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THE LIVED EXPERIENCE OF THE AUSTRALIAN SPORTS AGENT

Mr Timothy Cooper, Dr Melissa Parris, Dr Emma Sherry
Deakin University

The professionalisation of sport in the last decade has brought about an increased use of agents to manage the athlete's off-field career. Athlete salaries and endorsement contracts can now reach sums in excess of seven figures. The management and negotiation of these contracts is big business and in some cases can become highly lucrative for all parties involved. The nature of sports agents is such that director Cameron Crowe wrote and directed the hit film *Jerry Maguire*, bringing the profession into the Hollywood limelight through a feature film that grossed in excess of \$253 million. Yet little academic writing has addressed the experiences of professional sports agents.

The existing literature heavily focuses on the legal regulatory environment of the USA that agents must operate in and on attorneys themselves operating as sports agents. The negotiation of contracts is also well represented within the literature with ethical dilemmas faced by sports agents beginning to be outlined by several authors. The dominant research context found throughout the literature is the American sport agency system, further demonstrating the need for research into the Australian professional sports system. What has not been explored is the day to day experiences of sports agents, nor a study of the sports agent within the Australian context.

The aim of this study reported here was to provide answers to the research question: What is the lived experience of Australian sports agents? The research has explored the thoughts, feelings and emotions experienced by sports agents both during office hours and beyond, stemming from their work as sports agents. The qualitative study was conducted using participants from selected sports agencies throughout Victoria, Australia. Data generation occurred through the use of semi-structured in-depth interviews with Australian sports agents to provide an insight to the day-to-day life within the profession. After conducting the interviews, the transcripts were reviewed to identify both the individual experiences of the participants and common concerns of these agents. This paper presents the research findings, which reveal the reality of the sports agent role beyond the media image often portrayed.

Timothy Cooper is a student at Deakin University undertaking an Honours research program within the School of Management and Marketing. Tim completed his Bachelor of Commerce Degree in 2007, majoring in Economics, Finance and Management. His research project is focusing on the lived experiences of the Australian sports agent. Tim is completing the research project under the supervision of Dr Melissa Parris and Dr Emma Sherry, both also of Deakin University.