

1 Running Head: ATHLETES EXPERIENCES OF BEING INSPIRED IN SPORT

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4 **"You really could be something quite special": A qualitative exploration of athletes'**
5 **experiences of being inspired in sport.**

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ATHLETES' EXPERIENCES OF BEING INSPIRED IN SPORT

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Abstract

Objectives: The purpose of this research was to provide an explicit examination of inspiration in sport. In Study 1, we explored (a) what inspires athletes in sport, and (b) the consequences of being inspired. The aims of Study 2 were to explore (a) the contexts in which leaders inspired athletes, (b) leader behaviours and actions that inspire athletes, and (c) the consequences of being inspired by leaders.

Design: Two qualitative descriptive studies were conducted in order to explore athletes' experiences of being inspired.

Method: In Study 1, 95 athletes wrote about an experience of being inspired in sport. Study 2 utilised semi-structured interviews to explore 17 athletes' experiences of being inspired by leadership. Data were analysed via inductive thematic analysis.

Results: In Study 1, athletes' responses revealed three sources of inspiration: personal performance, accomplishments, and thoughts; role models; and leadership. Findings from Study 2 indicated that athletes were inspired by a range of leadership behaviours (e.g., demonstrations of belief) in a variety of, mainly negative, situations (e.g., following poor performance). Broadly, findings from both studies revealed inspiration to impact on athletes' awareness of their capabilities, confidence, motivation, and behaviour.

Conclusions: Overall, the findings indicate that an experience of inspiration can be evoked by a range of sources (most prominently leadership) and can have a powerful effect on athletes and their performance. Further research is required to understand how and why leaders can exert an inspirational impact on athletes.

Key Words: Inspiration, awareness, leadership, qualitative description, evocation, role models.

60 **Introduction**

61 Inspiration is used in everyday conversations and by the media to explain
62 extraordinary achievements and innovative ideas. Within sport, inspiration is often cited as
63 the driving force behind outstanding, and often surprising, athletic feats (Arthur, Hardy, &
64 Woodman, 2012). Recent research outside of the sport psychology literature (see Thrash,
65 Moldovan, Oleynick, & Maruskin, 2014 for details) has demonstrated that inspiration can
66 have a profound impact on important self-growth related outcomes and alter the way
67 individuals perceive their capabilities. Despite these widespread benefits of being inspired, to
68 date, we know little surrounding the ways in which athletes are inspired.

69 Until recently, inspiration as a psychological construct had been largely ignored
70 within the scientific literature owing to the lack of a consistent definition that clearly
71 distinguished it from other psychological constructs (Oleynick, Thrash, LeFew, Moldovan, &
72 Kieffaber, 2014). Consequently, Thrash and colleagues (e.g., Thrash & Elliot, 2003; Thrash
73 & Elliot, 2004; Thrash, Elliot, Maruskin, & Cassidy, 2010; Thrash, Maruskin, Cassidy, Fryer,
74 & Ryan, 2010) conducted a series of studies aiming to define and operationalise a domain-
75 general conceptualization of inspiration in order to promote the study of inspiration. Overall,
76 this research has outlined the core characteristics (Thrash & Elliot, 2003), the processes that
77 constitute an episode of inspiration (Thrash & Elliot, 2004), and the purpose of inspiration
78 (Thrash, Maruskin, et al., 2010).

79 Initially, Thrash and Elliot (2003) reviewed the diverse literatures on inspiration (e.g.,
80 religious, creative, and interpersonal) and proposed a *tripartite conceptualization*, consisting
81 of: (a) *evocation*, suggesting that the occurrence of inspiration is evoked spontaneously by
82 something or someone outside of the self; (b) *transcendence*, when an individual gains
83 awareness of greater possibilities for themselves or others; and (c) *approach motivation*,

84 which involves the energisation or direction of behaviour to realise or achieve these
85 possibilities. Thrash and Elliot (2004) built upon this work by proposing that an episode of
86 inspiration may comprise two *component processes*. These are, being inspired *by*—involving
87 evocation and transcendence—which refers to being awoken to the perceived intrinsic value
88 of an external stimulus, and being inspired *to*—involving approach motivation—which refers
89 to the motivation to actualize or extend the inspiring qualities exemplified in the evocative
90 object. Thrash, Maruskin, et al. (2010) extended Thrash and Elliot's (2003) conceptualization
91 by examining the *transmission model*, which contends that inspiration mediates the
92 transmission of the values exemplified by an evocative stimulus into some form of tangible
93 action. That is, intrinsically valued qualities of a stimulus evoke inspiration, which,
94 subsequently, compels an individual to pursue a newfound goal.

95 Research has also begun to examine the correlates and consequences of inspiration.
96 Within social psychology, researchers have shown inspiration to be positively associated with
97 a range of positive outcomes including self-determination and work-mastery motivation
98 (Thrash & Elliot, 2003), well-being (Thrash, Elliot, et al., 2010), goal progress (Milyavskaya,
99 Ianakieva, Foxen-Craft, Colantuoni, & Koestner, 2012), and productivity (Thrash & Elliot,
100 2004). Given such benefits in contexts where individuals' perceive there to be high intrinsic
101 value (e.g., potential for self-growth), it is surprising that limited research attention has been
102 paid to inspiration in sport, where individuals often compete for intrinsic reasons (Ryan &
103 Deci, 2007). Indeed, only two studies have examined inspiration in sport. Gonzalez, Metzler,
104 and Newton (2011) used edited video clips to examine the influence of a coach's team talk on
105 athletes' levels of inspiration. Athletes who watched the inspirational video clip reported
106 higher feelings of inspiration, dominance, and motivation. In addition, Gucciardi, Jackson,
107 Hanton, and Reid (2015) found that tennis players who experienced inspiration more
108 frequently were more likely to exhibit mentally tough behaviours. Taken together these

109 findings indicate that inspiration may be evoked in sport and be associated with advantageous
110 psychological concepts such as mental toughness. Thus, further exploration of inspiration in
111 sport may provide a fruitful avenue of research that could guide applied practitioners and
112 sport psychologists.

113 To this end, the overall aim of this research was to explore athletes' experiences of
114 being inspired. Given the limited research in this area, two qualitative studies were conducted
115 to understand how inspiration is evoked in athletes. Study 1 sought to identify sources of
116 inspiration for athletes. Building on these findings, Study 2 was conducted to further examine
117 how leaders inspire athletes. Leadership was chosen as the context of interest as it was
118 identified as the major source of inspiration in Study 1 and because research has shown
119 leaders to have a major impact on factors relating to the performance and development of
120 athletes (Appleton, Ntoumanis, Quested, Viladrich, & Duda, 2016).

121 **Methodology**

122 As the aim of the two studies was to produce a descriptive summary of athletes'
123 experiences of being inspired in sport (e.g., the sources and consequence of being inspired),
124 the research took a qualitative description approach. A qualitative description approach looks
125 to understand "the *who*, *what*, and *where* of events or experiences" (Sandelowski, 2000, p.
126 338). This approach has been successfully utilized in previous sport psychology research
127 when exploring novel research areas (e.g., coaching transitions; Knight, Rodgers, Reade,
128 Mrak, & Hall, 2015). Thus, given that little sport psychology research has examined
129 inspiration, this approach was deemed appropriate to fulfil the aims of this research.
130 Qualitative descriptive research is not limited to a specific philosophical or methodological
131 framework other than drawing from the general principles of naturalistic enquiry
132 (Sandelowski, 2000). However, the design and analysis of the research were consistent with
133 the perspective of critical realism that underpinned these studies. Critical realism proposes

134 that through research it is possible to identify patterns that underpin social phenomena, that
135 these patterns are relatively stable but that the phenomenon in question cannot be fully
136 understood only approximated. Also, it is acknowledged that the findings are a consequence
137 of interaction between the knowledge and experiences of the participants and the researchers.

138 **Study 1**

139 The purpose was to explore athletes' experiences of being inspired. Specifically, the
140 aims of this study were to: (a) understand what inspiration means to athletes; and (b)
141 understand what inspires athletes and identify potential consequences of being inspired.

142 **Method**

143 **Participants.** The sample consisted of 95 athletes (67 males and 28 female) aged
144 between 18 and 37 years ($M = 20.3$ years, $SD = 2.75$). The participants had between 1 and 30
145 years of experience ($M = 10.9$ years, $SD = 4.6$) of competing (between amateur and
146 international standard) in a range of team and individual sports, including Football, Golf,
147 Athletics, Swimming, Gymnastics, Equestrian, Rugby, and Netball. Drawing on experiences
148 from such a broad range of participants was deemed appropriate given the lack of previous
149 research in this area.

150 **Procedure.** Prior to conducting the study, institutional ethical approval was obtained.
151 Participants were invited to take part via email or face-to-face meetings, both of which
152 included information regarding the aims of the study, details regarding confidentiality, and
153 the requirements of the study. To be part of the study participants needed to be able to
154 describe (in writing) an instance in which they were inspired in sport.

155 Following the receipt of informed consent, participants were asked to write about a
156 situation in which they were inspired in sport¹. As this was the first study to explicitly explore
157 the concept of inspiration in a sporting context, written accounts were selected as the data

158 collection method because they provide rich qualitative data (Sparkes & Smith, 2013), and
159 they have been used successfully in previous inspiration (e.g., Thrash & Elliot, 2004) and
160 sport psychology research (e.g., Sitch & Day, 2015). The participants' written account was
161 guided by two main questions. The first question asked participants to describe what being
162 inspired in sport meant to them. The purpose of this question was to encourage participants to
163 consider what inspiration feels like in order to facilitate easier recall of a moment in which
164 they were inspired. The second question asked participants to describe a time when they had
165 been inspired in sport, which allowed us to examine sources and consequences of inspiration.

166 **Data Analysis.** The written accounts, which ranged between 0.5 and 1.5 A4 pages
167 long ($M = 0.98$ pages), were analysed using inductive thematic analysis, following the
168 procedures proposed by Braun and Clarke (2006). Initially, the written accounts were read
169 and re-read by the lead researcher to ensure familiarity with the data and initial analytic
170 statements of the data were noted. These initial statements were then used to facilitate initial
171 inductive coding and aid theme and category refinement in the latter stages of the analysis.
172 Initial coding involved attaching words or labels to the relevant research questions. Following
173 this, the codes were then refined and sorted into broader themes. Throughout analysis the
174 emerging themes were constantly compared against one another to ensure clarity and
175 distinctiveness of themes. As analysis progressed questions were posed to ensure the
176 emerging themes appropriately addressed the research questions. Such questions included, for
177 example, what inspiration meant to the participants, the sources of inspiration, and the
178 consequences of being inspired.

179 **Methodological Rigor.** Given the variety of methodologies and subsequent purposes
180 of qualitative research, it is difficult to assess all qualitative research against the same strict
181 criteria. Rather qualitative research should be judged against criteria that align with the

¹ A definition of inspiration was not provided for participants because previous research (Hart, 1998) has

182 specific methodology employed in each study (Sparkes & Smith, 2009). A number of steps
183 were integrated into this study to enhance the methodological rigor and ensure it fulfilled the
184 criteria of a qualitative descriptive study. Initially, the writing task was piloted in order to
185 ensure that the questions asked were appropriate for the study and would provide rich data
186 (Tracy, 2010). The research team reviewed the pilot work to ensure the data obtained would
187 meet the intended aims of the research and produce results that described the phenomenon in
188 question. The first author also wrote a range of memos throughout data collection and
189 analysis in order to keep a clear and detailed account of the decisions made throughout the
190 data analysis (Cresswell & Miller, 2000). Further, the first author engaged with critical
191 friends who encouraged reflection upon and questioned the emerging interpretations of the
192 data. Of particular importance to these processes was that the analysis was arranged in a
193 manner appropriate for the data (i.e., a descriptive summary of participants' experiences).

194 **Results**

195 In the following section, participants' perceptions of the meaning of inspiration are
196 outlined. Next, the moments of inspiration are described in relation to what and how
197 participants were inspired. Finally, the consequences of being inspired are discussed.

198 **The meaning of inspiration.** In general, participants perceived inspiration to be a
199 highly emotive "overwhelming" state, which they were not regularly used to experiencing.
200 Inspiration also appears to impact on passion, with one participant explaining, "inspiration is
201 getting a fire in your gut, heart and head to compete to the best of your ability." Participants
202 proposed that inspiration leads to an increase in desire to push oneself to reach their "highest
203 potential," as highlighted by one participant who wrote, "[Inspiration means] having a drive
204 to push all boundaries you thought there were, mentally and physically." Participants often
205 felt that the experience of inspiration made them aware of new opportunities, "learn

demonstrated that, while inspiration holds many shades of meaning, lay conceptualizations of the construct are clear and consistent (Thrash & Elliot, 2003).

206 something”, and created interest in something new (e.g., a new performance goal or target).
207 One participant wrote that inspiration meant, “to be shown a new light and see something that
208 is unexpected but engaging and exciting that makes me want to be involved.” Participants’
209 experiences of inspiration were also associated with a noticeable change of mental state,
210 attitude, or behaviour. This was highlighted by one participant who referred to inspiration as,
211 “something that changes your mentality, a situation, or group.” The feeling of inspiration was
212 proposed to be something that takes hold and triggers action instantaneously, as one
213 participant wrote, “[inspiration is] seeing something that you see to be extraordinary,
214 sparking you into life.”

215 **The source of inspiration.** Participants described being inspired by a range of
216 sources, which have been categorized into three main sources: (1) Personal performance,
217 thoughts, and accomplishments; (2) interacting with and watching role models; and (3)
218 demonstrations of leadership.

219 *Personal performance, thoughts, and accomplishments.* Participants reported being
220 inspired by their own unexpected performances (e.g., performances they did not think they
221 were capable of), their previous experiences, and their ability to deal with testing competitive
222 circumstances. For instance, one participant recounted being inspired by successfully
223 executing a new skill that he had not used in a competitive game before:

224 I was playing in the annual cricket match between my side and a touring side. [The
225 touring side] turned up and was two players short, and I was chosen to join their
226 squad. Heading on up to bowl aged 16 to the most senior and skilled batsman from
227 my team felt daunting, so I decided to bowl leg-spin for the first time. I had never
228 been confident enough to compete with it before. To my surprise I took 3 wickets and
229 haven’t looked back since.

ATHLETES' EXPERIENCES OF BEING INSPIRED IN SPORT

230 Participants were also inspired by their thoughts regarding their upcoming performances. For
231 example, one participant described being inspired by, “the thought that I could win . . . The
232 thought that I could cause an upset, and the feeling of awesomeness [I would experience]
233 when I destroy the stereotype over sprinters.” In contrast, another participant described how
234 letting go of negative thoughts and remembering the effort expended previously inspired him:

235 I got the ‘fuck it’ factor. I said to myself “I have worked too hard to just give up. Next
236 time I get the opportunity I will get in the battle and show people I belong.” I was
237 aggressive and nothing was going to stop me. When I did bowl things worked for me
238 and it went very well.

239 ***Interacting with and watching role models.*** Inspiration was drawn from elite-level
240 athletes’ ability, demonstration of skill, and exceptional performances in highly pressurized
241 situations. For example, one participant wrote about being inspired by the performance of a
242 role model in a pressurized situation:

243 It was David Beckham versus Greece in 2001, the world cup qualifier. The
244 importance of the goal he scored inspired me . . . how did he do that with the weight
245 of a nation on his shoulders? [When he scored] I was happy and excited.

246 Role models’ experiences of adversity were another catalyst for participants’ experiences of
247 inspiration. Participants wrote about being inspired by the way in which their role models
248 dealt with adversity and difficult circumstances and were still able to perform. For instance,
249 one participant was inspired when watching the Paralympics:

250 It amazed me to see that individuals who have been dealt a tough hand in life manage
251 to overcome their disability and perform at the highest level. Especially ex-soldiers . .
252 . how they overcome the trauma of being at war and being injured, are able to put that
253 to one side and have the drive and determination to succeed in sport.

ATHLETES' EXPERIENCES OF BEING INSPIRED IN SPORT

254 Participants were also inspired by their perceptions of role models' confidence in
255 themselves, as one participant said, "It was Phelps' belief in himself; that he could achieve
256 his goal of 8 gold's. There were some close calls where he nearly missed out, like the 100
257 metre fly, but he still pushed himself to the very end." Perceptions of group dynamics were
258 also inspiring. For example, one participant reported being inspired by a team's cohesion,
259 "The moment they won and the whole team celebrated together inspired me to improve my
260 game, make the team and have that experience myself."

261 Interacting with role models also provided inspiration. For example, when describing
262 her experience of seeing a role model present at a coaching conference, one participant wrote,
263 "One of the course leaders was [a world-class athlete] and she did a talk about her training
264 and lifestyle, and ran a training session during the course. Hearing her talk and watching her
265 train was inspirational." Praise from role models also inspired athletes. For example, a
266 discussion with a former international athlete inspired one participant:

267 I was told by the ex-pro that I could, if I put the effort in, achieve my goals as a
268 player. I was just a club cricketer that loved the game; being a pro had never really
269 been an option. They told me I had what it took so I believed him.

270 ***Demonstrations of leadership.*** Leadership seemed to be the major source of
271 inspiration in sport based upon the participants' responses. Participants reported being
272 inspired by both formal (individuals in a pre-determined leadership position such as coaches
273 and captains) and informal leaders' (individuals within a group who have no formal
274 leadership role) communication and behaviour. Participants recalled a variety of moments
275 when they were inspired by a leader's speech. For example, one participant said he was
276 inspired when, "the manager and captain gave an emotional speech. They told us that we
277 needed to sort ourselves out, and gave us confidence by saying 'we are a lot better than how
278 we are playing'."

ATHLETES' EXPERIENCES OF BEING INSPIRED IN SPORT

279 Individual talks with leaders also evoked inspiration. For example, one participant
280 recalled being spoken to by a national coach, “[The] England coach was watching me fight.
281 He pulled me to one side [during the fight] and said that he believed I was better than I knew,
282 and if I really went for it I would surprise myself.” Other participants were inspired by
283 leaders providing them with specific information on how to improve. One participant
284 commented that, “[the captain] gave me a few pointers on how to improve in the game . . .
285 applying the new marking and feeling relaxed about it [the mistake] helped us to win.”

286 Displays of leadership away from the competitive environment were also inspiring.
287 For example, one participant described the following situation that he found inspiring:

288 I told my coach what I was feeling [that I didn't want to carry on playing or training].
289 He pulled me aside during training and pointed out my friends, all working hard, he
290 told me that these boys are my brothers, my family, and you can't quit on family.
291 [The coach] told me that I had “special talent” and that I shouldn't quit because I was
292 tired and in pain, instead I should keep going and get reward from it. That [what the
293 coach said] blew my mind and I carried on.

294 Providing opportunities, challenging individuals, and having high standards were also
295 cited as ways in which leaders could inspire athletes. One participant described how a coach
296 had inspired her by providing her with an opportunity to switch to a preferred position
297 stating, “[The coach] gave me the opportunity, showed her confidence in me and gave me the
298 challenge. [The coach] said that if I practiced and showed competency I could play that
299 position in the next game.”

300 Finally, leaders inspired athletes by being role models and demonstrating high levels
301 of competency. As one participant recalled, he was inspired by the captain's effort and
302 persistence during competition because, “our captain never gave up when chasing the
303 opposition. [The captain] was very positive throughout and fully gave 110%.” Another

304 participant wrote, "We were representing East at nationals and lost against Wales. I was
305 feeling very defeated and [my teammate] motivated me to improve my performance . . . She
306 made every tackle, every run, and I wanted to be like that."

307 **Consequences of being inspired.** A range of positive outcomes were associated with
308 being inspired. These outcomes related to athletes' thoughts, feelings, and behaviours.

309 *Increased positive thoughts.* Participants reported inspiration to have an effect on a
310 range of cognitions. Participants reported experiencing increased confidence in their
311 capabilities (e.g., achieving performance goals), ability to deal with challenging situations
312 (e.g., perform well against higher-skilled opponents), and setbacks (e.g., returning to the
313 same level following injury). For example, one participant recalled the consequences of an
314 inspirational team-talk from his coach writing, "My confidence to perform well at the
315 competition was much greater. I felt more capable and had much greater belief in myself to
316 achieve what I had targeted." Participants also reported feeling more motivated in relation to
317 competing, achieving new goals, and improving their own skill-levels. One participant
318 explained, "I felt like I wanted to push training further, and I was determined to improve and
319 reach my goals . . . it [being inspired] made me feel more motivated to achieve." In addition,
320 participants reported having more rational thoughts when evaluating their own performances.
321 For example, one participant felt frustrated following a mistake which resulted in a goal and
322 recalled how being inspired, "changed my thoughts about letting the team down . . . I felt
323 more relaxed, but focused to win."

324 Athletes in team sports also recalled how inspiration resulted in improved team
325 functioning including improved perceptions of team cohesion and a heightened sense of
326 belonging within a team. For instance, one participant reported identifying more with his
327 team following a speech by a senior player stating, "I have never felt more part of a team
328 before." Episodes of inspiration also facilitated increased levels of trust within a team with

329 one participant writing, “[the coach] then listed every player’s qualities which allowed me
330 and my teammates to trust each other.”

331 ***Increased positive (and decreased negative) feelings.*** Participants explained that
332 inspiration had a positive impact on their emotional state. For instance, one participant
333 recalled being, “relieved, excited, and happy” after being inspired. Participants also described
334 increased pride, enjoyment, and enthusiasm for their sport following an episode of
335 inspiration. This was alluded to by one participant who described the impact of watching a
336 role model perform, writing, “It [seeing the role model perform] showed me that any situation
337 can be enjoyable . . . it has had a long-term impact as I have always had this enthusiasm since
338 then in any games I have played.” Participants indicated that being inspired gave them a more
339 positive outlook on their own performances and could lead to a positive reappraisal of the
340 situation. For example, one participant described the influence of inspiration on their feelings
341 following a loss in an important cup-final, “We thought we could win; we had very little
342 doubt. We played well and fought for each other for the full 90 minutes, but we lost.
343 However, although we lost we were still proud of our performance.”

344 As well as the typical positive feelings facilitated by an experience of inspiration,
345 participants also suggested that inspiration could lead to what are usually considered negative
346 feelings (e.g., increased levels of aggression). However, in these instances, participants
347 perceived these consequences as positive. For instance, one participant wrote, “[Inspiration]
348 gave me enhanced anger to drive and focus me.”

349 ***Behaviour and performance.*** In the main, participants experienced a range of
350 positive outcomes on their physical behaviour (e.g., increased effort, enhanced skill-level) as
351 a by-product of experiencing inspiration. Participants described feeling more energised and
352 aroused when inspired. For instance, one participant described their team’s response to a
353 team-talk from their coach stating, “All of us became more highly aroused and positive

354 before we went out for the second half.” Being inspired led to participants expending greater
355 effort in training and competition (e.g., to reach a new goal), as one participant wrote:

356 It [being inspired by role models' performance] made me want to work hard to the
357 extent that I could play and perform at a similar level. As a result, I have worked very
358 hard, and put in 100% at every training session in order to enhance my skills.

359 Ultimately, participants attributed improved performance to the experience of
360 inspiration. For example, one participant described how his coach's inspirational half-time
361 team-talk proved the catalyst for improved performance, “the performance after the half-time
362 talk was much better and we won 2-1.” The effects of inspiration on performance were not
363 just limited to the specific context (e.g., current game) in which an individual or team were
364 inspired with one participant commenting that their manager's intervention, “inspired us and
365 our performances for the rest of the season.”

366 **Discussion**

367 The purpose of this study was to explore athletes' experiences of being inspired in
368 sport. Firstly, we aimed to explore and understand what inspiration means to athletes.
369 Consistent with many of the propositions outlined in previous literature (cf. Thrash,
370 Moldovan, Oleynick, et al., 2014), participants perceived inspiration to be a highly emotive
371 and exciting state which has the power to alter perceptions of their or their team's capabilities
372 (in terms of potential or a specific situation) and direct their focus and effort towards a target.

373 Secondly, we aimed to explore the sources of inspiration, with athletes identifying
374 three major sources of inspiration. Athletes were inspired by their own unexpected successful
375 performances and the thought of potential success. These findings provide support for Thrash
376 and Elliot's (2003) contention that individuals are inspired when they gain awareness of new
377 or better possibilities. To explain, when an athlete produces a performance that exceeds their
378 perception of their capabilities they may be inspired as it presents an image of what they may

379 be capable of in the future. Participants were also inspired by the perceived positive
380 characteristics, dedication, and performances of other athletes competing at a higher level.
381 This provides support for previous research which has demonstrated that exposure to high-
382 performing role models (e.g., Michael Jordan) can have a positive impact on an individual's
383 perceptions of their own potential (Thrash, Elliot, et al., 2010). The findings also support the
384 suggestion that leaders can have an inspiring influence on followers (e.g., Searle & Hanrahan,
385 2011). Indeed, the findings of the current study show leadership to be the major source of
386 inspiration for athletes in a sporting context. Specifically, participants reported being inspired
387 by verbal (e.g., team-talks) and nonverbal (e.g., setting a positive example) communication
388 and behaviour. These findings further our understanding of inspiration in the leadership
389 context by indicating that, in addition to providing a compelling vision of the future (e.g.,
390 Searle & Hanrahan, 2011), other behaviours may also be inspiring (e.g., setting an example
391 and expecting high standards of discipline).

392 As well as identifying potential sources of inspiration, the present study also
393 examined the consequences of being inspired. Previous research has found inspiration to
394 correlate with self-determined motivation and approach motivation (Thrash & Elliot, 2003,
395 2004), efficiency and productivity (Thrash, Maruskin, et al., 2010), goal progress
396 (Milyavskaya et al., 2012), energy (Hart, 1998), mental toughness (Gucciardi et al., 2015),
397 and positive affect (Thrash, Elliot, et al., 2010). The present study supports these findings but
398 also extends our understanding of the potential consequences of inspiration in the sporting
399 context. Indeed, as well as experiencing a range of positive cognitive, affective, and
400 behavioural outcomes, participants reported that inspiration may enhance group functioning,
401 specifically team-bond and identification. These findings provide some support for the
402 findings of previous research which suggests that leadership can improve cohesion (Smith,
403 Arthur, Hardy, Callow, & Williams, 2013) and impact upon a team's social identity (Slater,

404 Barker, Coffee, & Jones, 2014). Given that inspiration may lead to these important outcomes,
405 future research should take a more detailed look at how these are facilitated by inspiration.

406 The findings of the present study support the idea that leaders may have the greatest
407 potential to provide inspiration. Given that athletes are exposed to numerous leaders (e.g.,
408 coaches, captains, performance directors, and senior players), enhancing the inspirational
409 potential of leaders may hold numerous benefits for individuals and groups. However, little is
410 known regarding the ways in which leaders inspire followers (Frese, Beimeel, & Schoenborn,
411 2003). The findings of this study further knowledge of this area, but the design of this study
412 did not allow for in-depth exploration of *how* leaders inspired athletes. Further research to
413 explore what leaders do to inspire athletes was therefore deemed necessary.

414 **Study 2**

415 Building upon Study 1, Study 2 examined athletes' experiences of inspirational
416 leadership. Specifically, we aimed to understand, (a) how leaders inspire followers (i.e., what
417 is it leaders say and do to inspire athletes), (b) in what situations athletes were inspired, and
418 (c) the consequences of inspiration.

419 **Method**

420 **Participants.** Participants were 17 athletes (13 male, 4 female), aged between 18 and
421 38 years ($M = 27.12$, $SD = 7.07$) with between 5 and 30 years' sport experience ($M = 14.53$,
422 $SD = 8.47$). These participants had not taken part in study 1. Participants had competed at
423 semi-professional, professional, national or international standard in a range of sports
424 including hockey, athletics, soccer, sailing, triathlon, and basketball. To be eligible for the
425 study, participants had to: (a) have experienced leadership that had inspired them, and (b) be
426 willing to openly share thoughts, opinions, and experiences in an interview. These sampling
427 criteria were used to ensure that participants would be information-rich cases who would be
428 able to provide detailed information pertaining to the research aims.

429 **Procedure.** Prior to commencement of the main study, a pilot interview was
430 conducted with one participant in order to evaluate and refine the content and clarity of the
431 initially developed interview guide. Following analysis of, and reflection upon the pilot
432 interview (e.g., using reflective notes), revisions were made to the interview guide. For
433 example, to allow a more free-flowing interview, the amount of direct questions was reduced.
434 Instead, in the initial part of the interview, participants were asked to recall situations in
435 which the leader inspired them, and these examples were recorded and then used as a
436 stimulus to structure the rest of the interview.

437 Following the pilot interview, potential participants were contacted via a telephone
438 conversation or email to explain the study and enquire into their interest in taking part in the
439 study. If participants were interested in taking part, an individual interview was arranged.
440 Interviews were conducted as conversations using open-ended questions. Before the
441 interview started, participants were provided with information regarding the purpose of the
442 study, the ways in which confidentiality would be ensured, and their right to withdraw at any
443 time. Participants were given an opportunity to confirm their understanding of the study and
444 complete a consent form, before voluntarily proceeding with the interview.

445 The interview began with introductory questions (e.g., tell us about your major
446 achievements and highlights of your career in your sport), which aimed to gain an
447 understanding of the participant's background and aid the development of rapport between
448 the interviewer and participant. Participants were then asked to talk generally about
449 inspirational leaders they had experienced in their career. Next, participants were asked to
450 identify moments in which leaders had inspired them; explaining what happened leading up
451 to these moments, what happened in the moments themselves, and the impacts of these
452 inspirational moments. All interviews were conducted face-to-face, and lasted between 45

453 and 120 minutes ($M = 82.47$, $SD = 24.91$). Interviews were recorded using a digital recorder
454 and transcribed verbatim.

455 **Data Analysis.** As with Study 1, inductive thematic analysis, following Braun and
456 Clarke's (2006) six phase procedure, was used to analyse the interview data. Initially, the
457 transcripts were read and re-read to ensure familiarity with the data and identify initial codes.
458 The codes were then refined and sorted into broad themes relating to the inspirational
459 moment, the consequences of being inspired, and factors that influence athletes' perceptions
460 of their leader. Following this, key themes were identified that best represented the essence of
461 each candidate theme.

462 **Methodological rigor.** To aid critical reflection, emerging findings were regularly
463 presented to the research team. The research team acted as "critical friends" throughout the
464 research process in order to provide a theoretical sounding board to encourage reflection
465 surrounding the interpretation of data (Sparkes & Smith, 2013). Further, authenticity was
466 enhanced through the use of a reflexive journal. The use of a reflexive research journal has
467 been proposed as an efficacious tool through which to acknowledge the way in which the
468 researcher's involvement can shape the research process, as well as help the researcher focus
469 on the developing method and content of the study (Culver, Gilbert, & Sparkes, 2012). In this
470 instance, the notes referred to the researcher's subjective feelings, reflections on the interview
471 process, and emerging themes following each interview. Reflections were used to increase
472 the researcher's awareness of his own subjectivities during the research process, to assess the
473 interviews and data analysis, and aided the on-going refinement of the interview guide.

474 **Results**

475 In the following sections the categories that depict the participants' experiences of
476 inspirational leadership are presented. First, details surrounding inspirational moments
477 experienced by the participants are reported. Second, consequences of inspirational

478 leadership are presented, and finally, factors that influence athletes' perceptions of their
479 leader are outlined.

480 **The inspirational moment.** In total, participants discussed 61 moments in which they
481 were inspired by their respective leaders. These moments happened in a range of situations
482 and inspiration was evoked by different leadership behaviours and actions. Thus, this section
483 is divided into two parts outlining (a) the context prior to inspiration, and (b) the leader
484 actions which inspired the participants.

485 *Context prior to being inspired.* Participants were inspired following a range of
486 scenarios in which they experienced a range of, mainly negative, cognitions and emotions.
487 For example, prior to being inspired participants reported experiencing situations that could
488 have had potentially negative consequences (e.g., following injury or training in adverse
489 weather). This was illustrated by one participant who recalled how an argument with their
490 coach had preceded inspirational leadership, "something went on that prompted a response . .
491 . we were both really annoyed that it wasn't going well, and we'd had quite a big clash. I was
492 nearly in tears at the time as I was so angry." Performance outcomes (positive and negative)
493 were another catalyst for inspirational leader behaviour. For example, inspirational moments
494 were preceded by negative performance either during competition or training, as highlighted
495 by one athlete who stated, "Before that [the inspirational leader behaviour] we were 3-1
496 down, and everyone was getting deflated."

497 Participants reported experiencing a range of negative cognitions prior to being
498 inspired by their coach. For example, they reported feelings of uncertainty relating to their
499 own potential, how to progress, and their ability to cope with the demands of a situation. One
500 participant described how she was feeling prior to completing a gruelling training session:

501 I was like 'I'm not going to be able to do it'. It was like fifty-eight miles and fifty-
502 eight hills, massive horrible hills . . . I was really, really nervous, thinking "there's no
503 way I can do this. I'm going to fail."

504 Participants also reported lacking confidence and motivation, as one said, "People just
505 seemed not to be motivated . . . in our minds we were thinking 'they're much older than us,
506 they're just going to smash us.'" Prior to the inspirational moments discussed, participants
507 also noted feeling a range of (mainly negative) emotions (e.g., frustration, worry). For
508 instance, following poor performance one athlete described feeling, "a bit stressed and angry
509 and a bit depressed."

510 *Leader actions leading to inspiration.* The leaders discussed in this study
511 demonstrated a range of behaviours and actions that were proposed to evoke inspiration.
512 Indeed, leaders evoked inspiration in participants through verbal and nonverbal
513 communication, which included praising and supporting athletes, and displaying positive
514 emotional reactions to the participants' performances.

515 Leaders inspired participants by providing an example for them to follow in terms of
516 behaviour and characteristics, and performance during competition and training. For instance,
517 participants discussed moments where they were inspired by seeing their leader train,
518 compete, and display exceptional effort. Indeed, one participant perceived seeing his coach
519 perform to be an inspirational moment during his career saying, "Seeing [the coach] compete
520 was inspirational . . . he was amazing at [his sport]; he could beat everyone with his left-hand
521 even though he doesn't play left-handed."

522 Participants also reported that leaders cultivated opportunities to be inspired. For
523 instance, participants described instances where they were inspired when their leader
524 provided opportunities for athletes to train with or meet higher-level athletes. One athlete
525 recalled when another coach with Olympic experience was brought in to training:

ATHLETES' EXPERIENCES OF BEING INSPIRED IN SPORT

526 [The coach] had a lot of contacts and was able to bring people at different levels in to
527 show us what we had to do to get to that next level . . . we had an ex-Olympian come
528 in. He was a great coach and very specific because he's got a lot of experience, he's
529 been in the position we're in. So, it was really interesting to see his ideas.

530 All the participants reported being inspired by their leaders communicating a clear
531 strategy to help them move forwards when they were unsure how to proceed. For example,
532 one athlete described how her coach inspired her by providing technical instruction when she
533 did not know how to compete against difficult opponents:

534 [The coach] talked to us about positioning . . . he focused on specific positional
535 skills—what the defence needed to do and what the forwards needed to do. Instead of
536 the defence just trying to go straight to the forwards, maybe passing it around and that
537 triggered what we had done in training previously and what had happened in previous
538 matches as well.

539 Participants were also inspired by leader's direct expressions of belief such as the
540 participants' potential for future successes and growth, their ability to cope with the demands
541 of a situation, and expressing higher expectations for athletes. For example, one participant
542 recalled his coach's reaction to a personal best performance, "Wow! If you've improved that
543 much then you really could be something quite special quite soon, and we must come up with
544 some ideas of how we can improve you." Another athlete described how her coach expressed
545 belief in her ability to perform better following a frustrating performance, "I know you're
546 frustrated but I know you can do better."

547 Participants also discussed being inspired by behaviours that they perceived to
548 demonstrated belief. This was evidenced by one participant's perception of their coach
549 turning up to train them individually despite adverse weather conditions, "The belief
550 [inspired me], that he [the coach] had belief in me. That he was willing to come down in the

551 snow to train just me, I must have had potential.” Similarly, leaders attending competitions to
552 support participants was perceived as demonstrations of belief. As one participant described:

553 So he’s [the coach] driven all that way just to come and see me and help me. He
554 actually wants to be here; it’s not like he’s been told to be here . . . I could tell that he
555 believed in me, I knew he wanted to work with me and get the best out of me.

556 Participants also found emotional support to be inspiring. Leaders demonstrated their
557 understanding of participants’ feelings in difficult circumstances by discussing the
558 participants’ concerns and providing support during these moments. For instance, following
559 a difficult build up to the competition and poor performance, which led to feelings of
560 frustration, one participant recalled her coach saying:

561 “We both know that the training prior to it wasn’t ideal, wasn’t what you wanted . . .
562 it’s not the end of the world.” He [the coach] did sympathize with me at that point and
563 said “I know you're frustrated; I know you're going to do better.”

564 **Consequences of inspiration.** Being inspired by a leader led to a range of positive
565 cognitive, affective, and behavioural responses.

566 **Cognitive outcomes.** Inspirational moments had an impact on participants’ thoughts
567 and beliefs. For instance, participants reported inspiration to influence their motivation (e.g.,
568 to train, to return from injury), as one participant said, the inspirational leadership made them,
569 “want to do more to succeed.” Inspiration was also seen to increase participants’ confidence
570 in a range of areas. Participants described how their leaders’ behaviour (e.g., demonstrating
571 belief in the athlete) led to increased confidence in their ability to accomplish further success.
572 This was highlighted by one participant who stated, “It was a really positive moment [coach’s
573 reaction to performance], I actually realised then that I could achieve . . . it was massive.”
574 Participants reported increased awareness and understanding of their potential as a result of
575 the inspirational moments. For example, one participant described how his leader’s reaction

576 to their performance led him to reassess his athletic potential saying, “suddenly it [the
577 coach’s reaction] made me think, well maybe I can improve a lot and . . . it just made me
578 suddenly think that there would be more in there somewhere.” Participants also reported
579 increased awareness relating to the way to progress in their sport or the context in which they
580 were inspired, as one participant said, “in that moment [following the coach’s reaction] I
581 realised that I was okay at the physical side, but the technical side needed work.”

582 The inspirational moments also produced a range of other cognitive responses, such
583 as increased focus, the ability to let go of negative thoughts regarding previous performances,
584 and a positive approach to competition and training. Additionally, there were examples of the
585 participants’ feelings towards their leader being strengthened after the inspirational moment.
586 For instance, when recalling the impact of the inspirational moment, one participant stated,
587 “It just strengthened the bond and the trust.”

588 *Affective outcomes.* While many participants reported feelings of negativity prior to
589 being inspired, a range of positive affective responses were reported as a result of the
590 inspirational moment. Participants reported feeling excited regarding their potential and the
591 opportunities that may come their way, and happier (in sport and general life) with one
592 participant describing the positive impact of inspiration stating, “I hadn’t had a great race
593 when I went and spoke to [the coach] and it [coach’s reaction] put a smile on my face.”
594 Participants also experienced a range of performance-related positive affective responses
595 (e.g., decreased frustration, increased pride). One participant recalled their feelings following
596 an inspirational interaction with his coach describing, “I performed with a lot more passion
597 and enjoyment after that.” Further, participants reported feelings of relaxation following
598 inspirational interactions with the leader, with one participant commenting, “[the coach] did
599 help me to switch off and just stop thinking about it for the day and relax.”

600 ***Behavioural and performance outcomes.*** The participants also perceived that
601 inspirational moments facilitated change in their training behaviours (e.g., dedicated more
602 time, increased effort). One participant described how they challenged themselves more in
603 training, saying the moment, “made me put what I’d been doing before that time as kind of a
604 marker and then try and do different things in terms of distance and pace to try and improve.”
605 Inspirational moments were also reported to have an impact on performance, with one
606 participant explaining how her leader’s reaction following poor performance facilitated
607 improved performance saying, “the next two days’ racing my performance really improved
608 and went really well for me.” As well as improved performance outcomes, participants
609 reported inspiration to influence other performance-related factors (e.g., increased effort). For
610 instance, one participant discussed the impact of a half-time team talk from her coach, “it
611 made me more persistent, so if I lost the ball I wouldn’t just stand there, I’d chase back.”

612 **Factors that influence athletes’ perceptions of their leader.** When discussing their
613 experiences of being inspired participants also mentioned some factors that influenced their
614 perceptions of their leaders. These factors related to leaders’ characteristics and general
615 behaviour, and participants’ feelings towards the leader.

616 ***Leader characteristics and general behaviour.*** Participants identified a range of
617 behaviours and characteristics that may have influenced their perceptions of the leader. For
618 example, when referring to how the leader promoted autonomy within the side, one
619 participant recalled how the coach would, “ask us what we wanted to do before the weekend
620 and then he'd plan sessions around what we wanted to do.” There were also several examples
621 of the leader having high expectations, with one participant commenting on the culture of
622 excellence facilitated by their leader saying, “because of the standards he'd set in training . . .
623 we basically had an international environment in a club set-up.” The participants also
624 highlighted various characteristics common to leaders they identified as inspirational,

625 including aspects relating to the authority, aura, passion, and enthusiasm. For instance,
626 participants perceived their leader to be genuine, one participant commented, “I think it’s just
627 how he [the leader] was totally genuine . . . he wasn’t trying to get something from you . . .
628 They were genuinely trying to make you better or genuinely leading the way to make,
629 ultimately, the team better.”

630 *Feelings towards the leader.* A number of factors were identified concerning the
631 feelings participants held toward their leader. One aspect highlighted by participants was the
632 respect they had for their leader, with reasons for such respect including the leader’s
633 reputation and conduct. For example, one participant highlighted how the whole team, “had
634 full respect for [the leader] because they knew what a competitor he was.” Trust in
635 competence and on a personal level was seen to play an important role in the interactions
636 between participants and leaders. Indeed, one participant referred to the trust she had in her
637 coach’s training structure:

638 Sometimes I’ll be like “oh, I can’t do that” . . . I panic that I’m going to push myself
639 too hard, but I go and do it and I’m alright. So, I do trust the way that he sets out the
640 timetable as well.

641 **Discussion**

642 The purpose of Study 2 was to understand how leaders inspire athletes in sport.
643 Firstly, Study 2 explored the leadership behaviours that inspire athletes in sport. There
644 appears to be some overlap between our findings and previous leadership research and
645 theory. For instance, a key behaviour within transformational leadership theory (Bass, 1985)
646 is inspirational motivation, where leaders inspire followers by articulating a compelling
647 vision of the future. In support of this, participants in this study described being inspired
648 when leaders outlined their future potential. However, in addition to this, the findings
649 indicated that leaders inspired athletes by demonstrating other behaviours including showing

650 athletes the way forward in difficult circumstances, providing a positive example to follow,
651 providing support, cultivating opportunities to be inspired, and through emotional reactions to
652 athletes' accomplishments.

653 Secondly, this study aimed to understand the context in which inspiration occurs. This
654 builds on previous research (e.g., Searle & Hanrahan, 2011) by identifying the situations in
655 which leaders inspire followers. Searle and Hanrahan posited that leaders could pick the
656 "opportune" moment to inspire followers, without providing details of the contexts in which
657 leaders had inspired followers. Within the present study inspirational leader behaviour was
658 preceded by both negative and positive situations accompanied by a range of, mainly
659 negative, cognitions and emotions. These findings are consistent with previous research that
660 has found inspiration to occur on the same day as positive experiences and following
661 moments of difficulty, frustration, and struggle (Hart, 1998; Thrash & Elliot, 2003). Thirdly,
662 this study examined consequences of inspiring leadership. Consistent with the findings of
663 Study 1, inspiration was seen to impact on participants' awareness of capabilities, confidence,
664 motivation, and behaviour.

665 Thirdly, this study examined the consequences of inspirational leadership. As with
666 Study 1 inspiration was posed to result in a positive impact on cognitions, affect and
667 behaviour. However, Study 2 did hint at potential temporal differences in relation to these
668 consequences. The findings indicate that inspiration might have both short-term (e.g., having
669 an impact on a team's performance in the second half of a match) and long-term (e.g., raising
670 an athlete's perceptions of what they may be capable of in the long-term) impacts on athlete
671 cognitions and behaviour. This suggests that the duration of the impact may depend upon the
672 context and message delivered by an inspiring stimulus. For example, a team-talk delivered at
673 half time may impact team performance in the second half of a game, whereas a discussion

699 change in cognitions, and a desire to act upon these feelings. The findings also support the
700 tripartite conceptualization of inspiration (Thrash & Elliot, 2003) because, in all the
701 inspirational moments described by the athletes, inspiration was *evoked* by an external source
702 (e.g., a leader), *transcended* their initial concerns (e.g., moving from a negative to positive
703 state) and increased their awareness of possibilities, and influenced *motivation* as athletes'
704 behaviour was energized and directed (e.g., increased effort to reach potential).

705 Our findings also revealed inspiration resulted in a change of athletes' cognitive and
706 affective states (e.g., from negative to positive) by influencing their perception or awareness
707 of their capabilities. This finding may be explained by self-regulation theory (cf. Carver &
708 Scheier, 1982), which posits that an individual will compare their perception of their present
709 (actual-) state against where they wish to be (ideal-self). If the actual-self does not match the
710 ideal-self, they will change their behaviour in order to reduce this discrepancy (providing
711 they have confidence in their ability and the knowledge to do so). In relation to our findings,
712 it appears that leaders are able to change athletes' perceptions of their capability and,
713 subsequently, increase athletes' expectancy of reducing this discrepancy, which subsequently
714 inspires them to strive towards their ideal- or ought-selves. Within the present study,
715 examples include the captain demonstrating exceptional effort that raises the teams'
716 awareness of what they should be doing (ought-selves) and the coach telling an athlete that
717 they have the potential to reach the elite-level (ideal-selves). In particular, it appears from our
718 findings that the ability to change athletes' perspectives is particularly salient when athletes
719 are feeling negative or at an early stage of their careers (where they perhaps do not have an
720 understanding of their own capability relative to others). Thus, leaders provided them with
721 the information required to counter the situation, which inspired them to behave in a manner
722 consistent with the information provided and subsequently lead to improved performance.
723 One question which arises from this suggestion regards the potential for inspiration to have a

724 negative impact on athletes. Specifically, when inspired, if athletes' perceptions of their
725 capabilities are raised significantly but their performances do not meet these expectations
726 could this have a detrimental impact on the athlete and their development.

727 Considering the above point and the findings of Study 1, leaders appear to have the
728 greatest potential to inspire athletes. Thus, our findings also make a unique contribution to the
729 leadership literature by identifying a range of inspiring leader behaviours (e.g.,
730 demonstrations of belief, setting an example, showing the way forward). Interestingly, these
731 behaviours appear to relate to the three forms of transmission (replication, actualization,
732 expression) that explain the way intrinsic qualities presented by a stimulus inspires an
733 individual to extend these qualities to a self-relevant object (cf. Thrash, Moldovan, Fuller, &
734 Dombrowski, 2014). To explain, setting an example relates to *replication* which refers to how
735 one is inspired by the qualities of a pre-existing object (e.g., dedication to self-improvement
736 displayed by a leader) in the environment and seeks to reproduce these qualities in a new
737 object (e.g., showing greater dedication to own training and development). Demonstrating
738 belief appears to overlap with *actualization*, where appreciation of a compelling seminal idea
739 enters awareness during a moment of insight (e.g., a leader outlining an athlete's potential)
740 and as such an individual is energized (e.g., the athlete has greater confidence and is
741 motivated to work towards this potential) by the possibility of bringing the idea into fruition.
742 Finally, showing the way forward has links with *expression*, whereby transmission is
743 facilitated by a compelling idea that is already well formed when it enters awareness (e.g.,
744 specific technical advice provided in order to counter a difficult situation) and is acted upon
745 immediately (e.g., the team have an understanding of how to deal with the situation and adapt
746 their behaviour accordingly).

747 **Limitations and Future Research**

748 The current studies provide an in-depth examination of the ways in which athletes are
749 inspired in sport and subsequently offer a number of future research avenues. However, this
750 research is not without its limitations. These include the use of single point of contact data
751 collection methods and the retrospective nature of recall. However, given that inspiration is
752 not something that occurs all the time it may be difficult to study in situ. Further, as the study
753 was looking to describe athletes' experiences of being inspired, it was beyond the scope of
754 the research to examine the reasons why the sources identified were inspirational. In addition,
755 the present study only considered positive impacts of being inspired². However, it is
756 conceivable that there may be negative consequences of being inspired and future research
757 could examine more fully the consequences of being inspired. Research could also look to
758 examine potential differences regarding the experiences of inspiration of athletes across
759 standards to see whether contextual factors (e.g., contact time with a leader) may have an
760 impact on the frequency and intensity of inspiration.

761 Although research could look to examine the inspirational potential of personal
762 performances and thoughts, and role models in greater depth, considering the findings and the
763 impact leaders have on athletes, future research should look to understand the factors that
764 influence the potential of leaders to inspire athletes. Indeed, a recent critique of leadership
765 literature suggested that in order to further understanding, researchers should look to
766 investigate specific aspects of leadership (van Knippenberg & Sitkin, 2013). For example, the
767 words 'inspire' and 'inspiration' are often used in definitions, behavioural components, or
768 described as consequences within theories of leadership. However, very little research has
769 examined the ways in which leaders act and behave in order to inspire followers. While the
770 present research addresses this by directly examining inspirational leader behaviour in sport
771 further research should examine more fully the processes through which leaders impact on

² We asked participants to discuss instances where they were inspired without providing them with information

772 followers. For instance, qualitative methods should be used that enable us to examine the
773 dynamic *process* of leadership in order to produce grounded theories (Shamir, 2011). Such
774 research would allow us to understand the process as a whole (e.g., how leaders are able to
775 develop an inspiring influence over time), has the potential to inform leadership development
776 programs, and could drive future research examining inspirational leadership.

777 **Conclusions**

778 Overall, the present findings suggest that the experience of inspiration can be evoked
779 in sport and lead to a range of positive outcomes. In turn, as these were the first studies to
780 explicitly explore inspiration in the context of sport, the results offer a promising foundation
781 from which future research can build in order to understand this complex process. In
782 particular, such research has the potential to enhance leadership practice and subsequently
783 improve athletes' experiences and performance in sport.

or suggestion that this required them to recall instances that were positive. Thus, based upon our findings, it appears that implicitly people perceive inspiration as a positive experience.

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