

1
2
3
4
5
6
7
8
9
10
11
12
13
14
15
16
17
18
19
20
21
22

A Collective Case Study of Parent-Athlete-Coach (PAC) Triads in British Youth Tennis

Ella F. Tagliavini¹, Chris G. Harwood², Sophia Jowett¹ & Sam N. Thrower³

¹School of Sport, Exercise and Health Sciences, Loughborough University

²Department of Sport Science, Nottingham Trent University

³Department of Sport, Health Sciences and Social Work, Oxford Brookes University

Correspondence:

Correspondence concerning this article should be addressed to Ella F. Tagliavini, University

Campus of Football Business (UCFB), Wembley, United Kingdom, HA9 0WS.

Tel: +44 (0) 333 241 7333, Email: e.tagliavini@ucfb.ac.uk

23
24
25
26
27
28
29
30
31
32
33
34
35
36
37

Abstract

While important for athletic development and well-being in youth sport, knowledge remains limited around the processes underpinning triadic relationships between parents, athletes and coaches (PAC). This study aimed to examine the **relational** processes that drive the functioning of PAC triads across three developmental stages of youth tennis. Using a collective case study design, **10 players, 10 coaches, and nine mothers** completed pre-interview tasks, semi-structured interviews, and provided conversational history. Reflexive thematic analysis led to the generation of two higher-order themes: foundations of relationship quality and factors enabling team effectiveness. Findings highlighted how specific relationship qualities (i.e., commitment, trust, respect, and parent-coach proximity) and team effectiveness constructs (i.e., shared goals, collaborative and adjusted roles, support, and role-specific communication) served to facilitate the tennis experience for triads. Scholars are encouraged to consider integrating small-group principles (e.g., team building) into tailored support programs that address the psychosocial needs of the triad.

Key Words: *PAC Triad, Parents, Coaches, Interpersonal Relationships, Youth Tennis*

38 **A Collective Case Study of Parent-Athlete-Coach (PAC) Triads in British Youth Tennis**

39 Interpersonal relationships between parents, athletes and coaches (PAC) are now
40 widely recognised as an integral part of improving the quality of athletic experiences within
41 youth sport (Sheridan et al., 2014). Research has shown that coaches and athletes who
42 complement each other, are committed to the relationship, and have an emotional connection
43 are more likely to participate and persist in sport for longer, experience greater enjoyment and
44 satisfaction, be more motivated, and achieve higher performance levels (e.g., Jowett &
45 Nezlek, 2012). Similarly, athletes who have supportive relationships with their parents report
46 greater enjoyment and motivation in contrast to parental relationships that focus on rankings
47 and performance outcomes (Gardner et al., 2017). Collectively, the quality of these
48 relationships is a key indicator of effective sport parenting (Harwood & Knight, 2015) and
49 coaching (Jowett, 2017).

50 Parenting and coaching ‘best practice’ is also defined by the relationships that occur
51 between parents and coaches (Harwood & Knight, 2015; Pynn et al., 2019), with a recent rise
52 in studies investigating the perceptions and experiences of parents and coaches about their
53 relationship to mitigate a lack of understanding in this area. Researchers have suggested that
54 positive parent-coach relationships are characterised by the way parents and coaches rely on
55 each other’s parenting or coaching ability, alongside the establishment of trust stemming from
56 honest, open, and frequent communication between both stakeholders (Preston et al., 2020;
57 Wall et al., 2019). Horne and colleagues (2022) affirmed that parents and coaches need to
58 collaborate **on** their goals for athletic development and performance, whilst O’Donnell et al.
59 (2022) further encourage parents and coaches to be clear **about** how they intend to take
60 responsibility for their roles within the relationship. Such recent findings resonate with earlier
61 work examining coaches’ or parents’ one-way perceptions of the practices and behaviours of
62 their parent or coach counterpart. Coaches have reported negative relationships with parents

PAC TRIADS IN YOUTH TENNIS

63 when parents value winning over development, fail to offer unconditional and appropriate
64 support to the athlete, and tell a coach how to coach (Gould et al., 2008; Gould et al., 2016).
65 Conversely, parents' perspectives of negative relationships with coaches have centred around
66 the lack of communication and feedback around their child's development alongside an
67 absence of support from coaches to help them negotiate the challenges of being a sport parent
68 (Harwood & Knight, 2009). Subsequently, negative parent-coach relationships are perceived
69 to induce stress and anxiety in athletes (Lauer et al., 2010) and hinder athletic performance
70 (Preston et al., 2020).

71 While this body of research highlights the importance of parent-coach relationships
72 within the youth sport, scientific advancements remain limited methodologically because few,
73 if any, of these studies have employed relational designs where intact parent-coach dyads are
74 at the centre of data collection. As such, bi-directional relational concepts have not been fully
75 understood because existing data is not grounded within the mutual experiences of actual
76 dyads working in practice. Furthermore, it is important to remember that such relationships
77 operate within the context of a PAC triad. Coaches' perceptions of parenting are often defined
78 by the interactions parents have with their child (e.g., emphasising developmentally
79 appropriate goals; Gould et al., 2016), whilst parents place importance on the quality of
80 coaching provided to their child (Wuerth et al., 2004). Therefore, athletes serve as an
81 intermediary link between parents and coaches with several models illustrating the
82 interdependent and reciprocal nature of PAC triads.

83 The concept of an 'athletic triad' between PACs was first introduced by Hellstedt
84 (1987) who posited that PACs work together as a system to determine the success of
85 everyone's role in sport. Dorsch et al.'s (2022) more recent integrated model of the youth
86 sport system illustrates clearly how parents and coaches form important proximal subsystems
87 surrounding athletes, reinforcing the value of achieving a better understanding of the complex

PAC TRIADS IN YOUTH TENNIS

88 and dynamic affective, cognitive, and behavioural processes that connect these individuals.
89 Triads also offer an important unit of sociological analysis because they provide greater
90 insight into how people affect and are affected by the network of interpersonal connections
91 around them (Siltaloppi & Vargo, 2017).

92 Jowett and Timson-Katchis (2005) first provided empirical evidence for the need to
93 consider how social networks operate in youth sport when they examined the impact parents
94 had on the quality of coach-athlete relationships in youth swimming. This research was
95 grounded in Sprecher's and colleagues' (2002) social network model which proposed that
96 dyadic relationships function within a larger social network, whereby third-party members
97 can influence the quality of these relationships through the support, information, and
98 opportunity they provide. Their results indicated that parents could affect the quality of
99 coach-athlete relationships (as defined by closeness, commitment, and complementarity) by
100 providing emotional support, practical information for resolving potential conflict, and
101 opportunities for communication with coaches. More recently, a series of studies by
102 Lisinskiene and colleagues (2019) explored how specific interpersonal qualities were viewed
103 by PACs in terms of their relationships with other members. First, they administered an
104 online survey to a sample of athletes, coaches, and parents from various sports to investigate
105 how the predetermined dimensions of trust, respect, communication, support, teamwork,
106 motivation, over-involvement, and demotivation were perceived to operate or exist in their
107 athletic triads. In a subsequent qualitative study, as part of a deductive refinement process for
108 item and scale development, Lisinskiene et al., (2019) conducted single interviews with 10
109 intact PAC triads from their initial sample of team and individual sports. Their deductive
110 findings verified the salience of positive group processes (e.g., support and communication)
111 within the triad and motivational qualities (e.g., hard work and passion), in addition to

PAC TRIADS IN YOUTH TENNIS

112 evidence of how overinvolvement behaviour can play out within parents and coaches related
113 largely to imbalances in power dynamics.

114 To understand more inductively how triadic processes may influence athletic
115 experiences in youth sport, a recent interpretative descriptive study by Maurice et al. (2021)
116 investigated how PACs from U9 to U16 level in an elite UK football academy perceived
117 triadic interactions to facilitate athletes' wellbeing and performance during the COVID-19
118 pandemic. Although their research design did not feature intact triads, findings from
119 individual interviews suggested that providing emotional support, using communication to
120 ensure social connections (e.g., getting to know the person behind the role), and an
121 understanding of roles and responsibilities fostered successful and durable PAC relationships.
122 However, Maurice et al. (2021) openly stated that the pandemic may have placed more stress
123 on PAC relationships given the restrictions that prevented PACs from functioning normally.
124 Therefore, their findings may not precisely reflect the typical relational processes that occur
125 within the triad on a day-to-day basis when such extraordinary stressors are likely to be
126 absent.

127 Progressing our knowledge of interpersonal relationship functioning in youth sport
128 requires applied researchers to explore existing and organic relationships much better in
129 practice, and within specific sport communities. Such knowledge and insights would inform
130 sport organisations and practitioners working with athletes, coaches, and parents **about** the
131 relational nuances that may be influenced by the culture and structure of a specific sport. At
132 present, investigations of parents, coaches, and athletes from entirely separate dyads or triads
133 is a research design limitation that restricts our study of actual interdependent, working
134 relationships. Further, where intact triads across sports have been sourced (e.g., Lisinskiene et
135 al., 2019), the focus has been on more deductively investigating relationship qualities of
136 purported importance through single interviews. The opportunity remains to study triadic

137 relationships more naturally or organically, and by extending data collection beyond
138 individual interviews (e.g., collecting conversations between PACs).

139 A further opportunity for knowledge advancement in this contemporary topic lies in
140 understanding how the functioning of PAC triadic relationships evolve along youth sport
141 pathways. This is important for applied researchers to consider because athletes' and coaches'
142 perceptions of optimal parental involvement are complex and change as athletes transition
143 through key developmental stages (Knight et al., 2016; Knight & Harwood, 2009). In parallel,
144 the stressors and support needs reported by parents are dynamic and evolve with the differing
145 expectations placed upon them as athletes mature and specialise in their sport (Dorsch et al.,
146 2015; Harwood & Knight, 2009; Thrower et al., 2016).

147 The above points are particularly relevant to consider for sports such as tennis where
148 the enduring relationships between parents and coaches become more prominent in affecting
149 the nature of development and performance for athletes. For example, tennis parents are often
150 forced to take up the role of support provider within competition contexts because
151 professional coaches often choose to earn money at their training venue rather than attend
152 tournaments unpaid (Knight & Holt, 2014). Contrary to many other sports, parents are also
153 responsible for selecting and employing their child's coach. This can mean that coaches can
154 feel pressured to appease parents to ensure they remain in their employment with the family
155 (Horne et al., 2020). Given the increased investment and intense involvement that parents
156 have in youth tennis (often negotiated through the interactions they have with coaches), tennis
157 has since offered a context for researchers to explore the interpersonal dynamics and
158 processes that operate in such sub-cultures (e.g., Horne et al., 2020). In Lauer and colleagues'
159 (2010) retrospective study of PAC triads reflecting on transitions in parental behaviour over
160 their developmental journey through tennis, three time periods of athletic development
161 emerged each with idiosyncratic challenges. Supporting Cote's (1999) model, athletes left the

162 early years (i.e., sampling) of development between 8 to 11 years old whilst the middle
163 developmental (i.e., specialising) stage lasted from 10 to 14 years of age on average. Athletes
164 were found to leave the middle stage of development between 13 and 17 years old, entering
165 the elite playing (i.e., investment) years often around 15 years old. Aligned with Dorsch et
166 al.'s (2022) observation that “developmentally informed research is needed to capture the
167 nuances of athletes’ behaviors, attitudes, experiences and outcomes over time in youth sport”
168 (p. 10), we would extend this point to reflect the whole PAC triad to better understand the
169 relationship dynamics that operate across key stages within youth tennis.

170 In summary, while a growing body of interpersonal research in youth sport is
171 ‘relationship-focused’, we would argue that it fails to be ‘relationship-centred’ with recent
172 studies neglecting to use interindividual sampling or richer data collection methods to better
173 capture the relational dynamics between PACs. Further, researchers **have** yet to explore how
174 triadic functioning evolves across the pathway of a specific sport culture as pressures,
175 demands, and expectations change. To that end, and using tennis as context to infuse the
176 evidence-base for sport psychology practitioners and organisations, **this study aimed** to
177 understand how PAC triads function in British youth tennis. Specifically, we pursued the
178 following research question: What do the perceptions of parents, athletes, and coaches tell us
179 about the **relational** processes that underpin triadic functioning across developmental stages
180 within British youth tennis?

181 **Method**

182 **Philosophical Position and Research Design**

183 The current study was conducted from a pragmatist worldview. Pragmatic researchers
184 use research to solve ‘real-world’ issues that impact human experiences and as such,
185 meaningful inquiry in research (i.e., methods used) is driven by the interaction between belief
186 and action (Poucher et al., 2019). That is, research is used to carefully consider the actions

187 (i.e., methods and designs) most equipped to illicit knowledge that can be used to understand
188 complex issues around human experiences (i.e., PAC triads; Dewey, 2008). In line with this
189 approach and due to the complex nature of the research question, a case study design was
190 used. A case study is “an in-depth exploration from multiple perspectives of the complexity
191 and uniqueness of a particular project, policy, institution, programme or system in a ‘real-life’
192 context” (Simons, 2009, p. 21). Although case study designs do not provide a prescriptive
193 guide for how to collect, analyse and interpret data, the key principles include: a) small *N*; b)
194 contextual detail; c) everyday setting; d) boundness (i.e., a detailed description of a temporal
195 or structural boundary which brings context to the phenomenon being studied); e) working
196 research question; f) multiple data sources; and g) extendibility (see VanWynsbergh & Kahn,
197 2007). Specifically, a collective case study (i.e., involving several cases) was used in this
198 study because it allowed us to gather an in-depth, detailed, and concurrent understanding of
199 nine PAC triads that are contextually bound to different stages of the tennis development
200 pathway, and the similarities and differences between them (Hodge & Sharpe, 2016).

201 **The Researchers**

202 The first author is a White, British woman who was conducting research as part of a
203 larger PhD project around parent-coach relationships in youth tennis. She has competed and
204 coached up to an international level in youth sport and undergone post-graduate training in
205 qualitative research. The second, third, and fourth authors have conducted research with
206 young athletes, parents, and coaches in the UK for 30, 25, and 10 years respectively.

207 Specifically, they contributed methodological (second and fourth authors), applied (second
208 and fourth author) and theoretical (third author) knowledge to the current study.

209 **Participants and Sampling**

210 A key feature of a collective case study design is to identify the units of analysis being
211 investigated (i.e., the cases; see Hodge & Sharp, 2016). Informed by limitations within the

PAC TRIADS IN YOUTH TENNIS

212 existing literature (e.g., Maurice et al., 2021), purposeful sampling was used to select
213 information-rich participants and cases (i.e., PAC triads; Patton, 2015). First, instrumental use
214 multicase sampling was used to select PAC triads in British youth tennis that could provide
215 generalisable data that may help inform developments made to sport programs and practices
216 (Patton, 2015). In line with this sampling method, criterion sampling (Patton, 2015) was used
217 to identify participants within operational and intact PAC triads across the youth tennis
218 pathway. This was important to capture the relational dynamics and structures within the triad
219 by comparing partners' perspectives from the same triad. Inclusion criteria required PAC
220 triads to operate within one of three developmental stages: U10s (i.e., sampling), U12s (i.e.,
221 specialising), or U18s (i.e., investment). In this respect, athletes were required to be playing at
222 a minimum of mini-tennis (U10s), county level (U12s), or regional level (U18s) and triads
223 had to have been active for a minimum of six months (U10s) and twelve months (U12s &
224 U18s) prior to the study. The developmental stages used in this study were chosen with
225 consideration to the developmental transitions present in models of talent development (i.e.,
226 Côté, 1999) and critically, the key organisational, contextual, and developmental transitions
227 that occur specifically in British youth tennis (Lauer et al., 2010; Thrower et al., 2016).

228 It is important to note that researchers have argued that “triadic analysis is not limited
229 to specific systems of exactly three actors but applicable to any system of at least three
230 actors” (Siltaloppi & Vargo, 2017, p. 408). Also, Stake (2006) recommended collective case
231 study research includes between four and ten cases. As such, collective case study research
232 frequently falls within this range (e.g., Dorsch et al., 2015; Jackman et al., 2017; Schweickle
233 et al., 2023). Therefore, the final cohort consisted of nine PAC triads across three
234 developmental age groups which included 29 participants in total. This comprised 10 players
235 (5 male and 5 female, $M_{age} = 10.4$ years), 10 coaches (6 male and 4 female, $M_{age} = 43.5$
236 years), and nine mothers ($M_{age} = 46.6$ years). In case one, there were two athletes in one triad

237 and in case three, two coaches considered themselves as lead coaches for the athlete.
238 Although these triads do not represent the traditional three-person system, they were included
239 because they represented the diverse and organic ways that PACs work together in this sport
240 (Siltaloppi & Vargo, 2017). Table 1 provides a full description of the demographic profile of
241 each participant and their triad including age, gender, level, and years of experience.

242 [Insert Table 1 here]

243 **Data Collection**

244 Prior to data collection, full ethical approval was received from the research ethics
245 committee at a higher-education academic institution. In line with the key characteristics of
246 case study research which states that multiple data collection resources should be used to
247 enrich a comprehensive understanding of the phenomenon (Smith & Sparkes, 2020), the
248 current study collected three forms of data: a) pre-interview tasks and documents; b) semi-
249 structured interviews; and c) conversational threads (i.e., emails and text messages).
250 Importantly, the language used in the interview guides and pre-interview task instructions was
251 adapted in accordance with athletes' developmental stage, using guidelines from existing
252 research about effectively incorporating children into research (i.e., Fargas-Malet et al.,
253 2010).

254 ***Pre-Interview Tasks and Documents***

255 In addition to providing a more comprehensive understanding of participants'
256 experiences in the PAC triad, pre-interview tasks were used as an elicitation tool to stimulate
257 discussion during the interviews (Smith & Sparkes, 2020). Specifically, participants were
258 asked to provide a visual description of their perceptions of the triad and its evolution over
259 time. The use of these visual descriptions allowed participants to provide a comprehensive
260 explanation in their own words around the important characteristics, qualities, and
261 interactions within their triad, and explain how this has changed or remained constant as

262 athletes have progressed through tennis (see Figure 1 for an athlete example). Participants
263 were also asked to share any personal documents that they felt added to an understanding of
264 how they perceived their triad (e.g., tennis rackets, diary entries, and videos of coach-athlete
265 interactions). Visual descriptions and personal documents were provided to the lead
266 researcher **before** individual interviews and **were** used to tailor interviews to participants to
267 **elicit** detailed descriptions of participants' experiences within their triads (Bravington &
268 King, 2019).

269 *Semi-Structured Interviews*

270 Semi-structured interview guides for each PAC member followed similar structures and
271 included probes to generate insightful and more in-depth responses to the initial questions
272 posed. Interview guides were also designed **to generate** greater insight into the interdependent
273 dynamics between PACs on a dyadic level and their contribution to the structural dynamics
274 between PACs as a triadic system. Each interview began with introductory and discussion
275 questions about participants' experiences in sport and tennis and to gather participants'
276 expectations and values for the roles in the triad (e.g., "Can you describe what it is like being
277 a tennis coach?"). The next three sections of the interview included questions which gathered
278 perceptions on the nature of the three dyadic relationships within the PAC triad (e.g., parent-
279 athlete). Questions and probes encouraged participants to think about the interactions that
280 occur between them and other members of the triad (e.g., "How would you describe your
281 relationship with your parent in tennis?"), the role these relationships have in the triad (e.g.,
282 "What role does the coach-athlete relationship play in the PAC triad"), and the impact these
283 relationships have on participants' athletic experiences (e.g., "How does the relationship
284 between you and the parent impact the athlete?"). The final section required participants to
285 consider the relationships between PACs as a triad. Questions focussed on participants'
286 experiences within the triad, the purpose and role of the triad within tennis, and the types of

287 interactions that fostered a positive PAC triad (e.g., “Can you discuss some of your
288 experiences of working with the parent(s) and player to improve how your PAC group
289 operates?).

290 Due to the restrictions of the COVID-19 pandemic, all interviews were conducted
291 online. The order **in which the** interviews were conducted was dependent upon participants’
292 availability. Recurring language (e.g., team and trust) used by participants was posed to
293 participants in subsequent interviews to gain a better understanding of the similarities and
294 differences across cases. Interviews with parents and coaches lasted between 45 and 90
295 minutes ($M = 69.24$, $SD = 12.30$) whilst athlete interviews ranged from 40 to 60 minutes ($M =$
296 49.50 ; $SD = 7.93$).

297 ***Conversational Threads***

298 Conversational threads (**i.e., emails and text messages**) were used to gather a more
299 enriched understanding of the day-to-day dynamics that occur between parents and coaches
300 (and athletes where possible) (Smith et al., 2015). Additionally, these threads were used as a
301 form of naturally occurring data which provided a more authentic view of the types and tone
302 of conversations that contribute to how the PAC triad functions. Following their interviews,
303 parents and coaches were asked to provide data from the conversation history between
304 themselves during the three months leading up to the study. Such conversational data was
305 represented through text messages (i.e., WhatsApp) but some email history was also shared.
306 Where available (i.e., cases in the U12s and **U18s** stages), participants provided **a** history of
307 WhatsApp group conversations between all three members of the triad. In total, 197 A4 pages
308 of conversational transcripts were used for analysis.

309 **Data Analysis**

310 The analysis procedure used in this study was reflexive thematic analysis (i.e.,
311 reflexive TA; Braun & Clarke, 2019). Reflexive TA offered a thoughtful account of the

PAC TRIADS IN YOUTH TENNIS

312 researcher's engagement with the data and analytical process (Braun & Clarke, 2019) which
313 is both congruent with the assumptions of pragmatism (i.e., it is the researcher's
314 responsibility to interpret participants' perspectives to produce knowledge most applicable to
315 the research question), and the characteristics of case study designs (i.e., developing a rich,
316 detailed, and natural account of a temporally bound phenomenon). Therefore, these tenets
317 were used in conjunction with case-study-specific guidelines (Creswell, 2013) to further
318 enhance analytical sensibility (Braun & Clarke, 2019). An abductive approach was taken to
319 ensure themes generated from the data were consistent with the conceptual terminology
320 currently used in existing literature within this area (e.g., Lisinskiene et al., 2019). Although
321 more data was available from participants' interviews, equal weighting was given to all forms
322 of data collection during the analysis given the unique insights each type of data could
323 provide in relation to the research question.

324 First, the lead researcher became familiar with the data by collecting, transcribing, and
325 re-reading the data prior to the formal analysis procedure. QSR NVivo12 computer software
326 was used to aid with storage and assist with coding and retrieving all forms of the data
327 collected. Next, data relevant to each case was analysed individually known as within-case
328 analysis. This involved both coding explicitly stated meanings from participants and
329 identifying the underlying and implicit ideas that underpin these descriptive meanings in each
330 case (Braun & Clarke, 2019). For example, quotes reflected the type of communication
331 between individuals (i.e., explicit meaning) and the presence of care between partners in their
332 relationship (i.e., implicit meaning). Upon identifying patterns of shared meaning within each
333 case, cross-case analysis involved interpreting patterns between cases to explore the temporal
334 nature of participants' shared experiences in the PAC triad and generate sub-themes. These
335 sub-themes (e.g., support, shared goals, role collaboration, and role-specific communication)
336 were then grouped around a central organising concept to generate themes (e.g., team

337 effectiveness) which aimed to represent the complex interaction between the data, the
338 researcher's philosophical assumptions, and the resources used in the analysis process (Braun
339 & Clarke, 2019). Finally, these were reviewed and refined to reflect their analytical narrative
340 relevant to the purpose of understanding how the PAC triad functioned in youth tennis (i.e.,
341 the research question; Braun & Clarke, 2019).

342 **Quality Criteria**

343 Drawing from a relativist approach to selecting criteria for judging qualitative research
344 (Smith & McGannon, 2018) and existing collective case study guidelines (see Day & Wadey,
345 2016), the following criteria can be used in conjunction with Braun and Clarke's (2021)
346 reflexive TA guidelines as a starting point to judge the quality of the current study. First, the
347 use of conversational threads in this study provided novel *insights* into the naturally occurring
348 interactions within the PAC triad that have not yet been captured by existing literature.
349 Second, *credibility* was demonstrated by using a variety of data collection methods to
350 triangulate PACs' perspectives and provide an in-depth understanding of how the PAC triad
351 functions in British youth tennis (Smith & Sparkes, 2020). Third, the methodology (i.e.,
352 collective case study) used in this study provided rich and contextualised insights into how
353 and why PACs perceive their experiences within the triad. This allows others to make
354 naturalistic generalisations (see Smith & Sparkes, 2020) which adds *width* to the study.
355 Finally, *coherence* was offered through the creation of a meaningful process between the
356 approach (i.e., pragmatism), methodology (i.e., research questions and design), and methods
357 (i.e., data collection and analysis) used in this study. Additionally, members of the research
358 team acted as 'critical friends' by providing a variety of empirical knowledge to guide the
359 lead researcher's actions and interpretations (Smith & McGannon, 2018).

360 **Transparency and Openness**

361 To comply with the Transparency and Openness Promotion (TOP) guidelines, the
362 current study follows the *JARS-Qual* recommendations with interview guides openly
363 available for the reader in addition to data (i.e., visual descriptors, threads, and transcripts)
364 where appropriately redacted for anonymity and confidentiality (these are available from the
365 first author). In addition, due to the qualitative methodological approach used, the current
366 study plan was not pre-registered and did not use computer code or syntax.

367 Results

368 Two higher-order themes were generated from the data that underpinned how the
369 PAC triad functioned within youth tennis: *foundations of relationship quality* and *factors*
370 *enabling team effectiveness*. Each theme contained lower-order themes intended to reflect
371 both within and across-case analysis between each case and developmental stage. Therefore,
372 the themes represent the similarities found between participants and their cases. However, in
373 Table 2, we first provide illustrative details of how these themes and sub-themes relate to
374 participants' experiences within their triads (i.e., cases).

375 [Insert Table 2 here]

376 Foundations of Relationship Quality

377 Perceptions that reflected the quality or state of the relationship revolved around
378 *commitment, trust, respect, and parent-coach proximity* which subsequently shaped the
379 interactions that occurred within the triad.

380 *Commitment to the Relationship*

381 Commitment reflected participants' intentions to invest in and maintain their
382 relationships within the triad. These intentions represented two levels of commitment across
383 all developmental stages: contract vs care-based commitment. *Contract-based commitment*
384 was characterised by the transactional basis in which parents employed coaches to coach the
385 athlete. Therefore, commitment between PACs was first and foremost defined by parents'

PAC TRIADS IN YOUTH TENNIS

386 intentions to financially commit to coaches and in return, the effort coaches made to provide a
387 ‘service’ that met the performance-based needs of the athlete. Given that this contractual
388 commitment represented the lowest level of intent needed to sustain the relationships within
389 the triad, the expectations parents and athletes had about the coaching qualities they wanted
390 from coaches influenced whether they were willing to contractually commit, as Emma
391 (Parent, T9) explains: “The coach competence, I think if that wasn’t there, you would have to
392 look elsewhere, I think that comes before everything” (Interview).

393 The second level of commitment was *care-based commitment* which builds off the
394 foundational, contractual level of commitment between PACs, and reflected the level of
395 intent PACs showed to ensure the relationships within the triad flourished rather than just
396 existed. To do this, participants willingly appreciated the importance of showing concern for
397 each other as individuals to reduce stress and promote enjoyment and well-being. Examples
398 of care-based commitment levels to the PAC relationship involved being friendly, showing an
399 interest in other members’ lives away from tennis, and spending time outside of paid
400 coaching hours to share feedback. This is illustrated by Mark, coach to 11-year-old Paul
401 (Athlete, T4):

402 I may send a little link of what I have seen on YouTube on a Sunday afternoon. They
403 are little things that can help the relationship because we are sometimes guilty of
404 spending a lot of court time with them, but don’t always have the time to follow them
405 around and watch matches – that is always a stumbling block for coaches. Those little
406 things can really help the relationship (Interview).

407 ***Trusting Each Member’s Ability***

408 Participants described trust as the extent to which each member trusted each other in
409 their roles within the triad. Parents and athletes trusted the coach’s expertise given the
410 influential role they had on athletes:

PAC TRIADS IN YOUTH TENNIS

411 We are essentially giving [Charlotte] a child to develop. It is a very influential
412 relationship between athlete and coach, especially in an individual sport with
413 individual lessons and not in a team environment. We will have to trust her for us to
414 give her responsibility for a piece of Lisa's (Athlete) development (Caroline, Parent,
415 T5, Interview).

416 Parents trusted coaches because they believed their child had a positive coach-athlete
417 relationship (e.g., was enthusiastic about spending time with them on the tennis court).

418 Likewise, athletes believed that their parent trusted their coach because the parent engaged
419 with the coach and encouraged the athlete to continue to work with them. Additionally,
420 building a trusting coach-athlete relationship was important to ensure athletes could work
421 more closely with coaches over time without parents acting as a mediator. As a result, parents
422 sought to build their child's trust in the coach by giving them time to interact without
423 interfering. Equally, coaches felt trusted and in turn, empowered and competent in their
424 ability to meet the holistic needs of the athlete when parents did not question their coaching
425 decisions. However, coaches did recognise that they could facilitate parents' trust by being
426 reliable during training sessions and explaining their intentions for the athlete as a tool to
427 reassure parents: "I feel trusted by them. You get some parents who say, 'Why is she doing
428 this or not doing this?' but, they are quite happy to have a quick chat and they are very
429 relaxed with it" (Charlotte, Coach, T5, Interview). Across all the triads, participants felt that
430 parents and athletes had positive relationships with each other because parents trusted athletes
431 to try their best and be receptive to support, whilst athletes trusted parents to be present and
432 provide the support they needed to develop.

433 *Respecting Members' Contributions*

434 Interlinking with commitment and trust, respect was also fundamental to the way
435 PACs experienced their connections with each other. Respect was defined by participants as

PAC TRIADS IN YOUTH TENNIS

436 being appreciative and receptive to the contribution each member made to the triad. As
437 parents expected coaches to provide their children with positive and growth-stimulating
438 experiences in tennis, parents respected coaches when they felt coaches cared for their child:
439 “I respect Ben (Coach) so much more and the effort and commitment he puts into this job and
440 tennis, they are like his children outside and on the court” (Sarah, Parent, T2, Interview).

441 **There** was a mutual consensus of respect between all three members of the triad. Even
442 when athletes were not able to comprehend the magnitude of their parents’ contribution, they
443 still respected that **their** parents did their best to make tennis an enjoyable challenge.
444 Likewise, although parents were not directly involved with the on-court aspects of athletes’
445 development, parents felt connected to the triad because coaches and athletes appreciated
446 their involvement. Overall, participants considered everyone to be equally important to the
447 functioning of the triad in their own ways: “I think it is a team based on respect, loyalty, and
448 trust ... The respect is the degree of interaction between the three of you and whether you all
449 believe in each other” (Emma, Parent, T9, Interview).

450 *Parent-Coach Proximity*

451 Parent-coach proximity refers to how the interpersonal connection between parents
452 and coaches influenced the quality of other relationships within the triad and the nature of the
453 triad moving forward. Parents and coaches who trusted each other enough to disclose
454 personal information about their lives outside of tennis, and to be honest about their feelings
455 created opportunities for stronger relationships with athletes. Athletes considered these
456 relationships between their parents and coaches as a friendship. As a result, athletes felt more
457 reassured that they could open up to their coaches about non-**tennis-specific** topics and issues
458 within their tennis because they believed the coach was more willing and knowledgeable in
459 their interactions with them. Paul (Athlete, T4) disclosed: “When I first met him, he was quite

460 good friends with my Mum, so he was open to me. He was kind of nicer to me. I have gotten
461 to know him better” (Interview).

462 Whilst not every triad had parents and coaches who were considered friends, there
463 were still instances where the trust between parents and coaches influenced the triad. This
464 included parents arranging opportunities for younger athletes to speak to their coach on the
465 phone, or coaches encouraging parents to watch training sessions so that parents could
466 understand and reinforce their coaching concepts in their absence at tournaments. In triads
467 where parents and coaches had known each other long enough to develop a sense of mutual
468 trust and respect, there was greater evidence of the tailored support that they could offer to
469 athletes. This included collaborating to help athletes resolve specific problems or challenges
470 they may be facing in tennis. In this regard, both Richard (Coach, T9) and Emma (Parent, T9)
471 shared the following example with Richard’s thoughts shown here:

472 I remember one time **when** Stephen (Athlete) was at a real low and he and his mum
473 came around my house. I was just trying to listen to him and he really opened up and he
474 was really crying. I said that was a part of the relationship that you know if we weren't
475 quite close, I don't think it gets to that. If me and the Mum weren't close, she wouldn't
476 feel comfortable with that, but it was really good because it really helped us kind of
477 verbalise what he was feeling and finding difficult to explain (Interview).

478 **Factors Enabling Team Effectiveness**

479 When asked to best describe how they perceived the nature of their triads, participants
480 across all the age groups referred to their triads as a ‘team’. Participants’ accounts provided
481 insights into elements they perceived as enabling their team to work effectively and included
482 qualities such as *shared goals, collaborative and adjusted roles, support, and role-specific*
483 *communication*.

484 ***Shared Goals for the Triad***

PAC TRIADS IN YOUTH TENNIS

485 Shared goals that are clear between PACs provided direction for each member
486 regarding the purpose of the triad and the responsibilities for which each member was
487 accountable. Given parents employed coaches to coach their children to play tennis, the
488 purpose of the triad was heavily oriented around helping athletes improve their tennis
489 performances. However, functional triads focussed on realistic goals which emphasised
490 processes (e.g., skill development and enjoyment) that preceded performance and developed
491 the athlete as a well-rounded person. This was done by identifying and meeting the needs of
492 athletes to allow them to develop the skills needed to play tennis and importantly, foster the
493 enjoyment that preceded athletes' intent to learn: "I see it as 100% a team because if it is not,
494 then that is not going to put me in the best situation where I want to be on court in terms of
495 learning those skills" (George, Athlete, T7, Interview). Establishing shared goals was made
496 easier when PACs had been working together for a long time and subsequently, had a good
497 understanding of the individual needs of the athlete. The following quote from Isabelle who
498 had been Olivia's (U12) coach for four years, supports this point:

499 You have to really understand what a player is like, and I think having them from a
500 young age and growing up is way easier. To just meet someone off the bat, you will get
501 to that team environment at some point, but it will take a while so if you can build that
502 team from a tiny age all the way up, then it will just get better (T6, Interview).

503 *Collaborative and Adjusted Roles within the Triad*

504 For PACs to work well together as a team, clear and specific roles transpired for each
505 member of the triad. Coaches were responsible for providing knowledge and expertise around
506 the organisational structure of tennis and **the** technical, physical, and psychological skills
507 needed to be a successful tennis player. Athletes needed to demonstrate an enthusiasm for
508 tennis and older athletes (i.e., U12s and **U18s**) needed to feedback to parents and coaches
509 **about** the challenges they faced. Whilst parents recognised that providing tangible (e.g.,

PAC TRIADS IN YOUTH TENNIS

510 transport) support to athletes was a major part of their role, participants explained that parents
511 provided important emotional and informational support to athletes given they spent more
512 time with them than coaches. As a result, coaches felt **the need** to work closely with the
513 parent to ensure they could maximise the parent's contribution to the athlete's tennis:

514 I've had to really consider how the parent has such an important role in their tennis. Not
515 just a taxi service! Having to discuss much more with the parent, I think they feel more
516 involved with what their son/daughter is going through on court. This can lead to a
517 much more of a supporting role as they have a better understanding (Mark, Coach, T4,
518 Pre-Task, T4).

519 The dyads within the triad also played specific roles within the 'team'. Parents acted as
520 a central point in facilitating feedback, communication, and understanding between coaches
521 and athletes until athletes matured enough to communicate their thoughts and feelings. As
522 such, the relationship between parents and coaches became pivotal to **ensuring** the triad
523 operated collaboratively in the younger developmental stages. Interestingly, however, parents
524 in the U10s and U12s stages saw their future involvement with coaches as less relevant: "I
525 think the PAC eventually becomes the AC (athlete-coach). Where the parent steps back a bit
526 more, I think at this stage it needs to be less P and more AC" (Molly, Parent, T4, Interview).

527 Boundaries were placed on the roles within the triad to avoid potential conflict and
528 offer direction within the triad. For example, parents were expected to "remain close and are
529 involved but know when to step in and when to let us get on with coaching Olivia (Athlete)"
530 (Isabelle, Coach, T6, Pre-Task). For all triads, boundaries were implicitly set by getting to
531 know each other's preferences that stemmed from previous relationships and experiences in
532 tennis and sport more generally. Despite this, the wider contextual and cultural expectations
533 placed upon participants (e.g., parents' rate of learning around the demands and requirements
534 of tennis) meant it was important that these roles were flexible to the demands participants

PAC TRIADS IN YOUTH TENNIS

535 were under to avoid PACs in the triad becoming frustrated and ineffective. For example,
536 parents were strongly discouraged from engaging in coaching behaviours (e.g., telling
537 coaches how to coach) that could jeopardise the trust coaches and athletes had for parents,
538 and the autonomy coaches had over coaching decisions that they believed they should be
539 primarily responsible for. However, given coaches were often absent at tournaments due to
540 the financial implications of attending, even during the older stages, it became part of parents'
541 roles to “reinforce goals set by the coach and athlete” (Heather, Parent, T1, Pre-Task) and for
542 coaches to facilitate this by encouraging parents to work closely with them as coaches to
543 “provide a consistent message to the player” (Josh, Coach, T8, Pre-Task). The following
544 extract taken from a WhatsApp conversation between Emma (Parent, T9) and Richard
545 (Coach, T9) demonstrates this point:

546 Emma (Parent): Stephen (Athlete) had a tough day. Lost all matches. Hitting FH with
547 much more pace, more winners, but more errors. He said the ball came back quicker
548 and the boys liked the extra pace. For me, lacked variety and didn't use space. Forgot
549 BH completely. Do I suggest anything? Have praised commitment to the new shot but
550 he's very disappointed it didn't magically improve his game!

551 Richard (Coach): You may have a sledgehammer in your tool kit, but it's no good
552 when you are trying to peel an orange. Helping him understand that different
553 situations require different tools would be helpful.

554 *Providing Support to Negotiate the Challenges of Tennis*

555 Tennis imposed numerous demands on PACs. Therefore, a core component of
556 building and maintaining a functional team was the strength of the three-way support
557 network. To support this point, Richard (Coach, T9) explained in his interview that “to be
558 successful, all three parts have to be working effectively and efficiently and if one of those
559 parts drops, if you have created a really good team, then the other two will be mechanisms

PAC TRIADS IN YOUTH TENNIS

560 and step in to help”. In this context, the type of support PACs exchanged was specific to the
561 role each participant occupied within the triad. It was particularly important that athletes felt
562 they had appropriate emotional (i.e., encouragement) and informational (i.e., psychological
563 skills development) support from parents and coaches, which allowed them to gain the skills
564 to critically self-reflect and develop a sense of autonomy over their development.

565 Additionally, parent-athlete relationships were positive for athletes when their parents
566 were present at tournaments, able to provide match-specific coaching points when needed,
567 and when they modelled calmness on the sidelines. Similarly, coaches respected and trusted
568 parents more when they observed parents support the athlete during challenging moments
569 (e.g., after losses). Parents also openly shared the challenges they faced from their athlete’s
570 tennis experiences and subsequently needed support from coaches to confidently navigate the
571 stressful nature of organising and attending tournaments. Coaches were aware of the need to
572 be proactive in working with parents even when parents did not explicitly ask for support. As
573 a result, parents relied on coaches to be available to offer encouragement and advice. This can
574 be seen in the following extract taken from a conversation between Mary (Parent, T3) and
575 Lucy (Coach, T3) after a disappointing performance and loss for Tom (Athlete, T3):

576 Mary (Parent): Tom (Athlete) and I are a bit down about it but I guess the positive side
577 is you can now see how things sometimes go in tournaments. Tom (Athlete) said he’s
578 embarrassed and hopefully it might sink in this time ... probably not straight away!

579 Lucy (Coach): Aw Mary (Parent), don’t be down at all. It was a real positive to be able
580 to see and that is the only way we can help. Everything we say is not a criticism at all, it
581 is with Tom’s (Athlete) interests at heart. ... Sometimes it may be uncomfortable but it
582 is not a negative at all – it is about finding a way forward. Don’t be down.

583 Finally, because athletes were expected to focus on their tennis and parents and coaches
584 were seen as the main support agents within the triad, athletes were expected to be receptive
585 to support rather than to provide it.

586 *Being Open to Offering and Receiving Role-Specific Communication*

587 To ensure the triad worked collectively as one team, participants explained how
588 ongoing and frequent communication allowed each member to share concerns, information,
589 and goals that stemmed from their role-related expertise. Most communication within the
590 triad occurred on a dyadic level given opportunities for PACs to converse as a group were
591 more restricted to training times until athletes were old enough to use their own phone to
592 communicate within group WhatsApp conversations. Parents and coaches mostly
593 communicated via text messages or phone calls, whilst athletes mostly communicated with
594 parents and coaches during training, at tournaments, or in the car. From parents' and coaches'
595 perspectives, dyadic communication allowed them to be honest, express appreciation, and
596 make shared decisions together. Likewise, parents' close understanding of their child away
597 from tennis meant they could offer coaches more relevant information regarding the
598 personality profile of the athlete, alongside stressors or challenges the athlete may be facing
599 without undermining the athlete's confidence in their own abilities. This allowed coaches to
600 tailor sessions to the capabilities of athletes:

601 I used to call (Lisa) the Hulk. She was this lovely little happy girl and then she just
602 flipped, and she would be the angriest thing you have ever seen... her Mum came to
603 me one day and she said 'she has just done a swimming gala and she lost, so she took
604 her fingernails, and she clawed them into her thighs'... Then I would pay attention to
605 it, and I started doing these games to make her lose... and she would freak out
606 massively but every week, she kind of calms down and you kind of defeat that side
607 (Charlotte, Coach, T5, Interview).

PAC TRIADS IN YOUTH TENNIS

608 For athletes, coaches were seen as the most knowledgeable individual within the triad
609 with Liam (Athlete, T2) calling his coach, Ben, “the mastermind” (Pre-Task). Therefore,
610 athletes often sought coaching feedback and advice to help them grow as tennis players by
611 discussing match reports, tactics, and areas for improvement. Communication was also an
612 opportunity for athletes to share their thoughts on how they performed **with** parents, whilst
613 parents used it to hold their children **accountable** to certain behavioural expectations (e.g.,
614 playing fairly, trying hard, and managing emotions).

615 **Developmental Differences Across Stages**

616 There were also specific and nuanced differences in how triads functioned in each
617 developmental stage. One key difference related to the emotional proximity between parents
618 and coaches and its position within the structural dynamics of the triad. For cases in the U10s
619 phase, parent-coach relationships were key to how well the triad functioned because athletes
620 relied most heavily on parents working with their coaches to encourage them, provide them
621 with the right messages, and guide them in the right direction. However, as athletes matured,
622 the proximity between parents and coaches became more implicit **in** the triad’s functioning
623 and the way coaches and athletes maintained high-quality relationships with each other
624 became more prominent. As a result, athletes were not always aware that parents and coaches
625 continued to maintain a close relationship and therefore, did not consider it necessary to the
626 triad or their tennis: “I think it is important that [Holly and Josh] talk but I don’t think they
627 need to be best friends or anything like that” (Amelia, Athlete, T8, Interview).

628 Another key developmental difference concerned the ways PACs adjusted their roles
629 to ensure they continued to collaborate effectively in the triad. In the U12s and **U18s** phases,
630 parents and coaches recognised the need for athletes to begin to take accountability for their
631 own experiences. This involved taking over some of the responsibilities parents had been
632 almost solely responsible for in the U10s phase such as being responsible for providing their

633 feedback about tournaments to coaches, providing more guidance to parents and coaches
634 around what type of support they needed from them, and sharing their own goals and
635 aspirations for their tennis: “As I have gotten older, [my Mum] has kind of let me get on with
636 it myself. She used to see if I was behaving myself but now, I think she trusts me to do it all
637 myself” (Stephen, Athlete, T9, Interview). Both Richard (Coach, T9) and Emma (Parent, T9)
638 also agreed that “Stephen (Athlete) is more engaged in goal setting and he also has developed
639 his ability to feedback more accurately. He is driving his development far more” (Richard,
640 Coach, T9, Pre-Task). Nevertheless, parents and coaches were mindful to help keep athletes’
641 aspirations realistic so they were able to still enjoy and feel confident playing tennis without
642 becoming overwhelmed by rankings and results.

643 **Discussion**

644 The present study aimed to understand the processes that underpin how PAC triads
645 function across the developmental pathway in British youth tennis. A total of nine triads were
646 examined across three developmental stages. **While not by design, self-selection of**
647 **participating triads resulted in PACs that were much more positive than negative in their**
648 **functioning, Nevertheless,** the findings revealed a series of relevant and practical insights
649 related to the way PACs work together as a triad in youth tennis. Building on previous
650 research (e.g., Maurice et al., 2021), these findings capture both the qualities and processes
651 (and the interaction between them) that underpin the positive development and maintenance
652 of triads as a collection of dyadic relationships, and as a unifying three-person team in
653 shaping positive tennis experiences for all members over time.

654 First, the findings of the current study suggest that the quality of the dyadic and triadic
655 relationships between PACs are a critical contributor to athletic development and enjoyment.
656 Reciprocal feelings of commitment, trust, respect, and proximity strengthened the dyadic
657 relationships and subsequently the triadic relationships between PACs. These relational

PAC TRIADS IN YOUTH TENNIS

658 foundations allowed PACs to develop a sense of autonomy and competence in their roles as
659 triad stakeholders. The mediating role of needs satisfaction between the quality of sporting
660 relationships and athletic outcomes (i.e., well-being and motivation) is well known (e.g.,
661 Jowett et al., 2017). However, the findings in this study perhaps particularly highlight the
662 importance of needs satisfaction for parents. Specifically, Horne et al. (2022) suggested that
663 in return for their investment and commitment to their children, tennis parents prefer a greater
664 share of responsibility for athletic development. Likewise, parents can often feel anxious and
665 uncertain about the pre-requisites of successful parenting especially when they lack previous
666 exposure to sport (Knight et al., 2016) and subsequently, seek sources of information as
667 opportunities to learn to become more competent sport parents (Horne et al., 2022).

668 Building on these suggestions, the current findings indicate that greater parental
669 responsibility was represented by a sense of self-control over the actions parents take towards
670 athletic development. Parents feel a greater sense of confidence in their abilities to execute
671 this greater shared responsibility when certain qualities underpin relationships between PACs.
672 This includes when coaches and athletes demonstrate care towards parents (e.g., coaches
673 investing in parents outside of paid contracted hours), and when they trust and respect parents
674 to be more involved within the triad (e.g., adjusting roles). Comparatively, coaches who felt
675 trusted and respected by parents and athletes to make and implement coaching decisions and
676 practices also felt a greater sense of control over and confidence in their responsibilities. For
677 athletes, perceptions of autonomy and competence were fostered when parents and coaches
678 respected their input in the triad and trusted them to be accountable for their own experiences
679 but continued to provide support when needed. Therefore, it is conceivable to suggest that
680 needs satisfaction is an important product of high-quality PAC relationships and a catalyst for
681 positive athletic outcomes.

682 Second, the way PAC triads function in youth tennis extends beyond the quality of
683 dyadic relationships they have within the triad. That is, there is a need for PACs to work as a
684 team through shared goals, role adjustments and collaboration, mutual support, and role-
685 specific communication. McEwan and Beauchamp (2014) proposed that team effectiveness is
686 the direct result of teamwork (i.e., how team members execute certain cooperative behaviours
687 to achieve the team's purpose). Consequently, teamwork acts as a mediator between
688 individual, team, and external-level inputs and outcomes working on episodic cycles (i.e.,
689 between matches) and developmental processes (i.e., through the youth sport system;
690 McEwan & Beauchamp, 2014). Hence, in this study, the provision of team-based constructs
691 (e.g., mutual support) contextualises teamwork between PACs to promote enjoyment,
692 development, and performance. The concept of teamwork has also previously been identified
693 as an important group process indicator where for PACs to have successful relationships,
694 everyone must be involved, help each other, express ideas, and work cooperatively in pursuit
695 of shared goals (Lisinskiene et al., 2019). The current findings extend this research by
696 suggesting that team maintenance and performance, two main components of teamwork in
697 sport (see McEwan & Beauchamp, 2014), rely on the provision of certain social processes. In
698 this study, PAC triads that are available and open to offer and receive a range of support and
699 adjust roles and responsibilities to the context of the triad (e.g., during tournaments), allow
700 PACs to feel connected and work through the shared challenges and stressors of tennis
701 together (Harwood & Knight, 2009).

702 The findings in this study suggest that the qualities embedded within positive social
703 relationships are inextricably linked to the way PACs interact on a dyadic and triadic level.
704 For example, parents felt trusted by coaches when they took the time to offer informational
705 support (e.g., guidance), whilst athletes demonstrated trust in parents when they were open to
706 parents reinforcing coaching messages during tournaments (i.e., coaches taking the time to

PAC TRIADS IN YOUTH TENNIS

707 promote the importance of parental feedback to athletes). Coaches felt closer to parents and
708 athletes when parents did not interfere with coaching responsibilities (e.g., trying to coach),
709 and when parents and athletes agreed on and actively worked towards goals that coaches
710 considered realistic and most relevant to the needs and ability of the athlete. In this regard, the
711 present results echo Siltaloppi and Vargo's (2017) observations when they stated how
712 "factors related to the quality of social relationships, such as trust, mutual appreciation, and
713 the presence of shared norms, constitute important coordination mechanisms that allow the
714 triad to function toward common goals" (p. 402).

715 Finally, by taking a developmental approach to case selection, the findings illustrate the
716 salience of PAC relationships through childhood and adolescence, including when athletes
717 gain more intrapersonal (e.g., self-reflection) and interpersonal skills (e.g., communication) to
718 work more closely with coaches themselves. Whilst parents needed to adapt in accordance
719 with the contextual and cultural demands and expectations associated with each
720 developmental transition (Harwood & Knight, 2015), the quality of parental involvement
721 remained crucial for triadic functioning in the later developmental stages even when earlier
722 stage parents forecasted a reduced level of involvement in the future. Overall, parents and
723 coaches appear to share responsibility for leading the triad (until athletes are old enough to
724 exercise more responsibility themselves), provided they fulfil the expected norms of their
725 roles or exercise a degree of care and caution when engaging in actions beyond the normal
726 boundaries of these roles. This concept of dyadic adjustments between PACs in their social
727 network has been similarly and previously highlighted by Jowett and Timson-Katchis (2005)
728 in youth swimming.

729 In sum, the results of this study illustrate some of the structural and systematic
730 dynamics that operate within PAC triads in youth tennis (see Siltaloppi & Vargo, 2017). This
731 includes the way individuals mediate the relationships between others in the triad (e.g.,

732 coaches providing parents with guidance to better support their child at tournaments). It also
733 includes how PACs work together as a whole system (i.e., as a ‘coalition’) to bring a sense of
734 stability and coordination to the triad (e.g., adjusting roles to the needs and circumstances of
735 the triad to achieve mutual goals).

736 **Practical Implications**

737 Several implications for applied researchers and practitioners are worth sharing from
738 this study. Firstly, given that team effectiveness and relationship quality may provide the
739 conditions underpinning triadic satisfaction and athlete development, we must look beyond
740 dyadic relationships and consider implementing team-focused approaches via small group
741 principles. The positive impact of team building exercises on promoting teamwork
742 behaviours (e.g., setting shared goals), cohesion, and social relationships (e.g., Beauchamp et
743 al., 2017) provides a beneficial starting point for this suggestion.

744 Secondly, at a sport organisational level, there is a need to position the salience of the
745 PAC triad within current parent support and coach development programs. Presently, parent
746 support programs place singular attention on helping parents cope with the demands of youth
747 sport and improve parental involvement (see Burke et al., 2021), whilst training and guidance
748 for coaches around working with parents **are** often limited to unreliable sources of
749 information (e.g., internet sources) rather than evidence-based initiatives (e.g., peer-reviewed
750 journal articles) (Horne et al., 2022). Relevant programme content may include greater
751 attention to interpersonal behaviours and relational strategies to help parents and coaches
752 optimise their triadic roles and resolve social-related issues. For example, following learning
753 resources tailored to coaches and parents (and athletes, as appropriate) about relationship
754 management, subsequent ‘joint’ workshops or webinars with coaches and parents together
755 may facilitate active engagement in the social processes that enable them to evaluate, adjust,
756 and optimise their involvement within sport (Horne et al., 2022). **Further consideration may**

757 also be given to integrating scheduled opportunities (e.g., bi-monthly review/check-ins) for
758 parents, coaches, and athletes to discuss their relationships and interact in a supportive,
759 communicative, and collaborative manner.

760 **Future Research Recommendations**

761 The strengths of the present study should be considered against its limitations. First,
762 although an effort was made to secure triads where fathers were the primary parental figure
763 within the triad, mothers emerged exclusively as the parental figure for each of the cases.
764 Therefore, future research should consider how fathers, acting as the primary parent,
765 influence the processes and qualities in the PAC triad given key differences can exist between
766 mothers and fathers in their relationships with others (e.g., Dorsch et al., 2016). As
767 knowledge in this area grows, future individual case studies may also investigate more
768 complicated social network systems which comprise other social actors (e.g., other family
769 members and peers).

770 Additionally, the self-selecting nature of the recruitment procedures in this study meant
771 that the cohort of PAC triads in this study functioned more positively rather than negatively.
772 As such, it is important for scholars to investigate whether a paucity or deficit of the
773 relationship and team-based constructs identified in this study characterise less stable and ‘at
774 risk’ triads. For example, the themes identified in the present study may align with the
775 preventative and proactive behaviours that promote functional, collaborative outcomes rather
776 than conflict and dysfunction (Wachsmuth et al., 2018). To add to this point, while features
777 and processes of the parent-athlete relationship contributed to our understanding of triadic
778 functioning, the salience of parent-coach and coach-athlete relationships in the triad appeared
779 to emerge more prominently. We believe that such a finding may relate to the pre-existing
780 closeness, health and stability of parent-athlete relationships in these specific cases, whereby
781 the natural and goal-related focus of triadic members’ attentions centred upon establishing

PAC TRIADS IN YOUTH TENNIS

782 high-quality coach-athlete and parent-coach relationships to facilitate the athlete's tennis
783 development. Hence, with careful sampling criteria, it would be interesting to investigate
784 whether the underpinning quality and salience of the parent-athlete relationship is magnified
785 **and emerges more** in less stable, problematic, or 'at risk' triads, where more negative
786 interactions between parents and athletes compromise triadic functioning compared to the
787 other dyads in the system.

788 In conclusion, the current study has illustrated some of the foundational qualities and
789 enabling factors that operate between PACs within organised youth tennis. It is hoped that
790 these findings can spur researchers into studying intact triads within other youth sport settings
791 and invigorate practitioners and sport organisations towards more tailored and team-based
792 support to parents, coaches and athletes.

793
794
795
796
797
798
799
800
801
802
803
804
805
806
807
808
809
810
811
812
813
814
815
816

References

Beauchamp, M. R., McEwan, D., & Waldhauser, K. J. (2017). Team building: Conceptual, methodological and applied considerations. *Current Opinion in Psychology, 16*, 114-117. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.copsyc.2017.02.031>

Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2019). Reflecting on reflexive thematic analysis. *Qualitative Research in Sport, Exercise and Health, 11*, 589-597. <https://doi.org/10.1080/2159676x.2019.1628806>

Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2021). One size fits all? What counts as quality practice in (reflexive) thematic analysis? *Qualitative Research in Psychology, 18*, 328-352. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14780887.2020.1769238>

Bravington, A., & King, N. (2019). Putting graphic elicitation into practice: Tools and typologies for the use of participant-led diagrams in qualitative research interviews. *Qualitative Research, 19*, 506-523. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1468794118781718>

Burke, S., Sharp, L-A., Woods, D., & Paradis, K. F. (2021). Enhancing parental support through parent-education programs in youth sport: A systematic review. *International Review of Sport and Exercise Psychology, 1*-28. <https://doi.org/10.1080/1750984X.2021.1992793>

Côté, J. (1999). The influence of the family in the development of talent in Sport. *The Sport Psychologist, 13*, 395-417. <https://doi.org/10.1123/tsp.13.4.395>

Creswell, J. W. (2013). *Qualitative inquiry and research design: Choosing among five approaches* (3rd ed.). Sage Publications, Inc.

Day, M. C., & Wadey, R. (2016). Narratives of trauma, recovery and growth: The complex role of sport following permanent acquired disability. *Psychology of Sport and Exercise, 22*, 131-138. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.psychsport.2015.07.004>

PAC TRIADS IN YOUTH TENNIS

- 817 Dewey, J. (2008). Logic: The theory of inquiry. In J. Boydston (Ed.), *The later works of John*
818 *Dewey*, (Vol 12). Southern Illinois University Press.
- 819 Dorsch, T. E., Smith, A. L., Blazo, J. A., Coakley, J., Côté, Wagstaff, C. R. D., Warner, S., &
820 King, M. Q. (2022). Toward an integrated understanding of the youth sport system.
821 *Research Quarterly for Exercise and Sport*, 93(1), 105-119.
822 <https://doi.org/10.1080/02701367.2020.1810847>
- 823 Dorsch, T. E., Smith, A. L., & Dotterer, A. M. (2016). Individual, relationship and context
824 factors associated with parent support and pressure in organized youth sport.
825 *Psychology of Sport and Exercise*, 23, 132-141.
826 <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.psychsport.2015.12.003>
- 827 Dorsch, T. E., Wilson, S. R., & McDonough, M. H. (2015). Parent goals and verbal sideline
828 verbal behavior in organized youth sport. *Sport, Exercise and Performance*
829 *Psychology*, 4(1), 19-35. <https://doi/10.1037/spy0000025>
- 830 Fargas-Malet, M., McSherry, D., Larkin, E., & Robinson, C. (2010). Research with children:
831 Methodological issues and innovative techniques. *Journal of Early Childhood*
832 *Research*, 8, 175-192. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1476718x09345412>
- 833 Gardner, L. A., Magee, C. A., & Vella, S. A. (2017). Enjoyment and behavioral intention
834 predict organized youth sport participation and dropout. *Journal of Physical Activity*
835 *and Health*, 14, 861-865. <https://doi.org/10.1123/jpah.2016-0572>
- 836 Gould, D., Lauer, L., Rolo, C., Jannes, C., & Pennisi, N. (2008). The role of parents in tennis
837 success: Focus group interviews with junior coaches. *The Sport Psychologist*, 22(1), 18-
838 37. <https://doi.org/10.1123/tsp.22.1.18>
- 839 Gould, D., Pierce, S., Wright, E. M., Lauer, L., & Nalepa, J. (2016). Examining expert coaches'
840 views of parent roles in 10-and-under tennis. *Sport, Exercise, and Performance*
841 *Psychology*, 5(2), 89-106. <https://doi.org/10.1037/spy0000050>

- 842 Harwood, C. G., & Knight, C. J. (2015). Parenting in youth sport: A position paper on
 843 parenting expertise. *Psychology of Sport and Exercise, 16*, 24-35.
 844 <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.psychsport.2014.03.001>
- 845 Harwood, C., & Knight, C. (2009). Understanding parental stressors: An investigation of
 846 British tennis parents. *Journal of Sports Sciences, 27*, 339-351.
 847 <https://doi.org/10.1080/02640410802603871>
- 848 Hellstedt, J. C. (1987). The coach/parent/athlete relationship. *The Sport Psychologist, 1*(2),
 849 151-160. <https://doi.org/10.1123/tsp.1.2.151>
- 850 Hodge, K., & Sharp, L. (2016). *Case studies*. In B. Smith and A.C. Sparkes (Eds.), *Routledge*
 851 *handbook of qualitative research in sport and exercise* (pp. 355-367). Routledge.
- 852 Horne, E., Lower-Hoppe, L., & Green, C. (2022). Co-creation in youth sport development:
 853 Examining (mis)alignment between coaches and parents. *Sport Management Review,*
 854 *26*(2), 271-292. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14413523.2022.2050107>
- 855 Horne, E., Woolf, J., & Green, C. (2020). Relationship dynamics between parents and
 856 coaches: Are they failing young athletes? *Managing Sport and Leisure, 27*(3), 224-
 857 240. <https://doi.org/10.1080/23750472.2020.1779114>
- 858 Jackman, P. C., Crust, L., & Swann, C. (2017). Systematically comparing methods used to
 859 study flow in sport: A longitudinal multiple-case study. *Psychology of Sport and*
 860 *Exercise, 32*, 113-123. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.psychsport.2017.06.009>
- 861 Jowett, S. (2017). Coaching effectiveness: The coach–athlete relationship at its heart. *Current*
 862 *Opinion in Psychology, 16*, 154-158. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.copsyc.2017.05.006>
- 863 Jowett, S., Adie, J. W., Bartholomew, K. J., Yang, S. X., Gustafsson, H., & Lopez-Jiménez, A.
 864 (2017). Motivational processes in the coach-athlete relationship: A multi-cultural self-
 865 determination approach. *Psychology of Sport and Exercise, 32*, 143-152.
 866 <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.psychsport.2017.06.004>

PAC TRIADS IN YOUTH TENNIS

- 867 Jowett, S., & Nezlek, J. (2012). Relationship interdependence and satisfaction with important
868 outcomes in coach–athlete dyads. *Journal of Social and Personal Relationships*, 29, 287-
869 301. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0265407511420980>
- 870 Jowett, S., & Timson-Katchis, M. (2005). Social networks in sport: Parental influence on the
871 coach-athlete relationship. *The Sport Psychologist*, 19, 267-287.
872 <https://doi.org/10.1123/tsp.19.3.267>
- 873 Knight, C. J., & Holt, N. L. (2014). Parenting in youth tennis: Understanding and enhancing
874 children’s experiences. *Psychology of Sport and Exercise*, 15(2), 155-164.
875 <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.psychsport.2013.10.010>
- 876 Knight, C. J., Dorsch, T. E., Osai, K. V., Haderlie, K. L., & Sellars, P. A. (2016). Influences on
877 parental involvement in youth sport. *Sport, Exercise and Performance Psychology*, 5(2),
878 161-178. <https://doi.org/10.1037/spy0000053>
- 879 Lauer, L., Gould, D., Roman, N., & Pierce, M. (2010). Parental behaviors that affect junior
880 tennis player development. *Psychology of Sport and Exercise*, 11(6), 487-496.
881 <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.psychsport.2010.06.008>
- 882 Lisinskiene, A., May, E., & Lochbaum, M. (2019). The initial questionnaire development in
883 measuring of coach-athlete–parent interpersonal relationships: Results of two
884 qualitative investigations. *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public
885 Health*, 16(13), 2283-2283. <https://doi.org/10.3390/ijerph16132283>
- 886 Maurice, J., Devonport, T. J., & Knight, C. J. (2021). Toward improved triadic functioning:
887 Exploring the interactions and adaptations of coaches, parents and athletes in
888 professional academy soccer through the adversity of COVID-19. *Frontiers in
889 Psychology*, 12, 1-17. <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2021.609631>

- 890 McEwan, D., & Beauchamp, M. R., (2014). Teamwork in sport: A theoretical and integrative
 891 review. *International Review of Sport and Exercise Psychology*, 7(1), 229-250.
 892 <https://doi.org/10.1080/1750984X.2014.932423>
- 893 O'Donnell, K., Elliott, S. K., & Drummond, M. J. (2022). Exploring parent and coach
 894 relationships in youth sport: A qualitative study. *Qualitative Research in Sport,
 895 Exercise and Health*. 14(7), 1023-1044.
 896 <https://doi.org/10.1080/2159676X.2022.2048060>
- 897 Patton, M. Q. (2015). *Qualitative research and evaluation methods* (4th ed.). Sage
 898 Publications, Inc.
- 899 Poucher, Z. A., Tamminen, K. A., Caron, J. G., & Sweet, S. N. (2019). Thinking through and
 900 designing qualitative research studies: A focused mapping review of 30 years of
 901 qualitative research in sport psychology. *International Review of Sport and Exercise
 902 Psychology*, 13(1), 163-186. <https://doi.org/10.1080/1750984x.2019.1656276>
- 903 Preston, C., Allan, V., Wolman, L., & Fraser-Thomas, J. (2020). The coach–parent relationship
 904 and athlete development in elite youth hockey: Lessons learned for conflict
 905 management. *The Sport Psychologist*, 34(2), 143-152. [https://doi.org/10.1123/tsp.2019-
 906 0130](https://doi.org/10.1123/tsp.2019-0130)
- 907 Pynn, S. R., Dunn, J. G. H., & Holt, N. L. (2019). A qualitative study of exemplary parenting in
 908 competitive female youth team sport. *Sport, Exercise and Performance Psychology*,
 909 8(2), 163-178. <https://doi.org/10.1037/spy0000141>
- 910 Ryan, R. M., & Deci, E. L. (2002). Overview of self-determination theory: An organismic
 911 dialectical perspective. In E. L. Deci & R. M. Ryan (Eds.), *Handbook of self-
 912 determination research* (pp. 3–33). University of Rochester Press.
- 913 Schweickle, M. J., Swann, C., & Vella, S. A. (2023). Objective and subjective performance
 914 indicators of clutch performance in basketball: A mixed-methods multiple case study.

PAC TRIADS IN YOUTH TENNIS

- 915 *Journal of Applied Sport Psychology*, 35(2), 155-177.
- 916 <https://doi.org/10.1080/10413200.2021.1998805>
- 917 Sheridan, D., Coffee, P., & Lavallee, D. (2014). A systematic review of social support in youth
918 sport. *International Review of Sport and Exercise Psychology*, 7(1), 198-228.
- 919 <https://doi.org/10.1080/1750984X.2014.931999>
- 920 Siltaloppi, J., & Vargo, S. L. (2017). Triads: A review and analytical framework. *Marketing*
921 *Theory*, 17(4), 395-414. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1470593117705694>
- 922 Simons, H. (2009). *Case study research in practice* (1st ed.). Sage Publications, Inc.
- 923 Smith, B., Caddick, N., & Williams, T. (2015). Qualitative methods and conceptual advances in
924 sport psychology. In S. D. Mellalieu & S. Hanton (Eds.), *Contemporary advances in*
925 *sport psychology: A review* (pp. 202–225). Routledge/Taylor & Francis.
- 926 Smith, B., & McGannon, K. R. (2018). Developing rigor in qualitative research: Problems and
927 opportunities within sport and exercise psychology. *International Review of Sport and*
928 *Exercise Psychology*, 11(1), 101-121. <https://doi.org/10.1080/1750984X.2017.1317357>
- 929 Smith, B., & Sparkes, A. C. (2020). Qualitative research. In G. Tenenbaum & R.C. Eklund
930 (Eds), *Handbook of sport psychology* (4th ed., pp. 999-1019). Wiley.
- 931 Sprecher, S., Felmlee, D., Orbuch, T.L., & Willets, M.C. (2002). Social networks and change in
932 personal relationships. In A. Vangelisti, H. Reis, & M.A. Fitzpatrick (Eds.), *Stability*
933 *and change in relationships*, (pp. 257-284). Cambridge University Press.
- 934 Stake, R. E. (2006). *Multiple case study analysis*. The Guildford Press.
- 935 Thrower, S. N., Harwood, C. G., & Spray, C. M. (2016). Educating and supporting tennis
936 parents: A grounded theory of parents' needs during childhood and early adolescence.
937 *Sport, Exercise and Performance Psychology*, 5(2), 107-124.
- 938 <https://doi.org/10.1037/spy0000054>

PAC TRIADS IN YOUTH TENNIS

- 939 VanWynsbergh, R., & Kahn, S. (2007). Redefining case study. *International Journal of*
940 *Qualitative Methods*, 6(2), 80-94. <https://doi.org/10.1177%2F160940690700600208>
- 941 Wachsmuth, S., Jowett, S., & Harwood, C. G. (2018). On understanding the nature of
942 interpersonal conflict between coaches and athletes. *Journal of Sports Sciences*, 36(17),
943 1955-1962. <https://doi.org/10.1080/02640414.2018.1428882>
- 944 Wall, J. M., Baugh, L. M., Pradhan, K., Beauchamp, M. R., Marshall, S. K., & Young, R. A.
945 (2019). The coach-parent relationship in Canadian competitive figure skating: An
946 interpretive description. *Psychology of Sport and Exercise*, 45, 1-10.
947 <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.psychsport.2019.101577>
- 948 Wuerth, S., Lee, M., & Alfermann, D. (2004). Parental involvement and athletes' career in
949 youth sport. *Psychology of Sport and Exercise*, 5(1), 21-33.
950 [https://doi.org/10.1016/s1469-0292\(02\)00047-x](https://doi.org/10.1016/s1469-0292(02)00047-x)

Table 1*Demographic Description of Cases*

Stage	Case (T)	Pseudonym	Role	Gender	Age	Nationality/ Ethnicity	Experience in Role (Years)	Level
U10s	1	Heather	Parent	Female	38	British/White	3	n/a
		Jessica	Athlete	Female	8	British/White	5	County
		Beth	Athlete	Female	10	British/White	7	County
		Kate	Coach	Female	27	British/White	10	Performance
	2	Sarah	Parent	Female	42	German/White	4	n/a
		Liam	Athlete	Male	10	German/White	4	National
Ben		Coach	Male	47	British/White	28	Performance	
U12s	3	Mary	Parent	Female	41	British/White	6	n/a
		Tom	Athlete	Male	10	British/White	6	County
		Lucy	Coach	Female	46	British/White	20	Performance
		Jack	Coach	Male	55	British/White	30	Performance
	4	Molly	Parent	Female	48	Irish/White	8.5	n/a
		Paul	Athlete	Male	11	British/White	8.5	County
		Mark	Coach	Male	48	British/White	28	Performance
	5	Caroline	Parent	Female	46	Chinese	4	n/a
		Lisa	Athlete	Female	10	Chinese/White	4	County
		Charlotte	Coach	Female	24	British/White	6	Performance
	6	Alice	Parent	Female	50	British/White	12	n/a
		Olivia	Athlete	Female	11	British/White	8	National
Isabelle		Coach	Female	56	Canadian/White	37	Performance	
U18s	7	Sophie	Parent	Female	52	British/White	13	n/a
		George	Athlete	Male	16	British/White	13	National
		Michael	Coach	Male	42	British/White	21	Performance
	8	Holly	Parent	Female	51	Japanese/Asian	10	n/a
		Amelia	Athlete	Female	13	British/Japanese/White/Asian	7	Regional
		Josh	Coach	Male	41	British/White	16	Performance
	9	Emma	Parent	Female	51	British/White	14	n/a
		Stephen	Athlete	Male	15	British/French/White	12	Regional
		Richard	Coach	Male	49	British/White	23	Performance

PAC TRIADS IN YOUTH TENNIS

Table 1

Summary Illustrations of Themes and Sub-Themes Within Each Triadic Case

Case	Foundations of Relationship Quality	Factors Enabling Team Effectiveness
1 Heather, Jessica, Beth and Kate	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There was a high degree of trust and respect in this triad because Heather (Parent), Jessica and Beth (Athletes) saw Kate (Coach) as a positive role model and someone they admired as a result of Kate's tennis playing history. However, this meant that Beth felt pressured to perform well at times (<i>Respecting Members' Contributions</i>). • Because Kate (Coach) was responsible for coaching both of Heather's (Parent) daughters, there was a greater sense of trust needed between Kate and Heather (<i>Trusting Each Member's Ability</i>). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The exchange of support and communication between participants in this triad was particularly important to its functioning. This was because Heather (Parent) was new to tennis and lacked experience (e.g., equipment and tournament selection), whilst Kate's (Coach) relationships with Jessica and Beth (Athletes) were in the early stages of development (e.g., needed context about the athletes' personalities and lives) (<i>Being Open to Offering and Receiving Role-Specific Communication</i>). • Collaboration in this triad was high because both Heather (Parent) and Kate (Coach) shared the same goals and values (i.e., long-term development, life-skill development, and enjoyment) (<i>Shared Goals for the Triad</i>).
2 Sarah, Liam and Ben	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Because of Ben's (Coach) highly regarded reputation and experience in tennis, both Sarah (Parent) and Liam (Athlete) respected him and his ability to coach (although this meant that Liam felt more pressure to perform well at tournaments if Ben was there). Nevertheless, this helped clarify what was expected of each member in the triad and establish boundaries that each member respected and could be measured against (<i>Respecting Members' Contributions</i>). Sarah also saw Ben as a "family friend" and a "tennis dad" because of his commitment to Liam and his tennis (<i>Parent-Coach Proximity</i>). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support in this triad was largely unilateral with Ben (Coach) providing a high degree of support to Sarah (Parent) and Liam (Athlete). This was because Sarah was enthusiastic and committed to Liam's development but relatively inexperienced so frequently sought reassurance and guidance from Ben (<i>Providing Support to Negotiate the Challenges of Tennis</i>).
3 Mary, Tom, Lucy and Jack	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The basis for the teamwork and communication between the triad as a whole was established from the nurturing connection Lucy and Jack (Coaches) had managed to create with Tom (Athlete). This was important for Mary (Parent) to see because it rebuilt Tom's confidence and made it easier for Mary to trust them with her son's development (<i>Trusting Each Member's Ability</i>). • Because Tom respected both of his coaches, he often felt pressured to perform well (<i>Respecting Members' Contributions</i>). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • As Tom was a U12 athlete, Mary (Parent), Lucy and Jack (Coaches) agreed that it was important to give Tom more accountability so Mary could take more of a step back and allow Tom to manage his own tennis experiences (although this presented a challenge to Mary who was very involved and invested in Tom's tennis) (<i>Collaborative and Adjusted Roles Within the Triad</i>).

PAC TRIADS IN YOUTH TENNIS

Case	Foundations of Relationship Quality	Factors Enabling Team Effectiveness
<p>4</p> <p>Molly, Paul and Mark</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Molly (Parent) and Mark (Coach) saw each other as friends because Molly volunteered at the tennis club where Mark worked and therefore, they saw each other frequently to be able to talk about non-tennis topics that allowed them to get to know each other as people. As Paul (Athlete) described, they talk “non-stop. I like that they have been talking a lot more about ways to help me mentally” (<i>Parent-Coach Proximity</i>). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> For Molly (Parent), it was important that she felt she and Paul (Athlete) could “knock on Mark’s (Coach) door” at any point should they feel they needed it. This facilitated trust and respect between the members of this triad which allowed them to define their roles and responsibilities within the triad (<i>Being Open to Offering and Receiving Role-Specific Communication</i>).
<p>5</p> <p>Caroline, Lisa and Charlotte</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Caroline (Parent) and Charlotte (Coach) both felt they had an open and relaxed friendship between them. This encompassed being able to talk about non-tennis topics, feeling comfortable in each other’s presence, and celebrating birthdays together. In doing so, Lisa (Athlete) was able to discuss non-tennis topics and share information about her personal interests and events with Charlotte because she felt Caroline and Charlotte were friends (<i>Parent-Coach Proximity</i>). Trust and respect in this triad were also high as each member appreciated the role each other played within the triad (<i>Trusting Each Member’s Ability/Respecting Members’ Contributions</i>). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Caroline’s (Parent) depiction of the triad was very much focused on ensuring the coach-athlete relationship between Charlotte (Coach) and Lisa (Athlete) was as strong as possible. To do this, Caroline allowed Lisa to call Charlotte on her phone and encouraged Lisa to seek information from Charlotte rather than herself (<i>Collaborative and Adjusted Roles Within the Triad</i>). The triad also had a very clear focus on Lisa’s (Athlete) holistic development (e.g., building self-esteem and resilience) (<i>Shared Goals for the Triad</i>).
<p>6</p> <p>Alice, Olivia and Isabelle</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> As Isabelle (Coach) had been coaching Olivia (Athlete) since she was 4 years old, participants felt that everyone was equally committed to developing relationships that benefited the triad because they showed genuine interest and care in each other as stakeholders and as people. (<i>Commitment to the Relationship</i>). As a result, participants had more respect for what each member could bring to the triad and trusted each other to deliver on these expectations (<i>Trusting Each Member’s Ability / Respecting Members’ Contributions</i>). Participants also considered Alice (Parent) and Isabelle (Coach) to be friends in this triad which helped to build positive and strong relationships across the triad (<i>Parent-Coach Proximity</i>). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Even though the triad decided to bring in another coach to help support Olivia’s (Athlete) development, there was still a sense of teamwork that everyone (including Isabelle) was working together to support Olivia’s development (<i>Collaborative and Adjusted Roles Within the Triad</i>). Participants shared instances where the collaboration between Alice (Parent) and Isabelle (Coach) allowed them to resolve a problem with Olivia’s (Athlete) match play (i.e., all sharing the same information with Olivia was seen as a “team effort”) (<i>Collaborative and Adjusted Roles Within the Triad</i>).

PAC TRIADS IN YOUTH TENNIS

Case	Foundations of Relationship Quality	Factors Enabling Team Effectiveness
7 Sophie, George and Michael	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sophie (Parent) and Michael (Coach) demonstrated <i>care-based commitment</i> and <i>parent-coach proximity</i> by scheduling time to get to know each other as people. This allowed each other to be sympathetic to the challenges going on in each other's lives in an efficient way that didn't detract from George's (Athlete) time with Michael. However, Michael highlighted the need for him to fulfil his contractual commitments to ensure they continued to have a positive relationship/triad (<i>Commitment to the Relationship</i>). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Comparative to some of the other triads in this study, George (Athlete) took more responsibility for his development by determining what he wanted to get out of training sessions and the competitions he wanted to play (<i>Collaborative and Adjusted Roles Within the Triad</i>). Sophie (Parent) was supported by George (Athlete) when he provided clear thoughts about what he wanted to do regarding his tennis and what he expected from her as a parent (these conversations primarily occurred in the car) (<i>Providing Support to Negotiate the Challenges of Tennis</i>).
8 Holly, Amelia and Josh	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Holly's (Parent) commitment to Josh (Coach) stemmed from Amelia's (Athlete) desire to be coached by Josh whom she had seen and respected at the tennis club (<i>Commitment to the Relationship</i>). Unlike some of the other triads, Amelia (Athlete) believed communication between Holly (Parent) and Josh (Coach) was only needed to ensure the triad was on the same page and understood their roles (<i>Parent-Coach Proximity</i>). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The use of a WhatsApp group between all three members of the triad allowed each member to communicate and feel connected to each other in between training sessions. It also allowed Amelia (Athlete) to see everyone working together towards her tennis so she felt supported and encouraged. Open communication online allowed Josh (Coach) to get both Holly's (Parent) and Amelia's perspectives on tournaments which he valued equally. As English was Holly's second language, online messages allowed the triad to clarify shared goals, reflections, and feedback (<i>Being Open to Offering and Receiving Role-Specific Communication</i>).
9 Emma, Stephen and Richard	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The emotional proximity between Emma (Parent) and Richard (Coach) was still important to the functioning of this triad even when Stephen (Athlete) gained more control of his tennis, and did not feel that Emma was heavily involved in his tennis (other than as a support mechanism when needed). The trust and respect in the triad were further enhanced because Emma worked at the same tennis club as Richard and he had coached Emma's daughter <i>before</i> coaching Stephen. As a result, they had a long-standing 10-year relationship (<i>Parent-Coach Proximity</i>). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> This triad had a very clear set of principles that participants agreed upon and followed. This largely centred around ensuring Stephen (Athlete) was developing the life skills needed to be a positive functioning player inside tennis and a person outside of tennis. This was facilitated because Emma (Parent) and Richard (Coach) both felt they were compatible in terms of their values and beliefs in tennis, and Stephen understood and accepted the importance of these beliefs to his development (<i>Shared Goals for the Triad</i>).

Note. The sub-theme that each summary relates to is specified in italics within brackets next to each point.

PAC TRIADS IN YOUTH TENNIS

Figure 1

Example of U10s Athlete Pre-Interview Task

