

# **Being-on-the-Bench: An Existential Analysis of the Substitute in Sport**

## **Abstract**

Being a substitute in sport appears to contradict the rationale behind being involved in that sport, especially in those sports whereby substitutes frequently remain unused or are brought on to the field of play for the final moments of that game. For the coach or manager, substitutes function as a way to improve the team achieving a particular end, namely to win the game; whether to replace an injured or tired player, to change a team's structure or tactics, to complete a specialised manoeuvre (such as goal kicking in American football or a short corner in hockey), or to run down the clock. Whether a substitute is afforded an opportunity of playing the game appears to be directed by others; arguably if one had a choice in the matter one would choose to be on the field of play rather than off it. Nevertheless, the Existentialist position is that our situation is always inexorably one that is freely chosen. To argue that one has not freely chosen one's position is to be 'inauthentic'. Furthermore, to conceptualise one's manifestation and to be treated by others as a thing 'in-itself' – such as *a substitute* - is to fall into 'bad faith'. Culbertson (1) has already argued that elite competitive sport is an arena which promotes rather than avoids bad faith due to its constituent factors. Culbertson's frame of reference primarily applied to sporting events that involve individuals competing in co-active, parallel competition - such as athletics, swimming or weightlifting - whereby bad faith is generated via a tacit acceptance of ever-improving and quantifiable performance. The purpose of this paper is a continuation of such an enquiry but with a redirection of focus away from parallel competition by

individuals, towards team competitions which are, by nature, less concerned with an unremitting contest against time, distance or some other measurable concept. This paper sets out to examine the nature of the substitute in sport, who appears to be equally liable to find herself being 'inauthentic' and/or in 'bad-faith'. It attempts to consider the nature of these concepts and offer direction as to how substitutes can attempt to realize the Existential ideal.

### **Abstract Ends**

Being 'authentic' and avoiding 'bad faith' is something that Existentialists, such as Sartre, have maintained (if not necessarily advocated) as a state of affairs that is desirable. Culbertson (1) has already argued that elite competitive sport is an arena which promotes rather than avoids bad faith due to its constituent factors. Culbertson's frame of reference primarily applied to sporting events that involve individuals competing in co-active, parallel competition - such as athletics, swimming or weightlifting - whereby bad faith is generated via a tacit acceptance of ever-improving and quantifiable performance. The purpose of this paper is a continuation of such an enquiry but with a redirection of focus away from parallel competition by individuals, towards team competitions which are, by nature, less concerned with an unremitting contest against time, distance or some other measurable concept. Whereas Culbertson's primary claim focused upon the bad faith that arises when an athlete emphasizes his/her transcendence (the possibility that one's being is limitless) whilst ignoring his/her facticity (the human condition), the focus of this study is the equivalent manifestation of bad faith: a stress of one's facticity over one's transcendence. Particular consideration is given to the unique role of the substitute within team sports. It is this

position that appears, at initial inspection, to provide the greatest environment to be both inauthentic; for the substitute's situation is arguably one that is not freely chosen, and also in bad faith; in the acceptance that one *is* a 'substitute' where one's fate (to play or not to play) is decided by others. The question to be addressed is whether being a sporting substitute inherently involves a similar likelihood of being in bad faith in comparison to a starting player or a competitor in an individual-based event, or whether it provides an avenue whereby such a position can be avoided.

### **Being a Substitute in Sport**

Being named a substitute for a sports match can be argued to be antithetical to one's aim, namely to play that sport. A substitute is something that takes the place of an 'other' but continues to provide the same function. In sport, it is a person who stands-in-reserve<sup>1</sup> for another competitor during a game, to replace that competitor according to the rules of that game. Substitutions are made for a variety of reasons: to replace an injured or tired player; to change a team's structure or tactics; to complete a specialised manoeuvre (such as goal kicking in American football or a short corner in hockey); or to run down the clock. Most team sports allow for substitutions to be made although the rules vary between sports as to their timing and frequency.<sup>2</sup> For example, many team sports such as association football, rugby union and rugby league allow for several substitutions to be made during the course of a game. However, unlike sports such as American football, basketball, volleyball, netball and field hockey where substitutions can be rotated throughout the game, in these former instances it is not uncommon for some substitutions to remain unused. The sport that most exemplifies this standing-in-reserve of the substitute is cricket where the 'twelfth man' can feasibly spend five days

on the bench only appearing on the field of play to bring on drinks. This person can only be used if a player on the pitch is injured, and then there are strict rules as to how much the substitution can participate in the game, i.e. not bowling, batting, or keeping wicket.<sup>3</sup> Additionally, it was only recently that tactical substitutions could be made for non-injured players in rugby union. It is on such sports - where the substitute can remain so for the entire duration of the game - that this paper focuses. In this context, the position of substitute is arguably one which encourages inauthenticity – that is; a rejection that one’s position is of one’s own choosing, as one joins a team or club to *play* the sport. Paradoxically, a substitute may become a spectator rather than a competitor if he/she remains unused. Even if we concede that there are members of sports teams who simply enjoy training and the added benefits that it gives, whether to keep fit, meet new people or enjoy other social aspects, it would seem prudent to maintain that the vast majority of people that join sports teams do so in order to play that sport. Yet, the person who is told by the coach, manager or captain that this weekend he/she is on the bench (but whose desire is to be on the field of play) is at risk of being inauthentic if he/she does not accept that the role of substitute is one that is freely chosen.<sup>4</sup>

To complain that one is on the bench for the forthcoming match exemplifies inauthenticity. Nevertheless, the substitute would undoubtedly argue that being on the bench was not a choice that they made. As suggested, if one was able to make a decision on the matter, presumably one would choose to be on the pitch rather than be on the bench. The freedom to choose whether to be a starting player is one made by others, not by the player himself/herself. The Existentialist, who insists that to deny that one is free to choose one’s actions is to be inauthentic, can be criticised for creating a false picture of the way the world works. Such critics argue that we are not free to

choose; freedom is limited in many aspects of life. The laws of nature prevent us from choosing to jump over the Great Wall of China or walk across the Atlantic Ocean. Yet the Existentialist would retort that although such actions are physically impossible we can still choose to do them – it is simply that we will fail to carry out these choices. Nonetheless these types of physical constraints appear to be fundamentally different from a situation where other autonomous beings are preventing one's choice to do something that one would otherwise be able to do; that is, to play a sport. One might interject here and argue that being on the bench is of no significance or notable interest for there are many aspects of our life whereby we are constrained from acting freely. The laws of society, for instance, oblige us to drive on a particular side of the road. Nevertheless, it seems that the role of the substitute, and particularly the role of the unused substitute, is of significance due to its reason for being. Legal laws exist for prudential and paternalistic reasons; for if one were to drive on any side of the road that one freely chooses it would have a detrimental effect on human life. These laws exist to safeguard particular values and rights. In contrast, the role of the substitute is a purely arbitrary one comparable with the constitutive rules of sport; it simply allows the game to be played, or in the case of substitution, allows the game to continue to be played; where each team is seen as having equal advantage (i.e. the same number of players on the field of play). Though there may be practical constraints on how many players can feasibly be on the field of play at any one time, the final number is an arbitrary agreement. From this then, though it can be argued that we are constrained from acting freely in many aspects of life, it appears that the constraints placed upon a substitute is of particular interest as one is being denied from participating in a game on arbitrary grounds. The fact that the constitutive rules of that sport dictate how many players make up a team is not because any more players may be harmful or damaging to the

well-being of individuals, but for reasons of fairness and equity.

For the Existentialist, the substitute suffers from self-deception in insisting that he/she did not freely choose to sit on the bench; he/she is being inauthentic in such a denial. Arguably one is not forced to sit on the bench: one could refuse, or, as frequently happens in these cases, one could leave to join another team where one's skills and talents are required on the pitch rather than on the sideline. Moreover, a player who freely chooses to sit on the bench and watch from the sidelines is not the kind of player that a coach or manager would want. Such players would be viewed as lacking hunger for the game and the desire to work for a starting position.

This highlights what seems to be an acute paradox in Existential freedom. On the one hand, there is an extent in which we are not free, we are born in a particular place at a particular time, and the position that we occupy in being human (in being conscious and self-conscious and finding ourselves 'thrown' into the world) gives rise to having thoughts and attitudes that are inherent in such a position. On the other hand, the Existentialist maintains that we are free to choose who we are and who we will be in the future; the possibilities of being allow for continuous (re)creation. One attempt to overcome this paradox lies in making the distinction between the active and the passive: between choosing to do things, and letting things happen. Understanding freedom centres upon this ability to be active, to seize the power to determine who we are and how we act. The Existentialist would maintain that it is only *because* there are boundaries to the things we can and cannot do that allows freedom to exist at all; without these limits we would cease to be (human) at all. Freedom does not mean that anything can happen but is dependent on accepting that there is *always* a choice to be made between one thing and another. Sole focus of one of these aspects, whilst ignoring the other, is an exemplification of bad faith. Being in bad faith involves a self-deception

that we are not wholly responsible for the person that we create. It is to reject one's unique position (i.e. human) as a being of both facticity and transcendence; that one is at the same time a 'thing' in the world that exists in a particular time with a particular form, whilst additionally possessing an ability to project one's being into a future time or possible situation and in a sense existing outside one's facticity. Being in bad faith involves ascribing a label to oneself that implies one's existence is fixed and binding, which determines the way that one is or the way one behaves. It is to reject the nature of one's being as something that is continually being created and recreated without reference to an essence or way that one *has* to be. If there can be said to be anything called human nature, it is a nature of freedom whereby there is always an alternative course of action or way of being. As Sartre argued,

We say indifferently of a person that he shows signs of bad faith or that he lies to himself. We shall willingly grant that bad faith is a lie to oneself... The essence of the lie implies in fact that the liar actually is in complete possession of the truth which he is hiding. (5: p71)

Sartre's judgement is not a moral one but one that illustrates a false belief or error. In contrast to such self-deception, Sartre insists that those in good faith are those whose ultimate desire is the quest for freedom. It is an acceptance of this freedom in one's actions and behaviour that leads to authenticity. Essentially, the distinction that can be made between bad faith and authenticity is that bad faith involves either a concentration on one's transcendence whilst ignoring one's facticity (as in the case of an athlete's belief in the possibility of continual improvement in performance in competitive sport) or a rejection of one's transcendence and a focus upon one's facticity

(as in the application of a label as to the 'thing' that a person is - a *substitute*), whereas authenticity is an acknowledgement that one's actions are of one's own free choice (for instance, that one freely chooses to take on the role of substitute). It is the attempt to realise the label 'substitute' by attempting to *be* a substitute that illustrates bad faith. For the nature of being a substitute in sport is one whereby a (would-be) player is *held-in-reserve* to be used or not as and when deemed necessary. The substitute is regarded as an object which has a particular function and use that is directed by the coach or manager in order to improve or influence an aspect of the team's performance. It is the ascription and acceptance of this label – *substitute* - that leads to bad faith and is analogous to Sartre's example of the waiter (5; p82-83).

### **Sartre's Waiter**

When the waiter is working in his café, he exaggerates his movements and behaviour so that they typically characterise those made by a (stereotypical) waiter. If one were to suggest to the waiter that he was simply acting the role of waiter, he would indignantly reply that he is not acting out a role but actually *is* a waiter. The waiter is attempting to *be* a waiter in the same way that a glass is a glass. Sartre suggests that the waiter in the café exaggerates his role in order to make it more tenable - more concrete. It is an attempt to *realise* the role that he is playing pre-reflectively (i.e. subconsciously). However, Sartre argues that this produces the contradictory position whereby the waiter is attempting to be an 'in-itself' (as a glass, a rock or a goal post *is* a glass, rock or goal post) rather than a 'for-itself' (as are reflective beings such as humans) as this whole process of attempting to be an 'in-itself' is only able to occur because we are by nature<sup>5</sup> a 'for-itself'. Anything that is an 'in-itself' has no knowledge

or understanding of that fact and therefore cannot attempt to *be* something else; a basketball cannot attempt to be anything – it is simply what it is. In contrast, humans cannot be anything but ‘for-itself’ and are guilty of bad faith if they attempt to be so. They cannot be a waiter or a substitute for a sports team in the way that a coffee cup is a coffee cup or a football is a football. A being that defines itself from the inside out, as humans inescapably do because they are self-aware and reflective beings, is acting in bad faith if it behaves as if it has been defined or designed to fulfil a particular role. This may be further exasperated in elite sport where this role is one of being an *athlete* or *sportsperson* and thus neglecting the multifarious aspects of being human. Essentially a ‘for-itself’ by its nature can never become an ‘in-itself’. Therefore, if a substitute attempts to *be* a substitute, they are in bad faith. Conversely, Sartre’s waiter is in bad faith in attempting to be sincere in his adoption of the role of waiter. As suggested, the waiter rejects the suggestion that he is *playing* the role of a waiter but, rather, he is attempting to *be* one. As such, even if one were authentic – through sincerity in one’s actions - one is in bad faith; for this sincerity is sought as a state of grounding in which one is a particular thing with a particular essence. The sincerity of the substitute who pre-reflectively attempts to become an ‘in-itself’ can be shown by a full embracement of substitute behaviour – wearing the sub-suits, bringing on refreshments in breaks of play, going for light jogs and stretching every ten minutes. However, as it has been argued that there is little desire for a person to be a substitute such bad faith may be less likely. One could argue that the substitute actually avoids falling into bad faith because there is no motivation to become an ‘in-itself’ since there is no desire to *be* a substitute as one wants to be a competitor on the field of play.

Sartre proposed that we are able to enter into bad faith because we have the ability to project ourselves beyond the instantaneous moment of ‘now’ into future

hypothetical possibilities and this means that no matter how much we attempt to become an 'in-itself' this attempt can only be made because we are a 'for-itself'. At the same time, we are also aware of the more concrete representation of our past and the present. The Existentialist maintains that in contrast to a past that has already happened and the roles that have been realised, we are able to conceive of a possibility where the person one will be in the future is different to the person one has been in the past. The substitute may choose to sit on the bench in recognition that it is not a permanent position; that one's future is not the same as one's past. As the waiter may provide reasons for why he is waiting – 'I am trying to save up so that I can go travelling' or 'It was the first job that came along and I needed to pay my bills' – those on the bench may provide reasons as to why they are fulfilling that role: 'I've just come back from a bad injury' or 'the selection system is unfair, the coach only chooses those that suck up to him.' Yet both are deceiving themselves if they do not concede that the respective roles of waiter and substitute are ones that they freely choose to play. Nevertheless, though there may be substitutes who argue that sitting on the bench is a necessary step that one must make in order to get on the pitch it is more likely that the substitute does not accept that their position is one that is freely chosen as there is no guarantee it is such a means to an end; that one will eventually get on the pitch or be selected to start. In contrast to the position of the waiter whereby it is certain that waiting is a means to the end of earning money, there is no concrete relationship between the time spent being a substitute and the time spent on the field of play. Furthermore, even if we agree that the reasons a substitute gives are truthful ones, the substitute remains in bad faith in allowing himself to be regarded by others as an 'in-itself'. Ultimately, a substitute might find himself/herself in the position whereby he/she avoids bad faith because he/she is not attempting to be an 'in-itself' in being a substitute as he is able to

acknowledge reflectively that he/she is just 'playing the part' rather than sincerely *being* a substitute. The substitute who rejects the attachment of the label 'substitute', who merely 'acts out' the role of a substitute rather than attempting to *be* a substitute, is avoiding bad faith. It may also be that suffering a state of 'angst' on the side-lines; realising that one could be doing something else, exemplifies such avoidance as it is a time where the substitute is fully aware that he/she freely chose to sit on the bench rather than, for example, doing the gardening or spending time with the family. If we wish to attain a situation whereby we are in good faith and at the same time authentic we must recognise that we can never truly *be* a 'substitute' nor a 'starting player' but that the decision to accept the role that a substitute entails is one that we freely choose.<sup>6</sup>

### **Freedom from Others**

A further difficulty with the notion of freedom (beyond the choices that we can make in a physical world constrained by physical laws) that is highlighted by the situation of being on the bench is associated with the restriction of free choice by others.

It may be that the drive towards authenticity and the avoidance of bad faith necessarily involves a desire for the freedom of others with the implication that you should therefore ensure that you are not limiting the free choice of others.<sup>7</sup> However, an alternative interpretation is that one person's freedom is inherently an obstacle to the freedom of another.<sup>8</sup> On this view, there is a constant struggle against falling into bad faith simply by the way one relates to others. Sartre uses the term 'gaze' to account for the emotional feelings, such as guilt and shame, which arise from our relationship with others. It is in our being-with-others where bad-faith is truly manifested, for we are

judged and viewed by others on our actions not intentions or inner-emotions. Whilst Sartre's consideration of sport focused solely upon individual recreational activities such as skiing, swimming and hiking, he maintained that our attempts to gain mastery over the snow, water and rock are analogous to the drive to conquer others (5: p606). Recognising that others see us a factitious object provides the battle-ground where we must defend our freedom. Sartre suggests that to preserve one's freedom involves a struggle against the 'gaze' of others so that we resist being turned into 'things' (purely factitious objects) which would lead us into bad faith. Paradoxically, a way of avoiding the 'gaze' is to use it to turn others into objects for oneself. In this sense, it is a continuous conflict for dominance between each party.<sup>9</sup> This can be illustrated with reference to the battle between the player and selector:

Whilst the selector considers the talents of each of her players (considering the players as factitious objects) and thereby chooses the team which he/she believes is most likely to succeed in the forthcoming match, the players are anxious to avoid the feelings of shame and embarrassment when they are told that they are not starting but are on the bench. If they assent to the selector's regard as a factitious object – as a substitute - they risk falling into bad faith in their attempt to realise this role. Yet, if they reject it by arguing that the selection system is unfair or that there is some other reason why they are not starting (such as recovering from illness or injury) and yet still carry out this role, they risk being inauthentic if they do not accept that it is something that they freely chose to do. Recognising a sense of powerlessness and feeling that one is at the mercy of the decisions of others displays a pre-reflective belief that one is a 'thing' in the world with a substance, property or essence. It is a definition of the self purely in relation to others and their interpretation of behaviour and actions<sup>10</sup>. As indicated, the desire of the selector is to choose the players believed most likely to

influence a game in a positive way. This can be perspicuously illustrated with reference to those sports where the manager or coach has a greater degree of power as to what occurs on a pitch. Whereas in soccer which, once the game is underway and apart from the minimal substitutions and the often animated but generally ineffective shouting from the sidelines, is fundamentally down to the players on the pitch to succeed, sports such as American football or basketball can be directed to a greater degree by the coach or manager who attempts to influence the game by calling time-outs, particular 'plays' and the frequent rotation of players. In such sports, one may argue that those players under the greater jurisdiction of the management throughout the game are likely to fall into bad faith if they allow themselves to be used as objects in another's regard. Arguably, players in these sports may be inauthentic by feeling that they have little freedom or control over what they do on the pitch. Correspondingly, this can be seen in the professional transfer market where players are bought and sold according to their past performance and future potential. Such players are likely to concentrate on their facticity whilst neglecting their transcendence in their attempt to *be* a professional player. Accepting such labels that are placed upon players encourages a pre-reflective attempt to become an 'in-itself' and thus a fall into bad faith. This might be further accentuated if a player bought for a club consistently finds himself a substitute. For Sartre, to realise that someone else is regarding you as a thing changes your perspective on the world. Your liberty is being restricted and you are being placed and organised in a foreign world – a world that is inaccessible to you since it is the viewpoint of another. It becomes a relationship not between two subjects in the world, but between subject (i.e. the manager) and object (i.e. the player) which constitutes itself as bad faith.

Sartre's focus upon the emotions that one is faced with when being viewed as an object - particularly the feeling of shame - correspond with features in sport. Although there may be aspects of being part of a highly directed game such as American football, that may encourage players into bad faith, his comments seem to resonate more acutely with being on the bench. Being designated substitute and in particular, being an unused substitute (as can habitually occur in sports such as, association football, rugby and cricket) may yield such feelings. The emotion that one feels when ascribed with particular labels by others indicates that it is not a passive activity. One may be labelled as a 'weak player' in being named a substitute which leads to a sense of embarrassment and shame.<sup>11</sup> Such feelings are compounded further if one accepts Sartre's view that such weakness is freely chosen. One is confronted with the realisation that one is there as an object to be used when, and if, another deems necessary. In this way, being-for-another results in a peculiar and discomforting predicament, for the other regards me in a way that is not the way I regard myself (as a subject not an object). It has been suggested that it is emotions such as fear, shame, pride and vanity in the experience of existing for others that indicate how we are able at one moment to be transcending and at another, transcended. When one is being transcended, one is unable to possess the liberty of another unless there is a struggle for domination. But then the other merely becomes an object in your regard: for example, if a player views a coach as merely another training device where its function and use can be assessed and evaluated (for example, if players dismiss the coach on the grounds that he/she is not functioning adequately). As indicated, although the battle to avoid the 'gaze' is continuous, being on the bench is generally a moment whereby one is being transcended not transcending. This suggests that there can be no mutual acknowledgement and respect for freedom since this is constantly being compromised

with such an ongoing struggle. However, given that the awareness of freedom and acceptance of responsibility for our choices increases when we refuse to accept ourselves to be fixed as objects by others (thereby avoiding bad faith), this seems to suggest a moral imperative that we ought not to fix others as objects either. For if we regard them as objects in an attempt to avoid the 'gaze' by them, we will inherently come to regard ourselves as an object like them (presumably because we accept that we are both human) which is inherently bad faith. To operate in bad faith involves a self-deception that one has had one's position forced upon one; that one has no alternative but to be an 'in-itself', rather than face the fact we are, as Sartre highlighted, 'condemned to be free'<sup>12</sup>. It may be that being inauthentic and in bad faith offers a degree of comfort and security, for being confronted by one's freedom is a burden to be carried. This burden is relieved by others who implicitly encourage us to be inauthentic and to fall into bad faith by regarding us as objects with a particular function, such as that of the substitute. Culbertson (1) notes that the athlete is often content to accept being regarded as an 'in-itself' as can be exemplified with the metaphor of BODY AS MACHINE. The responsibility and burden that is inherent in being human is transferred away from the athlete:

This blind faith is also applied to the role of the coach. By attempting to become an athlete as a thing in itself, the individual avoids responsibility for the decisions that should be continually made if performance is to be maximized. In bad faith athletes deny the fragile and precarious nature of their sporting success by blind faith in the coach and the regime. (1: p77)

This blind faith in the coaches' responsibility for using their body for a particular function is characterised in the role of the substitute as illustrated with the examples earlier. The substitute that allows himself/herself to stand-in-reserve to be used by another for a particular function is manifestly in bad faith.

As stated, there is a certain inevitability of being-with-others, as members of a community and of sports teams we can't escape this fact. This highlights a problem that Sartre never seemed to be able to fully reconcile: the fact that being authentic requires an acceptance of one's solitary and lonely situation, and Sartre's recognition that there are occasions whereby we need to act collectively, which necessarily involves viewing and using others as a means to a (moral) end. In the case of the sports team, all players and coaches involved, including those players on the bench, desire to achieve a particular end: to win by playing the best that they can. Such collective action is only possible if particular individuals allow their position to be determined by others; that is, if the substitute surrenders their freedom to be a starting player. If there is such a battle for transcendence, then it may be that being-with-others is inevitably inauthentic. The authentic substitute would be one that sits on the bench willingly, acknowledging that they could have freely chosen another action; whether walking out on the coach, running onto the pitch and waiting to see if anyone notices, or knocking a rival teammate unconscious. It may be that the situation of being on the bench is not necessarily the state of affairs that one would ideally choose but the authentic substitute recognises that there are other possibilities or options that allow for freedom to exist, and out of these possibilities the substitute freely chooses to sit on the bench. It is the contingent set of situations in which we find ourselves which provides us with the substance from which freedom of choice is built.

For Sartre, this concept of freedom and choice also includes the notion of character (in the Aristotelian sense). Sartre illustrates this with a story of the hiker who gave up walking because he said he was too exhausted to continue (5: p475-477). Sartre maintains that the hiker *chooses* to feel his fatigue as intolerable. Sartre argues that even if it could be said the hiker was forced to retire because he was a weak character that gave up more easily than others; this weakness of character was freely chosen. In Sartre's comment upon Freud's and Alder's psycho-analytic theory, feelings of inferiority in all aspects of life are chosen (5: p481). This implies that Sartre's notion of free choice extends as far as aptitudes, physical skill and ability, and would therefore add support to the claim that the sporting substitute freely chooses to sit on the bench. Yet, the validity of this argument appears to conflict with our intuitions. Presupposing that the coach selects the best<sup>13</sup> - for sake of simplicity let us label them 'most skilful' - players to start the game, leaving less skilful players on the side-line. This would indicate, on Sartre's understanding, the substitute freely chooses to be less skilful. To a certain extent, one could generously accept such a conclusion. One could argue that skill is acquired through dedicated and committed practice. Some players might be lazier than others in this respect and choose to practice and perfect their skills less frequently. Herein, Sartre would argue that this laziness or reticence is a characteristic that is freely chosen, as was the hiker's mental weakness and his choice to *suffer* rather than *endure* his fatigue. However, physical ability and skill is more than mere practice. It is arguably dependent on many other factors. If two hockey players were to receive the same training and spend the same amount of time practicing, it is unlikely that their physical skill would develop at the same pace and to the same result. Skill acquisition is not akin to programming a computer. Perhaps it is here that Sartre's account of freedom seems to conflict with our understanding of what it is to be a human. We are

constrained by aspects other than the 'laws of nature', for example, by genetic and biological processes. To argue that we sit on the bench because we *choose* to be less skilful than our team-mates seems implausible. If we desire to play that sport (which seems reasonable since we pay membership fees, match fees, and give up time and money to train) then it would be nonsensical to suggest that we *choose* not to be as skilful; resulting in our place on the bench. Requiring a substitute to accept that he/she *chooses* to be a less able player than those starting the match is likely to be a futile and absurd task.

### **Acknowledgement of the Absurd**

It could be suggested that there is another way to authenticity even if we find ourselves in a situation that is undesirable, namely, being on the bench. The way to authenticity is through recognising our situation for what it is and creating meaning within it. The Existentialist argues that we give meaning (or perhaps it would be better to say value) to our lives through the choices we make. Sport may provide such meaning or value as it has this paradoxical quality, indicated by both Moritz Schlick (6: pp.112-18) and Bernard Suits (7: pp.166-178), whereby it is serious and yet not serious at all. We want to play the game and win but on the other hand 'it is just a game'. However, if we are told to sit on the bench during a game, it is as if we are shown a meaning to our existence but are forbidden to employ it. Such a situation is both frustrating and, for all intents and purposes, pointless for the individual. Being sat on the bench may show an ironic parallel with life itself. Ultimately, the human position is meaningless. To be sat on the bench is to be in a situation where the meaning (or value) that playing sport gives is inaccessible. Yet this is a situation that is accepted as one holds on to the hope and belief that it is not a permanent position and that its meaning

will be shown when the time comes to be on the field of play. If this is replicated in the wider sphere of human existence in a belief that the meaning to one's life will become apparent on death, the Existentialist will reply that life has no greater purpose and we will be frustrated and prevented in our quest to find such a thing.<sup>14</sup> Ironically, it may be this aspect which is beneficial for the substitute who realises that their position is absurd. For in recognising the absurdity of being on the bench is a step towards authenticity: it involves facing up to the fact that our situation is pointless and without meaning.<sup>15</sup> To this, one might object and say that there is a purpose in being on the bench, that is for the good of the team, for if one person gets injured or is not performing to their usual standard, the substitute is able to go on to the pitch and make a difference. One may say that in life too, although our time on earth may be pointless because we will be unable to appreciate our achievements once we have ceased to exist, we can make a difference to humankind as a whole: our actions can make a difference to others. Yet, when the human race is also no more, we are faced with the fact that whatever we do whilst alive will make no difference at all. Thus, authenticity comes from a realisation of the absurdity of our existence. Conversely, in being an authentic substitute sitting on the bench, one also needs to recognise the absurdity of this situation, whereby one is a member of a team and yet not participating in the sport for which the team exists: it is to be confronted with one's position on the margins. It is the sense of the absurd that results from the awareness of our position in the world as both a factitious and a transcendent being simultaneously. Moreover, it is the recognition of the freedom that is inherent in this transcendent awareness that produces anguish and, in turn, entices us towards the comfort provided by being inauthentic and in bad faith.

## **Conclusions**

Finding oneself on the bench in a sporting competition appears to be analogous to the Existential conception of the world. The substitute is confronted with the fact that he/she literally finds himself/herself on the margins. The substitute must make a choice in how he/she deals with this fact. If we look to answer the question, 'Is it possible to be both in good faith and authentic whilst being-on-the-bench?' we are given various responses. One Existential answer to this is that we are able to be authentic if we are able to exist as free, autonomous human beings taking responsibility for our actions. However, there often seems to be a conflict between the freedom of choice for one person and the freedom of choice for another, especially as others are often used as a means to an end (for instance, a coach or manager selecting what he/she regards as his best players to win a match). We are only able to be authentic if we acknowledge our freedom and the freedom of others regardless of whether one is a starting player or a substitute. Being authentic requires an understanding of the situation and an acceptance that one is complicit in it. It may be enough to look at others as providing a guide and ideas for the decisions we make, but recognise that we are the only ones who are able to make those decisions when they are eventually made. As being-with-others is an inevitable part of being human, there will always be instances whereby we will need to be complicit to their actions and the way in which we are regarded. This is necessary to prevent quarrel, animosity, and to a certain degree, anarchy. For a sport would cease to exist if players did not abide by the tacit or constitutive rules; thus frustrating the ultimate desire of the players to play the game, even if some of those rules at particular times prevented individual players to take any course of action that they wished to take. Players (and substitutes) choose to accept such rules prior to the commencement of that sport.

Existentialists maintain that humans, in being free, have power to disengage, refuse and recommence. But such freedom only exists because there are constraints to the things that we can do in the world. A freedom without limits is not freedom at all. Such freedom is constrained to a large degree by our physical manifestation in being human but additionally involves being with others and recognising that others view us from a perspective that is very different to the one from which we view ourselves. Ultimately, freedom can be found in the attitude that we take towards the world.<sup>16</sup> The attitude one takes towards the world and towards others is of one's own creating. Approaching the world with the attitude that one is a free individual which is permanently faced with choices to be made is both empowering and disquieting but allows us to confront the absurdity of life. In the case of the substitute, this might mean being both part of a game and, at the same time, not part of it. If we do not see ourselves as free individuals then we are transferring responsibility for our actions on to something else, be it society, God, genetics or another. Failure to acknowledge this responsibility can be deemed as being inauthentic; it is a failure to see one's own-most possibilities of being. It is a denial of this freedom whilst knowing at the same time that we are free, that is an example of bad faith. It is in being inauthentic, that is refusing to acknowledge that one's position on the bench is of one's choosing, that encourages us into bad faith and into pre-reflectively believing that one is a thing or an object for another's manipulation. Though others may attach labels on to us, regarding us as things in the world, they are labels that we have the freedom to choose to accept or resist.

Authenticity can be a vague term for Existentialists but what it does suggest is that authenticity is more of a structure rather than content – it is about coming to terms with the fact that one is free to make one's own choices even if the decisions that are

open to you can be interpreted as constraints enforced by others. Being told to start on the bench requires the choice whether to accept such a decision or not. But this choice is your own even if you feel that the options for alternative action are limited. Existentialists would accept that our freedom and quest for authentic personal being often meet with resistance and sometimes with frustration because of the limitations that arise from being members of a social community. It may be that the most we can do in an attempt to be authentic is to resist falling into bad faith by recognising two aspects. First, that being a substitute is an expression of a being that is 'for-itself' and not a thing 'in-itself' as is a football, cricket bat or corner flag. Second, to acknowledge that being a substitute is a role that is freely chosen: even if that means recognising the absurd choice that one might make in spending an entire game sat on the bench.

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<sup>1</sup> Heidegger (2) uses the term 'Bestand' to describe the human tendency to view the world as something to be divided into representations of objects to be used and consumed for human purpose. It is this 'technological attitude' that conceals from humans their own being and prevents them from being authentic.

<sup>2</sup> The term 'team' sport corresponds to sports which involve more than two players. Doubles events in racquet sports, for example, do not allow for the substitution of an individual in a pair either before or during a competition.

<sup>3</sup> Indeed, there were complaints by the Australians during the 2005 Ashes test that England's use of their substitute ran against the 'spirit' of the game. (3)

<sup>4</sup> Being authentic is holding the attitude that I engage in my projects as my own. One is inauthentic if one acts in such a way from a sense of duty (because it is what 'good' people or 'upstanding' citizens do), whereas, acknowledging that one freely chooses to act in a particular way (not because it is what one is expected to do) is to be authentic. Authenticity involves a transparency, in an acceptance that we, as humans, are beings who are wholly responsible for ourselves. In this, it could be argued that authenticity is a moral category, in promoting integrity and a recognition of the human condition.

<sup>5</sup> As indicated earlier, this is the only thing one can say about a human essence or nature.

<sup>6</sup> In this then, falling into bad faith and being authentic are not necessarily dependently related concepts. We may be in good faith whilst being authentic and we may be in good faith whilst being inauthentic, and contrary, we may be in bad faith whilst being inauthentic or in bad faith whilst being authentic. One does not necessarily presuppose the other. However, in certain situations there may be a relationship between the two; in that being inauthentic implicitly encourages falling into bad faith brought about by a pre-reflective attempt to be an 'in-itself'.

<sup>7</sup> As given by Sartre in *Existentialism and Humanism* (4).

<sup>8</sup> As given by Sartre in *Being and Nothingness* (5).

<sup>9</sup> This idea is explored most fully in Sartre's play 'No Exit' or 'Huis Clos' (1944) and is exemplified in his famous phrase, "Hell is other people."

<sup>10</sup> Heidegger expressed this "Être-pour-autrui" or being-for-others.

<sup>11</sup> There are occasions when these emotions are different – when being named in the squad is a source of pride and confidence (for example, if it is the first time one wears one's national shirt). Yet this merely emphasises Sartre's claim that one is in bad faith in sincerely playing the role of a substitute as an object in-itself.

<sup>12</sup> In this mantra, Sartre emphasises that in being free, we carry the weight of the world on our shoulders. It is only as a result of our existence that there is a world for us to be confronted with and through this confrontation we are left with a freedom whereby we create ourselves; it therefore makes no sense to complain that the world is the way it is.

<sup>13</sup> This could be her most skilful, mentally tenacious, or physically dominant players; depending on what the coach believed to be important attributes or characteristics that would lead to the desired state of affairs in the game (i.e. winning).

<sup>14</sup> Indeed, Sartre argued that it is with one's death whereby one's facticity - or one's purpose - becomes ultimately determined by others and not by oneself.

<sup>15</sup> As noted by Camus in *The Myth of Sisyphus*.

<sup>16</sup> This suggests a similarity to Wittgenstein's notion of 'attitude' in ethics. In a sense, the facts are irrelevant; one could always argue that our behaviour is highly influenced, determined even, by our genes or other physical or social causes but the point is that we hold the 'attitude' that we are free. This gives us credibility in being human: it is to take responsibility for one's being. To be authentic involves a sense of autonomy: to be resolute in committing to a course of action, rather than to merely occupy a role or place.