

Is the concept of 'followership' understood in professional sport in the UK and how transferable are its concepts, principles and application to the general business environment?

1. Introduction

The increased global commercialisation of professional sports, such as Football, Rugby and Athletics, has led to the most successful clubs and organisations becoming international businesses. This is far removed from these clubs' historical past when they were seen traditionally as 'local' entities; such organisations now operate to develop the 'club brand' beyond sport across a broad range of diverse business operations such as for example, retail finance, lifestyle products and Internet service provision. This continuing expansion has attracted much interest and is matched by the appetite from business executives to learn transferable 'secrets of success' and Leadership skills from the most successful sports-team managers and coaches.

In parallel with the increased commercialization and internationalization of sport, there has been, in the academic and business worlds, a growing interest in understanding and explaining the concept and application of 'Followership', (as distinct from Leadership). However, examination of the references used for this paper shows that the majority, (eleven from fifteen), have been written within the last five years. A critical understanding of Followership is therefore less well developed than Leadership. It was this fact coupled with the obvious connotation that the supporters of sports clubs are often described as 'followers', that led the author to consider how well the concept, principles and application of Followership in professional sports in the UK are understood or applied and to determine if there was any evidence, overt or otherwise, that these lessons were being highlighted and/or transferred to general business management.

The phenomenon of transferring lessons from the world of sport to the world of business is nothing particularly new. Arguably professional sports in the USA such as Gridiron Football and Basketball have led the way in terms of commercialization and the journey from 'sports club' to business institution, (*Webber 1987*); rather the (literal) transformation of professional sports clubs into businesses and the resulting increased attention paid by a a more varied cross section of the media to these clubs/organisations has merely served to accentuate the profiles of the most successful sports coaches. Biographies and autobiographies of these coaches have an increasing focus on the more general perspectives of management rather than a confined view of a particular sport and how an individual 'made it through to the top'. A good example of this change can be seen in the different titles of the two sequential autobiographical volumes written by the Manager of Manchester United FC, Sir Alex Ferguson; 'A Year in the Life' (1995) and 'Managing My Life' (1999). Further evidence of this change is provided by the fact that during the preparation and research for this paper, Sir Clive Woodward, coach of the England Rugby Union 2003 World Cup winning team, published his own account of how (according to the fly-sheet), "he used his personal business philosophy to mould a team capable of reaching the very pinnacle of its sport." This particular book, entitled 'Winning', (*Woodward 2004*) has become an immediate success and at the beginning of

October 2004, just three weeks after the first publishing run, is number three in the hardback non-fiction ‘best-seller’ list, (*source: Nielsen BookScan TCM*).

Both Sir Alex Ferguson’s and Sir Clive Woodward’s books are used as references for this paper, which commences with an exploration of the various attributes ascribed to Followership by the different references and will attempt to compare these to the experiences of both Sir Alex Ferguson, Sir Clive Woodward and Red Auerbach (a successful basketball coach in the USA during the 1980’s), in order to evaluate how well and to what degree the concept of Followership is understood or recognized in professional sport in the UK. From this evaluation conclusions are drawn that seek to answer the question posed in the title to this paper.

2. Followership Attributes

Even though there is comparatively little research and literature as yet devoted to the subject of Followership, there is already an unresolved debate about what exactly Followership is. This has echoes of the idea, grounded in a duality, in that its opposing concept, Leadership, is an ‘essentially contested concept’ (*Grint, 2004*). This duality, where Leadership and Followership are perhaps interrelated concepts on the same continuum (*Townsend 2002*) or where there can be no leadership without followers (*Goffee & Jones, 2001*) implies a degree of choice and influence amongst followers (*Brown A, 2003*) and even that Leadership is ‘an achievement of Followership’, (*Litzinger & Schaefer, 1982*). The duality of Leadership and Followership is perhaps best emphasized by the fact that in nearly all cases, reference material for Followership identifies best Leadership practice and for some this includes the need to have an intimate understanding of Followership through ‘personal experience of servitude’ (*Litzinger & Schaefer 1982; after Hegel’s Phenomenology Of The Mind*). In his ‘Politics’, Aristotle stated that ‘only by training from youth can subjects grow to Leadership,’ implying that there is a need to have a broad range of experiences, perhaps as followers, in order to develop Leadership skills; graduates of the military academy at West Point in the USA reinforced this by stating that potential leaders need to be taught how to be followers (*Litzinger & Schaefer 1982*), although they stopped short of the more antagonistic proposition Hengel developed from studying major historical leaders such as Stalin, Churchill, Hitler and Genghis Khan, that Leadership is only possible ‘if an individual has known subjection and thralldom’.

The very word ‘follower’ can have both positive and negative interpretations (*Grint 2004*), where in one sense a follower simply accepts the logic of leadership by someone else, (without necessarily declaring themselves unfit for leadership) yet on the other hand they (followers) can be servile and unsophisticated i.e. in need of leadership. Unquestioning behaviour by followers, who ‘hold their egos in check’ (*Brown T, 1995*), can lead to exploitation of the follower base by leaders although in certain ‘adversarial’ societies or organisations such as criminal gangs or prison hierarchies this is necessary in order to make the group function, (*Litzinger & Schaefer 1982*).

The positivist view of Followership is reinforced by the notion of ‘exemplary followers’ – those followers who so master certain skills that they become ‘indispensable’ to their leader (*Banutu-Gomez 2004*). The role of the leader is therefore elevated beyond day-to-

day ‘management by command and control’ (*R Drew – CEO TEC International Ltd; Director Magazine July 2004*) and involves ‘sharing the limelight’ with followers (*Banutu-Gomez 2004*). Followers now have an increased access to information (*Brown A, 2003*) created by the technology and communications revolution, most patently in the form of the Internet. This ‘democratization of information’, (*Brown A, 2003*) has significantly empowered followers and required leaders to further embrace changes and perhaps challenges to (their) leadership styles. The changes required of leaders are a direct response to the ‘weakening of professional priesthoods’ that were formerly seen as the most important sources of wisdom and knowledge for followers. Increasingly in the workplace, leadership is ‘bestowed’ by followers on their bosses and processes such as ‘bottom-up’ or ‘360°’ appraisals reinforce the powers and influence of followers, (*Brown A, 2003*). In a similar way, ‘management by (mutually agreed) objectives’ connects the ‘followership of the leader with the leadership of the followers,’ (*Litzinger & Schaefer 1982*) and as one leading businesswoman from the UK stated; “Technology both liberates and chains a workforce. In the knowledge age it is not possible to lead people simply by managing them,” (*K Price – CEO E-Skills; Director Magazine July 2004*). Chester Barnard’s ‘Acceptance Theory of Authority’, proposes that the decision as to whether or not an order has authority (and validity), is determined by those to whom the order is addressed and therefore the behavioural style of the followers influences the leadership style received (*Litzinger & Schaefer 1982*); this was also noted by Schein in 1992 (*Banutu-Gomez, 2004*). Leaders can also be constrained and are at risk of losing their validity (and power), if they do not ‘follow’ the values that are accepted commonly within an organization and which link ‘obedience and command’ (*Litzinger & Schaefer 1982*). It has also been argued that Followers need to maintain a sense of ‘realism’ by giving feedback to Leaders to overcome the ‘remoteness of seniority’ (in an organizational sense), that leadership can bring (*Brown T, 1995*).

The need for Followers to provide feedback to Leaders is something that is core to the concept of ‘Exemplary Followership’, which is further described by Banutu-Gomez as “going beyond expectations,” (in the eyes of the leader and other followers) by focusing on the skills that are required to make team interactions effective through the facilitation of a common understanding of the team’s goals and purpose. In addition exemplary followers solicit feedback and help from other team members by externalizing their own problems. In particular, exemplary followers will seek to be educated about leadership by the leader; in return leaders create exemplary followers by ‘sharing the limelight with them’, encouraging self-management removing bureaucracy and involving these followers in decision-making (*Banutu-Gomez, 2004*). Developed further the behaviour of the leader becomes more like that of the follower i.e. providing a service to and on behalf of followers from which arises the concept of ‘servant-leader’ – someone who, on behalf of the followers, ‘knows the unknowable, foresees the unforeseeable and establishes a sustainable future or vision (*Banutu-Gomez, 2004*). Underwriting the concepts of ‘servant-leader’ and ‘exemplary follower’ are positive Followership skills such as (*Banutu-Gomez, 2004*):

- Continuous learning,
- Commitment to a courageous conscience,
- Independent critical thinking,

- Giving/receiving constructive criticism,
- Innovation,
- Initiative without prompting
- Creativity

Infantry Magazine in the USA printed a list of Followership Principles for the US Army that is remarkably similar, albeit that it uses a different sort of vocabulary (*Townsend, 2002*), indicating perhaps that Followership is a concept that has been well understood by military organizations for some time:

- Know yourself and seek self improvement
- Be technically and tactically proficient
- Comply with orders and initiate appropriate actions in the absence of orders
- Develop a sense of responsibility and take responsibility for your actions
- Make sound and timely decisions or recommendations
- Set the example for others
- Be familiar with your leader and his job, and anticipate his requirements
- Keep your leaders informed
- Understand the task and ethically accomplish it
- Be a team member – but not a yes man

In their 1990 article, ‘Beyond Leadership – The Importance of Followership’, published in *The Futurist Magazine*, Lancaster and Lundin categorized the essential attributes of Followership as:

- Thinking independently
- Sending tough messages to the leader (when required)
- Implementing change in the face of resistance (tenacity)
- Being undeterred by ‘roadblocks’
- Showing strong commitment to the organization and their own work
- Having a very good understanding how the organization works
- Demonstrating independence and integrity
- Loyalty
- Ability (and versatility) to cope with ambiguity
- Having a sense of being ‘self-employed’

By contrast Goffee and Jones, in their 2001 article ‘Followership It’s Personal Too’, (*Harvard Business Review*), defined Followership as a series of emotional responses the leader needs to engender in his/her followers:

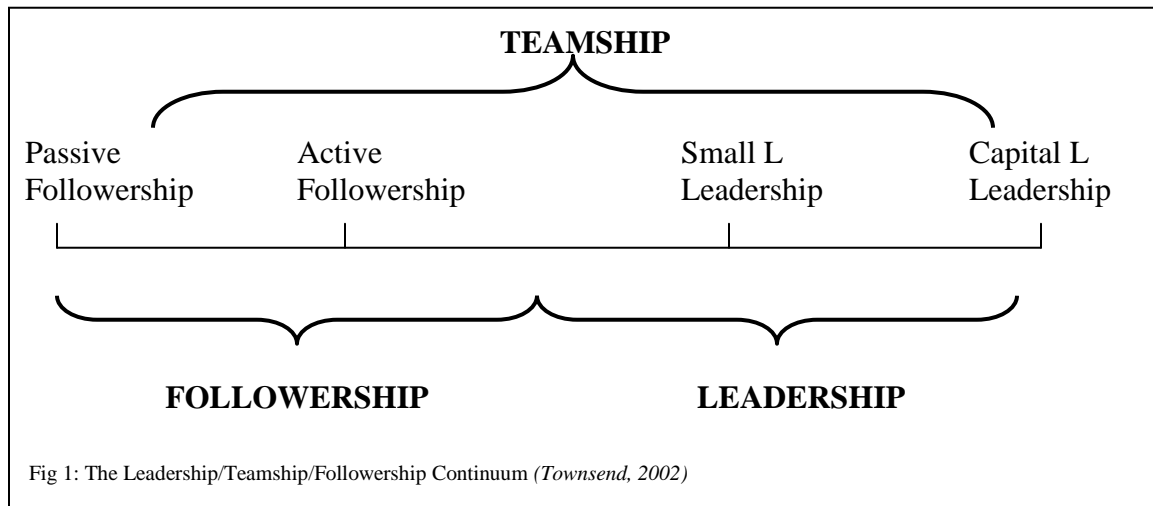
- Followers are made to believe (by the leader) that they matter i.e. have a significance
- There is a unity of purpose around work whilst being able to relate to each other as human beings
- Followers ‘get a buzz’ when the leader is around

One of the key elements in the first three lists is the requirement to show ‘independent critical thinking’ or (in military terms) to avoid being a ‘yes man’. Clearly to be an exemplary follower in this way carries the risk that the courage it takes to question the leader in this way will be repaid with an inappropriate response. Evidence shows that about 70% of people will not challenge a CEO even if they believe that person is making the wrong decision or a serious error (*Brown T, 1995*). However, leaders who have themselves been previously developed as ‘exemplary followers’ are more likely to be empathetic and sensitive to a team where such challenges are made – perhaps playing a role that can be described as ‘a leader amongst equals’ (*Banutu-Gomez, 2004*). Arguably, the best leaders understand the contradictory truth that to hold onto power is best done by giving it away and that by placing trust in teams, leaders multiply their own influence and effectiveness whilst at the same time helping to develop new leaders for the future (*Lyons, 2002*). To do this leaders need to abandon intuition and learn what their followers really want by being better at listening and understanding their thoughts and desires (*Brown A, 2003*). Dr Martin Luther King was someone who demonstrated a well developed ability to understand and listen to his followers, particularly within black communities in the USA whom he encouraged in the early 1960’s to take more responsibility for their own emancipation and perhaps in the process generated more new leaders than followers (*Heifetz, 1999*).

‘Courageous followers’ are defined as being prepared to challenge both themselves and their leader in equal measure about anything that impedes the common purpose. It therefore follows that an appropriate Followership behaviour can be described as responsibly following the common purpose whilst not just executing orders even if they are irresponsible (*Brown T, 1995*). In times of chaotic change, and social or economic fragmentation, followers need to challenge the belief systems and conformity of their team; by clashing with or challenging the leader on these points, the follower helps to ensure that the necessary innovation to succeed is developed (*Banutu-Gomez, 2004*). The strength of the ‘courageous follower’ paradoxically singles them out as someone who will not give blind obedience to the leader and this in turn places a burden of responsibility on the leader to make the right decisions collectively and individually; again in this way followers constrain a leader (*Brown T, 1995*).

The concept of ‘teams’ is central to the very essence of sport and professional sport. There is the obvious connection with a team of players, working together against opposing teams to achieve positive results. In professional sport there is an increasing awareness of the important role that is played by various other teams of ‘backroom staff’ within those organisations; examples abound in the dedications and prelude at the beginning of ‘Winning!’ (*Woodward, 2004*) and also in the chapter of ‘acknowledgements’ at the beginning of ‘Managing My Life’ (*Ferguson, 1999*). ‘Teamship’ as defined by Townsend, is ‘where leaders and followers meet, intermingle and switch roles whilst agreeing future actions’, (*Townsend, 2002*). As stated above, this concept proposes that Followership and Leadership exist on the same continuum and is further developed by the concept that an individual can join this continuum at any point depending on how they perceive their own worth and how an organization (or team) perceives their worth in the context of that team or organization. Leadership is broken

down into ‘small L leadership’ and ‘capital L leadership’; the former is most often practiced on a ‘one to one’ or ‘one to few’ basis whilst the latter is described as a ‘lonely position’, where decisions tend to be about moving people and resources or committing to action’. Followership is also classified into ‘passive’ and ‘active’ styles. Passive Followership is defined as literally just following behind like ‘a potato pulled on a string’, whilst active Followership involves interaction with the leader to ensure understanding and success for the team; this is broadly similar to the concept of an exemplary follower. Townsend represented these ideas in a model (Fig 1):



Arguably the ability to move easily within this continuum, and to recognize where to be at critical times is a significant factor in the success of professional sports clubs and organizations. The context of this model for sports clubs transcends the actual playing of sport into the management processes of these clubs which have increasing importance and relevance to their overall success, something identified by Sir Clive Woodward in the early chapters of ‘Winning !’ (Woodward C, 2004) as fundamental to the changes made in Rugby Union as it underwent the transformation from an amateur to a professional sport.

3. Followership Examples: Sir Alex Ferguson, Sir Clive Woodward & Red Auerbach

3.1 Sir Alex Ferguson

In ‘Managing My Life’ (Ferguson A, 1999), Sir Alex Ferguson does not specifically refer to the concept of Followership. His public persona, as defined by his profile in the media, is one of a ‘hard nosed’, independent leader who has fearsome rages and rules the dressing room by fear. Nevertheless, there are within this account of his life up to May 1999, some indirect yet revealing references to events that are grounded in the concepts behind Followership.

If Followership requires the follower to show ‘independence’ (Lancaster & Lundin, 1990) and be committed to a courageous ‘conscience’ (Banutu-Gomez, 2004), then one of

the earliest examples cited by Ferguson on page 94 relates to his views about the way in which Football clubs should appoint their Directors; as a player during the late 1960s at Rangers Football Club in Glasgow, he reflects that the appointment process should include an interview to gauge the individuals 'character and dignity'. Undoubtedly, given the authoritarian and religiously biased management culture present within Rangers Football Club at that time, this was a courageous thought - although not one that he had the courage at the time to take to the powerbrokers at the club. Perhaps this independence and critical thinking was influential in his 'fall from grace' whilst at this club, a fall that eventually left him completely marginalized from the first team squad training with the apprentices (page 105). But even this change in his circumstances provided an opportunity to demonstrate some Followership qualities; he argued for and was deputed to organize and lead some training sessions with the apprentices which is consistent to Townsend's concept of 'Teamship' and the US Army's Followership code that requires 'tactical proficiency', 'taking responsibility' and 'self improvement', (Ferguson was studying for his coaching 'badge' at this time). The behaviour of developing a greater sense of responsibility as an 'Active Follower', (*Townsend, 2004*) also appears during his time as a player at Falkirk from 1969 - 1973 when he was 'granted responsibility for every aspect of match preparation except picking the team', (page 117).

In his third managerial post, as Manager of Aberdeen Football Club 1978 – 1986, it is evident that he has attached a great importance to the development of young players and in particular to personally intervening in their private lives to ensure they maintain the highest ethical and professional standards. As he puts it on page 169, "there is nothing more uplifting for a manager than the emergence of young players with talent," and on page 407, "I like to have control of my players as they grow up." The commitment he shows to the development of grass root scouting operations and the very paternal approach he has employed in developing and protecting young players has echoes of Goffee & Jones' concept that the followers, (the young players in question) are made to feel significant and get a buzz when the leader is around.

This close association with members of the playing staff did not always yield positive results. One Aberdeen player in particular, Steve Archibald, proved to be very difficult to handle – as Ferguson himself puts it on page 171, he "rated high on the defiance chart," yet, "belongs in the top echelon." This reflection refers to Archibald demonstrating really courageous followership by daring to question Ferguson's own actions and it is easy to see that this was something that Ferguson admired and related to in his own make up.

The defeat of Real Madrid in the 1983 European Cup Winner's Final provides further insight to how Ferguson put 'Teamship' first during his managerial career at Aberdeen. He describes the triumph as the result of 'an unstoppable spirit,' and in an unusual display of sentimentality, Ferguson named an unfit player, (Stuart Kennedy), as a substitute as reward for this player's 'strength and fine character'; in so doing he made clear (as Townsend proposed), how the organization valued / perceived the worth of this particular player. In his subsequent managerial career with Manchester United plc, he repeated this act of 'Teamship' when confronted with very different and difficult circumstances created by the well-publicized inappropriate behaviours of key players such as Eric Cantona and Roy Keane.

If ‘continuous learning,’ (*Banutu-Gomez*) and ‘seeking self improvement,’ (*Townsend*) are definitive traits of followers, then Sir Alex Ferguson’s comments about Jock Stein (the Scotland Football Manager), and his management style are very revealing. Ferguson’s views of Stein (page 183), are that he was, prior to his untimely death in 1985, a “one man university,” in football. Acting as Stein’s assistant on a part time basis, Ferguson recognized that he was Stein’s apprentice but also that Stein was “happy to listen and take account,” of the advice he (Ferguson) offered regarding training, team selection and tactics. After Stein’s death, Ferguson was promoted to the position of (part-time) Scotland Manager until 1986 when he stepped down after the World Cup Finals in Mexico. On page 203 he relates how at the time of these finals, he believed football should be, “all for one and one for all,” (page 203), once again extolling the principals of Townsend’s ‘Teamship’. During these same finals Ferguson was keen to “appoint a strong team of personalities amongst his background staff,” (page 211) thereby inviting the inevitable courageous, critical appraisal of his decisions and actions that such appointments would bring.

In reflecting on more recent successes at Manchester United, Ferguson again returns to the idea of ‘spirit’; he states (on page 418), that his best Manchester United teams have become ‘real’ teams where, “individuals are truly integrated into the team which functions with a single spirit,” and where there is, “a constant flow of mutual support amongst the players that compensates for any weaknesses and feeds their strengths.” This invites comparisons with the Teamship continuum model in Fig 1 where there is a constant interchanging of roles between leadership and followership.

4.2 Sir Clive Woodward

In complete contrast to Sir Alex Ferguson’s autobiography discussed above, in his book ‘Winning!’, Sir Clive Woodward, the coach of England’s successful 2003 World Cup winning squad makes no secret of the fact that he has developed the original concept of Followership into what he describes as ‘Teamship’. In fact Teamship is one of three parts of what Woodward describes as his ‘One Team’ organizational and cultural model for success. The basic elements of this model are shown below in Fig 2:-

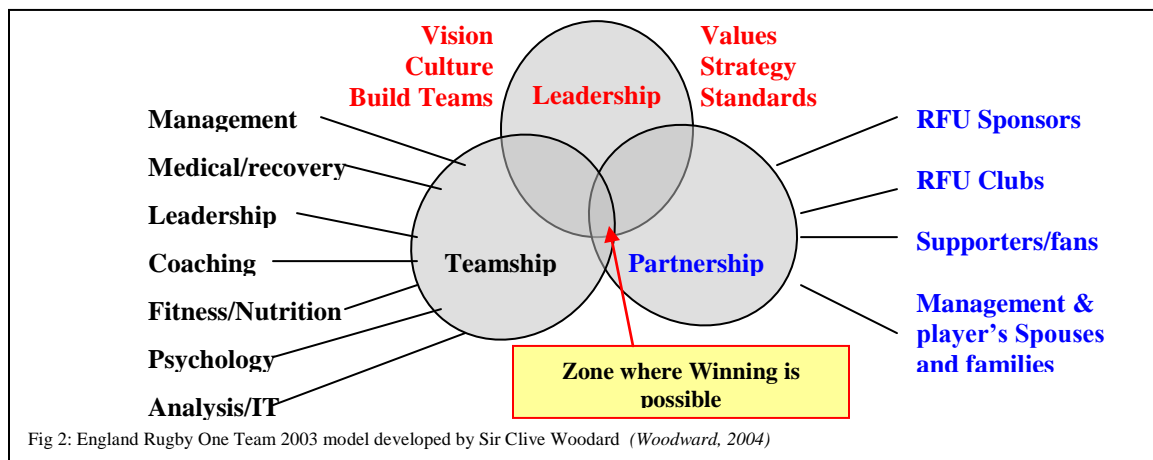


Fig 2: England Rugby One Team 2003 model developed by Sir Clive Woodward (*Woodward, 2004*)

The elements of Teamship, as defined by Woodward are quite specific to an England RFU team that includes all the support and back-up personnel. However, this concept of Teamship retains the underlying principles of the Teamship model proposed by Townsend. Over a period of two years this was developed from workshops *that included senior players*, into a ‘black book’ that is used to assimilate new members into the team by setting expectations of the ‘elite (winning) culture’ in terms of behaviour, standards of dress etc; arguably this book lays down the requirements for ‘Exemplary Followership’

as defined by this team. These workshops have been facilitated by external consultants at the request of Woodward; as coach of England’s Rugby team he has drawn often upon his own quite extensive experience in business both as an employee of Xerox and as someone who runs his own (successful) business. In fact Woodward sees his autobiography as a ‘Management Book’ (page 221) rather than a traditional account of how to be successful in running a sports team. Indeed in the prelude he states that; “I’ve found that the principles that apply to coaching successfully also apply to business.” His desire to straddle both worlds is perhaps explained by his desire to understand why British sport is so unsuccessful on the international stage when compared to British businesses. It is clear that successful people whom he describes as being able to ‘think laterally’ and ‘challenge convention’ have influenced Woodward. Two examples are the successful Australian Rugby coach, Alan Jones, who had originally very little direct experience of playing rugby nor coaching and Jim Greenwood, a Sports Scientist (and radical thinker), at Loughborough University where Woodward studied for a degree. Greenwood in particular, ‘electrified’ Woodward in a way that is reminiscent of Goffee & Jones’ idea that followers get a ‘buzz’ when the leader is near.

There are also some other significant clear examples of Followership within ‘Winning!’. For example in developing the management structure for the entire team, Woodward recognized the importance of obtaining ‘buy-in’ from those involved. His early management career and the problems he had running a satellite operation for Xerox in Australia left an indelible impression on him in this regard. Now the team selection process for England’s rugby team directly and routinely involves the captain and other senior players who are definitively accountable for specific elements of the team’s performance such as, defence, attack etc. A constant element in his time as England coach was the continual need to challenge the preconceptions of the governing council of the English Rugby Football Union (RFU) about a wide variety of issues. These ranged from improving the overseas hotel accommodation for the team, the number of training days allotted to the national side and the size/nature of the coaching team. It is clear from these confrontations that he considers himself not to be a ‘yes man’ - a followership quality identified by the US armed forces (*Lancaster & Lundin, 1990*). Similarly he describes his personal split between admiration and frustration about the national squad who nearly went on strike in 2000 over a contractual dispute with the RFU, eventually taking (unfairly in the author’s opinion), responsibility publicly for the dispute having arisen in the first place. In fact, he states quite clearly that the England squad in 1999/2000 were, “not yes men,” referring to their original reaction to a newly introduced idea that players should change their half time routine, (even their kit), to develop the same mindset they had at the beginning of the game for the second half.

Woodward also acknowledges the way in which at the end of August 2000, the England squad members were influential in ensuring that his contract as coach was renewed; believing this to have been the most important factor in that decision. Quite clearly this is consistent with the idea that ‘leadership is bestowed by followers’, (*Brown A, 2003*).

Upon selection of captains, Woodward writes that the person who holds this position must not only be the best in that particular position on the field, but also responsible for ensuring the players are ‘as one’ with the coaches’ philosophies. Furthermore the captain is an integral part of the team selection process and must ‘show leadership qualities at training at all other times’. The author would assert that by conveying and sharing leadership in this way, Woodward is creating an ‘Exemplary Follower’ in line with the definition proposed by Banutu-Gomez. In fact the England Rugby Team’s Leadership doctrine openly states that one objective is to create a ‘team of leaders’.

4.3 Red Auerbach

Red Auerbach spent thirty-six years as Coach, General Manager and then President of the Boston Celtics Basket ball team in the USA. During this time and up to his retirement he was one of that sport’s most successful coaches. In an interview given in 1987 to the Harvard Business Review, (*Webber, 1987*) he defines a major difference between sport and business as being that winning and losing is much clearer in sport than in business although he also states that managing a sports team is like managing any other business – knowledge of the product is very important and should be acquired ‘bottom up’. This ‘bottom up’ learning process has echoes of the exemplary follower who becomes the leader and who ‘incorporates all and more that the follower is and is therefore the best exponent of followership,’ (*Litzinger & Schaefer, 1982*). His management philosophy is to encourage, value and demonstrate loyalty, pride, teamwork and discipline. In this he is almost identical to Sir Alex Ferguson who stated that ‘loyalty has been the anchor of his life’. Both individuals believed that the attributes of this philosophy are transportable to managers in all fields.

Auerbach believed that trust and loyalty was a “two-way street” between players and their managers but that this is not always the case in business. Due to the uncertainty in professional sport careers, he believed that players respond best to managers whom they judge to have integrity and who make them feel secure . A demonstration of his loyalty is that Auerbach made fewer trades (transfers) than other teams and the majority of the Boston Celtics players decided for themselves when to ‘self-retire’ without little or no pressure from the manager or coaching team. He also turned down many potential transfer opportunities as he thought the subject player would not have the right ‘chemistry’ to fit into the team.

Auerbach developed the concept of ‘Celtic Pride’ amongst his players. This he described as being ‘based on caring’ and on ‘the notion of family’. He maintained contacts and relationships with his players long after they finished their playing careers. He took a novel approach to player’s salaries; these were not determined by their individual

performance statistics, rather by their contribution to the team winning as adjudged by the coach himself and his coaching staff. In judging a player's performance, Auerbach did not use statistics. He said that statistics of performance were, "reliant on too many things

that cannot be measured, for example the 'willingness to sacrifice'." He wanted his players to, "play for fun," and wanted them to be, "happy rather than afraid," as he saw this as a precursor to maximizing player performance. In his philosophy of management, motivation came from a, "pride in excellence and a pride in winning." He clearly believed that, "fear stifles ingenuity," so he encouraged a philosophy of, "talking to people rather than threatening them," as evidenced by a much looser structure for fining player's misdemeanours when compared to other Basketball teams at that time. Nevertheless, he didn't let players, "get too close," as he believed this would lead to a loss of essential (mutual) respect.

His views on the broader management of the Boston Celtics Club are again very similar to Sir Alex Ferguson. For instance, Auerbach believed that the club's President shouldn't 'interfere' with the coaching staff, as this would be sensed by the players and breed discord amongst them. He also saw the club as a machine where everyone was a, "cog," that had to turn flawlessly and interdependently.

4. Conclusions

Without doubt there is a growing awareness of the concept of Followership in professional sports within the UK and in particular in professional Rugby Union. Sir Clive Woodward has used a development of Followership, in the form of Teamship, allied with Leadership and Partnership to create his 'One Team' model – the degree to which this was influential in winning the Rugby World Cup in 2003 is not clear, but it was central to the team's preparation over a long period of time. Given this particular sporting success, and the popularity of Woodward's recent autobiography it is likely that the 'business world' will take some notice of the concepts developed and used, although the focus is more likely to be on the Leadership lessons rather than Followership. Woodward himself states that he believes managerial professionalism in Rugby Union has recently surpassed that in professional Football in the UK and certainly there are no obviously conscious nor transparent links between the concept of Followership, as defined at this time and Sir Alex Ferguson's management philosophies up to May 1999. Given that Sir Clive Woodward is considering a possible move into professional Football management it will be fascinating to see if he is influential in bringing Followership more to the fore in that sport.

Undoubtedly, all three sports coaches reviewed above demonstrate at least an innate understanding of Followership and demonstrate by their own actions and experience, a learning of Leadership that is grounded in Followership. In the author's opinion, it is perhaps not surprising, given the nature of professional sports, that the model of Teamship is one that has most common ground with the business world at this time.

As a critical understanding of Followership continues to develop, so it is likely that it will become more overtly evident, understood and reinforced in both the world of business and in professional sports.

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