

**Coaching Dropout: A Study of volunteer Head Coaches in American Football**  
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**Abstract**

This was a longitudinal study from a population of UK based American Football Head Coaches (n=49) who had who had left their posts over three off-seasons covering two competitive seasons. Each coach received a questionnaire based upon a previous methodology developed by Lyle, Allison & Taylor (1997). Head Coaches who self-identified themselves to have dropped out of coaching were recruited to complete a questionnaire receiving a 12 month follow up to determine whether or not they had returned to coaching.

The questionnaire measured gender, age, previous experience, and employment status. Length of tenure, reasons for leaving post and considerations for returning to coaching were also recorded.

Finally the study examined reasons why coaches 'drop out' of their coaching activities, investigating factors that may induce coaches to return to coaching.

The study results highlighted that Head Coaches are predominantly choosing to step down (87.8%) but are not leaving the sport but instead choosing to coach in a less demanding role with less responsibility (63.3%).

Head Coaches reported high levels of burnout through physical and emotional fatigue prior to stepping away from their post and cited a lack of support, time pressures, and a dissatisfaction with athlete commitment as prime factors for resigning from post.

**Introduction**

A recent YouGov survey commissioned by UK Coaching indicated that six percent of UK adults reported that they had coached, instructed, trained, taught or led sport or physical activity in the 12 months prior to the survey. This equates to an estimated three million coaches across the UK in 2019, a slight decrease from 2017. Of these, just under half (46%) did so in a voluntary capacity (UK Coaching, 2019).

5% of this reported three million coaches declare themselves to be 'Head Coach' would equate to a population of 150,000 nationwide, encompassing a number of sports across all age groups and abilities.

**Table 1:** Self-referred to Coaching Titles, (UK Coaching 2019)

<b>Coaching Titles</b>	<b>Percentage 2017</b>	<b>Percentage 2019</b>
Activator/Facilitator	10	10
Advanced/Senior Coach	5	5
Assistant Coach	14	15
Coach	18	19
Fitness or Exercise Instructor	9	10
Head Coach	5	5
Helper	25	22
PE Teacher	8	8
Performance Coach	4	4
Personal Trainer	6	6
Specialist Coach (e.g. Positional, Skills)	5	5
Sports Leader/Leader	10	8
Teacher (outside school)	8	7
Trainee Coach	6	4

A similar study of Scottish coaches conducted by Sport Scotland (2017), showed that reasons for becoming involved in coaching was primarily through a love of their sport (71%).

**Table 2:** Motivations to start Coaching, (Sport Scotland, 2017),  
*\*Note: coaches could select more than one motivation.*

Motivation	% of Coaches
I love my sport/activity and want to help others enjoy it	71
I enjoy helping others	39
To help my old team/club	26
To stay involved in sport/physical	24
My children were playing, and I wanted to help	24
I was asked	21
I wanted a career in coaching	20
I had already been coaching while playing	14
There was no one else to do it	11
I started at university	5
It was a way to meet new people	3

Coaches in the 2019 study described themselves as generally very positive about their experience of coaching and feel recognised for their contribution to helping others, recommending coaching to others. Amongst potential stressors reported, male coaches are more likely to agree it is hard to balance coaching alongside their other commitments (42% of male coaches compared to 33% of female coaches). Balancing work/home life, remain the biggest barriers to coaching in the UK (36%) (UK Coaching, 2019).

Coaches reported benefits of coaching with 78% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that being a coach helped them develop skills outside sport amongst other benefits (Table 3).

**Table 3:** Benefits of being a coach (Sport Scotland, 2017). *\*Note: coaches could select more than one benefit.*

	Stongly Agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
Coaching makes me proud to help others	55	39	5	0	0
I feel I make a positive contribution to my community by coaching	49	45	6	0	0
Coaching makes me feel positive	34	52	12	1	1
I have developed lasting friendships through coaching	36	46	15	2	1
Coaching keeps me active and healthy	35	46	16	3	0
Through coaching I have developed skills that help outside sport	35	43	18	3	1
Coaching has increased my confidence	37	36	25	2	1
Coaching has opened up new opportunities in life	31	36	25	7	2
Coaching has increased my self-esteem	31	32	33	3	0
Coaching has helped in my career outside sport	23	25	36	12	4
Coaching provides a release from the stresses of life	15	31	33	17	4
I worry less as a result of coaching	8	17	52	20	3

Whilst the majority of self-reported coaches hold no qualification (54%) this number has been driven downwards in recent years as coach education programmes have been rolled out across all sports. As national governing bodies move towards minimum standards through coaching qualifications. Therefore a major concern for policy makers, is an adequate supply of qualified coaches who are available to increase participation and raise standards in sport (Lyle, Allison & Taylor, 1997).

In this context, it is a legitimate concern to enquire why qualified coaches who have been actively involved in the delivery of their sport choose to leave their roles.

This study aims to investigate the characteristics of British American Football coaches who have recently exited their roles and also to explore the reasons for dropping out from the sport.

## Background

American football was introduced to the United Kingdom during the early part of the 20th century by American servicemen stationed in the country however it wasn't until Channel 4 began weekly broadcasts of the game in 1982 that the game began to develop a wider following (Crawford, 2016).

The first teams open to British players were established in 1983, and competition began the following year in the form of a series of one-off games. Hundreds of clubs have since been formed, playing both full contact football and flag football at senior, university, junior and youth level.

The sport is administered by the British American Football Association (BAFA), with two main bodies of competition; the BAFA National Leagues (BAFANL), referred to as Senior League, with 64 teams and the British Universities American Football League (operating as part of the British Universities and Colleges Sport competition (BUCS) with 80 teams.

In order to coach American Football in the UK, all coaches, positional and Head Coaches, must be fully accredited by the British American Football Coaches Association (BAFCA), holding both a recent Level 1 coaching qualification, and mandatory insurance with the governing body (BAFCA, 2019a).

BAFA registered a total of 2063 coaches, across all competitive formats, in 2018-19. A breakdown of numbers for coaches involved in the university league showed an upward trend in total coaching numbers. The BUCS league registered 909 coaches in 2018-19, an increase from 507 in 2016-17 (BAFCA 2019b).

**Table 4:** BAFCA Coach registration numbers across all leagues (BAFCA 2019b) *\*Figures for 2018-19 included an additional category of Player/Coaches, which revealed an additional 339 registered coaches.*

	2013/14	2014/15	2015/16	2016/17	2017/18	2018/19
<b>BUCS</b>				507	477	570 (339*) 909
<b>National League</b>				729	1136	1045
<b>Others</b>				83	113	109
<b>Totals</b>	715	757	1142	1319	1726	2063

These numbers indicate a heavy increase in registered coach numbers but does not detail whether coaches are staying with their respective teams, moving on, or dropping out of the sport altogether. The increase in total coaching numbers is possibly related to a change in league rules, which required a minimum of 3 registered per team from season 2018-19. This shows BUCS competition having a 90% increase in registered coaches, compared to a 6% Decrease in registered coaches the year before. In comparison the National (Senior) League have recorded an 8% decrease in registered coaches in 2018-19.

The nature of coaching within the sport of American Football means there are multiple positional coaches overseen by a Head Coach. The Head Coach has a range of responsibilities, from managing all players and staff, designing practices, outlining game plans, opposition scouting, post-game analysis, game management, and dictating the overall philosophy of the team (Garda, 2013).

This excess of responsibilities makes the role of Head Coach in American Football particularly stressful. James (2007) stated that professional Head Coaches reported high levels of stress and pressure within the role.

An analysis of BUCS league coach registrations indicate that there has been a high turnover in Head Coaches within the current 81 team league. From the end of the 2016-17 season to the completion of the 2018-19 season, there had been 74 Head Coach changes over 58 teams (15 teams had more than one change) affecting 71.6% of teams within the league across all levels (BAFCA 2019b).

**Table 5:** Head Coach Attrition rates across BUCS leagues 2017-2019 (BAFCA 2019b)  
*\*Includes teams with more than one change of Head Coach.*

Level of Play	Total teams	Teams who have lost HC's	%
Premier	10	6 (8*)	60%
Division 1	30	20 (23*)	66.70%
Division 2	41	32 (41*)	78.05%
Total	81	58 (74*)	71.60%

## Methodology

By utilising previous methodology developed by Lyle, Allison & Taylor (1997) coaches who self-identify themselves to have dropped out of coaching were recruited to complete a questionnaire. The subject group was a self-selected group identified through the British American Football Coaches Association as having resigned from their Head Coaching post since 2016.

Upon volunteering for the study, coaches were supplied with a questionnaire, with 20 questions covering sections on personal details; coaching background; reasons for becoming involved; reasons for dropout; possible return to coaching; feelings associated to coaching.

All completed questionnaires were submitted anonymously over a 2-year period (covering 3 competitive seasons) from 2016 to 2019, and data collated for analysis upon completion of the data collection period. A subsequent 12 month follow up was conducted to ascertain whether the subjects had returned to coaching.

## Results

There were 49 respondents from 74 coaches who had left their posts over three off-seasons covering two competitive seasons (2017-2019), a response rate of 66%. Respondents had a mean age of 36.4 years and were primarily under 40 years of age (69.4%) (Table 6).

**Table 6:** Age Ranges of Coaches

Age of Coaches	% of Respondents
16 to 29	26.5
30 to 39	42.9
40 to 49	16.3
50+	14.3

The respondents were predominantly male (98%) with only one female Head Coach in the entirety of all the 74 coaches who had left post. The Head Coaches were largely in full time employment (87.8%) reflective of the younger cohort reported (Table 7).

**Table 7:** Employment Status of Coaches (Base of 49 respondents).

Employment Status of Coaches	%
Employed full-time (30 hours+)	87.8
Employed part-time (8-29 hours)	0.0
Self-employed	6.1
Unemployed	0.0
Retired	2.0
Not employed (ie. housewife/husband/student)	4.1

The coaches had been coaching (all positions) for an average of 10.0 years (Table 8) and accumulated an average of 6.6 seasons as a Head Coach.

**Table 8:** Years of experience coaching (all positions\*) American Football, *\*not just as Head Coach.*

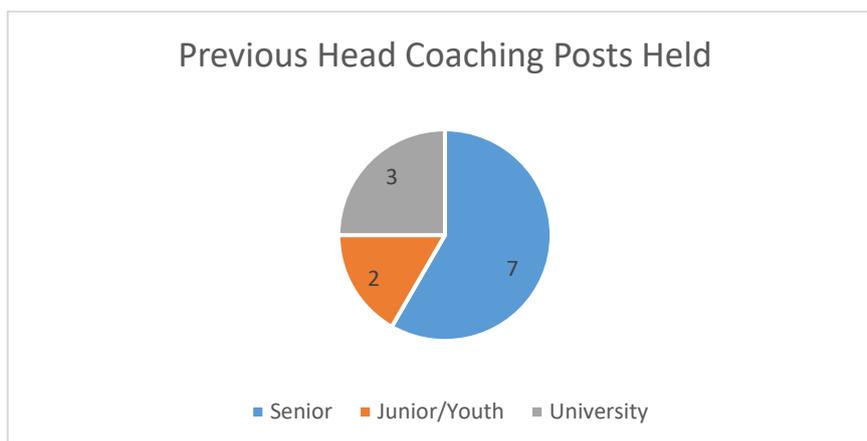
Years Experience	% of Respondents
Up to 1 year	2.0
1-2 years	0.0
3-5 years	14.3
6-10 years	42.9
11-15 years	18.4
16 years or more	22.4

Of the 49 Head Coaches participants to the survey 75.5% had never previously held a post as a Head Coach before and were therefore novices to the role of Head Coach (Figure 1).



**Figure 1:** Previous Head Coaching experience

The majority of those who had worked as a Head Coach elsewhere had been working in the Senior National leagues, with a smaller number working with Youth teams or in Head Coaching position with another University team (Figure 2).



**Figure 2:** Previous Head Coaching posts held (n=12).

On average, the coaches had passed their Level 1 Coaching award 8.6 years prior to leaving their post as a Head Coach.

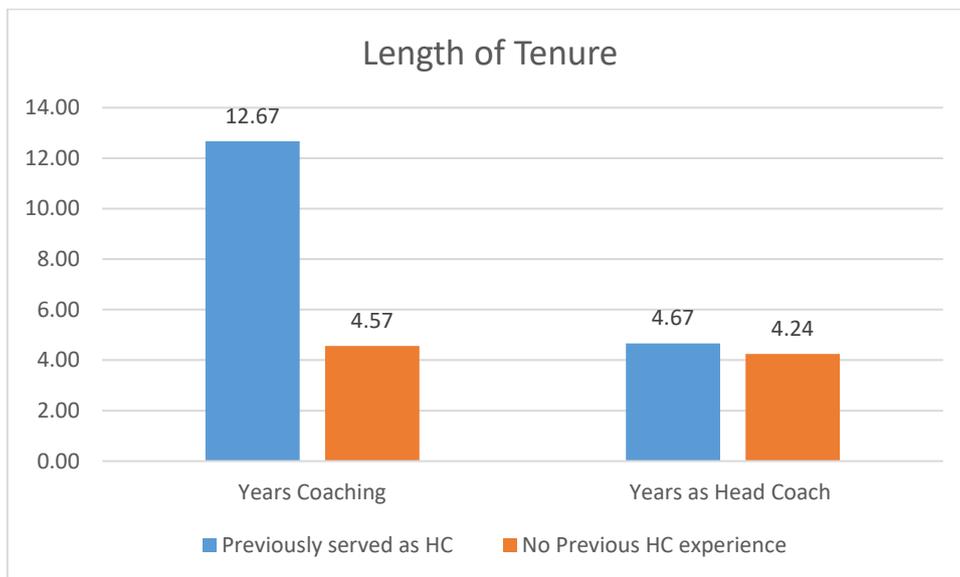
The majority of the coaches 73.5% had greater than 6 years' worth of experience since qualifying as a Level 1 coach through the BAFA coach education scheme (Table 9).

**Table 9:** Years since Head Coaches qualified as a Level 1 coach.

Years since qualified as a coach	Number of respondents	% of Respondents
Up to 1 year	2	4.2
1-2 years	2	4.1
3-5 years	12	24.5
6-10 years	23	46.9
11-15 years	6	12.2
16 years or more	6	12.2

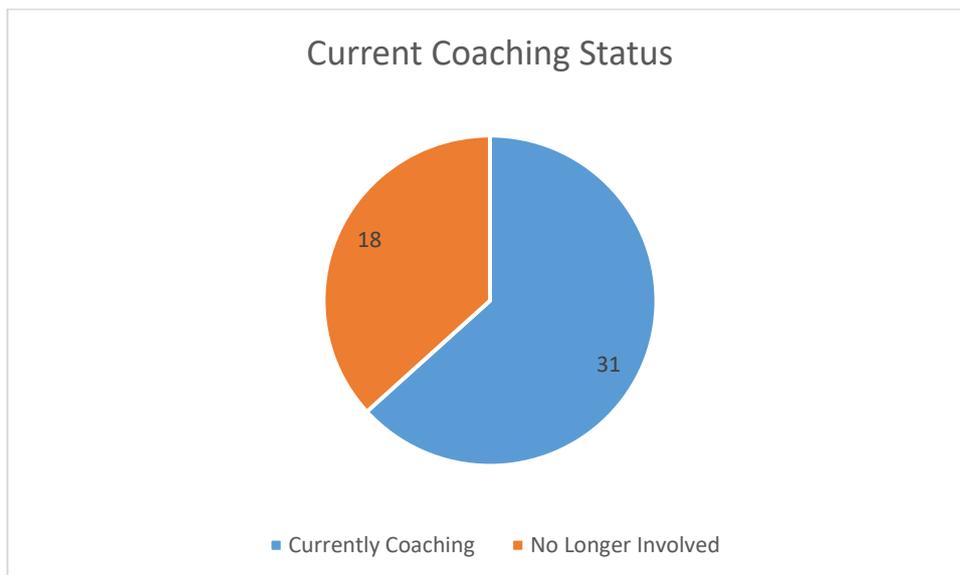
Once in post, the Head Coaches accumulated 4.3 seasons worth of experience before leaving their current position.

Coaches who had previously served as a Head Coach (at all levels of play) recorded slightly longer tenures before leaving post (4.67 seasons, n=12) compared to novice Head Coaches (4.24 seasons, n=37) (Figure 3). Coaches who previously served as a Head Coach had an average tenure of 9.67 seasons in other posts, predominantly in Senior League (58.3%). The average length of tenure for all coaches was 4.35 seasons (n=49).



**Figure 3:** Length of Tenure of Head Coaches in most recent post

Of the 49 coaches no longer in post 63.3% had already returned to coaching, predominantly to Senior League (58.1%) (Figure 4).



**Figure 4:** Current Coaching status

Of those Head Coaches who had returned to coaching (n=31) as positional coaches (54.8%) with 29% (n=9) stepping back to the role of Head Coach at another team (Figure 5).



**Figure 5:** Current roles of Head Coaches who had returned to coaching

Of those who had stepped back into the post of Head Coach only 33% had stayed within the same league set up with the remaining returnees moving into other formats of the game (Table 10).

**Table 10:** League for new Head Coaches role.

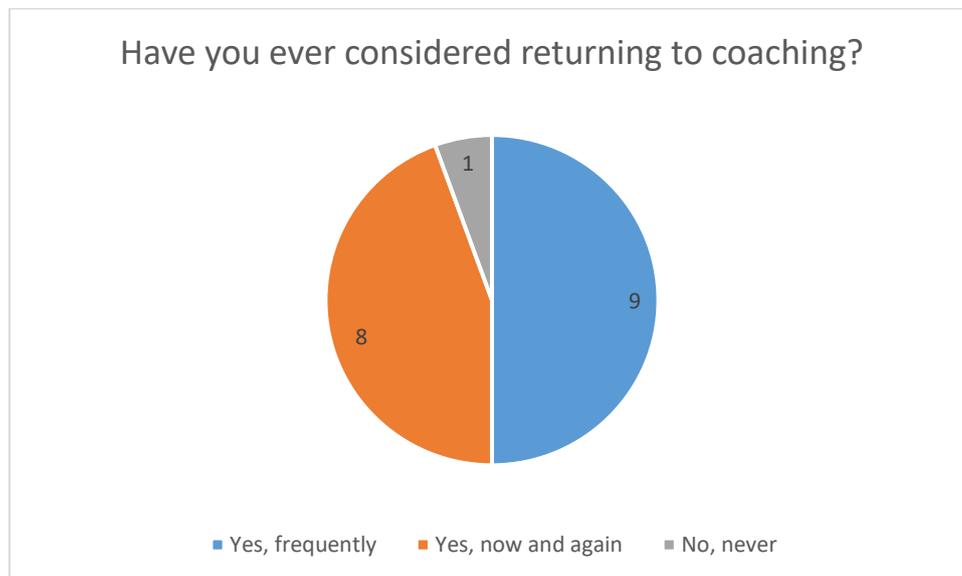
League for new HC role	No.
University	3
Senior/National League	4
Youth/Junior	2
Womens	0

The vast majority of Head Coaches had stepped down from post on their own accord (87.8%) with only 2 coaches being removed from post (4.1%).

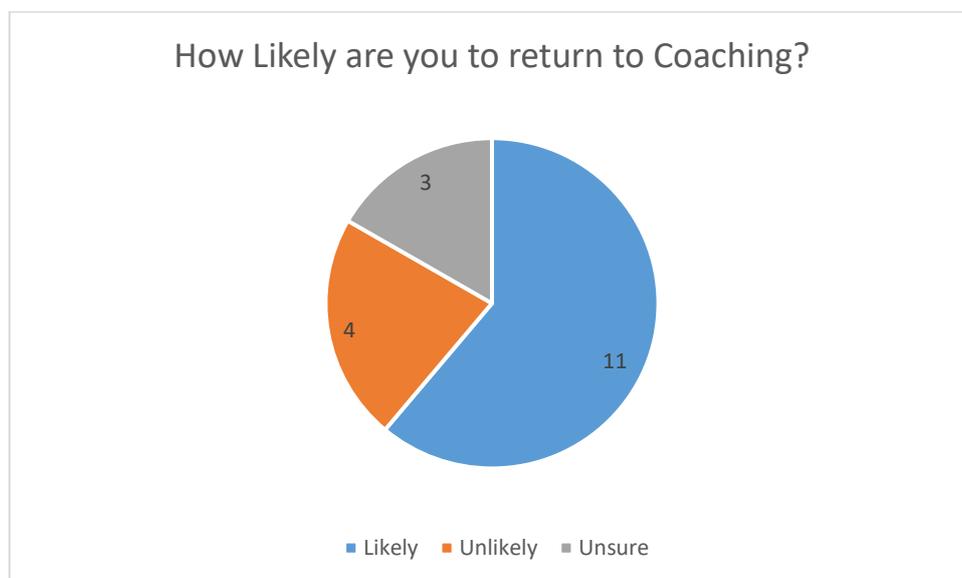


**Figure 6:** Reasons given for leaving Head Coaching post.

Of those coaches no longer coaching (n=18), they recorded themselves as thinking of returning to coaching frequently (50%) or 'now and again' (44.4%) (Figure 7), and 61.8% recording themselves as being 'likely to return' to coaching in a follow up question with 22.2% as unlikely, and 16.7% unsure (Figure 8).



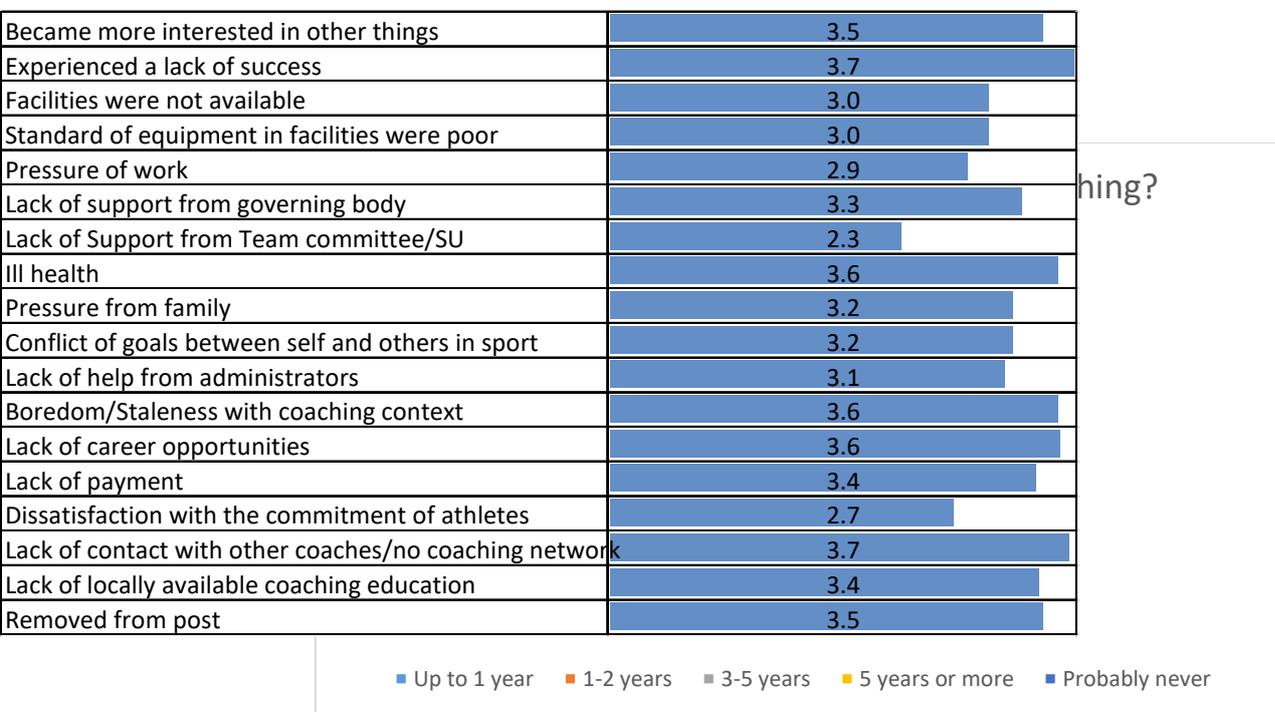
**Figure 7:** Consideration of Head Coaches who had not returned to coaching within 12 months of doing so at a later point (n=18).



**Figure 8:** Likelihood of Head Coaches who had left post to return to coaching (n=18).

Of those coaches no longer coaching (36.7% of respondents, n=18) most predicted a return in 1-2 years (61.1%) with a preference for Junior, University or Senior league levels but with no preference for level coached (Head Coach/Coordinator/Positional).

Only 2 respondents in total (4.1%) predicted they would probably never coach again with the majority (61.1%) expecting to return within 1-2 years, with one subject being undecided (Figure 9).



**Figure 9:** Estimated return to coaching (n=17).

Of the reasons given for becoming involved in coaching, the most popular responses were: 1. I had a general interest in the sport, 2. I was interested in helping young people, 3. I wanted to maintain my involvement in Competitive sport, 4. I wanted to put something back into sport (Table 11).

**Table 11:** Reasons given for becoming involved in Coaching

1 Of very great importance; 2 Great Importance; 3 Somewhat Important; 4 Not Important; 5 Not Relevant

I wanted to maintain my involvement in Competitive sport	2.0
My children were involved in the sport	3.5
I wanted to put something back into sport	2.1
I was interested in helping young people	2.0
I wanted to begin a career in sport	3.5
I was influenced by personal role models	2.6
I had a general interest in the sport	1.6
It related to my occupation	3.5
The financial reward	4.0
Others asked for my help	2.5
There was no one else to do it	2.9
I was dissatisfied with the existing coaching provision	2.8
The opportunity to work with other coaches	2.7

Other factors listed included; an attachment/love for a particular club, playing careers cut short by injury/wanting to stay involved, an attachment/love for the sport, an interest in teaching/coaching, to give something back, and to stay with friends involved in coaching.

Of the reasons given for why participants had stopped coaching only three were recorded as significant(\*): 1. Lack of Support from Team committee/SU, 2. Pressure of work, 3. Dissatisfaction with the commitment of athletes, (Table 12). Although 7 subjects (14.9%) did report they could not commit time to be a Head Coach due to the birth of a child.

**Table 12:** Reasons for leaving Head Coaching post

1 Of very great importance; 2 Great Importance; 3 Somewhat Important; 4 Not Important; 5 Not Relevant

Became more interested in other things	3.5
Experienced a lack of success	3.7
Facilities were not available	3.0
Standard of equipment in facilities were poor	3.0
Pressure of work*	2.9
Lack of support from governing body	3.3
Lack of Support from Team committee/SU*	2.3
Ill health	3.6
Pressure from family	3.2
Conflict of goals between self and others in sport	3.2
Lack of help from administrators	3.1
Boredom/Staleness with coaching context	3.6
Lack of career opportunities	3.6
Lack of payment	3.4
Dissatisfaction with the commitment of athletes*	2.7
Lack of contact with other coaches/no coaching network	3.7
Lack of locally available coaching education	3.4
Removed from post	3.5

For those subjects who had not returned to coaching (n=18) the most important factors listed as being encouraging to return were: 1. Improved availability of facilities, 2. The opportunity to work with higher level performers, 3. Improved standard of equipment in facilities, 4. Improved support from governing body.

**Table 13:** Factors that would encourage a return to coaching (n=18)

1 Of very great importance; 2 Great Importance; 3 Somewhat Important; 4 Not Important; 5 Not Relevant

Improved support from governing body	2.7
Improved availability of facilities	2.3
Improved standard of equipment in facilities	2.6
Better career opportunities for coaches	3.3
Grants to attend coach education courses	3.3
Payment for coaching	3.2
Coaches association/network	3.4
Locally available coach education	3.2
The opportunity to work with senior coaches	2.8
The opportunity to work with higher level performers	2.5

Subjects reported that their feelings about Coaching over the past season made them feel predominantly: 1. They felt I was able to contribute new ideas; 2. felt able to be creative; 3. felt able to be sensitive to the needs of support staff and players; 4. felt they could think rapidly

Lower scoring responses from the twelve options, indicators of burn out, showed the Head Coaches as scoring particularly low in: 12. Felt vigorous; 11=. Felt they had physical strength; 11= had feelings of vitality (Table 14).

**Table 14:** Reported positive feelings related to past/final season as Head Coach (n=49)

1 Never or Almost Never; 2 Very infrequently; 3 Quite Infrequently; 4 Sometimes; 5 Quite Frequently; 6 Very Frequently; 7 Always or almost always

I felt full of energy	5.3
I felt I had physical strength	5.0
Felt vigorous	4.9
I felt energetic	5.3
I had feelings of vitality	5.0
I felt I could think rapidly	5.9
I felt I was able to contribute new ideas	6.0
I felt able to be creative	5.9
I felt able to show warmth to others	5.7
I felt able to be sensitive to the needs of support staff and players	6.0
I felt capable of investing emotionally in support staff and players	5.7
I felt capable of being sympathetic to support staff and players	5.7

Coaches indicated they had experienced negative feelings associated with their coaching in the past season. Of those scoring 3.0 or higher, four responses were recorded as most frequent: 1. I felt fed up; 2. I felt tired; 3. I felt physically drained; 4. I felt burned out (Table 15).

**Table 15:** Reported negative feelings related to past/final season as Head Coach (n=49)

1 Never or Almost Never; 2 Very infrequently; 3 Quite Infrequently; 4 Sometimes; 5 Quite Frequently; 6 Very Frequently; 7 Always or almost always

I felt tired	3.7
I had no energy for going to coach in the morning	2.4
I felt physically drained	3.4
I felt fed up	3.8
I felt like my "batteries" were "dead"	2.9
I felt burned out	3.0
My thinking process was slow	1.8
I had difficulty concentrating	1.9
I feel I'm not thinking clearly	1.8
I felt I could not focus my thinking	1.8
I had difficulty thinking about complex things	1.7
I felt I was unable to be sensitive to the needs of support staff and players	1.9
I felt I was not capable of investing emotionally in support staff and players	2.1
I felt I was not capable of being sympathetic to support staff and players	2.1

## Discussion of Initial findings

UK Coaching (2019) identified the high number of volunteer coaches within the UK with each volunteer playing a significant role in the provision of sport and an impact on those they coach. The survey highlighted that over a quarter of coaches were coaching over 10 hours per week (27%), and half of those were also volunteers (UK Coaching, 2019). Lyle, Allison, & Taylor, (1997) identified issues such as increasing numbers of athletes, coupled with more stringent legislation affecting safety and child protection, are putting added pressure on coaches and that these issues as leading to the consequences of burnout and high dropout rates.

This study aimed to look at previous experience, qualifications, and hours dedicated to coaching, organisational and occupational commitment, and burnout. A previous study by Engelberg-Moston, Stipis, Kippin, Spillman, & Burbidge, (2009), indicated that affective occupational commitment is a predictor of two

aspects of burnout: reduced professional efficacy and exhaustion and cynicism; These findings suggest that commitment to the coaching role may be an important aspect of volunteer coaches' sense of self.

The mean age of the predominantly male respondents (36.4) and the mean length of their coaching careers (10.0 years) would suggest that this is a group of coaches who got involved at a relatively young age, whilst in all probability still combining playing with their coaching.

For three quarters of those surveyed (75.5%) this was their first Head Coaching post and the length of tenures for all coaches (4.35 seasons) would indicate that Head Coaches are leaving post after relatively short periods of time. When taken alongside the fact that the vast majority of Head Coaches had stepped down from post on their own accord (87.8%) there is an indication of coach burnout.

The study was able to follow up with all subjects after 12 months and found that 63.3% had returned to coaching but predominantly in other roles and in other leagues, this would indicate a dissatisfaction with both the post of Head Coach and a disillusionment with the particular league within which they worked (student league). Of the remaining 36.7% who had yet to return to coaching only 2 respondents reported that they would probably never return to a coaching post but 61.1% reporting as being highly likely to return within the next year or two. This compares favourably to Lyle, Allison, & Taylor, (1997) study who reported nine out of ten lapsed coaches had considered returning to coaching and 40 per cent considered this to be likely.

Caccese and Mayerberg (1984) recognised that coaching was a potentially stressful occupation and that female head coaches reported higher levels of emotional exhaustion and higher levels of burnout. It is therefore interesting to note that the one subject who identified as no longer thinking of coaching as well as reporting that they would never return was the only female respondent in the study. This would suggest they had suffered extremely high levels of burnout.

The coaches self-reported motivations were predominantly ego driven responses of having a personal interest in the sport, and maintaining their own involvement in competition. However there were also altruistic respondents wanting to 'help young people' or 'put something back'.

The reasons listed as to why the Head Coaches had stepped away focused primarily on areas of lack of support, external time pressures (including raising a family), and lack of commitment from others (Table 11). Li (1993) surveyed 640 coaches in China and found that the coach's job satisfaction was related to the level of support available, incentives available and the degree of influence (self-regulation). It seems clear that continued involvement in coaching becomes a result of balancing perceived rewards compared to the perceived costs (Williams and Jackson, 1981).

The items listed as potential incentives for returning to coaching included working at a higher level with improved resources and support. Reflecting a frustration and an exhaustion of the infrastructure around the level at which these coaches worked. Lyle, Allison, & Taylor, (1997) study showed that respondents similarly identified factors likely to influence them to return as; grants for coach education, local coach education and the opportunity to work with senior coaches.

Capel et al (1987) related burnout to role conflict in 235 High School coaches, and a recent study by Sas-Nowosielski, Szóstak, & Herman, (2018) of 244 coaches from 21 sports disciplines, reported coaches as feeling professionally undervalued.

There is a significant relationship between coaches' leadership behaviours and burnout. According to Altahayneh (2003) personal accomplishment and emotional exhaustion are significant predictors of the coaches' leadership behaviours. Subjects in the current study were still able to report positive feelings about their coaching over their last season that reflected their own input towards contributing new ideas,

creativity, and supporting others (Table 14). These reflected a group of coaches who still seemed to value their own attributes to contribute to a team.

However the coaches also reported indicators of burn out, showing the Head Coaches as feeling a lack of vigour, as well as physiological effects to their own physical strength and vitality (Table 15).

According to Kelly (1994) burnout results from the stress which is caused by a mismatch between perceived demand and perceived capabilities. Burnout is conceptualised as emotional depletion, depersonalisation and a reduced sense of meaning in the job - individuals become ineffective or leave.

The subjects experienced negative feelings associated with their coaching, reporting feelings of being fed up, tired, physically drained, and burned out. Coaches higher in emotional exhaustion are perceived by their teams as providing less training and instruction and social support and making fewer autocratic and greater democratic decisions (Price & Weiss, 2000). A sample of 15 head coaches of high school soccer teams showed coaches higher in emotional exhaustion were perceived by their teams as providing less training and instruction and social support and making fewer autocratic and greater democratic decisions.

Role conflict is often cited as a cause of stress. Taylor (1992) differentiates between role clutter (conflict and ambiguity) and other factors such as lack of support from others, dealing with difficult athletes, long hours, administration and expectations for success. Kroll and Gundersheim (1982) support the stress factors associated with athlete interaction. In their survey, 93 male high school coaches identified disrespect from players, not being able to 'reach' players and being unappreciated as stress factors in coaching.

in the UK as a whole the volunteer coach is the norm. the voluntary non-institutional parameters would suggest that perceptions of external support or inter-role conflicts are more likely to lead to disengagement. The non-career nature of the voluntary sector coach may also exacerbate the effect of 'drift' (Lyle, Allison, & Taylor, 1997).

In Lyle, Allison, & Taylor, study (1997) Reasons for Coach Drop-out the factors identified as being important in coaches' decisions to cease coaching can be grouped into two categories: those which are directly associated with sport and coaching, and those that have no direct relationship to sport or coaching provision. Many factors affecting coaches' decisions to stop coaching not directly associated with sport and coaching and mostly associated with coaches' personal life outside sport.

**Table 16:** Main Factors Affecting Coaches' Decisions to Cease Coaching, *Note: Multiple response question - percentages add up to more than 100 per cent (n=114).* (Lyle, Allison, & Taylor, 1997).

<b>Main Factors Affecting Coaches' Decisions to Cease Coaching</b>	<b>% of respondents</b>
Pressure of work	25
Interest in other things	21
Family pressures/commitments	11
Moved away/changed job	9
Conflict of goals between self and others in sport	7
Dissatisfaction with the commitment of athletes	7
Boredom/staleness with coaching context	7
Health/injury	6
Lack of help from administrators	6

The factors identified most strongly, related to external considerations: pressure of work, development of other interests, family commitments and job changes. It is clear that coaching as a part-time, primarily voluntary activity will be subject to pressure from other more central life interests. There were also a number of coaching-related factors: conflicting goals, dissatisfaction with the commitment of athletes, boredom and staleness, and lack of help from administrators.

It is obvious that there is a degree of role conflict between coaching and one's occupation and/or family commitments.

The responses suggest that even with coaches of great experience, a form of burnout appears. One might speculate that particular constraints are perceived to be more demotivating as coaches move into a 'plateau stage' in their coaching careers. Issues highlighted around lack of support, and lack of commitment from others would seem to be indicators of this demotivation.

NGBs and other agencies, therefore, should attempt to 're-energise' coaches on a regular basis (visits, workshops, changes of role, regular networking).

### **Key Findings:**

- Head Coaches are choosing to step down
- They are not leaving the sport
- They are choosing to coach in a less demanding role with less responsibility
- A lack of previous Head Coaching experience *could be* a contributing factor as to why coaches are stepping down.
- Coaches who previously served as a Head Coach had longer tenures in their previous posts (predominantly in Senior League) suggesting there may be increased dissatisfaction attributed to being a Head Coach in the University League.
- A lack of support from the Team Committee/Sports Union, time pressures, and a dissatisfaction with athlete commitment were the prime factors for resigning from post.
- The Head Coaches reported high levels of burnout through physical and emotional fatigue.

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