

With respect to cricket, this initially began at age 4-5 with 'backyard' cricket with my dad, where I developed a sense of fun and enjoyment for and from 'the game'. This enjoyment led to participation in junior club cricket programmes throughout primary school where I played in teams, predominantly made up of close school friends. This led to even stronger friendships, which in turn, positively influenced my willingness to continue with cricket, even though the transition to 'hard ball' cricket (where a lot of kids stopped playing due to a lack of skill development and the fact that you could now get really hurt if struck with the ball).

I thoroughly enjoyed spending time with my friends in an environment, other than school, whereby we were learning team values and "how to work together". Additionally, having good coaches at an early age allowed for the continued participation in cricket. These were because the coaches had been keen competitors, were passionate about the game, and had the appropriate skills and maturity to strike a balance between competing and participation. I was able to look up to and respect my coaches as a result. This then created a sense of idolism in me whereby I wanted to pursue cricket at an early age because 'Coach (name removed) thinks cricket is great'. These coaches also effectively created an enjoyable environment whereby a foundation was set for cricket to be fun as well as competitive. Because of this early exposure to a positive attitude, I was able to continue to build on this foundation after leaving the junior team, progressing through the years and increasing levels of ability. As a result of these factors, negative external influences were minimised, which again, resulted in my further participation in cricket, as I was not disheartened or "turned off" cricket at an early age. Consequently, through this exposure, I was able to develop further skill leading to a natural talent for aggressive batting and athletic fielding being identified...

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Many social, cultural, and economic factors have influenced my participation in physical activity. Firstly my family, friends and the environment in which I live have played a positive role in my physical activity participation. I have been brought up in a family environment which promotes participation to physical activity, in any particular way, resulting in this attitude being nurtured in me from an early age. Both of my parents were once competitive body builders and remain physically active to this day. Bodybuilding is a sport that requires total commitment and determination in order to succeed. I have, therefore, adopted the same attitude towards physical activity, and consequently have had a degree of success, which has allowed me to consciously and somewhat 'naturally' continue with physical activity. Additionally my parents have encouraged me to adhere to sporting activity as they strongly believe that sport teaches valuable life lessons, such as how to win and how to lose, that can be applied to life. 'State of Play' research states "Some parents view sport as a vehicle that improves life skills such as teamwork, communication, discipline and general social skills". This has been a predominant focal point in my upbringing, with my parents consistently emphasizing that valuable lessons learnt through sport, are easily translated and applied to life, in areas such as work and socializing. As a result of this I gained further mental and spiritual benefits. This is because the valuable lessons I was learning through sport, were essentially laying a dominant foundation for my overall values system which have been influential in developing my individuality...

The ... community has provided a real sense of belonging in a sporting sense. Starting off playing junior cricket and football for the community clubs has progressed, through sport in the community, into my final year at College. In an holistic sense, this sense of community has been engrained in me since I was 5 years old, and has, therefore, created a strong sense of pride and spiritual well-being in representing my schools and a strong sense of community belonging.

In the early years of my sporting life, activity and sports participation was gender-mixed. Girls and boys were given equal opportunity in a wide variety of activities in lower age level sports, girls often exceeding the physical prowess of the boys at that younger age. Throughout my life however, gender based pressures have never affected my choices or adherence to a type of physical activity, for example, playing rugby for feelings of masculinity or playing cricket because that is a middle class activity. I have simply pursued the activities that I have been most talented in, and therefore enjoyed the most. I continue to play these sports based on the positive experiences that I had when younger and not because of the stereotype surrounded by these sports. However, although I was not directly affected, I have been aware of naturally occurring factors related to gender in sport at a subconscious level. This included factors such as, as age increased, sport became influenced by common societal stereotypes, namely, what gender should play what sport. As a male, I have played sports that, sociologically, it was 'natural for me to play, resulting in positive well-being, irrespective of my gender. However, participation in sport could have negative outcomes where a participant did not fit or meet societal norms, for example, a male wanting to play netball, or, a young woman wanting to play football or rugby in a men's team. Sports participation and the positive spin-offs that come from physical activity would become secondary in the circumstances as outlined, the predominant drivers being, arguably, social identity, self-worth, and stereotypical prejudice.

2

Media focus has had some influence on my physical activity and participation but has not directly influenced my choices of activity. However, through the emphasis of the benefits of being physically active through media, and increased societal awareness around the benefits of physical activity, I learned at an early age that being fit enabled me to enjoy the game more as well as provide a sense of greater well-being. Playing a highly physically demanding sport like basketball required me to attain and maintain a high fitness level. As a result of this I felt better in myself, and confident that I was partaking in a positive lifestyle choice. These attitudes then lead to the knowledge that a physically demanding sport required healthy eating habits and healthy life-style choices. For example, the need to play a full 'days' cricket would mean that I would not go out late and party the night before.

A very natural assumption exists that if a parent or parents of an individual is talented and experienced at a particular sport or activity, the individual will be good at that sport/activity also. However, in challenging this assumption, this factor can actually be counter-productive; because of the likelihood that the individual will be brought up being constantly pressured to succeed and compete in the same field as their parents. For example, it has been assumed by people who know my family, that I would be a talented pipe band drummer. My dad was ranked fourth in the world for pipe band drumming, but this activity is one that does not interest me and I have not participated in this, therefore challenging this natural assumption. This can lead to a sense of disinterest and lack of personal identity in physical activity for the individual, as they may simply not like the activity, but are being pressured to participate so that their parents can 'relive' the experience. Also, the individual may strive for a sense of individuality, and for that reason, not want to follow in the parents footsteps. In my case, having parents that do not participate in my chosen sports has been beneficial to my participation.

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Another assumption is that because of my height I would naturally pursue basketball as a chosen sport. This is a valid assumption in my case as I got introduced to basketball because I was always tall for my age, and have continued to play since then. However, basketball isn't necessarily a sport that requires you to be very tall (although it helps). Some of the most successful point guards in the NBA have been less than 6 feet tall, but logical assumptions would suggest otherwise, as the average height of an NBA point guard is 6 ft 3.