., aggressiveness, toughness, mental and emotional control, commitment, rationality, dedication, teamwork, leadership, and the perception of a well-rounded personality) are cultivated and glorified (Connell, 1987; Whitson, 1990; Messner, 1992; Hargreaves, 1994; Hall, 1999; White & Young, 1999; McKay, Messner & Sabo, 2000). Connell's (1987) notions of hegemonic masculinity and emphasized femininity, for example, have been applied by many in illustrating how sport serves as an institution that ideologically perpetuates traditional notions of masculinity and its dominance over other forms of masculinity and femininity (Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005).

This notion of hegemonic masculinity has guided a range of studies and commentaries on sport since the late 1980's (Messner & Sabo, 1990). Stemming from explorations of hegemony, male sex roles, plurality of masculinities and complexities of gender construction for men, this concept has encouraged an understanding of patterns and practices that have promoted and perpetuated the dominance of some men over other men and over women more generally (Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005). An aspect of this dominance that has been, and continues to be, thoroughly investigated by researchers examines how traditional notions of femininity and female (hetero)sexuality are

implicated within sport. Griffin (1998) and Lenskyj (1999; 2003) argue that in order for women to be successful in sport, they must gender/conform their bodies and characteristics to those that fall within traditional notions of masculinity (Karwas, 1993; Levy & Miller, 1996; Lowe, 1998; Dowling, 2000; Clasen, 2001). This is not to say that women must simply 'act' masculine in order to be good athletes. At the same time that female athletes work to embody and engage in masculinity in order to 'succeed' at/within sport, female athletes must also carefully embody and engage in femininity in order to maintain their 'feminine' and 'heterosexual' identities and ward off assumptions of lesbianism (Lenskyj, 1999). Fear-mongering based on the notion of the 'lesbian boogeywoman' works to curtail girls and women's involvement in sport by suggesting that females who desire to engage in sport and do so successfully are mannish ("Muscle Moll" and/or "Butch") and sexually desire women (Cahn, 1994; Griffin, 1998). Even in today's sport media a successful female athletes' sexuality and female authenticity is oft questioned, highly controversial (when homosexual), and highly emphasized/promoted (when heterosexual) (Robinson, 2002).

The media also aids and abets the perpetuation of the 'nature' of sport as traditionally masculine by reporting primarily on men's sports and often exploiting images of female athletes. Many researchers have investigated how traditional forms of media perpetuate the marginalization of women in sport. Work in this area has varied from the exclusion of women's sports and female athletes in the media altogether, little representation of women's sports within the media, the sexualization of female athletes within the media, and the perpetuation of traditional notions of femininity through pictures and stories about women's sports and female athletes (Boutilier & SanGiovanni,

1983; Rintala & Birrell, 1984; Kane, 1989; Duncan, 1990; Lucas, 2000; Knoppers & Eling, 2004; Carty, 2005).

Fears of lesbianism coupled with lack of coverage in the sports media result in the need for female athletes to engage in Connell's (1987) concept of emphasized femininity that only leads to more public discourse that questions women's place in competitive sport. For example, when Brandi Chastain jubilantly pulled off her jersey after scoring the final penalty kick to capture the 1999 Women's World Cup Gold Medal, the media questioned the 'femininity' of her behavior and muscular upper-body rather than basking in her triumph (Heywood & Dworkin, 2003). More recently in 2004, rather than focusing his energy on increasing its support and development of the women's game around the world, FIFA president Joseph S. Blatter argued that what women's soccer needs is different sponsors from the men's game and that it should try to attract fashion and cosmetics companies by featuring "more feminine uniforms" such as "tighter shorts". Blatter went on to say, "Pretty women are playing football today", implying the need for sexualizing the sport and insinuating perhaps that, in the past, female soccer players were not "pretty".

As a bastion of masculinity, sport has therefore been a long-contested arena wherein women's participation and access to competition has been resisted and discouraged. Though females did participate in sport for many decades and fought hard to resist exclusion, legislated inclusion in the form of 'gender equality' would be the impetus for great change for women in sport.

Title IX and Women's Soccer

Any examination of women's soccer in Canada and the United States must discuss the profound impact Title IX of the Educational Amendments (of the U.S. Constitution) has had on women's sports in the United States and indeed more generally (Carpenter & Acosta, 2004; Hogshead-Makar & Zimbalist, 2007; McDonagh & Pappano, 2007; Mitchell & Ennis, 2007; Simon, 2005; Suggs, 2006; Ware, 2006). Passed in 1972, Title IX provided females with a "fair and equitable share for whatever opportunity a federally-assisted educational institution offers" (Hogan, 1979:175 as cited in Clasen, 2001:3). In mandating that educational institutions receiving federal funding be equitable in the distribution of their funds, not only was the door for women's athletics opened, but also the impact of such legislation was immediate resulting in the tremendous growth of female participation in organized sport. Before Title IX, only 1 in 27 girls participated in sports (Lakowski, 2006); today female participation in U.S. high school sports has risen from nearly 300,000 in 1971 to a historical high reaching 2.8 million in 2002-2003 (Carpenter & Acosta, 2004). Similarly, participation among U.S. college women has risen 372 percent over that time, from 32,000 to more than 150,000 women (McDonagh & Pappano, 2007).

More pertinent to this thesis, female participation in soccer grew exponentially as a result of Title IX legislation. In 1977 just 2.8 percent of the nation's intercollegiate women's athletics programs offered soccer. This number increased more than 4,000 percent by 2004 where 88.6 percent of schools offered soccer programs to women (Carpenter & Acosta, 2004). In 2005-2006, the sport of soccer ranked highest in

participation within the National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) with 21,709 female competitors, an increase from 1,855 participants in 1981-82.³

Like the United States, a resurgence of feminist activity in Canada beginning in the late 1960s had an impact on society, including sport. Although women were not singled out for special attention within its mandate, Bill C-131, the Fitness and Amateur Sport Act of 1961, marked a change for amateur sport in Canada for women not unlike the passage of Title IX; by the mid-1970s, parents all across Canada were “waking up to the fact that their daughters were not being treated in the same way as their sons when it came to recreational and sporting opportunities.” (Hall, 2002, p.163) By the late 1970s, sport-related complaints of sex-discrimination began to come to the attention of provincial human rights commissions, bringing with them public interest, concern, and pressure to eliminate unequal and sex-discriminatory sport and recreation programs (Hall, 2002).

As parents, coaches, administrators, volunteers, and interest-group organizations fought to gain more and more access for girls and women to participate in recreational and sport organizations, soccer for girls and women (not unlike what was occurring in the U.S. upon the implementation of Title IX) was one of the sports that experienced the most rapid growth. Ifedi (2005) with Statistics Canada reported that soccer is the number one sport for Canadian girls and boys between the ages of five and 14 years with a participation rate of 44%, and for the population aged 15 and over, soccer ranked fourth in participation.

³ *NCAA Sports Sponsorship and Participation Rates Report 1981-82 – 2005-06*, published May 2007 (www.ncaa.org accessed May 5, 2008).

Hall (2004) labeled soccer a “girls game of choice” recognizing that opportunities for female youth to participate in soccer abound. She notes that with these increased participation rates most universities within Canada offer women’s soccer programs. However many young women wishing to play competitive soccer and attend university will opt to go to the United States, where the competition is stronger and the financial support often greater (Hall, 2004, p. 44). This drain of Canadian players to the United States, Hall (2004) suggests, has the effect of “watering down the competition” in Canada.

However soccer is not only played in Canada and the United States; coined the “World’s Game”, football (“soccer” as it is known in Canada in the U.S.) is played in more countries than any other sport in the world and in many countries it is considered the ‘national’ sport. Just as women have been largely excluded from the development of and participation in sport in general, their involvement in soccer has been a long-contested battle. This sport made by men and for men has in the past and continues to marginalize women’s involvement in both the decision-making and participation processes of the sport (Duke & Crolley, 1996).

As the popularity of girls and women’s soccer around the world has increased, academic research on the subject has grown with much of it focused on women’s football in Britain (Caudwell, 2006; Harris, 2005; Williams, 2003, 2006; Williams & Woodhouse, 1991). However despite the rapid growth of women’s soccer and the readiness of many national sporting organizations to boast about their growing numbers in female participation female soccer players still face barriers to competition based on ideas of gender, race, and sexuality. Indeed women’s soccer as a sport still faces obstacles in a

continued effort of competitive development (Cox & Thompson, 2000; Harris, 2007; Hoffman, Ging, Matheson & Ramasamy, 2006; Knoppers & Anthonissen, 2003; Mennesson & Clement, 2003; Pelak, 2005; Scraton, Caudwell & Holland, 2005).

Through qualitative in-depth interviews with female soccer players in England, Germany, Norway, and Sweden, researchers Fasting, Pfister, and Scraton (2004) found that women who are engaged at a highly competitive level in a male dominated sport such as soccer, actively construct alternative femininities in response to the cultural ideals of “acceptable” femininity. A more recent study done by Harris (2007) examines the ways in which female college football players in the South of England negotiate ideas of masculinity and sexuality and thus ‘do gender’ both on and off the playing field. He found that despite a growing culture of acceptance in Britain for the increased number of female participants in football, a continued lack of serious media coverage and questioning of players’ sexual orientation serves to resist further development of the women’s game.

A more holistic picture in examining how women’s soccer has emerged within countries all over the world can be found in, *Soccer, Women, and Sexual Liberation: Kicking off a new era* (2004), where Hong and Mangan (Eds.) examine how, despite being a male domain, women around the globe have carved out a place in soccer. The contributing authors of this book explore how countries such as China, Germany, Norway, Canada, and the United States all share similar timeframes and political and social barriers in the development of women’s soccer. For example, women in China, one of the first countries to have an expansive competitive women’s pro-soccer league in the 1970’s and early 1980’s, struggled with the ideology of women competing in a

traditionally male sport (Hong & Mangan, 2004). Despite its popularity on the men's side, soccer for women in Germany emerged later in the 1980's also due to the concerns of young girls and women competing in a masculine sport (Pfister, 2004). In Norway, even with a less conservative cultural ideology towards gender equality, women's soccer did not emerge until the late 1980's. Again, as young girls and women began competing in soccer, fears of women becoming unfeminine and therefore non-heterosexual, were pervasive (Fasting, 2004).

Despite these barriers based on gender, race, and sexuality, girls and women (and those invested in their participation in the game) have carved a place for themselves in soccer in ever-increasing numbers. However, as Williams (2003) writes:

FIFA and national associations are rarely careful not to overstate the number of female participants and this tendency has been criticized... for deflecting attention from some of the more fundamental issues which continue to affect women's access to sport. (Williams, 2003, p. 109)

An emphasis on participation numbers does not address the obstacles still present in the game, one of which being the lack of a coherent professional structure for women in soccer.

Women and 'Professional' Sport

Studies on professional sport and athletes have focused on the historical development and political economy of sport and on the experiences of the athletes themselves (Messner, 1992; Shaw & Amis, 2001; Stokvis, 2000). Despite the steady increase in female participation at youth and collegiate levels the arena of professional

sport has largely remained a male domain. In Canada and the United States, male athletes can be highly paid for their athletic talents in professional leagues such as the National Football Leagues (NFL), the National Basketball League (NBA), Major League Baseball (MLB), the National Hockey League (NHL), and Major Leagues Soccer (MLS). The world of professionally owned and operated leagues and franchises' paying large sums for athletes' talent/skill remains a sphere accessible to – or an occupation attainable mostly by – men. Fewer professional sporting opportunities exist for women; the Women's Professional Tennis (WPT) tours, Ladies Professional Golf Association (LPGA) tours, and the decade-old Women's National Basketball League (WNBA) are some of the only 'professional' leagues that pay their female athletes.

In *The Work of Professional Football: A Labour of Love?*, Roderick (2006) examines the variety of ways in which British male participants interpret and negotiate their lives as professional footballers. Shaped by sociological queries of 'work' and 'career' which examine how the work people engage in becomes closely bound to their conception of self, Roderick (2006) found that the self-identities of his participants were determined by the all-consuming and physically demanding 'work' of professional football, wherein the physical nature of professional football ties the player's sense of self inextricably to his body. As 'performers', professional players are bound to the performance of their body and as such football is not simply something that players 'do', rather it is something that they *are*. Despite daily training and the attempt to control and discipline their bodies for performance, the players in Roderick's (2006) study found that their 'careers' were determined by a number of interdependent issues such as injury and/or age (and the stigma surrounding both), changes in club personnel, the club's

financial needs, as well as the prospect of transferring. The latter aspect of a professional player's career is a reality of professional football; nevertheless, the transfer process is often tied to notions of 'promotion' or 'demotion' and has a significant impact on the players' perception of self.

Though professional football for women does not exist at this time, sport for women is becoming more and more professionalized. Stokvis (2000) has explored how increasing commercialization and globalization has impacted the self-perceptions, attitudes and behaviors of elite female rowers in Holland. Using Norbert Elias' (1987) concept of a We-I balance, he argued how the processes of commercialization and globalization created a shift to the I-balance of self-perception creating conflict between club coaches, national coaches, and athletes as rowing developed into an increasingly professional sport. Stokvis (2000) argued that such interactions and personal experiences are unavoidable given the transition of sport from amateurism to commercialism, but he failed to examine how notions of gender and power are implicated in such change and conflict.

Researchers agree that as more and more women's sports strive to establish and maintain elite levels of competition and organization, academic research that seeks to understand what constitutes a "professional" female athlete and women's teams/leagues and the ways in which women's sport undergo processes of professionalization and commercialization requires further investigation (Hall, 2002; McDonagh & Pappano, 2007; Stokvis, 2000; Williams, 2006).

Sport Organizations and Female Leadership

In addition to participation and competition access, the institution of sport within Canada and the United States has typically provided boys and men favorable access to leadership and administrative positions, along with the development of sport policies (Hall, 1999; McKay, 1999). There is an extensive literature in the area of sport organizations and female leadership examining how notions of gender and power relations are perpetuated through the structure and operation of sport organizations and underrepresentation of decision-making positions available to and held by women in such organizations (Amis, Slack, & Hinnings, 2002; Hoeber & Frisby, 2001; McKay, 1997; Shaw & Frisby, 2006; White & Young, 1999).

In many respects soccer organizations continue to marginalize women's involvement in decision-making processes of the development and organization of the sport (Hall, 2004; Duke & Crolley, 1996; Williams, 2003). For example, of the 26-member Executive Committee (comprised of a President, Vice-Presidents, Members, an Observer, and a General Secretary) for the Fédération Internationale de Football Association (FIFA), all 26 members are male (Fédération Internationale de Football Association [FIFA], 2006). Despite over 125 countries with Female Senior National Programs, including municipal and regional programs that supplement these national programs, not one member of the FIFA Executive Committee is female (FIFA, 2006). Similarly, despite the popularity of women's soccer in Canada, females in leadership positions are scarce. Although female participation in soccer is now nearly 50 percent, only 13 percent of the volunteer administrators at the provincial and national level are

female and at the national level, there are two women on a 21-member Board of Directors (Hall, 2004).

This under-representation (and often non-representation) of women in the upper echelons of sports organizations is not only apparent within large international governing entities. In a 1992-93 study, McKay (1999) conducted in-depth interviews with seven men and eight women who were current and former members of Sport Canada (the agency responsible for the national funding and planning of amateur sport) and six women with the Canadian Association for the Advancement of Women and Sport (CAAWS) to examine the barriers to women coaches and managers faced by women in the Canadian public service. The study found that in addition to distributional and categorical issues, disparate relational aspects of gender were discovered. For example, when participants were asked why there were so few women in decision-making positions in Sport Canada, almost all the female respondents identified either the conventionally masculine climate of sport and/or the strength of men's networks (McKay, 1999). When the male respondents were posed the same question, only one suggested the importance of predominately male networks while the other respondents attributed women's underrepresentation to "...tradition', 'society', 'natural' sexual differences, or as the normal outcome of meritocratic competition." (McKay, 1999: 199).

The traditional notions of gender embedded in the responses of McKay's (1999) interview participants demonstrate how the decisions and experiences that are made within the institution of sport are closely linked to notions of power. Viewing power as a relational concept that works through the actions of people, Foucault argued that power relations exist within all human relations whether conversations between friends or an

institutional relationship (Pringle, 2005). It is in this way that Foucault's genealogies of power are both repressive and productive, operating locally, circulating in the regional and local institutions of the social body, and emanating from every point in the social field (Allen, 1999; Foucault, 1978).

In their study of three publicly funded English National Governing Bodies (NGB's), Shaw and Slack (2002) discussed similar findings on how power and gender relationships within sports organizations are developed and remain resilient over time. Using a multiple histories approach to provide an analysis of the historical construction of power and gender relations Shaw and Slack (2002) examined how gender relations have developed to favor historically constructed 'masculinities' expressed by men over those expressed by women and 'femininities' expressed by women and some men. For example, the history of one of their participant NGB's included a recent merger of two associations that had existed for nearly 100 years. Each association catered to the sport for each sex, where the men's association was considered 'professional' and the women's association was considered 'volunteer'. Upon merging, women fought to ensure that they were fairly represented on the newly organized committees and men worked to ensure that 'volunteers' from the women's association did not occupy their paid positions. These historical discourses surrounding the merger of the men's and women's associations embodied the femininities that are undervalued and the masculinities that were considered to be 'important strengths' within power and gender relations found within organizations today (Shaw & Slack, 2002).

Foucauldian notions of power provide a frame of analysis from which to examine how constant decisions being made concerning the funding and management of the

Vancouver Whitecaps FC and the Canadian women's national program change the landscape of elite women's soccer in Canada, and consequently how such change influences the competitive and life experiences of female players and staff within the sport.

It is within this literature and these theories about gender and power that the changing landscape of elite women's soccer in Canada will be explored. The following chapter discusses the methodology undertaken for this research project.

Chapter 3

Methodology

As a qualitative inquiry, this study was designed to examine the culture of elite women's soccer in Canada generally, while more specifically addressing the research goals outlined in Chapter 2. According to Andrews, Mason, and Silk (2005), a study of this kind is significant in that:

...the qualitative researcher in sport studies focuses on the qualitative values and meanings in the context of a "whole way of life" – a concern about sport cultures, life –worlds and identities – and thereby provides an opportunity for the expression of "other" cultures and indeed those from the margins in our own cultures. (p. 5)

More specifically this project provides a critical analysis of some specific aspects of women's elite soccer in Canada. Through in-depth interviews with elite female soccer players and staff members, this study investigated the "...sites in, and the processes by which, ideologies are created, accepted, and challenged, and how they affect the structure of people's every day lives" (Beal, 2002: 364).

In the following sections I describe how I selected my research sample, designed and conducted in-depth interviews and provide information on my research protocol and rationale. Following this I discuss my data analysis. Lastly, I discuss some of the limitations inherent in my study and provide a discussion reflecting on my own role in co-constructing the data for this research endeavor.

Sample

The sample of participants was drawn from the pool of female soccer players and staff members involved with both the Vancouver Whitecaps FC senior women's team and/or the Canadian senior women's national team during the summer and fall of 2006. Using both teams/programs was significant because in addition to Vancouver being home to a W-League franchise (the Whitecaps FC), since 2004 Vancouver has also become the home base for the Canadian senior women's national team. As a result, there is a considerable amount of overlap of both players and staff members between both teams/programs. For example, some senior national team players also compete for the Vancouver Whitecaps FC team, while some national team staff coaches also coach for the Whitecaps FC. Thus interview participants drawn from these teams/programs were organized into two categories; a) players and b) staff members.

Players

The 'player' group consisted of nine adult female players ranging from the age of 25 years to 37 years of age. All but one participant identified as Caucasian and most identified their marital status as single; two participants identified as married. Eight participants had four or more years of experience at the W-League level and each participant competed at the university level. Four participants were active national team players at the time the interview was conducted.

Based on the variations in playing experience, two categories from within the player sample emerged; 1) players with no national team experience, henceforth referred to as "competitive players" and 2) players with national team experience, henceforth

referred to as “national team players”. It is important to note here that all subsequent references to ‘players’ refers to adult and elite (read: non-recreational and/or non-youth) female players. For the purposes of this research, “elite” is used to demarcate what would be considered “professional” in men’s soccer in that the female players train on a daily basis. At present (and at the time of data collection), there is no “professional” women’s soccer league in North America.

Staff

The ‘staff member’ group consisted of nine individuals, five males and four females who currently hold (or recently held) a position within either one or both of the two teams/programs such as Head and/or Assistant Coach, General Manager, Team Manager, Director of Operations, etc. Each participant identified as Caucasian with ages ranging from 35 to 50 years.

Research Protocol

Participant involvement was initially requested in person, by telephone or by e-mail. After a participant expressed interest, I sent an official contact letter (see Appendix 1) via electronic attachment or through traditional post. Due to my involvement within the soccer community (discussed further below), I had access to many participants’ contact information and was able to find additional contact information through official team websites. Additionally, upon conclusion of an interview, some participants suggested that I contact and speak with other individuals they felt would offer insight to the research project, therefore, some snowball sampling was involved.

Once participation was confirmed, the interview was scheduled for approximately one hour in duration and conducted in a place of convenience for the participant; interview sites included personal residences, coffee shops, and work offices. Due to distance, some interviews were conducted over the telephone from both the University of British Columbia and my residential phone.

Before each interview, the participant reviewed and signed a research information sheet that explained the purpose of my study, the process and expectation of their participation, and outlined procedures around confidentiality and ethical presentation of their involvement (see Appendix 2). In addition, each participant filled out a biographical information questionnaire at the outset of each interview (see Appendix 3).

Each interview was conducted with an open-ended interview guide (see Appendix 4 and 5) that addressed the participants' past and present experiences in elite women's soccer in Canada. At the outset of the interview, I asked each participant to define, in their opinion, what "elite-level" soccer meant to them. After commencing the interview with an opinion-based question about soccer in general, I then invited each participant to tell her/his "story" (uninterrupted and in detail) about how s/he became involved in soccer, when s/he became involved in elite women's soccer, and how her/his involvement in elite women's soccer has changed over the years.

All interviews were recorded on audio-cassette so as not to miss any important details provided by the interviewee. Field notes were taken immediately after each interview in order to capture the non-verbal cues as well as features of the interview environment (Anderson & Jack, 1991). Each participant was invited to follow-up with me after their interview via telephone or e-mail in the event that they thought of

additional details or responses that they wanted to share, however, no participant pursued this option.

Following the completion of our interview and my transcription I e-mailed each participant a copy of their transcript and asked that they give formal approval of its use as well as make corrections/additions where needed (Naples, 2003).

Research Rationale

In-depth interviews with 18 participants provide most of the data for this research. Researchers tend to agree that 10-12 participants within a homogenous sample involved in in-depth interviews provides opportunity for general themes to emerge upon which data saturation can be reached – the point when additional interviews will unlikely offer new or different data (Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Strauss & Corbin, 1998).

The in-depth interviews were conducted between September and November 2006, just after the Whitecaps FC season concluded and as the Canadian women's national team commenced the Full-Time Player Program held in Vancouver in preparation for the 2007 FIFA Women's World Cup. This time of year resulted in more players and staff members being available for participation in the Vancouver area.

Unlike structured interviews that are guided with a set of pre-established questions designed to solicit specific information, a less structured interview provided the participant with the opportunity and the time to communicate and re-communicate her/his responses (Fontana & Frey, 2003). In this way, as researcher I was able to "listen" to what the participant was saying and ask for further interpretation or elaboration (if

needed), without concern for having to move on to all the designed questions (Anderson & Jack, 1991).

An inquiry of this nature helps to shed light on how soccer has shaped these players' and staff members' life experiences, as well as illuminate the changing landscape of elite women's soccer in Canada. The technique of interviewing was essential in providing both the players and staff members with the opportunity to give a "voice" to their experiences from their own frame of reference (Krane, 2001). In addition, in-depth interviewing provided an opportunity for the researcher to gain insight into attitudes, perspectives, and meanings of experiences that cannot be directly observed (Hammersley & Atkinson, 1995).

Finally, in-depth interviews were a significant method within this critical examination of elite women's soccer in Canada as interviews are seen as "a source of information, with the assumption that interviewing results in true and accurate pictures of respondents' selves and lives" (Fontana & Frey, 2003).

Data Analysis

The process of analysis described in this section was ongoing throughout data collection, transcription, and secondary research phase of this project (Hammersley & Atkinson, 1995). After each interview, I transcribed the audio data into Microsoft Word document via transcribing machine in order to capture as many details while still fresh/recent.

When each participant had reviewed their transcript, multiple readings of the transcripts were conducted in order to give me the opportunity to look for important

themes/concepts in separate readings -themes/concepts that could potentially have been overlooked with just one reading (Mauthner & Doucet, 1998). These multiple readings were guided by Blumer's notion of 'sensitizing concepts' (Hammersley & Atkinson, 1995) allowing concepts to emerge and reveal direction for further/deeper analysis. Upon the completion of 18 interviews, it was clear that useful themes had emerged and no additional interviews were needed that would reveal new/different data.

Finally, throughout the process of analysis, the intersectionality of race, class, gender, and sexuality was examined in an attempt to refrain from essentializing the experiences of players and staff members in elite women's soccer as representative of "all" elite female soccer players and staff members in Canada. The experiences I heard about simply reflect those of a small group's particular attitudes and perceptions of their own lived experiences in the domain of elite women's soccer.

In saying this, I should note that I offered to share my interpretations and results with each participant in the form of my completed thesis in order to gain trust and credibility (Achebe, 2002), and to avoid interpretive conflict (Ristock & Pennell, 1996).

Limitations

As researchers we can rarely prepare ourselves completely before entering the field, nor can we expect and/or create perfect circumstances or settings within which to conduct our research. However, we can attempt to identify and understand the limitations that exist at the outset of (and those that unfold throughout) the project at hand.

For example, at the beginning of the data collection phase of this study, I believed that my involvement as a member of the Whitecaps FC senior women's team would provide me access to interview participants based on an insider status. As a competitive player, I had cultivated relationships with both players and staff members and therefore gained contact information that I hoped would prove invaluable to my research.

Yet my insider status did not remain static due to unique events that transpired shortly before my first interview, which continued to have an impact throughout the rest of the interviews, data analysis, and writing of this research. While it has been noted that one's insider/outsider status is always fluid and must always be considered (Hill-Collins, 1999) throughout the research endeavor, three unique events stand out as having impact on my work as researcher and warrant explicit discussion.

As noted above, my status as a competitive soccer player afforded me some 'insider' status as a social researcher but it also contributed in no small part to the inception of this research project. Being on the 'inside' as a player, playing with the players and for the staff members on the Whitecaps FC and the Canadian national team who were directly responsible for and experiencing the recent changes happening in elite-level women's soccer in Canada enabled me to see that a research project of this kind was needed and feasible; change was clearly happening and I was surrounded by it.

The first unique event occurred two months before my initial interview when my involvement with the Whitecaps FC ended. After my first year as a graduate student, balancing my competitive career with my academic pursuits had become challenging. Halfway through the 2006 season, I reluctantly decided to discontinue my involvement

with the team and start dealing with the prospect of retiring from my competitive career (Messner, 1992).

As a result, in the two months after leaving the team and before commencing my interviews my status as ‘insider’ changed dramatically. While I still had access to the interview participants needed for my research based on pre-existing relationships, I was no longer directly amidst the environment I had once been surrounded by; team meetings with coaches, conversations with management and physiotherapy staff, informal conversations amongst teammates, as well as access to and participation in on-field training sessions were no longer at my disposal. The changes that I was previously intimately involved with were now observations seen from a distance.

In some respects this new transition as ‘insider’ proved advantageous for my work as a social researcher. In her study on mature women students, Janet Parr (1998) writes, “...I wanted what they told me to be their story, not a reflection of my own.” (Parr, 1998, p. 91) Due to my previous proximity to the research topic and the participants, this change in the dynamic of my perceived ‘insider’ status created a new and perhaps safer distance where many participants felt they could offer full-disclosure to someone who understood the culture/environment but who was now not perceived as a risk.

The second unique circumstance surfaced with the simultaneous commencement of my data collection phase and the implementation of the Full-time Player Program (henceforth FTTP). During the months that I conducted my interviews with participants, the FTTP was getting underway in Vancouver. For the first time ever, national team players were provided the opportunity to relocate to Vancouver and focus their energies on soccer in a full-time capacity. This was an exciting and optimistic time for the

athletes and staff members participating in this new program. Only one to two months into the residency camp, the athletes were fit, energies were high, the program was 'new', and players were committed to the program. These sentiments were likely reflected in the interviews conducted with various national team players and staff members during this time.

Finally, just three weeks before my initial interview a controversy erupted in the sports media contributing to the third and arguably the most significant unique event that shaped the data collection phase of my research. The abrupt release of three veteran players from the Canadian women's national team and the FTPP was covered in newspapers across Canada and on the World Wide Web on most women's sports and soccer-specific websites. Prominent Canadian and international women's soccer star, Charmaine Hooper, was one of the three veterans released adding to the controversy of the event. Over the years, Hooper has contributed to the women's program in many ways: an 18-year veteran of the team she has been a voice for the players in making certain that funding has been made available; she was instrumental in assembling a Players Committee to demand more financial support to the players and program in preparation for the 1999 Women's World Cup; and after the birth of her daughter, Hooper made certain that support was provided by the CSA in the form of on-site babysitting during training camps.

Due to their release, members of the sports media responded by asking for interviews with players and staff members causing the CSA to advise those on the national team to refrain from participating in *any* interviews with the media or discussing the event with outside members of the program. Though my interviews had been

previously scheduled and explained to be for the purpose of academic research, it became apparent during some of the interviews that participants were hesitant, cautious, and at times defensive when discussing the ‘changing landscape’ of elite-level women’s soccer in Canada.

The excitement of the implementation of the FTPP, and the release of three veteran players made public in the media, created a unique time period in which the interviews were conducted for this research as well as contributing to further distancing my perceived ‘insider’ status and possibly influencing the dynamic between research and participant during the interviews.

As well, as knowledge producer and feminist researcher my research is particularly shaped by my own personal experiences and gender. As a white, 28-year-old, middle-class woman, I have had the “privilege” of having access to and participating in organized sport from a very young age. I was able to participate in soccer and play in a more ‘equality’-based environment, which affected my sport experiences. My feminist theoretical lens shaped my analysis of the experiences of female soccer players and staff members regarding the changing landscape of women’s soccer in Canada, and therefore the knowledge produced here. Disclosing my social location and identity as a social researcher sheds light on how this research was informed and shaped (Ristock & Pennell, 1996).

Finally, as Hammersley and Atkinson (1995) write, “What is significant... is not just whether the information published and publicized is true, but what implications it carries, or what implications it may be taken to carry, about the people studied...” (Hammersley and Atkinson, 1995, p. 271). Though I have taken additional measures

through all phases of this research project to ensure anonymity, based on the nature of the information I have collected as well as the specificity of the research sample, full anonymity cannot be guaranteed.

The following chapter uses information gleaned from reports, newspapers and information from my respondents to provide a comprehensive historical background to the Canadian women's national team program and elite-level women's soccer in Canada which is needed in order to situate the experiences, attitudes and beliefs shared by the participants within this study.

Chapter 4

Changing Landscape

Despite over 20 years of competition, the history and development of elite-level women's soccer in Canada and the Canadian women's national team remains relatively undocumented. In his book on coaching and leadership, current national team head coach, Even Pellerud, briefly describes the turbulent state of the Canadian women's national team program upon accepting his initial contract in 2000 (Kucey, 2005). Other works have focused on the participation of female youth (particularly between the ages of five and 14) in community soccer, recent key moments in women's soccer and the Canadian women's national team, as well as an introduction to current and up-and-coming national team players (Hall, 2002; Hall, 2004; Hall, 2004).

Additionally, the official website for the Canadian Soccer Association (www.canadasoccer.com) provides a brief history of soccer in Canada by author and historian at the Soccer Hall of Fame and Museum, Colin Jose, giving a condensed timeline of soccer's trajectory in Canada. Beginning in 1876 when, "the first games [were] played under "London Association Rules" between teams representing the Toronto Lacrosse Club and the Carlton Cricket Club on Parliament Street in Toronto," the history provides nearly six pages of chronological events pertaining to Canadian men's soccer. However, not until the last page and year 1995 is the Canadian women's national team mentioned; "Canada qualified for the finals of the second FIFA Women's World Cup played in Sweden. The team lost to England and Norway and tied with Nigeria."

Though the history of elite-level women's soccer in Canada and the Canadian women's national team is relatively young in comparison to elite-level men's soccer, this limited record-keeping of significant events in the trajectory of women's soccer is perhaps demonstrative of the manner in which those involved in soccer in Canada perceive the importance of the women's game. Excluding the women's game in the historical process deems its existence unworthy and lesser than the men's game (Hargreaves, 1994), although Colin Jose does acknowledge that, "much more research into the history of the game all across the country needs to be done".

This chapter then, begins the record-keeping process of documenting the inception, development, and significant changes that have occurred in elite-level women's soccer in Canada. Using information gleaned from newspapers and websites, as well as data gathered from in-depth interviews, I have begun to piece together the history of elite-level women's soccer and the Canadian women's national team program, giving voice to an important part of the history of women's sport in Canada. I begin by exploring the early development of Team Canada when the Canadian women's national team program was first formed in 1986, and paint a picture of the initial landscape of elite-level women's soccer in Canada. Significant changes to this landscape and the trajectory of the women's game in Canada are then discussed in subsequent sections focusing on defining moments such as the success of the 1999 FIFA Women's World Cup tournament, Canada's hiring of head coach Even Pellerud in 2000 and his immediate success at the 2003 FIFA Women's World Cup tournament, and the existence of semi-professional women's soccer in North America. Additionally, Vancouver's role in providing elite-level soccer for Canadian women as well as the arrival of a private

benefactor to the Canadian women's national team program will be discussed. This chapter concludes with a discussion of the Canadian women's national team program's implementation of the first ever Full-Time Player Program designed to achieve success at the 2007 FIFA Women's World Cup and 2008 Olympic Games, both held in Beijing.

The Beginnings of a Dream

In January 1986, Rose Michaels⁴ received a phone call from her father to tell her that Canada was forming a national team. As a rookie softball player at a well known University in Western Canada, Rose assumed her father was referring to a softball national team; "No its for soccer!" he informed her. With few organized girl's youth teams in existence in 1986, Rose's only exposure to competitive soccer had been two seasons with a local women's team. She hesitated at the thought of pursuing a national team program for soccer but when her father remarked, "Why not, what's it going to hurt you?" she decided to take a chance. After that phone call, Rose spent every weekend traveling 40 km to Richmond to train with a group of women that would form Team BC and then travel to Winnipeg in July for the first ever Canadian national women's all-star soccer championship (Toronto Star, 1986).

For the first time, Canada's national governing body for soccer, the Canadian Soccer Association (CSA) invited eight provincial teams from British Columbia, Alberta, Saskatchewan, Manitoba, Ontario, Quebec, and Newfoundland, all boasting the top players from each province, to Winnipeg to compete in a national championship event for women (Hall, 2004). This national championship event served as a scouting ground for

⁴ All participants have been assigned pseudonyms to protect anonymity.

the first tryout camp for the Canadian women's national team. From this event, a part-time coaching staff, led by head coach Neil Turnbull from Alberta, selected 24 women to remain in Winnipeg for an extended training camp (Davidson, 1986). Ten days later, 16 players were selected for the first Canadian women's national team and Rose was among them. The players chosen to remain in Winnipeg for the tryout and subsequent training camp were housed in the residences at the University of Winnipeg where they had access to the institution's fields and food provided by residence. Outside of food and accommodations, the players were provided little else; travel costs were not covered, daily per diem was not provided, nor were additional items of equipment given to the players. As one participant noted, "The outfits were a complete joke! [But] we were just proud to wear the Canadian jersey, it was awesome, right? Don't get me wrong it was an unbelievable feeling, but... the tracksuits that they gave us were way too big, they were so unattractive and hokie, [and] no boots, nothing like that." Of course at this time, many of the players were just happy to be selected to remain in Winnipeg.

The result of this first training camp was a twenty-hour bus ride to Minneapolis in the United States where Team Canada competed against Team U.S.A in two "friendlies"⁵ (Hall, 2004). After losing 0-2 on July 7, Canada won the next game, 2-1, two days later. With limited funds to start the program, Team Canada's trip to the U.S. was short, but sweet; players returned home with excitement and determination to represent their country as female soccer players. This determination, for Rose and many other players, manifested itself in a major life decision; Rose resigned from her varsity softball team

⁵ International "Friendlies" are matches held between countries as 'exhibition' games in that the outcome does have any bearing on dis/qualification for any official FIFA or Olympic event. However, the outcome is recorded and used as part of an elaborate measuring system that determines a country's position in the official FIFA rankings.

giving up her scholarship, joined the varsity soccer team and never looked back. That fall, the national team coaching staff mailed 'report cards' to each of the players outlining their strengths and weaknesses and assigning areas where players could improve. In order to rise to the level of international competition, players were given training packages where details regarding resting heart rate, distances ran, weight used in strength training, etc. were recorded and submitted to the staff. Players competed with their varsity teams (if still in university) and club teams, trained with men's teams, and committed to individual training in order to meet these standards (Toronto Star, 1986; Hall, 2004).

In the beginning, training opportunities and games were limited and often scheduled many months apart (Hall, 2004). After their inaugural road trip, it was another five months before Team Canada met again for a training camp held over the Christmas holidays in 1986. Then, six months later, in June 1987, Team Canada met for three games back in Minneapolis for the North American Cup. Here, they lost all three of their matches, twice to the U.S. and once to Sweden (www.canadasoccer.com). In December of that year, the CSA sent an 18-member squad on their first-ever overseas trip to Taipei and Kaohsiung to compete in the 12-team Taiwan Cup women's soccer tournament. The tour cost a reported \$40,000 and each one of the 27 players selected to report for training at CFB Esquimalt on November 30, 1987 was asked to raise \$1,500 to contribute to the budget (Da Costa, 1987). For example, the Port Moody Soccer Club, Rotary Club and local Safeway grocery store raised \$1,500 to send then-Team Canada captain, Geri Donnelly, overseas (Hall, 2004). Once there, Team Canada played six matches, winning their first game against Hong Kong (2-0), losing their second and third matches to

Australia (0-2) and Taiwan (0-2), drawing their fourth match with Australia (0-0), and losing their fifth and sixth matches to the United States (0-4) and New Zealand (0-1) (The Gazette, 1987).

This training pattern persisted for almost a decade; Team Canada would meet (in a training camp setting) before competing internationally in friendly matches or tournaments only when funding was available. Women's soccer at the elite-level was still emergent, and with a reported annual budget of \$12,000 provided by the CSA to the women's national team program in 1986, these international friendly matches and tournaments were rare (Davidson, 1986). Additionally, at this time, the position of head coach of the women's national team program was part-time, thus preventing the coaching staff from focusing all of their time and resources to the development of the program. Technology at this time was also 'slower' than today in that e-mail was not available to communicate quickly/daily with players, staff, or administrators. Postal service and long-distance phone calling was an administrative expense as well as a more time consuming mode of communication and organization. Add to this the size of Canada as a country and the fact that most of Team Canada's players were spread apart by thousands of kilometres. For example, of the 27 players brought into camp in order to be selected for Canada's first international tour (the Taiwan Cup) nine were from Ontario, seven from Alberta, four each from British Columbia and Quebec, two from Nova Scotia and one from Saskatchewan (Da Costa, 1987).

Due to infrequent camps players had to continue their own training regime independently and since carding money was not yet provided by Sport Canada to women's soccer, all the costs associated in maintaining an elite-level training schedule

were absorbed by the players and their families. Costs such as appropriate equipment, gym memberships, travel, time away from work/school, proper nutrition, and adequate athletic physiotherapy created ever increasing expenses for competing on the international stage of soccer for Canada.

These technological, geographical, and economical factors confined the Canadian women's national team program to few training camps and fewer international matches, drastically limiting the opportunity for adequate international development.

Competitive Women's Soccer Around the World

Simultaneously, other countries around the world were also carving out a place for women's soccer. Teams, leagues, and all-female organizations were forming to accommodate the increasing participation of female youth and women in soccer. In countries such as Germany, Norway, Denmark, England, and China, women were taking up space on the soccer pitches traditionally reserved for male players (Hong & Mangan, 2004). As previously discussed (above), conservative notions of gender and sexuality served as barriers to the emergence of women's soccer in a traditionally male domain (Hargreaves, 1994; Hall, 2002; Williams, 2003). However, despite these barriers, athletes, coaches, administrators, and organizations involved in girls and women's soccer pushed for national team opportunities, forcing their male counterparts to make room for female soccer (Hong & Mangan, 2004; Williams, 2003).

In June 1988, having recognized the growth of women's soccer to be persistent and global, FIFA decided to sponsor a 'demonstration' Women's World Cup in Guangzhou, China and invited Team Canada to participate in the 12-country tournament

alongside Australia, Brazil, England, France, Italy, Ivory Coast, Japan, Norway, Thailand, the United States, and the host country, China (Hudson, 1988). In preparation for this first-ever FIFA sanctioned international women's competition, Team Canada trained for only three weeks before leaving for China, therefore making the training camp "intense". One participant recalled, "...we trained three times a day and finally we were just exhausted!" Already fatigued, Team Canada flew to China where they competed in four matches in just eight days, losing their opening match against China (0-2), beating the Ivory Coast (6-0) in their second match, drawing their third match against Norway (1-1), and losing their final match to Sweden (1-0). Despite Team Canada's own results, FIFA deemed the tournament a great success.

FIFA Embraces Women's International Soccer

Pleased with the success of the 1988 Taiwan Cup, FIFA fully sanctioned the first ever Women's World Cup tournament hosted by China, in November 1991. In order to qualify for a FIFA Women's World Cup and Olympic Games event, Team Canada has to compete in qualifying tournaments hosted by the Confederation for North, Central American and Caribbean Association Football (CONCACAF). These qualifying tournaments are sometimes held a year to several months before the world event takes place with each of the participating countries competing in a round-robin tournament in an attempt to secure a spot in the final match. Typically, both countries reaching the final match secure a berth into the upcoming tournament. However, in the inaugural qualifying tournament, the CONCACAF Championships held in April 1991, only the

champion of the tournament qualified for the 1991 FIFA Women's World Cup in November.

During the tournament, Team Canada secured four wins against Costa Rica (6-0), Jamaica (9-0), Haiti (2-0), and Trinidad & Tobago (6-0) to advance to the final match. However, a loss to the United States (0-6) denied Team Canada a berth in the first ever FIFA Women's World Cup. Consequently, the Canadian women's national team program was placed in an unofficial temporary hiatus only to resume in June 1993 under a new head coach, Sylvie Béliveau from Quebec. She too was hired in the same part-time capacity with a limited budget that restricted development (Kucey, 2005).

With Béliveau in August 1994, Team Canada qualified for the second FIFA Women's World Cup hosted by Sweden in 1995. The CSA responded to Team Canada's qualification with a surge of money into the women's program, making Béliveau's position full-time and enabling her to focus on the upcoming WWC (Hall, 2004; Kucey, 2005). However, despite the provision of last minute funding, Team Canada's preparation for this prestigious event was poorly designed. An intense preparation phase started in the spring of 1995, where one participant remembered, "In those three months that we were gone, we went through 52 time zones. We were in France, we were in Japan, we were down South, we were back East, [and] we were in Denmark, [all] just before the World Cup." In addition to this amount of traveling, there were times when the players were forced to train despite fatigue and jetlag. One participant recalled a time when the team was ordered not to sleep after a long flight back to Canada from Japan. Instead, they were called to a training session where they were asked to train a full session in the hope of battling the effects of travel.

Thus it was an exhausted Team Canada that arrived in Sweden in June for their first appearance in a FIFA Women's World Cup tournament. Team Canada lost to England (2-3) and Norway (0-7), but tied Nigeria (3-3) and in the end, placed 10th out of 12 teams. At this time, the 1995 FIFA Women's World Cup event simultaneously served as qualification for the inaugural presentation of women's soccer at the 1996 Olympic Games in Atlanta. However, only the top eight teams from the WWC advanced to the Olympics, leaving Team Canada out of the Olympic "dream". Béliveau was released as head coach and Team Canada returned home to again experience another unofficial temporary hiatus. They did not compete in another international match for a full calendar year.

It is important to note here that previously, Sport Canada had approved the CSA's application to include the women's national team in the Athlete Assistance Program (AAP). The AAP provides federal funding in the form of a monthly stipend to international competitors based on a carding system (A-, B-, and C- cards) that at one time was determined by an individual athlete's experience and world ranking within their sport. In March 1995, prior to Team Canada's first WWC appearance, and for the first time since 1984, Sport Canada announced a 25% increase to the AAP (Christie, 1995). Beginning in April, top A-carded athletes received an increase to \$810 a month from \$650, B-carded athletes went to \$685 from \$550 and those with less experience at the C-card level went to \$560 from \$450 (The Ottawa Citizen, 1995)⁶. Information about

⁶ According to the Sport Canada website, it is the responsibility of the National Sporting Organization (in this case the CSA) to provide a list of all carded athletes. I have not been able to locate this information, nor is it on the CSA website, and therefore do not have knowledge of how many national team players were receiving money and at what card-level.

which national team players received this funding and at what card-level is not available. Yet while this financial support was more than the women on Team Canada had received in the past, one participant noted, “By the same token, we had to request leaves from our work and [although] our [employers] were great and [granted our leaves] they couldn’t honor us our pay.” By the time Team Canada departed for Sweden, players had requested up to three months of unpaid leave from their respective employers. In the end, the CSA came through after the WWC tournament by giving each of the 18 players on the team \$1,000 for all their expenses, efforts, and sacrifices.

Limited financial support for the players, poor scheduling in preparation for International competitions, no full-time Coaching Staff, and lengthy periods of unofficial temporary hiatus made it incredibly difficult for those involved in elite-level women’s soccer to lay the foundations of developing and strengthening a consistent long-term Canadian women’s national team program. In the future, many changes would be needed in order for Team Canada to earn a spot on the world stage of soccer, and stay there.

1999 FIFA Women’s World Cup

A major impetus to change occurred in 1999 when 90,185 spectators filled the Rose Bowl in Pasadena, California, to watch the United States women’s national team play the Chinese women’s national team in the Gold Medal match for the third FIFA Women’s World Cup tournament (Longman, 2000).

However, with the Canadian women’s national team program in active status again and back under the leadership of Neil Turnbill, Team Canada again faced troubles in preparing a strong squad for the third FIFA Women’s World Cup tournament hosted

by the United States. One player recalls, “The World Cup was in June and we started [preparing] in Victoria in May... There were a lot of decisions that led to lots of frustration on the team.” Part of this frustration started in 1998 prior to the WWC year. Rumors were circulated that players within the Canadian men’s national team program were receiving compensation in the form of appearance fees, amounting to \$10,000 annually, a significant amount more than any remuneration players within the Canadian women’s national team program had ever received.

In response to these rumors, a few veteran players on Team Canada, including well-established player Charmaine Hooper, created an informal ‘Players Committee’ to enter into discussions with the CSA in an attempt to receive appropriate financial compensation. In justifying the formation of the Players Committee, one player recalled, “We’re coming up to our qualifications, and our World Cup, and we [were not] looking for anything like a pay cheque per game, but we [were] looking for some of the compensation for time missed from work, from school, for all the sacrifices. You know, over and above the [carding money] per month.” Minutes from a 1998 CSA Board of Directors Meeting suggests that the Players Committee’s issues and concerns were understood and taken seriously:

The Director of Finance advised that the Women’s Team has requested a compensation package much higher than what presently appears in the budget. Members of the women’s team have, in the past, received a bonus for winning a ‘tournament’ not an appearance fee per game. It was noted that the Men’s senior team receives compensation (appearance fees) as well as a bonus for points. The Women’s Team is presently lobbying for fair treatment based on gender-equity. This issue will be negotiated before the Women’s International Championships schedule for the summer of 1999. The Board agreed that the Women’s Team did need a new contract and to be treated with fairness.

However despite this apparent mutual agreement that the women's national team did in fact need a new contract and expected to be treated "with fairness", discussions between members of the Players Committee and the Executive Committee of the CSA went back and forth for some time before finally reaching a stalemate. Unable to continue discussions on their own, the Players Committee decided to seek legal council in an attempt to strengthen their negotiations. According to one participant recalling the negotiation process, dealing with the CSA was, "not pleasant at all" and very, "unprofessional": "I found [the CSA's] negotiating to be unrealistic... [They] would get easily angered... then it would be cut off... [they] were hanging up phones, that sort of thing."

In the end, with negotiations still unresolved, Team Canada performed poorly at the WWC, drawing with Japan (1-1), and losing to Norway (1-7) and Russia (1-4). Dealing with the disappointment and frustration of not advancing out of their group, Hooper publicly lambasted the CSA's lack of support for the women's national team. The CSA responded aggressively and withdrew several veteran athletes from the AAP, stripping them of their carding money, and citing "declining personal performance, contribution to poor team chemistry and advancing age." (Kucey, 2005)

Ironically, while Team Canada was forced to fight tooth and nail in an attempt to convince the CSA that the Canadian women's national team program was deserving of increased financial support, a well-funded Team U.S.A. proved just how powerful women's soccer truly is.

One 90-minute match changed the landscape of elite-level women's soccer in the U.S. and around the world; Team U.S.A.'s performance and win was instrumental in

making the growth and development of women's soccer visible on a global scale (Heywood & Dworkin, 2003, Markovits & Hellerman, 2003). Now, not only those participating in soccer at the local, provincial, and national levels were aware of the rising popularity in women's soccer, but sports' fans outside of soccer and around the world were taking notice. The gold-medal match between U.S.A. and China raised awareness of the level of women's international competition and tempted countries around the world to follow suit.

A Fresh Start in 2000

The Canadian Soccer Association responded quickly to the new media attention being given to women's soccer around the world and took action in a way they had never done in the past for the women's program; they hired an internationally renowned full-time head coach. In hiring Norwegian Even Pellerud, the CSA funded a position where the head coach's main responsibility was to bring new leadership to the women's program and focus solely on its development at the Senior and Youth levels. One participant said, "...it was amazing that the CSA actually showed that initiative to hire someone internationally, and obviously someone who cost a lot of money to get here. They were willing to put that kind of money into the women's side of the program, and I think that was the start for Canadian Soccer."

Pellerud's impact on the program was immediate. First he contracted to work with the players a minimum of 90 days per year and have them compete in at least 12 international matches per year. By doing so he was ensuring two things; that he would have a realistic impact on the development of the program, and that for perhaps the first

time he “committed the CSA to have an attitude towards supporting the [women’s] program” (Kucey, 2005). Additionally, Pellerud sought to acquire increased funds for more full-time staff and create more youth development teams. To bring the team together more often and accommodate a year-round outdoor training environment Pellerud moved the program to Vancouver.

Coincident with Pellerud’s demand for increased funding for more full-time staff, FIFA decided to organize a U19 FIFA World Cup tournament in 2002 bringing even more attention to women’s soccer at the grassroots and youth levels. This put pressure on the CSA and other NSO’s alike to increase funds for their existing youth teams (or to start youth team programs). Previously, the Canadian women’s national team program had had a junior national team program, but like the senior team funding was limited and sporadic causing the program to be inconsistent. In addition to FIFA’s announcement, Canada was declared the host country for the inaugural U19 FIFA World Cup, doubling the pressure on the CSA to provide adequate funding for the Canada’s youth program. Pellerud used this event as the platform for acquiring another full-time coach, and hired his assistant coach of the senior team, Ian Bridge, as head coach for the U19 youth team. Shortly afterwards, Shel Brodsgaard was hired as full-time Goalkeeper Coach for all teams within the program. In this way, Pellerud was securing more human resources to support the overall development of the Canadian women’s national team program.

The benefit of youth teams to any program is to prepare prospective athletes for the mental, physical, and emotional requirements of international competition. As head coach of the Canadian women’s national team program, one of Pellerud’s most important tasks has been to implement a successful system of play that all players within the

program adhere to. Because the process of identifying prospective national team players is on-going, frequently bringing in new players from outside the program can be disruptive for the overall development of a program and team. Now, with a well-funded U19 youth team in place receiving direction from the assistant coach of the senior team, Pellerud could ensure that his direction and system of play were being properly implemented and that, where necessary the transition for a youth player to the senior team would be seamless. One participant agreed, "...start[ing] programs for the youth national teams made a huge impact because the players, instead of being invited to train [directly] with the senior national team, came in [through the youth national teams]... when they [finally] came with the [senior national team] they were more prepared... they're even younger and more experienced..."

As a result, the Canadian U19 national team brought immense success to women's soccer in Canada enticing almost 50,000 spectators to the Commonwealth Stadium in Edmonton to watch Canada compete against the U.S.A. in the Gold Medal match (Hall, 2004; Brodsgaard & Mackin, 2005)⁷. In a heart-wrenching period of overtime, Canada lost to the U.S. but captured the hearts of thousands of Canadian sporting fans and confirmed to the CSA the importance of their support for Canada to succeed on the world stage of soccer.

In addition to securing more full-time staff and laying the framework for a strong youth program, Pellerud was able to immediately increase Team Canada's international competition schedule. Since the team's inception in 1986 until 2000, Team Canada averaged 5.64 International matches a year for a total of 79 games in 14 years. Since

⁷ In 2004, FIFA changed the U19 World Cup to U20.

2000, Team Canada's average of international matches played annually has more than doubled, averaging 11.37 annually for a total of 91 games in 8 years⁸. A quick review of international matches best illustrates the immediate impact Pellerud had on the women's national team program; by augmenting the number of annual international matches, he was able to bring Team Canada into training camp more frequently, providing increased opportunity for development and coaching. Additionally, more international matches gave Canada the opportunity to increase their official FIFA ranking. Not only did Pellerud secure more games for Canada to play, he was able to schedule games with some of the leading countries in the world. By 2001 he had secured a friendly series of two matches with Germany, and in 2002 invited Norway and Australia to compete on Canadian soil. In hosting these competitive international matches at home, Pellerud and the CSA attempted to ride the wave of increased popularity and visibility of women's soccer that flowed from both the U.S.A's success in '99 as well as Canada's success in 2002. Pellerud's hard work to increase the profile of elite-level women's soccer in Canada was paying off.

After the U19 youth team's success in Edmonton in 2002, Pellerud's immediate impact on elite-level women's soccer in Canada was demonstrated again at the 2003 FIFA Women's World Cup tournament in the United States. Despite losing their first game to Germany (4-1), Team Canada went on to beat Argentina (3-0) and Japan (3-1) to advance out of their group. In an amazing quarter-final match, Team Canada shocked the world by beating China (1-0) to advance to the semi-finals of the World Cup. In a well-

⁸ Statistics are based on officially recorded International Game Results for Team Canada provided by the Canadian Soccer Association's official website, accessed January 25, 2008 and not including the matches held in 2008. These numbers do not include exhibition games.

fought match, Canada was unable to secure a win against Sweden, losing 2-1 and advancing to the third/fourth place match against Team U.S.A. Although losing 3-1 to the U.S.A., Canada left the 2003 FIFA World Cup in fourth place overall. It was an amazing success that confirmed the immense potential Canada has within the sport of soccer.

Riding on this success, Team Canada went on to compete in the 2004 CONCACAF Olympic Qualifications and beat Jamaica and Panama 6-0, respectively, then Costa Rica (2-1) to advance to the semi-finals. Winning the semi-final match and securing a spot in the finals would at last ensure Team Canada a chance at Olympic competition. Unfortunately, Team Canada suffered a devastating loss to Mexico (2-1), shattering Olympic dreams and aspirations.

Despite not qualifying for the 2004 Olympics in Athens however, Pellerud and the Canadian women's national team had achieved enough success to ensure that the CSA would not put the program on another temporary hiatus. Team Canada had tasted success and now, more than ever, Pellerud was motivated to continue developing the program. He renewed his contract with the CSA for another five years and set out to continue preparations for the next FIFA Women's World Cup (2007) and Olympic Games (2008) cycle – both events to be held in Beijing, China. As a testament to Pellerud's efforts, one participant declared:

I think he is 100% responsible for turning women's soccer in Canada right around. You look back to when he came in, in 2000, and even talking to the girls that were in the program before he arrived, its just so incredibly different. And he has, you know, he has gotten results and therefore has been given more funding and that's a constant battle for him. ...he's actually the first coach that has come in and demanded and gotten a fraction of what he's asked for but at least he's gotten stuff and I mean, phenomenal coach, and battling, day in and day out for the women. He's done wonders for [women's soccer]. (Arli)

Outside the Canadian Women's National Team Program

It is important to note that the Canadian women's national team program was not the only program within elite-level women's soccer to respond to the success and popularity resulting from Team U.S.A.'s gold medal win in 1999. In the spring of 2000, Chairman and CEO of Discovery Communications, John Hendricks, along with corporate investors such as Cox Communications, Time Warner Cable, and Comcast Corporation, founded the Women's United Soccer Association (WUSA) with an initial stake of \$40 million. The WUSA was organized and funded as a single entity business structure where club operators owned a financial stake in the league itself, not just their individual team, and where player contracts were owned by the league and not the teams. At the outset of the WUSA, the league signed all 20 players from the champion Team U.S.A., including Mia Hamm, Julie Foudy, and Tiffeny Milbrett, as 'founding players' with equity shares in the league. The inaugural season was launched in 2001, with player salaries set at a yearly minimum of \$27,000 and a maximum of \$85,000, and the league consisting of eight teams located throughout the United States (Markovits & Hellerman, 2003). Pre-season training often began in February with regular season play commencing in April and culminating in a four-team playoff to determine the Founders Cup league championship. The Team U.S.A. founding players were originally distributed amongst the eight franchises to ensure competitive disparity within the league. Additionally, each team could sign up to four International players to their roster, attracting top competitors from countries all over the world (Glier, n.d.). Some top Canadian players also secured roster spots in the WUSA with Silvana Burtini playing one season with the Carolina Courage, Amy Walsh playing one season with the Bay Area

CyberRays, Karina LeBlanc playing for the Boston Breakers, and Sharolta Nonen and Charmaine Hooper playing for the Atlanta Beat (Hall, 2004).

Unfortunately the WUSA folded after the 2003 season due to financial constraints and was reportedly \$16 million in the red. Although the league had an average attendance of 6,667 per game, these numbers were a 4.2% decline from the 2002 season. Even though several players took pay cuts prior to the final season, WUSA could not make up for the decline in average attendance and shortfall in sponsorships (Hersch & Bechtel, 2003). Consequently, the end of the WUSA either marked the end of many women's playing careers or forced aspiring players to seek other competitive teams and leagues to play in so they could remain elite. Fortunately (and perhaps as a result of WUSA's overall success) other countries like Norway, Sweden, Denmark, France, England, and Germany had strengthened the infrastructure of their semi-professional women's leagues and were eager to attract 'big-name' players to their clubs. For example, both France's Marinette Pichon and England's Kelly Smith, team-mates from the Philadelphia Charge, remained in the U.S. after the WUSA folded to play for the W-League's (see below) New Jersey Wildcats, then, returned to France (Pichon) in 2004 to play for Juvisy FCF and England (Smith) in 2004 to play for Arsenal (www.TheFA.com). German star, Birgit Prinz, played for the Carolina Courage then returned home in 2003 to compete with 1. FFC Frankfurt in the Frauen-Bundelisga within the Deutscher Fußball-Bund (www.dfb.de). The Atlanta Beat's Sun Wen from China temporarily retired after the WUSA folded but resumed play in 2005 within the Asian Football Confederation.

The Carolina Courage's Hege Riise also returned home to compete within the Football Association of Norway⁹.

Alternatively, many players stayed in the U.S.A. and Canada, flooding two existing amateur leagues, the Women's League (W-League) and the Women's Premier Soccer League (WPSL)¹⁰. The demise of the WUSA made the W-League and the WPSL the highest level of competition available to women in Canada and the United States outside national team development and collegiate competition¹¹. Yet the overall level of competition within these amateur leagues remains considerably lower than once offered by the WUSA. While the purpose of this chapter is not to discuss all amateur female soccer within North America, it is important to examine the specific structure of the W-League and the WPSL, in order to understand the changing landscape of elite-level women's soccer in Canada in its appropriate context. Thus, the next section briefly describes the structure of the amateur W-League and the WPSL, offering an explanation for their overall limited levels of competition and describing obstacles that pose as barriers to their competitive development.

⁹ An extensive search to track the whereabouts of ex-WUSA players turned up little information, reiterating what is already well documented in scholarly research: women's sports and female athletes are under-represented in sports media (for example Carty, 2005; Knoppers & Elling, 2004, and Duncan, 1990). Details regarding particular players were gained from insider knowledge and confirmed by information found on Wikipedia.com. However, it is acknowledged that Wikipedia.com is not a scholarly reference and therefore prone to misinformation.

¹⁰ Both of these leagues consider themselves to be "semi-professional" but are not publicly able to identify as such (e.g., through marketing) due to NCAA Bylaw 12 on Amateurism discussed below.

¹¹ By making this reference to "women", I am speaking of the post inter-collegiate athlete, approximately 22 years of age and older.

Amateur Soccer within Canada and the United States

That the W-League and WPSL have a marked lower level of competition than once offered in the WUSA is due in part to the fact that both leagues are strongly influenced by collegiate sport in both Canada and the United States; mainly National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) competition in the United States. The popularity and importance of collegiate sport has shaped the W-League and the WPSL in two main ways; 1) duration of league competition; and 2) league operation as amateur, and as a result contributes to the leagues' overall lower level of competition.

First, while the W-League and the WPSL consist of 40 and 26 teams respectively, boasting approximately 1,500 annual competitive roster spots, it is estimated by league officials that 50% of women on these teams are intercollegiate athletes¹². Since approximately half of W-League and WPSL players compete for their post-secondary institutions, they are committed to the intercollegiate fall and spring soccer seasons (from approximately August to April). Thus the W-league and WPSL regular season is scheduled in the summer, commencing in early May and concluding after playoffs in the first two weeks of August, resulting in a very short competitive season.

Secondly, since an estimated 50% of those competing in either the W-League or the WPSL are intercollegiate athletes, under NCAA Bylaw 12 on Amateurism, they must maintain their amateur status during all competition¹³. For example, as a prospective

¹² There are no official statistics of college vs. non-college aged players provided by the league, however this estimate was given by the W-League Director in a telephone conversation (*November, 2005*).

¹³ This NCAA policy is of profound importance because of the fact that the NCAA is "the" governing body of all intercollegiate athletics. Also, like men's football and basketball, and women's basketball, intercollegiate soccer is highly competitive and seen

and/or current student-athlete Bylaw 12 stipulates that you cannot compete with a franchise or within a league that deems itself ‘semi-Professional’ or ‘Professional’, nor compete with a team-mate who is considered ‘semi-Professional’ or ‘Professional’, nor accept payment for one’s sport talent (deeming one ‘semi-Professional’ or ‘Professional’) (NCAA Operations Manual, 2005-06: 69-84). Thus elite-level players and franchises within these amateur leagues are limited in their ability to become more professional and therefore more competitive. For example, for a franchise to demand that its players train every day, they need to provide adequate remuneration. Doing so, however, constitutes the league, the franchise, and the player as “professional” therefore excluding all collegiate players (which, as stated above, accounts for an approximate 50% of players within both leagues). Hence, elite-level adult players within the W-League and the WPSL cannot be paid for playing competitive soccer and are therefore pursuing their playing careers with little financial support.

These two major characteristics shape the landscape of elite-level women’s soccer in most of North America. The fact that the most competitive environment available for elite female soccer players in Canada and the United States, upon graduation from post-secondary education, amounts to a regular season of just three months is detrimental to a player’s long-term development. When student-athletes within the leagues return to school at the end of the season they are training and competing in a consistently competitive environment for an additional nine months. Meanwhile, the elite adult

as a stepping-stone, or breeding ground, for the professional level. A thorough discussion of this will be included in my final thesis.

players are left with few competitive environments in which to train and compete on a year-round basis¹⁴.

Consistently training and competing on a year-round basis is imperative for athletes to ensure optimum development throughout their career (Coaches Report, 2001). Istvan Balyi, a leading expert on planning and periodization and on short- and long-term performance programming, notes that scientific research suggests that it takes eight to 12 years of training for a talented athlete to reach elite levels. Described as the “10-year or 10,000 hour rule”, talented athletes should train slightly more than three hours daily for 10 years (Coaches Report, 2001). From this perspective, the current infrastructure of the W-League and WPSL, each with a three-month-long season, provide limited opportunities for serious and talented athletes to ensure ‘optimum development’ in their careers. When the W-League or WPSL seasons conclude after three months, both National Team and competitive players must find alternative teams and leagues to play for as well as additional training resources to maintain their elite-level performance capability.

The W-League and the WPSL both have stable infrastructures that support and provide *student-athletes* with competitive, high-level training environments in between their collegiate seasons. Yet because of their amateur status and short seasons (that accommodate NCAA competition), these leagues and their franchise owners are unable to provide a more long-term infrastructure with adequate financial support that would ensure optimum development of elite adult players. This shapes the development of

¹⁴ A small number of these players do compete overseas (where the leagues are structured differently with little influence from University athletics) or internationally for their National Teams. However, this number is extremely small.

elite-level women's soccer in both Canada and the United States at the national team level because instead of achieving optimal training and development on a consistent basis throughout the year at the club level, the responsibility of providing this competitive, year-round, environment falls on the national team programs¹⁵.

Fortunately for the Canadian women's national team program, a passionate soccer fan and committed supporter, Greg Kerfoot, purchased the Vancouver Whitecaps Football Club (WFC) in 2002 with the hope of taking competitive soccer in Canada in a new direction. Examining the role of the WFC is important to understand the changing landscape of elite-level women's soccer in Canada. As one of five Canadian franchises with teams in the W-League, Canadian elite-level players (like their American counterparts) participate in the league during and after varsity competition in order to remain competitive players. The next section describes the relationship between the Vancouver Whitecaps FC women's team and the Canadian women's national team and the role this relationship has played in changing the landscape of elite-level women's soccer in Canada.

The Vancouver Whitecaps FC

In August 2000, Dave Stadnyk purchased the 86ers, Vancouver's only professional men's soccer club, and changed the franchise name back to the Whitecaps¹⁶.

¹⁵ The scope of this statement cannot be explored in this thesis but it is significant in understanding the obstacles faced by countries like Canada and the United States in developing elite-level women's soccer after varsity competition.

¹⁶ The Whitecaps sport franchise originated in 1974 and competed in the North American Soccer League (NASL) until it folded in 1984 due to league instability (www.whitecapsfc.com). In 1986 the 86ers were launched with the franchise competing in the professional Canadian Soccer League (CSL). In 1992, the 86ers moved from the

That same year, Stadnyk introduced a women's team, the Breakers, to W-league competition and appointed Vancouver-based, Dave Dew, as volunteer head coach. Affiliated with the Whitecaps and competing in the North American W-League, the Breakers became the most competitive women's team in the Vancouver area and as such attracted a number of national team players and aspiring competitive athletes to the roster.

Like the beginnings of the Canadian women's national team program in 1986, Dew had few resources and limited funds with which to develop the competitive women's team. For the first few seasons, players and coaches committed to three training sessions a week with little to no support for travel food and accommodation. Physiotherapy was provided by local volunteer physiotherapists and was inconsistent. As volunteers, the coaching staff had other primary careers that needed their full attention and therefore were unable to put the time and energy needed into providing an adequate competitive training environment for the players on the Breakers.

Despite these limited resources, players were excited to have a competitive women's team to play for. One participant remembered, "I think we all felt really lucky about having this new level of play for women. The men were being paid on the other side but as far as I was concerned I didn't mind not being paid, I wasn't even considering getting paid, I just thought, 'this is great, we're playing in a kind of professional league, they're advertising us on the radio and the news and they're making a lot of noise about us.' That was pretty exciting for all of us!"

floundering CSL to the American Professional Soccer League (APSL) and in 1997 the APSL became what is now the A-League under the United Soccer Leagues.

Soon, due to significant financial losses, the USL took over the rights to the franchise and created a search committee to seek new ownership (www.whitecapsfc.com). In November 2002, Greg Kerfoot, a Vancouver-based millionaire, purchased the Whitecaps bringing the men's, women's, and youth teams together as the Vancouver Whitecaps Football Club (WFC).

When Kerfoot purchased the WFC his goal was not only to keep competitive soccer alive in Vancouver but to take it in a new direction. He immediately set out to create a more professional and competitive training environment for elite players and that included the women's and youth programs as well as the men's program.

Like Pellerud, Kerfoot recognized the importance of providing a consistent training environment for competitive players. He created this environment by providing increased access to quality training facilities and physiotherapy resources, providing living accommodations for out-of-town players for the duration of the season, compensating local players with gas/mileage, and eventually hiring a full-time staff for the women's side of the club.

Although these changes within the women's program did not occur all at once, the commitment to change was immediately visible; one of the first changes Kerfoot made within the organization was to make the ticket prices for both men's and women's games the same. "You're just so accustomed to being a female, growing up you always thought, 'okay we're a little bit under the men so it's cheaper in [our] sport', like even professional basketball tickets are less for the women [than the men]." For women who have grown up in a sporting culture where their participation has been permitted but their competitive development not always encouraged by the provision of adequate coaching

and resources, making the cost of a women's game equal to the cost of a men's game made an immediate impression. One participant stated, "You know, just with that small action he showed that there's value in the women's game and why have it seem to the outside person that it's less valuable by having lower ticket prices?"

Under new ownership the WFC became a more professionally run sport organization able to attract top Canadian players to the program. An increased number of national team players signed with the WFC and began spending their summers in Vancouver training in an increasingly competitive environment.

This competitive environment was precisely what Pellerud had been seeking for his players since arriving to Canada and with many of his national team players on the WFC roster, Pellerud was introduced to Kerfoot and they immediately established a collaborative working relationship. Living in Toronto with his family since the beginning of his contract, Pellerud recognized the benefits of Vancouver's mild winter climate in providing year-round, outdoor, training and decided to move his family to Vancouver in early 2004. Having an increasingly competitive environment provided by the WFC and both his assistant and goalkeeper coach already out west, Pellerud's relocation made Vancouver the unofficial "home base" for the Canadian women's national team program.

As a result, a symbiotic relationship between the Canadian women's national team program and the WFC women's program developed. The WFC benefited by having the national team based out of Vancouver in that they could attract more top Canadian players to their franchise by promoting 'increased visibility' to national team staff. Similarly, when top Canadian players made the decision to sign with the WFC and

relocate to the Vancouver area, the national team coaching staff had increased (and less-expensive) scouting opportunities as well as more hands-on access to the development and training of current and prospective national team players.

As more and more national team players, as well as youth and adult competitive players aspiring to compete internationally, signed with the WFC, the competitive training standards rose. With rising competitive standards came rising needs of the players and staff. Unlike five years earlier with the Breakers, the 2005 WFC season had the women's team training every single day with an increased number of out-of-town players training in small-group settings. This increased training necessitated more human resources and in a landmark move, Kerfoot hired the first-ever full-time head coach in the W-League. In February 2006, the Canadian women's national team program, U20 Assistant Coach Bob Birarda was named WFC full-time head coach. Shortly afterwards, Birarda named Steve Simonson full-time assistant coach with responsibilities to oversee the development of the WFC female youth program.

These new positions demonstrated a commitment to competitive women's soccer by allocating significant funds to the WFC women's program for two new full-time staff members. For the first time in the W-League a women's team head coach would have time and funding to focus solely on the training and development of the team. One participant described this decision as, "something that adds so much to the program. They are people that are there all the time. Before, we may have had coaches [who] were teachers so we couldn't train in the morning or afternoon. Now, the schedule can be dictated around what's best for the players in terms of training."

In hiring Birarda, the relationship between the WFC and the Canadian women's national team program became further entwined, and in the fall of 2006 Kerfoot's funding of the first-ever Full-Time Player Program made this relationship explicit.

Full-Time Player Program

By the end of 2005 and fully ensconced in the soccer world in Vancouver, Pellerud and Kerfoot began negotiating the design and funding for a program that would ensure that the Canadian women's national team would be fully prepared for the upcoming 2007 FIFA Women's World Cup tournament and come home as gold medal champions. An avid soccer fan and savvy businessman, Kerfoot asked how much it would cost to help Canada bring home the gold. Pellerud responded with characteristic bluntness that to win the gold medal at the 2007 FIFA WWC he would need to train the national team on a full-time basis in a long-term residency camp setting in Vancouver. In order to relocate the national team players to Vancouver and offer a new daily training regime, players would have to be financially supported beyond what players were receiving from the Athlete Assistance Program (AAP) through Sport Canada. Pellerud said achieving this would cost \$1.5 million over two years. Kerfoot agreed.

In the fall of 2006, current players from the Canadian women's national team arrived in Vancouver to start the "Full-Time Player Program", enabling them to focus solely on training and preparing for the 2007 FIFA Women's World Cup in Beijing. For the first time ever, women on Team Canada were able to treat playing for their country like a full-time professional career. In addition to annual carding money provided by the AAP (up to \$18,000 for a senior card and \$10,800 for a development card) players in the

Full-Time Player Program receive funding to top their annual salary up to \$40,000. Thus funding varied from player to player depending on their carding status, original living circumstances, and NCAA eligibility.

Without the costly expense of repeatedly flying national team players from all over North America into training camp as well as relieving the players' financial stress of being in a long-term training camp and away from work, the Full-Time Player Program finally enabled Pellerud to have daily access to the training and development of the player's on the national team. This increased the program's chances for success at the 2007 FIFA Women's World Cup.

Kerfoot's willingness to financially support Pellerud and the Canadian women's national team program in their efforts to reach the podium at the 2007 FIFA Women's World Cup and the 2008 Olympic Games in Beijing has taken the already changing landscape of elite-level women's soccer in Canada a dramatic step forward.

Conclusion - Dreaming of Beijing

Although the 22-year history of the Canadian women's national team program, like competitive women's soccer around the world, has been short, it has not been easy. With limited funding and support from the CSA and frequent unofficial hiatus' to the program, the women's program has faced many obstacles. However, the success of Team U.S.A.'s 1999 gold medal game sent the message to FIFA and NSO's around the world to take notice of women's soccer. The CSA's response to this message was to hire internationally renowned head coach Even Pellerud thereby opening a door to the development of competitive women's soccer in Canada that Pellerud has refused to let

the CSA shut. By pushing for increased funding, acquiring additional full-time coaches, laying the groundwork for a stable youth national team program, competing in more international matches, bringing players into a long-term residency camp funded by the Full-Time Player Program, and achieving strong results at both the U19 and senior 2003 FIFA Women's World Cup events, Even Pellerud and Greg Kerfoot have been key participants in creating change within the competitive landscape of women's soccer in Canada and have helped jumpstart Team Canada down the path to success.

This success was ratified in September 2006, for the first time ever in either men's or women's soccer in Canada, when the Canadian women's national team placed 10th in the Official FIFA World Rankings – a feat previously deemed impossible by soccer critics and fans alike.

The following chapter takes a deeper look at the ways in which these documented changes have influenced the everyday lives of both players and staff members involved in the Canadian women's national team program and the Vancouver Whitecaps FC.

Chapter 5

Findings

The changing landscape of elite-level women's soccer and the Canadian women's national team program described in the previous chapter led to a more professional training environment during the 2006 Whitecaps FC season and culminated in the implementation of the Full-Time Player Program (henceforth FTTP) in September 2006. As a result of these changes within the environment of elite-level women's soccer, the experiences and attitudes of players and staff members involved were influenced in a number of ways.

Unstructured and in-depth interviews with eight elite-level soccer players and eight staff members who played/worked for the Whitecaps FC organization and/or within the Canadian women's national team program provided an opportunity for each individual to share their attitudes, perspectives, and meanings about the progress made in elite-level women's soccer in Canada.

At first glance, the data suggests that each of the eight competitors believed that the increasingly professional Whitecaps FC environment and the implementation of the FTTP represented real progress for women's soccer in Canada. However, within the stories told by each participant, key themes emerged that illustrated a more ambiguous picture about the impact of this environment depending in part on who benefited from and/or had access to the changes. Thus, two somewhat different sets of opinions emerged from within the player participant sample from those who were not national team players (henceforth competitive players) and those who were.

This chapter presents my findings in three sections; the first section focuses on the experiences and opinions of competitive players influenced by the 2006 Whitecaps FC season and the second looks at the experiences and opinions of the national team players shaped by the subsequent implementation of the FTPP in September 2006. The final section explores the attitudes and experiences expressed by staff members immersed in these environments.

Competitive Players: The Changing Landscape of the 2006 Whitecaps FC Season

Embracing Change

When Kerfoot assumed ownership of the Vancouver Whitecaps FC in 2002 and infused money into the development of the women's team, the changes that occurred ranged from the provision of better quality soccer equipment and access to better training facilities, to an increase in training opportunities and the provision of a small stipend. Then, when Pellerud moved to Vancouver in 2004 and began working closely with Kerfoot and the Whitecaps FC, both parties recognized the need to combine their efforts towards creating an elite-level environment that would benefit their respective programs. This culminated in hiring Bob Birarda (then U20 Canadian national team assistant coach) as full-time head coach of the Vancouver Whitecaps FC senior women's team in February 2006. Until this time, no head coach in the W-League had been full-time, therefore this hire demonstrated that the Whitecaps FC was committed to developing and supporting an elite-level environment within the women's game. Upon learning of Birarda's appointment, one participant, Marcie, recalled:

I was excited for Bob being there... I thought he was going to bring more of a professionalism to the team. ...I did think it was going to be a really positive and good change. (Marcie)

Birarda's new position meant that his primary focus was to oversee the development of the senior women's team and provide a more competitive training environment for the players. As full-time coach, the team's training schedule could also be supervised on a full-time basis. Gone were the days when players trained two or three times a week in the late evenings. A full-time training environment was now possible, and for the first time, the 2006 Whitecaps FC season consisted of daily training sessions, sometimes two sessions in one day (referred to as two-a-days), with training times in either the early morning, mid-afternoon, and/or evenings. Marcie described the impact of this full-time environment:

In terms of scouting and resource assistance, [there] is a lot more. There's also a bigger pool of players that are being developed because there are more resources. So, the fact that you have a reserve team, have these younger youth players, you know, youth [developing] into women's players, coming up there's the ability to train them and get them involved in the program whereas there just [weren't] those kind of resources before. (Marcie)

Being full-time, and having access to more financial and human resources, Birarda and the Whitecaps FC were able to implement a reserve team format for the 2006 season that served the purpose of developing youth players as well as providing extra training and matches for senior players. Theoretically, the reserve team enabled the coaching staff to monitor the development of up-and-coming youth players as well as move senior players up and down. With a senior team and a reserve team, even more training opportunities were available for both competitive and national team players.

For most of the players interviewed, this new training schedule, with access to more training sessions, was a tremendous step forward in providing more opportunities for individual and team development. Of this change, one participant, Marney, said:

“[I] felt like I was finally in an environment in Vancouver that I could actually really improve as a player.” (Marney)

While Birarda's hiring was a demonstrative step towards the development of a more professionally run sports franchise, the link between the Whitecaps FC and the Canadian national team program became even more transparent. Marney and another participant, Tracy, acknowledged this link:

The Whitecaps is where this source of established money is, and so then it's kind of like taking that established money and then bringing the national team into it, because there's no other system of funding that's adequate enough to be able to, you know, have the national team be covered in the sense that they can do what they need to do in order to be a country that can compete with the highest level, you know? (Marney)

I think when they hired Bob Birarda as the coach, [it was a] great decision for the national team program because you have a national team coach who's coaching the Whitecaps, so all those players who are already on the Whitecaps will develop into more of the national team system, and also all these other players around Canada or who are usually in the States or wherever they may be, will want to come here and train because it's the best link to their national team career. (Tracy)

As discussed in the previous chapter, access to a consistent competitive training environment, along with financial support to maintain this access, is the quintessential need for a competitive and national team player. These players found quality training where and when they could in order to remain competitive, and for many players on the west coast, this meant playing for the Vancouver Whitecaps FC. A mutually beneficial, albeit informal, relationship existed between the Whitecaps FC and various west-coast national team players; the Whitecaps FC worked hard to accommodate their national team players' duties (e.g., being called into camp and taken away from the Whitecaps FC season), so that when available, they would return to Vancouver and wear the Whitecaps FC jersey. As a private sport franchise concerned with the bottom line, being able to market and feature national team players as part of the Whitecaps FC brand is in the best interest of the organization. As well, when not with the national team, national team players need an intense environment in order to maintain competitiveness – and the

Whitecaps FC is the only women's team in Vancouver able to realistically provide this environment.

Increased Training, Decreased Funding

Though access to better equipment, training facilities, quality coaching, and more frequent training opportunities for the 2006 Whitecaps FC season was recognized as progress, the impact of these changes did not benefit some of the competitive player participants in the ways that they had hoped. More specifically, these players related the sacrifices that they made to continue playing competitively, how they negotiated their feelings of self-worth and value as it related to their involvement with an increasingly professional program, and their need for control (sense of agency) over the continuation or conclusion of their own careers.

For many players the increase in training had a dramatic impact upon their daily lives. Historically, training sessions were held in the late evenings, starting anytime between seven and eight o'clock and ending between nine and ten o'clock. This allowed for the players and volunteer staff (coaches) to maintain a typical work week and still attend soccer training. Now that training sessions were held daily, often during the morning and afternoon, not only did commitment to travel costs and time increase, but time away from work increased as well. Tracy noted how the new training schedule, made life more difficult to balance:

I think once a club takes it professionally you automatically have to step up, right? Um, is that good? Yeah, but it's good and bad. I think for a lot of people when you become a professional athlete you have to make a choice. Like especially with, you know, so training becomes more intense, which is fine and stuff like that but at the same time you're not professionally paid. So you still have to balance your existing life with it, right? You still have to go to work, you still have to pay bills, you still have to do all that... (Tracy)

Despite the fact that an increase in training was perceived as a step forward for competitive women's soccer in Canada, the ability to commit to these changes proved difficult for many. All participants in the player category were adult women, living away from home, with living costs that need to be covered (e.g., rent, car payments, car insurance, food, gas money, utilities, and health insurance). An increase in training meant that players either had to adjust their work schedules, miss work entirely, or miss training sessions altogether, and for many, this was not possible.

Although the Whitecaps FC did offer some compensation to offset costs associated with increased training for the 2006 season, the amount of money offered was limited (approximately \$300 a month), and was not guaranteed to each player. It was provided for only the duration of the season (approximately three months) and did not include pre-season training during the months of March and April. Though the compensation was better than nothing, many women were still paying out of their own pocket to meet the team's new training schedule:

...just the struggle of trying to, you know, \$300 a month or whatever those of us that aren't on the national team, like that's the only funding that I was getting from the Whitecaps which basically, essentially was just covering the gas to get to practice. (Marney)

Again, although increased training opportunities were needed to strengthen and raise the environment within the Whitecaps FC for the competitive player, adequate financial support was not available to help ease the costs of increased travel and time.

For many women, making these adjustments required even more sacrifices in their lives to accommodate their competitive playing career. Driving long distances to training three times a week was already a financial and time commitment for competitive players. Training five or six times a week and sometimes twice in one day was a considerable increase. One participant, Hayley, remarked:

You do start to feel, like towards the end there, you know I was just driving up to SFU over and over again and it's in rush hour traffic, and you know, and you've got to pay for gas and you're paying for parking and all these different things and, just yeah, you do start to think, uh, I want to be doing some other things here, and this is such a sacrifice or this is such a time commitment and I'm not happy. (Hayley)

Previous to and during the 2006 Whitecaps FC season, some competitive players accommodated their playing careers by putting the pursuit of a professional career on hold. One competitive player described this accommodation:

To be honest with you, like, to have a real "career" and play soccer, I don't think you can do it. You have to do one or the other. ...I've been able to balance a job and play soccer, but notice I say the word job not a career. If it was a career, it wouldn't last, right? (Tracy)

Many competitive players found various ways to financially support their desire to play elite-level soccer (and in some cases chase their dreams of becoming national team players) through coaching. Unlike many men in soccer who turn to coaching once their playing careers are over, many women in soccer turn to coaching as a viable source of income that enables them to support/maintain their playing careers. As a coach, you can earn between \$40 and \$75 an hour¹⁷. In this way, coaching enables a female player to work few hours per day, for high hourly wages, leaving plenty of time available during the day and late evening for training and earning enough money to remain financially self-sufficient. Marney acknowledged how her work as a coach enabled her to remain competitive:

I'm probably one of the more fortunate ones [who coaches soccer which] doesn't require me to be at a desk from 9-5, that I can make enough money to try and play... (Marney)

For national team players receiving monthly government funding, the changes implemented for the 2006 Whitecaps FC season did not have the same impact on their lives as on the lives of competitive players within the organization. Receiving

¹⁷ This number varies based on the player's coaching experience and reputation as well as what community soccer organization they are working with. Also, this varies from within Canada; not all community soccer organizations in each province across Canada pays this much for professional coaching, however, this is the current trend in Vancouver.

approximately \$1,800 a month (if on a senior card) and \$300 from the Whitecaps FC stipend provided more financial support to national team players in this increased training environment than to competitive players.

It is important to note here that for the 2005 season, the Whitecaps FC organization implemented, for the first time, a monthly player stipend to cover the costs of playing for the Whitecaps FC. The stipend was distributed in a tier-system with top-tier players receiving \$425 a month, second-tier players receiving \$325, and third-tier players receiving \$250. Leading into the 2006 season, despite all the changes and increased training demands, the tier system was canceled and a \$300 stipend was offered to some players with various restrictions (as mentioned above). Thus, some players who received \$425 a month in the previous season were now committing more time and personal resources to the Whitecaps FC organization and their playing careers for \$125 less in financial support.

Excluded by Change

This resulted in feelings of frustration, worthlessness, and exclusion as it became obvious to some competitive players that this new training schedule primarily accommodated national team players. Tracy remarked on the new training schedule:

You could tell it was geared towards making sure those national team players had a place to play and train on a consistent basis, so every day during the day, two-a-days, whatever. Whereas they know, the majority of the local or in-town players aren't going to be able to do that because they already have other commitments. (Tracy)

While she did not believe that the national team players were undeserving of this support per se, Tracy said:

...I think you can create a huge division in your team when you know certain players are able to survive by just playing soccer all summer, where you have other players on the team giving the

same amount of commitment, they're there the same amount of time and they still have to find a way to survive. (Tracy)

For most competitive players, it was difficult to maintain a positive attitude when the national team players within the Whitecaps FC were receiving more financial compensation for equal amount of time and effort given. In addition to financial support, it was perceived that national team players were also being provided with a certain level of respect and privilege based on their national team status:

...it seemed as though they were treated very well, financially and like, with respect, you know? They were the important people of the team kind of thing. So yeah it did make us, well me, feel less important and you know, I got less playing time, I wasn't supported financially or you know, I was paying my rent, whereas a lot of the national team players were living for free in the apartment building, able to train all the times that they wanted. Whereas the rest of us were working, and you know, trying to make money to do all this. And it also felt like it didn't really matter what we did, that these national team players were going to play. And even when they were away we got to fill in, and that was exciting, but then they came back and we were kind of pushed to the side again, and not having as much playing time. So, yeah, that was frustrating and for me, it was difficult to really have a positive attitude even though I knew that that was important for me to do. (Hayley)

Marney echoed these feeling of frustration:

I think if you have the benefit of being labeled a national team player, I just feel like you get a certain credit... everybody likes to put people into boxes, you know? This is how we identify this player or that player, or whatever. ...I've never had the benefit of being identified as a national team player. I'm put in this box, based on my past experiences where I'm the player that's not quite good enough to play on the national team, whereas if I'm on the national team I get a certain, 'Well obviously you must be good in some sort of way.' Where a lot of times with players its like, you have good performances and bad performances and its given a different sort of importance, or something is attached to it based on the stock that comes with your name as a player. And that's what I find frustrating with the whole system! (Marney)

Competitive players were not receiving commensurate financial support and felt that they were not being treated with an equal or objective amount of respect, which made it difficult to feel as though they were an integral part of a cohesive team unit. This made them feel insignificant and dispensable. Both Hayley and Tracy described feeling this way:

I didn't really feel like I was important. Or I was just a number. So if I wanted to come [to training], great, and if I didn't want to come then... [shrugs shoulders]... that kind of thing. (Hayley)

...to be honest, I almost felt replaceable. Really, I could have been any person, I felt more like a number here in my own city, whereas, when I was away I felt like an actual professional player. (Tracy)

Lacking a Sense of Control

The limited financial and emotional support created an unhealthy environment where the competitive players in this study felt they had no sense of control over their own playing career. Some competitive players, after commencing the 2006 Whitecaps FC season, felt that they were forced to 'retire' from competitive soccer. Tracy recalled:

I always said that if I couldn't play at that level anymore, if I knew, "You know what Tracy? You're not fit enough, you're not fast enough, ...you're not smart enough to play." ...You know what I mean? At that level, if my decision-making slowed down and all that stuff, then I would be like, okay. "Well you know what, I'm just not cut out to do it." But, the fact that I still know and still believe that I could still be at that level. I could still play... So, ...yeah the decision wasn't really mine to make. ...So it wasn't a, okay, no I just love working more and I chose that. It was a, I didn't really have a choice. ...I'm not a person who deals well with not being in control – especially in my life – so, for that decision to be forced upon my drove me nuts... [Participant goes on to discuss that she cannot stand to listen to Whitecaps FC advertisements or even read news highlights of the team.] (Tracy)

Perhaps in a moment of forethought the following participant chose to resign before the 2006 Whitecaps FC season commenced. She described her decision:

[In] the end I decided that I really needed to be able to put all my energy into something like that and looking at the way the team was going to go, looking at the fact that there was going to [be] training on a daily basis, sometimes more than once, and the fact that I have a full-time job and that, you know, I have to put my energies towards that as well. I just didn't feel that I could be at the same level as the other girls because, you know, with the other things I had to do in my life, or wanted to do in my life. And that, I could maybe do it, but that I wouldn't be happy at the end doing it. So, I had to make that decision. And I also wanted to make sure that when I wasn't playing anymore, it was on my terms as well. (Marcie)

Although she felt that she could still compete technically and physically for the Whitecaps FC, Marcie recognized that balancing a full-time career and the new training schedule would be difficult and therefore chose to retire.

Thus although the changing landscape within the Whitecaps FC organization is generally described as positive change for elite-level women's soccer in Canada its impact on the personal lives of the competitive players interviewed in this study were at times negative. Despite some of these negative influences Marney poignantly stated how she is able to endure:

But I know what gives me happiness and it's soccer. I love playing soccer, it's at the core of who I am. (Marney)

The following section describes some of the similar ways in which the FTTP influenced the lives of some of the national team players involved in the program.

National Team Players: Implementation of the FTTP

Embracing Change

After the 2006 Whitecaps FC season concluded in August, details of the FTTP were finalized and in September, national team players residing outside of Vancouver moved to the city to join the national team players already living in town in the first-ever long-term residency training camp. Funded by Kerfoot, the FTTP strictly supports the Canadian women's national team program.

For women on the Canadian national team, the implementation of the FTTP was a dream come true; for years, players and coaches within the national team program were vociferous in asking the CSA for increased funding that would enable the national team to spend more time together in residency-style training camps. More time together, they insisted, would enable individual players and the team to coalesce technically, tactically and physically, to achieve international standards. One participant, Natalie, described the benefit of having more time together in residency camp:

The time that the team has spent together this fall has been so instrumental in some of the results that have occurred, you know, even on the field say, in the past couple of weeks. That time together, in order to become one of the world's best, you need to always surround yourself by like-minded players, players with the same quest, you know, pushing each other. Before, you would again, break it off and go back to your own environment, and sometimes to create this sort of super-environment is the best way to get the best results and to prepare as closely as you can for that international pursuit. (Natalie)

As discussed previously, it is strongly argued that more frequent (daily) and intense training contributes to the development of elite-athletes (Salmela, 1998). More time 'together' as a team is imperative in helping a team's success in international competition. However, in order to have more time together in the form of a full-time residency camp players need to be properly compensated. In providing individual contracts, the FPHP gives money directly to the player in the form of a salary, ensuring that each player can dedicate the time, energy, and resources needed while in residency.

For players receiving carding money through the AAP, the FPHP contracts top up their yearly salary to approximately \$40,000 annually (roughly an additional \$1,800 monthly/\$22,000 annually). Previous reports from Sport Canada have stated that in pursuit of international competition, the AAP funding accounts for 100% of a carded athlete's income. In Canada, funding for athletes has been a contentious issue over the years with those in elite-level sport (players, coaches, administrators) constantly pushing for more government support. After a dismal report given by the IOC after Canada's performance at the 2006 Winter Olympic Games in Turin, Italy, the government of Canada renewed its commitment to support international athletes by increasing the AAP carding scale to \$1,500 for a senior card and \$1,000 for a development card. Still, \$1,500 a month is not enough to support most athletes in this pursuit. The provision of the FPHP ensures this additional financial support. One participant, Arli, described the importance of the FPHP:

[It] is helping out by allowing the players to receive some money on a monthly basis, not for them to make money, but to help them relieve a bit of the stress. So instead of having to work eight hours a day or being on the field coaching every single night – which is extremely exhausting – it means that you [can] work less and therefore you can focus more on soccer, on training, and alleviate the stress of having to worry about working so much. (Arli)

Gone are the days when players were paying out of their own pocket for travel, equipment, physiotherapy, and additional training. Through the FTPP contracts, players are now able to cover the added expenses associated with international competition, as well as live comfortably. Natalie explained the importance of the FTPP contracts:

...I think it's the very thing that we've been arguing for in '99 and 2003 and the qualifications leading up to, is to somehow compensate for some of the daily living expenses that it costs to being a player. This money doesn't go into the majority of people's bank accounts and helping to increase the black, it just helps, like this money is there, there is some housing that is also supported by Greg Kerfoot and the CSA, but players are still responsible for buying their food, paying for chunks of the rent, you know any of the telephone cost, all that kind of stuff, so. ...I don't think its necessarily just going into a stack in the bank account. (Natalie)

Finally, players were given the financial compensation/support they needed in order to focus their energies on becoming elite-level players and representing Canada on the world stage of soccer. There were other ways, however, in which the implementation of the FTPP influenced and shaped their lives.

Increased Support, Increased Sacrifice

Though players on the national team were now provided with additional funds to support their daily training schedule, the program/contract came with many requirements, including the expectation to relocate to Vancouver, BC. One participant, Madaleine discussed the impact of this requirement:

...we had to make sacrifices like I said, having to move here, to Vancouver to residency camp. That, you know, it's costing us, personally more money than – I mean I'm not making any money being here. As you know, we are getting that money but it's quite expensive living here. Plus having to pay for your home at home. ...I mean I guess you have to be based somewhere, and they chose to be based here in the BC area but like... I make a sacrifice not to see my boyfriend, see my family, put everything on hold, because I have to live here and I have to pay

everything here just to get settled down here. I have to get more stuff even though I have all the same stuff at home, you know? (Madaleine)

In order to have residency camp, players need to live in the same location. For players living outside of Vancouver, this meant leaving their established lifestyles and often times careers for extended periods of time up to two or three months at a time. This commitment had an impact on local national team players as well. One participant, Heather, described the sacrifices she has made:

Um a lot of it has to do with family and friends... Missing out on weddings, some of my girlfriends, friends of mine, relatives have gotten married. Funerals I've missed. You know those types of things. ...You know there's all that sort of stuff that you don't really think about... And another thing I sacrifice is the health of my body. I don't know, to be honest, if I'll be able to walk when I'm 40 years old. Because I have three stress fractures in my legs, one in my leg, two in my feet. I have ankles that are shattered. Knock on wood that my knees are okay but, who knows for how much longer, you know? So there's a lot of health things, school things, work – like I've sacrificed getting a real job, like, who knows what I'm going to do when I'm done soccer? Because I don't know life outside of soccer, right? There's no, reality to my life outside of this. ...I haven't traveled the world, I've never been on a trip for myself before. It's been all for soccer. So I mean, schooling is probably going to be another two years and then, like, get a real job, like go traveling, okay so then I'm getting married and having kids when I'm 40. Not that great, you know? So I've put a lot of that sort of stuff on hold, and who knows when real life is going to happen? (Heather)

Putting 'real' life on 'hold' by having to miss important family events or postpone major life decisions like starting a family, a career, and having the time to travel were sacrifices some national team players made to participate. Having managed to balance a career in sport along with competing internationally *before* the FTTP, Natalie had to resign in order to fully participate in the FTTP:

...I've taken a leave of absence, an indefinite leave of absence. So, and it's sort of been a process through early in 2006 where I took a massive pay-cut to allow myself to continue to play, or to become more of a full-time player... So I took a big hit and became very much a part-time worker throughout the spring and summer. And then at the end of the summer, again, knowing that residency was going to start, thought, this is different than we even imagined in the spring, I thought there was still going to be an in and out ability, and I realized with residency that that's not realistic. (Natalie)

I'm not saying it's – it's incredibly difficult, I think, to pull up stakes and move somewhere else. ...I'm not saying it's easy, I've given up jobs and actually have lost a huge chunk of money to go and do this, and in fact, because I'm a local player, don't get the benefits of some gas money or maybe help with rent, you know, so in the end, it hurts local players too – some local players. So it's just a huge sacrifice all around for everybody, even some of the contract staff members or some of the coaching staff, like it has been very difficult on them. (Natalie)

Like Natalie who had to lose a salaried position in order to receive full-time funding, Heather also acknowledged that the increased funding did not necessarily cover committed expenses:

Like, the situation still isn't great... We're each getting money now, per month, that's a salary basically, in order to offset some of the costs of our training. I mean, people that have left their homes and stuff, still have their mortgages to pay, still have their bills to pay, still have their car payments, still have all these payments, and now they have payments here as well. But, I don't know, I guess the balancing factor is that there is some more money to help out with that.
(Heather)

While the national team participants were supportive of the FFTP and certain that residency-style training is imperative in Canada's pursuit to be strong competitors in international soccer, they acknowledged that the program was not without increased sacrifice to their personal lives.

Lacking a Sense of Control

In addition to emotional, professional, and for some women financial sacrifices in order to participate in the FFTP, the national team participants spoke somewhat uneasily about the manner in which the contracts were designed and administered resulting in feelings of insecurity and control over their careers.

Since Kerfoot funds the Canadian women's national team program, the CSA does not play a role in the decision-making and distribution process¹⁸. As Head coach, Pellerud decides who will be offered funding and upon accepting the contract, players relocate to Vancouver in order to participate in the full-time residency camp. Heather described the process of selection:

¹⁸ This process has not been clearly disclosed in any interviews with either the player and/or staff samples. Participants all noted that Even Pellerud has sole control over who is given funding and when that funding concludes.

He chooses the players. So basically if you're performing at a level and you can commit to the team residential camp wise, I mean you're still able to be involved with the NT and not be a part of residential camp – it is a possibility – you just forfeit your funding from Greg Kerfoot and you live your lifestyle, wherever you do it, you play games, you train, whatever, you can still get invited into a camp, Even made that clear, you can still play at World Cup level, but, you can't be involved here and be paid. So, he chooses, and in a way, also the players, like he can recommend a player and if a player denies it then fine, but he basically chooses who gets it. ...But you can be dropped from the program at any point in time. You're only given one month grace period of pay. So if I got dropped tomorrow, I'd get my October month and then I'd be toast. Toast from my carding, toast from Greg Kerfoot in one month, go find yourself a job that pays you three grand a month and continue to live without your life. So it's pretty harsh if you do something wrong or you're not performing or something like that and you fully get dropped. You're done. So Even has full reigns over that. (Heather)

For Heather it was very clear that in order to maintain funding, you must not only consistently perform at international standards, but be willing and able to relocate to the Vancouver area and commit to the FTPP. Though Heather said that it is still a “possibility” for players to be on the national team but not participate in the FTPP, such players would not receive additional financial support, nor have access to daily training with the national team.

With the implementation of the FTPP and new financial support, received only when the contracts were signed, participants described a sense of limited autonomy over their lives. Arli struggled to express her sense of the limitations of the contract:

...basically Even said, in the contract between the players, um, communicate to him, you're allowed to have work outside of being a player but just communicate with him. So, if you're accepting a, like if you're working 9-5, Monday to Friday, it's... that would not be acceptable because, especially the Vancouver-based players, have to be available for... It just, it gave Even the freedom to run more sessions throughout the week. Like, outside of training camps and the flexibility to and um, I mean it, it wasn't written in stone that you could not work... (Arli)

Previous to the FTPP, national team players managed various aspects of their lives such as education, interpersonal relationships, as well as jobs/careers when funded only by Sport Canada's AAP. Now, in order to receive increased funding they had to commit to participating in the FTPP which entailed relocating to Vancouver. Although it was not “written in stone” that you couldn't accept work and still be in the FTPP, there was

limited time and opportunity for players to do so. In this way, some participants felt that they exchanged their sense of autonomy for increased funding:

It's been um, I mean in a way, we've been able to be professional soccer players, something we always wanted. Obviously there was a cost to it. It cost, you know, pretty much living, you know, leave all our family and you know our life that we are accustomed to at home, and do whatever [Pellerud] was saying. ...So it's a bit more challenging in the way that there was less... how can I say that? If there was a camp, you can't say no. You're more of a, you know, a puppet in the way that they're giving you money but they're expecting a lot. (Madaleine)

Thus, despite being told that they were still able to work and live outside of Vancouver and remain in the national team program, the only way to receive additional funding from Kerfoot, was for national team players to sign the contracts and commit to relocating to Vancouver to participate in the FTTP.

However, unlike the competitive players discussed above, the sacrifices being made by the national team players were for a more tangible goal – dreams of medaling in the 2007 FIFA Women's World Cup and the 2008 Beijing Olympics. Recalling the sweet taste of victory from Team Canada's success in 2003, Natalie described the invaluable reward that makes these sacrifices worthwhile:

To look into your teammates' eyes at the end of the a game, or go to the World Cup and beat a China to make it into the semi-finals, there is no dollar figure on that, and that can't be replaced with anything... (Natalie)

Like the players immersed in the changing landscape of elite-level women's soccer in Canada, staff members also had particular attitudes and beliefs about their environment and the changes within it. The next section reveals important attitudes and beliefs about the culture of soccer in Canada from various staff members' perspectives.

Staff Members: Views of the Changing Landscape

Not surprisingly, when discussing the changing landscape of elite-level women's soccer in Canada with various staff members the attitudes, experiences, and beliefs

expressed differed in varying ways from those shared by some of the players. In addition, discussions with staff members traversed a wide range of ideas about *how* soccer is structured and perceived in Canada. The following section explores the attitudes and experiences shared by staff members.

Perceived Struggle: Gender Bias

Prior to Kerfoot providing funding for the senior women's national team in September 2006, Canada had experienced immense success with a second place finish at the 2002 U19 FIFA Women's World Cup in Edmonton and a fourth place finish at the 2003 FIFA Women's World Cup in the U.S.. Staff member Brent, recalled the climate felt within women's soccer:

...at that time there was a lot of awareness raised to the success of women's soccer in Canada. Unfortunately when we failed to qualify for the Olympics in 2004 it was a bit of a blow to the situation but even more so was [that] the CSA no longer funded the team in that year to continue training since [we] failed to qualify... so that was a bit of step backwards for us. ...So, the momentum that was initially created raised a lot of awareness, there was a lot of opportunity, and it was a very exciting time for soccer in Canada. I do remember after we had qualified, I believe for the semi-final, in the World Cup in 2003 in the USA, our Head of Delegation, who was the Vice-President at the time, toasted us at the staff table by saying, do you realize that by qualifying the bonuses the players receive will come out of next year's budget? (Brent)

Despite the program's successes on the field, the CSA did not reward the women's program with increased funding and/or resources to stay the course of development.

The ethos behind these CSA decisions were viewed differently by the staff members interviewed. Some believed that women's soccer in Canada was treated and/or perceived differently than men's soccer based on their experiences within the CSA and the Whitecaps FC organization. Despite the on-field successes noted by Brent, staff member Darla, described the CSA's mixed message of support:

... all of a sudden these Board members whom I've known for years at the CSA were saying, "Aren't the women great! The women are doing much better than the men could ever hope to do!" ... the CSA loves to have success and they're never going to have success in the men's

program the way that things are going right now so they're jumping on the bandwagon of the women's program, but they're still trying to undercut us! They're still trying to under-fund us. (Darla)

Another staff member, Samantha, described that the perception of the women's and men's soccer differs:

...there are still people out there who believe [women should not be playing soccer] and they are in positions of power. Because it's a cultural thing... Male culture, female culture. And it's just very hard for a lot of people to accept it and there will always be this dichotomy. And I think the women ...are smart enough to realize this and just grit their teeth and keep going. Because I think they'll be fighting this battle for a long, long, long time. And there are people who pay lip service to women's soccer but when it comes down to the crunch, and I've had people in very high power at [the CSA] say to me... I'm just going to pull the funding and throw it into the men's program because that's where it counts. Oh, yeah, I've had people say that to me. ...And that's within the last few years. The attitude is still there. (Samantha)

Though the women's and men's national team programs are structured differently, staff member Jillian described these differences in terms of support:

[The men's program] take all these players from their premier league teams and they have to actually pay them. And I think they get an appearance fee of 10 grand every time they play. And you know, [we were] giving the players \$10 a day, you know? I mean that's a disparity right there... (Jillian)

Despite the different organizational structure of the women's and men's national team program¹⁹, male national team players do, in fact, receive more funding for their playing contributions, leading to the perception that the women's program and female national team players have been and continue to be treated unfairly by the CSA.

This perception that women's programs are treated differently from men's programs was also maintained by some staff members working within the Whitecaps FC organization. Staff member Vivian, described:

...when you look at the women having won the W-League twice now and the men having won it once, who got more hoopla? So again, you know what, it's a father's pride to see his son succeed; he's really happy that his daughter did too, but it's his absolute pride to see his son succeed. And I think somehow that comes out, and, can I begrudge them that thought? Some nights I can sit there and think about it and go, boy I'm telling you! We should have been at the Lion's game, being paraded around and being shown on the big screen! You know, we didn't

¹⁹ For the purpose of this research, a comprehensive comparative analysis of the women's and men's national team program is not provided. Based on data gathered within the interviews

do this once, we did this twice; we should have been out there being paraded around, we should have been at the WHL game being paraded out on the big screen and getting the free tickets to the hockey games and things. (Vivian)

Perceived Struggle: Cultural Attitudes

Not all staff members described the barriers to the women's program as being the result of bias based on gender. Some of them believed that the women's program was not treated any differently from the men's program at the national level. Brent recalled:

...in the history of the CSA there are stories of people making presentations and completely forgetting about the women's program, but this is pre-2000. From my experiences to date I haven't noticed any difference in funding between male and the female and it's never ever been an issue and it's never ever been a concern. ...I do recall, at the Olympic qualifying tournament in Costa Rica, listening to the then Head of Accounting, tell us flat-out that the team, yeah they were successful, but unfortunately they weren't quite successful enough for the sponsors that the CSA was going after so we still needed to prove ourselves, even though we finished fourth in the world with the senior national team and second in the world with the youth national team, it still wasn't good enough by their standards. ...I think that in 1986... when [the men] were in the World Cup [the CSA] made a choice not to invest in the future of soccer in Canada. At that time the US made a choice to invest in the future of [soccer in] the United States of America, and they're now ranked in the top 10 and [our men] are approaching 100. So in a sense, I think that [the CSA] has been making these decisions all along, male or female. (Brent)

Rather than the lack of support and funding experienced by the women's program being a result of 'better' or 'more' support and funding given to the men's program, some staff members believe that it is the CSA in general that struggles to adequately support and fund *both* programs. In this way, Paul described:

The [CSA] has never been biased between men and women... The main problem is the... cultural problem, that the [CSA], as most other associations, are run as amateur, with an amateur background. So that means, everything has to be politically correct. There is no risk-taking. There is no understanding of seeing things differently, and there is no understanding that high performance takes a more aggressive approach and has to be treated a different way than the grassroots soccer program. (Paul)

Non-aggressive decision-making and leadership within the CSA (national level) as well as within youth soccer organizations (municipal and provincial levels) was described as part of the reason why women's soccer *and* men's soccer within Canada have struggled to develop, rather than concerns based on gender equity.

In addition, some staff members coupled beliefs of non-aggressive decision-making and poor leadership with a 'cultural attitude' towards sport participation as further reason attributing to the lack of funding/support of elite-level women's soccer in Canada. Based on his experience Paul described this 'cultural attitude':

Well I think the whole North American soccer attitude is a recreational one, or was a recreational one. Which means the top [goal] for a North American player [is] to get a scholarship. And ... what they did outside that was minor. Summer was meant to be off, to have vacation and be with family or friends, and then go back to school. Which was the main focus for a lot of young players. I think the mentality was that, that was the top team for them. And national team ... it was a recreational mentality for sure. ... While soccer is the focal point for every young girl or women, or man, growing up in Europe, its hockey [in Canada]. Yeah, people talk highly about [soccer] because it's a great participation sport, it's good for the kids all around fitness, and it's a fun sport. But that attitude is still around, and there's nothing wrong with that. Just what is happening is that the high performance part of it has been more encouraged and understood to be an important factor as well. So I think there's a sense of yes, grassroots soccer is important as well, but now it's time to focus on the high performance part. (Paul)

Since a female soccer player's top "goal" in North America is to compete for her college or university (whether in the U.S.A. on athletic scholarship or within the Canadian Interuniversity Sport structure), the emphasis on her development is placed between the ages of 14 to 18 years. Paul described how this cultural attitude affects the adult female player and adult competitive programs after college/university sport:

There is nothing. Unless you are young enough to be a NCAA player with scholarships, but that is until you are graduating and that is where your real soccer career should take off. Here, it takes down. So actually when you are 22, 23 years old, where you haven't really peaked yet, you have nowhere to go. And that is the biggest difference between Europe and Canada. You are offered a three-month soccer league and outside that is basically amateur, or super-amateur, grassroots, recreational leagues, which does not help you in development, it takes you actually the other way... (Paul)

With so much emphasis placed on youth participation and development, leading up to and during college/university competition, elite-level adult women's soccer and the

Canadian women's national team program have struggled to create an adequate environment for *continued* training and development²⁰.

Thus, when Kerfoot approached Pellerud with the question of what it would take for the women to succeed at the 2007 FIFA Women's World Cup in Beijing, Pellerud recognized Kerfoot's query as a unique opportunity for development of the women's national team program within a complex culture of soccer in Canada.

Kerfoot and Pellerud's combined effort represent progress made within this complex culture. One staff member, Darla, acknowledged:

I think that [Pellerud] is trying to do the best that he can for the national team players, and that means that he wants them centralized and he wants to give them more money. ... So with regards to money, you know what, I don't think anything's wrong with that. I don't. I think he's done a good job in trying to get it, to make it so that it's a living for these players. And who wouldn't want that, by the way, right? If he can make it work, why not? (Darla)

From the injection of funds into the women's national team program by a private benefactor, the Canadian women's national team has achieved one of its ultimate goals; daily and as close to year-round competitive, training as possible with adequate financial compensation to the players involved.

These changes within the landscape of elite-level women's soccer in Canada enable players and staff members to keep dreaming of Beijing: to qualify and medal at the 2007 FIFA Women's World Cup and the 2008 Olympics.

²⁰ As documented in Chapter 4, the NCAA is not the only barrier in the development of elite-level women's soccer and the Canadian national team program; lack of adequate funding and support have been well documented as additional significant obstacles.

Chapter 6

Discussion

In Gina Prince-Bythewood's 2000 film *Love & Basketball*, the two main characters Monica Wright and Quincy McCall grow up as neighbours, friends, and later, lovers brought together by their passion for basketball. Equally talented players both share the aspiration of one day playing professional basketball and are recruited to the same university enabling them to continue their playing careers and their relationship. After learning of his father's infidelity, Quincy ends his relationship with Monica and leaves college to enter the NBA draft. Heartbroken, Monica delves further into basketball ensuring a successful college career that affords her (in a pre-WNBA era) the chance to play professionally in Spain.

Despite her success playing overseas, Monica's dream of playing in the NBA is never realized, and after one season she retires and returns to the United States. At home, Monica visits Quincy in the hospital who suffered an ACL tear after five turbulent and unsuccessful years in the NBA and learns that he is engaged. Having never really let go of her love for him, Monica finds herself without basketball and Quincy. When Quincy asks her why she has given up professional ball, Monica replies, "It's a trip you know, when you're a kid you see the life you want and it never crosses your mind that its not going to turn out that way."

Like Monica and like many young women in Canada today, the players in this study not only grew up participating in sports but cultivating visions of their futures that included sport competition. As a result of Title IX's impact on increasing women's participation in college athletics, female athletes have been offered "a mainstream vision

of athletic success” (McDonagh & Pappano, 2007, p.108). In soccer in Canada, as described by the participants in this study, this ‘vision of success’ comes primarily in the form of NCAA athletic scholarships to colleges and universities in the United States.

However, it is upon graduation that the female soccer players’ ‘vision of success’ becomes fractured. Both competitive and national team players and staff members acknowledge that after graduation, when a female athlete is approximately 22 years of age, her opportunities for continued athletic development are extremely limited in North America. McDonagh and Pappano (2007) recognize that:

While female athletes can now dream of playing on an Olympic team, the promise of a professional career, while increasingly possible, remains largely elusive. The landscape is improving, but too few female athletes have opportunities beyond college, particularly to earn a living even remotely akin to comparable male athletes, for whom big-money careers provide an incentive for hard work. (p. 108).

The conclusion of a female’s academic career does not necessitate the end of her desire and ability to be a competitive athlete; for the players in this study, their involvement in soccer was far more than ‘sport participation’ - it became the core of their identities.

Women and Professional Sport

That this core identity does not abruptly end upon graduation is the reason why many of these female players strove to maintain their athletic identity by pursuing elite-level soccer in the ways available to them; namely within the amateur W-League.

The men in Roderick’s (2006) study of professional footballers in England struggled to maintain a sense of control over their ‘careers’ in a profession of a highly

public nature and defined by the performance of their body. He writes, “When players start out they may think that, as young professionals, their destinies are in their own hands. Even so, as they mature, they find themselves increasingly caught up in the ties of interdependence which they cannot comprehend very easily, if at all...” (Roderick, 2006, p.4).

Not unlike these male professionals, the players in this study struggled to accept that their athletic ‘careers’, or destinies, were not wholly within their hands. They found that their destinies were shaped not only by the decisions of coaches and team managers but by the absence of professional playing opportunities that permitted them the opportunity to pursue a viable career in sport. Some of the competitive players in this study, as the Whitecaps FC organization became increasingly professional with daily and sometimes two-a-day unpaid training sessions felt “forced” into retirement. Additionally, the Whitecaps FC’s new formal relationship with the Canadian women’s national team brought more prospective and current national team players to Vancouver, limiting the opportunity for active roster spots on the Whitecaps FC team. In this way, competitive players, despite their perception of their ability to play/compete at a higher level of soccer and their desire to do so lacked control over their playing ‘careers’.

National team players in this study experienced similar feelings of loss of control over their personal lives and their playing ‘careers’ based on the FTFP. Despite having the opportunity to be paid to play elite-level soccer, the money came with various restrictions impacting the abilities of national team players to determine their place of residence, career development and personal affairs.

Sport Organizations and Female Leadership

The sense of power and control over the personal lives and playing careers of the female players in this study due to the changing landscape of elite-level women's soccer in Canada was transferred to the people and organizations, namely those involved with the Canadian women's national team and the Whitecaps FC team.

The previously more casual relationship between the Canadian national team program and the Whitecaps FC organization became more formal when Birarda was hired as the Whitecaps FC full-time Head coach and Kerfoot funded the FTFPP. The manifest intention of combining their efforts and resources was to provide a more professional training environment for elite-level women soccer players in Canada. However the latent result of this new alliance meant that while the Whitecaps FC was a team/organization that in the past enabled competitive and national team players to maintain/develop their physical and technical abilities, it had now become *the* team where prospective and current youth and senior national team players flocked, in order to increase their chances of playing for the national team. This "professional" environment provided by the Whitecaps FC organization has shaped the landscape of elite-level women's soccer in Canada in two main ways; first, it has raised the value of the Whitecaps FC brand by 'cornering the market' on prospective (youth) and national team players within Canada, decreasing the available roster spots and hence training opportunities for non-national team players (competitive players). Secondly, because the Whitecaps FC women's team plays within the amateur W-League of the USL, the organization cannot "pay" its players – assuming they had the desire to do so. At the same time, being unable to pay their players does not obstruct the program from

increasing their training and match commitments, that is to say, creating a more ‘professional’ environment. Thus an increasingly ‘professional’ environment without proper remunerations works to curtail the duration of a competitive female athletes’ playing career rather than extend it.

The impact of these changes on competitive players and the landscape of elite-level women’s soccer however does not dilute the importance of a ‘professional’ training environment for development and international recognition. Given the constraints of the structure of women’s soccer in Canada, with its focus on collegiate sport, and the impact of NCAA’s amateurism bylaw on the W-League and thus the Whitecaps FC franchise, Pellerud and Kerfoot pursued the only other option available to them by funding and implementing the FPHP and providing senior national team players with the financial support required to “be” professional.

Interestingly, when asked *why* elite-level women’s soccer has struggled to receive adequate funding (for the program), quality training, and pay (for the players and staff) over the years, the participants in this study provided two main lines of reasoning. Most female respondents (within the player and staff sample) attributed the struggles experienced within elite-level soccer and primarily the Canadian women’s national program as a result of unequal treatment based on gender. The women’s program, it was felt, suffered because people in leadership positions within the CSA did not take women’s soccer as seriously as men’s soccer.

However most male respondents (within the staff sample) attributed these obstacles to a cultural ‘attitude’ of soccer in Canada. Elite-level women’s soccer in Canada struggled not because the CSA treated the men ‘better’ than the women but

because the people within the CSA lacked the leadership in general to take risks in the development of soccer overall. Therefore, both elite-level women's *and* men's soccer in Canada has struggled to develop and carve out a place in the Canadian and international sporting world.

Upon closer examination of some of the recent changes examined here, it cannot go unnoticed that while Pellerud has worked tirelessly to secure additional funding for additional full-time coach positions within his program, and worked together with Kerfoot to secure a full-time Head coach position within the Vancouver Whitecaps FC, each position funded was subsequently filled by a male coach. This increased distribution of resources into the women's program is a step forward for women in a male institution, but it is a move nevertheless embedded with power relations.

Sport organization literature acknowledges how sport has and continues to serve as a male institution where men have access to leadership and administrative positions that influence the development of sport policies (Amis, Slack, & Hinnings, 2002; Hall, 1999; Hoeber & Frisby, 2001; McKay, 1997, 1999; Shaw & Frisby, 2006; White & Young, 1999). Here, the patriarchal balance of power and control are perpetuated in that – despite elite-level women's soccer making 'progress' by achieving increased funding and an increasingly competitive environment in which to develop – male coaches continue to maintain control over the direction of the game as well as its financial and professional rewards. In her historical examination of women and/in sport in Canada, Hall (2002) underscores this state of affairs where so often, "...inequitable positions were not perceived as problematic by the very individuals and organizations perpetuating

them; and rarely did it seem possible to confront the power relations that constituted sexism...” (Hall, 2002, p. 165)

Chapter 7

Conclusion

This study addressed several gaps in the existing literature in both women in/and sport and women's soccer. In particular, there exists no comprehensive historical archive of women's soccer in Canada. The experiences shared by some of the participants in this study demonstrate the rich history of women and/in sport that is waiting to be more fully explored. Documenting this history is valuable not only as recognition of the growing importance of the game of soccer, but in the need to give voice to the hundreds of women whose lives and identities have been shaped by their involvement in the game. The significance of 'voice' was demonstrated in my most memorable interview with one player participant who became emotional when recalling the manner in which her international career concluded. Despite being "retired" for over a decade the player's identity was still so deeply shaped and influenced by her experiences in soccer that her emotions were still raw. Not surprisingly, this raw emotion was reflected in each of the player interviews. Although players are not signed to professional contracts, or 'work' in professional leagues, their participation in soccer is very much a 'career' in the professional sense. Most revealing was the desire for each player to have access to and control over the pursuit of her own soccer career and feel valued and respected in her pursuit.

Methodologically, in-depth interviews provided an opportunity to gather firsthand accounts of players' and staff members' experiences within elite-level soccer. Each interview went over the scheduled time of 45 minutes to one hour with two interviews lasting three hours long. The length of these interviews suggested that the participants

were eager to share their thoughts and ideas with regards to the changing landscape of elite-level women's soccer in Canada. Though some participants were at times cautious in sharing some feelings/opinions others were eager to discuss the issues regarding elite-level women's soccer and the game of soccer in general in Canada.

At this juncture it should be noted that my status as insider perhaps encouraged the interviews to flow freely; for most of the participants in this study, I had at one time been a teammate and a player with whom they worked. My involvement within the changing soccer environment in Vancouver and within the national program was one with which I was familiar and understood primarily from a player's perspective. However, as a recently retired competitive player this inevitably shaped my perspective and subsequently my position as a knowledge producer. In an interview with one participant, I asked her to recall the circumstances around her retirement from the national team. After 10 years away from the game, she had to pause the interview in order to gather her emotional response; she acknowledged that she was still "sensitive" about the situation and that recalling the details still "upset" her. Like this participant, my 24 years as a player and 10 years as a coach has created a passion and personal investment in the game that cannot be detached, turned off, or ignored, despite a desire to remain objective. At the same time, it is this passion coupled with the need to record the story of women's soccer in Canada as well as give voice to lived experiences of women within the game that needs continual exploration and investigation.

The conception of this research project occurred at a time of exciting change within elite-level women's soccer. The Canadian women's national team had secured significant funding and the Full-Time Player Program was just getting underway.

Participants in the study, despite the various ways in which these changes affected their own lives, expressed overall excitement and optimism that the changes taking place were going to move Canada forward in achieving success on the international stage of soccer. Their fourth place finish at the FIFA Women's World Cup in 2003 inspired thousands of soccer fans; now, with increased funding and training environments goals were set for even greater success for the 2007 FIFA Women's World Cup in Beijing. However, that event has come and passed and the result was disappointing. Despite all the changes that had taken place and the opportunities given to the national team program/players, Canada failed to move out of the first round.

Unlike the past however, when funding was cut after inadequate performances at (or the lack of qualifying for) world events, Kerfoot's financing and the FTTP remain and new sights were set on the Olympic Games. On April 9, 2008 the Canadian women's national team achieved their first berth into the Olympic Games and in August 2008, Canada will fly to China to compete in the fourth Olympic appearance of women's soccer at the 2008 Olympic Games in Beijing.

It is important to note that although this study does examine elite-level women's soccer "in Canada" and includes members of the country's national team program within its analysis, the research cannot be seen as representative of all of Canada. For example, in 2006 there were three other Canadian franchises playing within the W-League (Ottawa, Laval, and Hamilton). Therefore the experiences of these competitive players cannot be assumed to be the same as those described by competitive players from the Vancouver Whitecaps FC. Although the Canadian national team is meant to represent the best soccer talent in all of Canada, players from British Columbia and

Ontario make up the majority of the women on the team. Also, soccer for women in the Vancouver area is a predominantly white, middle-class sport. As a result, only two participants in the study identified as non-Caucasian. In a city (Vancouver) whose majority population consists of those who are 'visible minorities', the absence of visible minorities at the elite and international level of women's soccer, though reflective of female game, are indicative of broader racial and cultural themes not explored in this research.

Finally, with the absence of a professional soccer league for women, the concept of "elite-level" women's soccer was not a unified term and was defined with considerable subjectivity. For many of the players within this study, 'elite-level' ranged from participation on Provincial Teams (Youth), competition in both the Canadian and American collegiate system, competition in the W-League, and/or competition at the junior or senior national levels. One player participant broadly defined elite-level women's soccer as anyone who trains on a daily basis. Staff members within this study on the other hand, more clearly defined 'elite-level' women's soccer to mean playing for one's country (despite the fact that international soccer constitutes 'amateur' soccer) and "treating" their careers as professional (i.e., having their playing career and their competitive development as their primary career focus). Perhaps that the staff members' professional careers within elite-level women's soccer are so clearly defined by a job description and salary lends to the perceived consensus of definition. It is in this way that concepts such as 'career' and 'work' are implicated in the development and maintenance of a female's perception of self, feelings of value and worth, and life experiences as a soccer player.

Future Research

The use of “professional” when referring to developing competitive leagues for women must be nuanced. In mainstream sport, ‘professional’ refers to people who get paid for their talent, thus becoming full-time ‘work’. In this way, professional leagues exist where players are traded and teams as well as players are the ‘product’ marketed and sold for ‘profit’. Take for example “professional” female soccer leagues outside Canada and the United States such as Germany’s Frauen-Bundesliga; signed to contracts with clubs, women in Germany train daily, have part- and/or full-time coaches (depending on wealth of club), are provided with free kit, have access to training facilities, and budgets that enable the team to travel to league competitions. However, the players in this “pro” league do not receive pay for their work. It is within this climate, as national sporting organizations continue to promote women’s soccer around the world, that Williams (2006) cautions:

It is a fine balancing act as the bureaucracies attempt to simultaneously sell the message of an established female-appropriate sport with great potential for expansion in a number of ways but which will proliferate in a manner that poses no threat whatsoever to the highly commercialized world of male professional football. (Williams, 2006, p.157)

Future research in this area must therefore ask what constitutes a female professional athlete, a female professional league, and what role do professional male clubs play and/or should play (if any) in the development of professional female clubs (e.g., England’s Arsenal, Vancouver’s Whitecaps FC, and Germany’s Frankfurt FC)?

Along the same lines, how could federal legislation be, if at all, the catalyst for increased professional opportunities for women in sport?

In relation to the changes within the landscape of elite-level women's soccer specific to Canada, more research needs to focus on best practices to ensure that decisions in funding and structure create sustainable, long-term change in the development and strength of the game.

Despite soccer's global development for females and the increasing literature on the subject, Williams (2006) writes, "the academic treatment of women's football is new, unsure and uncertain, with a need for theoretical underpinnings..."

In Closing

Though declarations by FIFA that for soccer the "future is feminine" along with other research that suggests that soccer is the "game of choice" for girls in Canada, women competing in soccer and in sport in general must not be used as 'proof' to suggest that women have achieved equality on the playing field. Despite soaring female participation rates, increases in international female competitions, and the implementation of programs like the FTTP there remain significant barriers to the development of the women's game around the world and the opportunities within football for women to coach, officiate, direct, and pursue viable professional playing careers. My hope is that this research project will provide an impetus for further critical examination into women's soccer in Canada and the experiences of female competitors within the game.

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Websites

National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) www.ncaa.org

Canadian Soccer Association (CSA) www.canadasoccer.com

Whitecaps Football Club www.whitecapsfc.com

W-League www.w-league.com

Women's Premier Soccer League (WPSL) www.wpsl.com

National Association of Intercollegiate Athletics (NAIA) www.naia.org

Canadian Interuniversity Sports www.universitysport.ca

CONCACAF www.concacaf.org

Appendix 1 – Letter of Initial Contact

Letter of Initial Contact

September 2006

Dear (Name of potential participant),

I am a Masters student in the school of Human Kinetics at The University of British Columbia. I am currently investigating the recent developments in elite women's soccer in Canada and am writing to request your assistance. My present research project is entitled: *Dreaming of Beijing: Experiencing the changing landscape of women's soccer in Canada*.

The rationale for this study is grounded in the need to better document and examine how recent changes in elite women's soccer are shaping the experiences of female players and staff within Canada. Using interview methodology, the project focuses on collecting and analyzing the life experiences of those directly involved in elite women's soccer as a player or staff personnel (e.g., coach, trainer, administrator, manager, etc.).

I am asking for your assistance with this research. You have been selected as a participant in this research project because of your involvement with elite women's soccer in Vancouver as well as your involvement with Canada's Women's World Cup Team (Team Canada). Your knowledge, expertise, and experience in the sport of soccer will provide vital information and data for this project. Your participation in this study will entail involvement in one interview, approximately 45 to 60 minutes in length. Questions will encompass you explaining your experiences in the sport of soccer and the impact these experiences have/had on you. I am especially interested in your opinions about how recent changes in elite women's soccer are impacting your experiences in the sport in Canada.

The data obtained from the interviews will be published in a report, academic articles, and in my Masters thesis. Please be aware that you have the right to ask me to omit any information that you do not wish to be included. The information will help inform academics and sports administrators about gender and power relations in soccer and give light to women's experiences with these relations.

Attached you will find an informed consent form. Please take a moment to look at the form. If you are able to meet with me, please e-mail or telephone me as soon as possible to establish a suitable meeting time and place. I will telephone you in a couple of days to follow up on this letter. Thank you for your time.

Sincerely,

Dr. Patricia Vertinsky	Ashley McGhee
Professor (Advisor)	Masters Student
School of Human Kinetics	School of Human Kinetics
The University of British Columbia	The University of British Columbia

Appendix 2 – Information Sheet & Consent Form

September ____, 2006

Information Sheet & Consent Form

Dreaming of Beijing: Experiencing the changing landscape of elite women's soccer in Canada

Researchers:

Dr. Patricia Vertinsky, Professor School of Human Kinetics The University of British Columbia	Ashley McGhee, MA Candidate School of Human Kinetics The University of British Columbia
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Brief description of the study: This study is intended to provide an exploration of elite women's sport participation in Vancouver and Canada and the integral role that recent changes have played in shaping the experiences of elite female players and staff members in women's soccer. I am interested in your past and present personal soccer experiences as well as your knowledge and expertise on the development of semi-professional and international women's soccer in Vancouver and Canada.

Researcher: This study is conducted by Ashley McGhee, a Master of Arts candidate, through the School of Human Kinetics at the University of British Columbia.

The Interview: The interview will take anywhere from 45 minutes to one hour in length. Most of the questions are specific to your own experiences in the soccer community and specifically to your involvement in elite women's soccer in Canada. The interview will be recorded on an audio-cassette.

You have been selected as a participant in this research project because of your involvement with the Vancouver Whitecaps FC *and/or* the Canadian Women's World Cup Team (Team Canada). In researching the history and development of women's soccer in Canada through a variety of sources, including the Canadian Soccer Association's official website and the Vancouver Whitecaps FC's official website, your name appeared as having been extensively involved in elite women's soccer. Your knowledge, expertise, and experience in the sport of soccer will provide vital information and data for this project.

Results: The data obtained from the interviews will be published in a report, academic articles, and in a Masters thesis. The information will help inform academics and sports administrators about gender and power relations in Vancouver and Canada's female sporting history and give light to women's experiences with these relations.

Confidentiality: Your identity will be kept strictly confidential as all documents will be identified by a code number and kept in a locked filing cabinet. The cassette tapes and transcripts will also be coded and kept in a separate locked file. You also have the option of allowing your name to be acknowledged in the publications of the collected data.

Voluntary Participation: Your participation is strictly voluntary. You are free to not answer any question and withdraw from the interview at any time.

Risk: There are no expected risks to participants in this research project, but as you will be re-living previous life experiences, sensitive topics may arise.

Further Contact Information or Concerns: If you have any questions or require further information about the study, please contact Ashley McGhee.

Concerns about the Rights of Research Subjects: If you have any concerns about your treatment or rights as a research subject, you may contact the Research Subject Information Line in the UBC Office of Research Services at 604-822-8598.

PLEASE READ AND SIGN ALL THAT APPLY ON NEXT PAGE (P. 3)

I have read the *consent form* and understand the nature of the study. I understand that my participation in this study is strictly voluntary and confidential and I may withdraw from participation at any time. I also understand that in signing this consent form, I am not signing away any of my legal rights.

Your signature below indicates that you have received a copy of this consent form for your own records.

Your signature indicates that you consent to participate in this study.

Signed: _____ Date: _____

Printed Name of the Participant signing above.

I consent to having my responses tape-recorded.

Signed: _____ Date: _____

I consent to having my name acknowledged in this project and understand that my name and statements may be published.

Signed: _____ Date: _____

Appendix 3 – Biographical Form

QUESTIONNAIRE: BIOGRAPHICAL INFORMATION

Study Title: Dreaming of Beijing: Experiencing the changing landscape of women's soccer in Canada.

Instructions: The following questions are intended to obtain some general background information about you. Answer all questions as accurately as you can. If it is unclear what is being asked, please ask for help or clarification from the researcher.

1. Age: _____ (years)
2. Sex: Female _____ Male _____
3. Were you born in Canada? _____ If no, where were you born? _____
4. Where is your current permanent residence (city/country)? _____
5. What is your ethnic background? _____
6. Please indicate the approximate social economic status of the family in which you were raised:

Lower-class _____	Lower-Middle class _____
Middle-class _____	Upper-Middle class _____
Upper-class _____	
7. What is your highest education level?

Some high school _____	Some university _____
Finished high school _____	University degree _____
Some college _____	Other (please specify) _____
College diploma _____	
8. Please identify your current occupation. (This includes part-time work):

9. How long have you been (or were you) involved with the Vancouver Whitecaps FC and/or the Canadian National Team?

Appendix 4 – Interview Guide (Players)

Dreaming of Beijing: Experiencing the changing landscape of elite women's soccer in Canada.

*The following questions represent a general guide for interviews with study participants in the 'Player' sample. All participants will be reminded of their **voluntary** participation in this study and their right to not answer any questions posed.*

Introduction

- How long have you been playing soccer?
- What do you consider “elite” level soccer?
- When did you first start playing elite level women's soccer?

W-League

- How many years have you competed in the W-League?
- Can you tell me about some of your initial experiences in playing with the WFC franchise?
- What was the Staff comprised of when you first joined the program?
- What was your in-season training schedule like?
- While playing for the WFC, did you play for any other teams? When/Where?
- In your opinion, what did you think of the hiring of a full-time Head Coach for the WFC women's team this past February 2006?
- Has (and/or will) this hiring effect you directly?
 - If so, how does this new position effect you?
 - How has/will this impact your involvement with the program?
 - What have you done/are you doing to deal with this change?
- Do you think this new Head Coach position has or will influence the WFC and/or the W-League? If yes, how so?
- How has your involvement with the WFC changed over the years?

Team Canada

- Have you ever played for Team Canada? If yes, for how long?
- Describe some of your initial experiences in playing with Team Canada?

- Who was coaching Team Canada when you first joined the program? Was it a full-time position? If no, why not?
- What was the Staff comprised of when you first joined the program?
- Describe how training camps and competitions were organized and implemented when you first joined Team Canada?
- In the past, what was your out-of-camp personal training schedule comprised of?
- In your opinion, what did you think when Even Pellerud was first hired as Head Coach of Team Canada in the fall of 1999?
- Did this hiring effect you directly?
 - If so, how did this new position effect you?
 - How did this impact your involvement with the program?
 - How did you feel about this at the time?
 - What did you do to deal with this change?
 - How have these experiences changed over the years?
- Describe how (and if) you think Pellerud's involvement with Team Canada has changed the program and/or the Canadian Soccer Association?

Financials

- In the past, how did you support your involvement in soccer?
- How do you support your involvement in soccer now?
- What is your out-of-camp personal training schedule comprised of now?
- Are you, or any other players that you know of, able to negotiate contracts with the WFC and/or Team Canada?
- Do you or any players that you know of on the WFC and/or Team Canada have Agents? Why or why not?
- Do you or any players that you know of on the WFC and/or Team Canada have Sponsorships? Why or why not?
- In your opinion, what have been the major changes in the WFC and/or Team Canada since your initial involvement?
- Looking back over your entire soccer career, what do you think are some of the major changes in women's soccer in Canada? Are these changes for the better?

Appendix 5 – Interview Guide (Staff)

Dreaming of Beijing : Experiencing the changing landscape of elite women's soccer in Canada.

*The following questions represent a general guide for interview participants in the 'Staff' sample. **All participants will be reminded of their voluntary participation in this study and their right to not answer any questions posed.*

Introduction

- In your opinion, please describe what you consider to be elite-level women's soccer. (If different in North America than in other parts of the world, please explain.)
- How and when did you first become involved with women's soccer?
- Please describe your current and/or most recent involvement with women's soccer in Canada.

Women's World Cup Program and the Canadian Soccer Association (CSA)

- Describe the state of the Canadian Women's World Cup Program when you first became involved.
 - How were training camps designed?
 - How often were training camps held and what was the average duration?
 - How many annual international matches did Canada compete in and/or host?
 - How many annual international tournaments did Canada compete in and/or host?
 - What were the training expectations for players outside of training camp and competition?
 - What were the time commitments for the coaching staff?
- Describe how these aspects have changed in recent years?
- As someone who has been involved in the Women's World Cup Program for an extended period of time, what were your first impressions of program when you commenced your position?
- In your opinion, before you assumed your position with the program, how did the CSA and its executive committee treat women's soccer? (E.g., did the executive committee support the program with adequate funding and resources, etc.?)

- As an integral part of the coaching staff, what were some of the biggest challenges in developing/strengthening the program? (Describe any instances or scenarios where these challenges were obvious.)
- Was there anyone in particular who you felt discouraged the development of the Women's World Cup Program? (Describe any instances or scenarios where you felt this discouragement was obvious.)
- How has that treatment changed since your involvement with the program?

Funding/Financials for the Women's World Cup Program

- If you can recall, please describe the "make-up" of the coaching staff for the Women's World Cup program before your arrival.
- To your knowledge, were the positions of Head Coach, Assistant Coach, and Goalkeeper Coach, full-time positions before your arrival?
- To your knowledge, how much was the previous Coaching Staff being paid for their positions? (Can you provide an approximate number?)
- In your opinion, how has the Coaching Staff changed since you have been involved in the program? (E.g., are the assistant positions considered full-time, are the salaries commensurate with the experience/work provided?)
- Why are these changes to the Coaching Staff important and necessary? (Describe any benefits to the program that are a result of a larger and more full-time coaching staff.)
- To your knowledge, what was the CSA's annual budget for the Women's World Cup Program the year you commenced with the program?
- What does that annual budget look like now?
- In your opinion, are the players in the National Pool and on your squad adequately compensated for their "work" as international competitors?

Greg Kerfoot

- Based on your knowledge, please describe Even Pellerud's relationship with Greg Kerfoot?
- What is Greg Kerfoot's connection with women's soccer in Canada?

- Greg Kerfoot currently funds a number of the Women's World Cup Team players, can you please describe this 'professional player contract' and how it came about?
- Do you think increased funding for the players is essential in building a competitive international program? (Describe potential values/abilities that you believe appropriate funding for players will foster and develop the program – any specific examples?)

Women's Soccer in Canada

- Outside of Canada's Women's World Cup Program, what does competitive women's soccer in Canada look like?
- In your opinion, is the W-League (it's level of competition) and the number of Canadian teams that exist within the league, sufficient enough for the development of competitive adult female soccer players in Canada?
- In your opinion, how can women's soccer in Canada continue to grow? (Describe any ideas that you may have that would implement competitive growth in women's soccer in Canada.)



The University of British Columbia
Office of Research Services
Behavioural Research Ethics Board
Suite 102, 6190 Agronomy Road, Vancouver, B.C. V6T 1Z3

CERTIFICATE OF APPROVAL- MINIMAL RISK RENEWAL

PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR: Patricia A. Vertinsky	DEPARTMENT: UBC/Education/Human Kinetics	UBC BREB NUMBER: H06-80308
INSTITUTION(S) WHERE RESEARCH WILL BE CARRIED OUT:		
Institution	Site	
UBC	Point Grey Site	
Other locations where the research will be conducted: N/A		
CO-INVESTIGATOR(S): Ashley McGhee		
SPONSORING AGENCIES: N/A		
PROJECT TITLE: Dreaming of Beijing: Experiencing the Changing Landscape of Women's Soccer in Canada		

EXPIRY DATE OF THIS APPROVAL: July 16, 2008

APPROVAL DATE: July 16, 2007

The Annual Renewal for Study have been reviewed and the procedures were found to be acceptable on ethical grounds for research involving human subjects.

Approval is issued on behalf of the Behavioural Research Ethics Board
