

The Role of Football in Philip Kerr's Scott Manson Series

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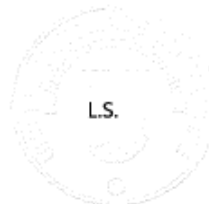
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ABSTRAKT

Primárním cílem této práce je znázornit roli fotbalu v sérii *Scott Mason*, která se skládá ze tří knih. První z nich se jmenuje *January Window*, druhá *Hand of God*, a poslední *False Nine*. Kvůli zachycení role fotbalu v těchto románech se tato práce bude například soustředit na jeho porovnání s ostatními sportovními i obvyklými prostředími nebo na to, jak velká část děje se odehrává právě ve fotbalovém prostředí. Druhým cílem této práce je poté analyzovat, jak skutečné je vyobrazení fotbalového prostředí v těchto románech v porovnání se skutečným fotbalovým světem.

Klíčová slova: řada *Scott Manson*, *January Window*, *Hand of God*, *False Nine*, role fotbalu, fotbalové prostředí, porovnání,

ABSTRACT

The primary goal of this study is to depict the role of football in the *Scott Manson* series, which consists of three books. The first is called *January Window*, second is *Hand of God*, and the last one is called *False Nine*. For portraying the role of football in these works, this work will be, for instance, focused on a comparison with other sport's or usual settings or how much of the story really takes place in the football environment. The second goal of this thesis is to analyse how real is the depiction of the football setting in these novels in comparison with the true football world.

Keywords: *Scott Manson* series, *January Window*, *Hand of God*, *False Nine*, the role of football, football setting, comparison

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I hereby declare that the print version of my Bachelor's thesis and the electronic version of my thesis deposited in the IS/STAG system are identical. I also declare that I had written this Bachelor's thesis by myself. In the end, I would like to express my gratitude to my supervisor Mgr. Roman Trušník for his guidance, enthusiastic attitude and help with my thesis.

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INTRODUCTION

This thesis has two main purposes. The primary purpose is to specify the role of football in the *Scott Manson* detective series by Scottish writer Phillip Kerr. The series contains three novels, these are *January Window*, *Hand of God* and *False Nine*. The work analyses the football setting in every novel of the series independently. A result of the analysis should establish whether the football setting plays a major or minor role in the context of the story. The second purpose is to demonstrate how well is the football environment portrayed in a comparison with a real world of professional football. Writing a novel about football is not an easy task for somebody, who do not know the environment himself. One needs to have some experience with the environment and should also know a few things about the game and its close history.

One of the reasons for picking a topic of the detective fiction novels set in the football world was to find out whether the role of football in the *Scott Manson* series is necessary for the development of the story or if its function is secondary to a plot. As a life-long football player, the football environment represents a setting in which I am personally very well oriented so from this point of view, it can be said that I have a close relationship with this topic and most importantly with the setting. Another reason was to find out, what a football setting will do with a well-known genre of detective fiction.

At the beginning of this work is shown development of the genre of detective fiction set in the football environment to outline key changes that have shaped the genre until the present. Because it is not a new genre and the development of the genre has its origins in the second half of the nineteenth century. The work then continues with some general information about space and setting from various sources. It is followed with an autobiography of the writer Philip Kerr in context of the role of football.

The main part of this thesis depicts stories of the novels to summarize their main detective storyline. The analyses of the individual novels come after. These analyses are conducted in terms of primary and secondary goals of this thesis. Arguments are based mostly on the examples from the analysed novels.

The conclusion should provide answers to the two main goals of this thesis and also summarize the analysis conducted.

1 OVERVIEW OF FOOTBALL FICTION

The representation of the theme of football or other sports in fiction has always been perceived as a very difficult task. Football is a physical sport that brings joy to those who play it, even to those who may not have a mind of Albert Einstein. On the other side are writers and thinkers, intellectuals for whom everything has some theoretical explanation. When we put these two groups together, the possibility that the result could be unsatisfactory rises exponentially. Unsatisfactory in terms of depicting the action sequences which football or any other sport brings. This idea is supported with a claim of Ellis Cashmore who said that “sports are for doers, not thinkers.”¹ In other words, it suggests that it is not important to put too much intellect in a simple game as football.²

With an evaluation like this in mind, we cannot blame Peter Seddon who claims that “football and literature are not comfortable bedfellows or even casual friends—distant relatives would be nearer the mark.”³ Nevertheless, this statement should not be taken as a common rule, because authors such as Lee McGowan, D.J. Taylor or Michael Oriard express a completely different opinion about the relationship. For example, Taylor points out that the theme of football could be handled from different angles and offers many possibilities for developing a story:

This reluctance to admit that a football match, with its 22 players, its thousands of spectators and its garnish of moral, mythical and even political endeavour, makes an ideal backdrop for a novel is all the more curious given soccer’s ability to infiltrate British literature at a fairly early stage.⁴

Michael Oriard continues with other reasons why sport can mutually influence literature:

Sport also provides other specific advantages to the writer of fiction. The duration of a single season, a single career, even a single game or fight with its preparation and aftermath all offer a distinct beginning, middle, and end for the construction of a novel. Conflicts, tension, and climaxes are built into the framework of sport, ready for translation into fiction. Each sport offers a ready-made cast of recognizable characters which writers can easily manipulate.⁵

¹ Cyprian Piskurek, *Fictional Representations of English Football and Fan Cultures: Slum Sport, Slum People?* (Dortmund: Palgrave Macmillan, 2018), 83.

² Quoted in Piskurek, *Fictional Representations of English Football and Fan Cultures*, 83.

³ Quoted in Piskurek, *Fictional Representations of English Football and Fan Cultures*, 88.

⁴ D.J. Taylor, “A football novel is never simply about football,” *The Guardian*, January 27, 2019, <https://www.theguardian.com/global/2017/may/27/football-novel-boys-school-stories-modern-fiction>.

⁵ Piskurek, *Fictional Representations of English Football and Fan Cultures*, 85.

These examples show that football fiction has many variables which can influence potential usage and could be favourably used while writing football novels. But for this study is important to understand what the term “football fiction” really means. McGowan’s definition defines football fiction as a “fictive work, which relies on football, or soccer if there is a preference for the term, as a substantive element, including but not restricted to narrative, voice, structure, setting and/or character development.”⁶

1.1 History and Development of Football Fiction

McGowan claims that football fiction has gone through a rough development to the stage where it is now, although the genre of football fiction has been influenced by many changes that occurred while this genre has been developing.⁷

When we talk about the beginnings of football fiction we have to go back to the year 1867 because it is the year perceived as a starting point of football fiction.⁸ At the beginning of the development were mainly short novels or comic books which were mostly issued in Victorian boys’ journals and magazines.⁹

One of the first authors in the evolution of the genre is Arnold Bennet and his *The Card* (1910) which features the game.¹⁰ He issued stories for a male adult with drafting of professional players and their stories.¹¹ But the first big wave of novels about football arose in the 1890s and lasted to the 1930s. The purpose of these short novels was to teach some moral lessons through sport as for example the one about the importance of team spirit. In this group can be found works as *Strickland the Sixth* or *The Fellows of Ten Trees School* by R.A.H. Goodyear. At that time in England, rugby was a sport of upper-class boys, football, on the other hand, was a game of lower and middle-class youngsters who were also the ones who identified themselves with those novels and became their main audience.¹²

As was rising the popularity of a professional game, consequently were expanding fictional books with football as the main theme. More than twenty novels by Sydney Horler were published in *Aldine Football Novel* series between the 1920s to the mid-1950s.

⁶ Lee McGowan, “Marking Out the Pitch: A Historiography and Taxonomy of Football Fiction. *Journal of Soccer & Society* 16, no. 1 (2015): 77, <https://doi.org/10.1080/14660970.2014.882820>.

⁷ McGowan, “Marking Out the pitch,” 77-78.

⁸ Lee McGowan, “Football and Its Fiction,” in *Routledge Handbook of Football Studies*, ed. John Hughson, Kevin Moore, Ramón Spaaij, Joseph Maguire (New York: Taylor and Francis, 2016), 222.

⁹ McGowan, “Marking Out the Pitch,” 78-79.

¹⁰ Taylor, “Football.”

¹¹ McGowan, “Marking Out the Pitch,” 79.

¹² Taylor, “Football.”

McGowan in his *Football and Its Fiction* refer to the fact that from the 1950s romanticism and moralistic consensus present in football fiction so far started to disappear and sophisticated social-political commentaries started to come out, such as in Robin Jenkins's *The Thistle and The Grail* (1954).¹³ It was the right time for working-class authors to express themselves, as they could use their own football experiences or put some deeper social context into the story.¹⁴

Recently, Taylor really saw the point when he believed an opinion that no matter how much football is present in some work, it is never completely about it. There is a second story running over the football one all the time, such as parables about class, social change or moral imperative which appears in works of football fiction, just like in a work *They Used to Play on Grass* (1973) written by Gordon Williams and Terry Venables, or JL Carr's *How Steeple Sinderby Wanderers Won the FA Cup* (1975) in which a triumph of a small village at Webley is put into background of social change in England, where from provincial England rising a new consumer-materialist one.¹⁵

Nevertheless, the main breakthrough for football fiction represents the year 1992 in which Nick Hornby produced *Fever Pitch*. From that moment on, football writing meant respectable activity.¹⁶ It is a true story, an autobiography that follows football compulsions of one football fan following Arsenal, so it cannot be perceived as a fiction.¹⁷ Critics appreciated Hornby for his social realism and demonstration of Northern working-class life. Fans recognized themselves in his book and just could not believe why they did not write it themselves.¹⁸ But that was exactly the catalyst for a new wave of football writing, for people like Hornby who had something to say and are now known as "soccerati" – "Hunter Davies, Simon Kuper, DJ Taylor, Nalinaksha Bhattacharya, and others – wrote works where football took on a greater literary or figurative significance."¹⁹

When we want to look how far the genre of football fiction has come, a good example could be Ross Raisin's *A Natural* (2017) in which theme of understanding one's sexuality plays a key role, while the story is just passing off on a football field.²⁰

¹³ McGowan, "Marking Out the pitch," 79.

¹⁴ McGowan, "Football," 224.

¹⁵ Taylor, "Football."

¹⁶ Taylor, "Football."

¹⁷ McGowan, "Marking out the pitch," 87.

¹⁸ Piskurek, *Fictional Representations of English Football and Fan Cultures*, 88.

¹⁹ McGowan, "Marking Out the pitch," 79.

²⁰ Taylor, "Football."

1.2 Space and Settings

In her overview of the role of space in literature, Marie-Laure Ryan points out that space is one of the most fundamental categories which contribute to the narrative. Space is the environment where a story is set, where existents are put, all together create a location for events to happen. That corresponds with the definition of space by Oxford English Dictionary, which defines space as “the dimensions of height, width, and depth within which all things exist.”²¹ Space is thus essential for the story and the narrative, although it is also in the relationship with time. Time and space are bound together for eternity and one influences the other. For example, while characterizing stories and producing events, time stands in the front line at the expense of space, which is in the meantime put to the background of the story. Running events have then impact on existents, which are once again embedded in space. Place or environment where characters live and have their being is called narrative space or setting. However, the concept of space in the narrative is not limited by the representation of a world (the Earth) in which events are held. According to *Handbook of Narratology* there are at least five types of locations that can be distinguished. Starting with spatial frames (the setting of an actual event, described through narrative or graphically shown), following with setting (period in history, with social relationships depicted in environment), story space (all the places mentioned by characters with relevance to the plot), narrative world (reader’s fictional world affected by reader’s real-life geographical knowledge), and ending with narrative universe (all the words built up by character’s fears, beliefs, dreams or fantasies).²²

The setting is basically everything that we can see via writer’s words, through eyes of his characters, which make up a picture of a place that we imagine in our heads when we read those words. It can be said, that we are entering some fictional world created by an author and our mind. P. D. James in her book *Talking about Detective Fiction* claims that description of a place is better done by characters own perceptions than by authorial voice because it helps with an interaction between character and place, which can potentially influence character’s mood or actions.²³

Chatman expresses a similar opinion and declares that “the setting ‘sets the character off’ in the usual figurative sense of the expression; it is the place and collection of objects

²¹ Marie-Laure Ryan, “Space,” in *Handbook of Narratology*, ed. Peter Hühn, John Pier, Wolf Schmid, and Jörg Schönert (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2009), 796.

²² Ryan, “Space,” 802.

²³ P.D. James, *Talking about Detective Fiction* (New York: Knopf, 2009), 41.

‘against which’ his actions and passions appropriately emerge.”²⁴ He adds that further distinctions between the major and minor characters have to be made to separate a hero and just same walker, whose purpose is to take part in a crowd to portray the setting. Chatman continues with three basic criteria for this distinction, which are biology, identity and importance. Chatman also states that character which is described and has more features or is given a name is more likely to have a more important role in the story.²⁵

The genre of the series is detective fiction, which is described by M. H. Abrams in his book *A Glossary of Literary Terms* as:

Narratives that center on criminal acts and especially on the investigation, either by an amateur or professional detective, of a serious crime, generally a murder. Typically, the crime is committed in a closed environment that limits the number of possible suspects.²⁶

Space can be presented by various techniques, and description is one of the basic techniques how to disclose spatial information, although Ryan perceives this technique as an antithesis of the narrative because it stops depicting actions to show a reader where the actions or events take place. Other dynamic ways of how to construct narrative world can be used, for instance, movements of character or object (where they go) or characters’ perceptions (what they see), narrativized descriptions, or implications from reports of events (what is going on with setting while some event is waging). As readers go through the narrative text, they start to process the development of a story just as they begin to capture a place and environment in which the story takes place. Readers are then able to create a cognitive map based on the movements of characters and establish their fictional world, helping them with orientation in the narrative world. Most often space in the narrative is not so important as characters and their actions or development, but when space plays a key role as for example in the works of detective fiction, the graphic illustration of narrative world is necessary when only words are not enough.²⁷

²⁴ Seymour Benjamin Chatman, *Story and Discourse: Narrative Structure in Fiction and Film* (Ithaca NY: Cornell University, 1978), 138-139.

²⁵ Chatman, *Story and Discourse*, 141.

²⁶ M. H. Abrams and Geoffrey Galt Harpham, *A Glossary of Literary Terms. 11th ed.* (Stamford, CT: Cengage Learning, 2015), 48.

²⁷ Ryan, “Space,” 797–799.

1.3 Philip Kerr

Philip Ballantyne Kerr was a Scottish crime writer who was born in Edinburgh on February 22, 1956, and died on March 23, 2018. From a young age, he was intrigued by books but his religious parents kept him away from them. His father worked as an engineer and his mother as a secretary. One day, when he was 12 years old, he found a copy of D. H. Lawrence's *Lady Chatterley's Lover* (in that time perceived as obscene) which was an impulse for Kerr to write his own racy story, which was called *The Duchess and the Daisies* which were basically pornographic stories for his classmates. When his parents found out, young Philip had to read it in front of his mother, who could stand only a couple of sentences, before she left a room. As Kerr said, "it gave me quite an insight into the power of words."²⁸ Who would know then that five decades on, he will reach more than 400,000 sold books.

After this first, not so well received piece of work, Kerr gave up pornographic stories and turned to thrillers and non-fiction novels. One of his most famous characters is notorious detective Bernie Gunther, protagonist of his well-known series *Bernie Gunther*, which is set in Hitler's Berlin and was launched with *March Violets* in 1989. Thrillers and crime fiction stories were not the only genres, in which Kerr was interested, he also wrote several fantasy novels for children which were published in the *Children of the Lamp* series which he wrote under the name B.P. Kerr.²⁹

The first impulse for him to write novels about football was not any football related event or book, it was totally different game, the game of golf, more precisely Ian Fleming's *Goldfinger*, seventh novel of the James Bond series, where golf is depicted on almost 40 pages, which left Kerr with a feeling of desire for playing golf himself. Moreover, he realized there was a lack of sport-related novels.³⁰ He said, "it got me thinking; given the amount of sport we play and watch on TV, why isn't there more fiction about sport? It can't be because no one is interested; more people go to see football on a Sunday than go to a Church of England service."³¹

²⁸ Toby Clements, "Philip Kerr: Interview," *The Telegraph*, January 23, 2012,

<https://www.telegraph.co.uk/culture/books/bookreviews/9025756/Philip-Kerr-Interview.html>.

²⁹ Richard Sandomir, "Philip Kerr, 62, Author of 'Gunther' Crime Novels, Is Dead," *The New York Times*, March 27, 2018, <https://www.nytimes.com/2018/03/27/obituaries/philip-kerr-62-author-of-gunther-crime-novels-is-dead.html>.

³⁰ Philip Kerr, "He writes... he scores! Thriller writer Philip Kerr reveals how the world of football lends itself to his new novel," *Daily Mail*, November 15, 2014, <https://www.dailymail.co.uk/home/event/article-2833330/Philip-Kerr-reveals-world-football-lends-new-novel.html>.

³¹ Kerr, "He writes."

He adds that one of the factors because of which there has not been taken an advantage of sport in fictional writing so far was, that it just did not bring the excitement needed while describing an important sport occasion.³²

Nevertheless, Kerr decided to give it try it and started a new series called *Scott Manson* which is set in the world of football. The football world immediately impressed him as he sought for some setting for his story: “The football world seemed the ideal setting for such intrigue, I’m just surprised someone hasn’t done it already. With football, there is so much incentive for murder. Players are young, virile, have far too much money, are shagging each other’s wives, there’s corrupt money.... the possibilities are enormous.”³³

However, in writing novels set in particular environments as in this case the world of football, the knowledge of the background is fundamental, not only to show a reader that the author knows, what he is writing about, but also to achieve that desired effect which deliver the excitement so much lacking in previous works of sport fiction. Anyway, this was no problem for Kerr, because being a lifelong fan of Hibby (Hibernian FC) and Arsenal FC, he has got quite an insight into the game. Moreover, he also read many autobiographies from managers or players to pick up the inside information and establish a strong ground for his stories and plots.³⁴

³² Kerr, “He writes.”

³³ “Author Philip Kerr on being a secret Hibby,” *Edinburgh Evening News*, 28 November, 2014, <https://www.edinburghnews.scotsman.com/news/entertainment/author-philip-kerr-on-being-a-secret-hibby-1-3619142>.

³⁴ Kerr, “He writes.”

2 OVERVIEW OF THE SCOTT MANSON TRILOGY

The trilogy of *Scott Manson* portrays events set in one fictional football club from London which plays the real football league called Premier League. It is highlighted that the work is fictional because the author uses fictional football club to make sure that he will not have problems with lawyers. Other clubs and players are mentioned here only to portray the setting of the football world and for depicting the background of the story.

2.1 *January Window*

The first book of the trilogy is called *January Window* and it was published in 2014. As the title suggests, the action is set in the very first month of a year, in which football clubs are able to sign or sell players. The schedule at this time is as hectic as it can be with all the matches and transfers going on. The main protagonist is Scott Manson, who is 40, black, half-Scottish, and ex-Arsenal centre-back, currently working as an assistant manager for a fictional club London City Football Club playing in the English Premier League. The team is owned by the wealthy Ukrainian oligarch Viktor Sokolnikov and managed by the charismatic but little aggressive former Portuguese international named Joao Zarco.

When the coach is found dead in the City's stadium, Ukrainian boss entrust Manson to solve the crime. He wants to find out who committed the crime as soon as possible, so he promises Manson the dead man's job if he succeeds. It is a strong impulse for Manson as he has an opportunity to take his revenge on police, which falsely accused him a few years ago for rape he did not commit and sent him to the prison for 18 months before his innocence was proved, but which in fact ended his career as a professional football player. So he becomes a detective who will do everything he can to catch the killer and get the job while also taking revenge on the police.

But where to start. Joao Zarca had always a big mouth which means that he pissed off many people who now turned into possible suspects. Zarco was a very tempered person who always said what he was thinking, like when the reporter asked him, what he thinks about the upcoming World Cup in Qatar in 2022, he said exactly what he had on his mind, that it is foolish idea to want players to play in the weather and temperatures like the ones in Qatar. Although, not knowing where to start, Scott remembers there was a thing with a grave which was found on a pitch of the City stadium with a photo of Zarco in the bottom. This clue turned out to be a blind alley, at least for now. But because Scott was a close friend of Zarco, he knew where he was putting off his mobile phone. So as soon as he found the phone in his

drawer, he started searching for information. From the texts it was obvious that Zarco had some kind of deal with a player agent to get some provision from transfers of players and also 50 thousand pounds for some share deal going on between these two. They agreed to meet in one of the VIP rooms at Silvertown Dock (stadium of London City). Manson tried to call the agent but did not succeed. Than few days later he sees a police officer who was walking down the stadium. From his time in prison, he knew how a police officer really look like, and something about this one was not right. A few moments later, the false police officer was already interrogated by Manson. The man had keys for the same room as the one where the trade between Zarco and mentioned agent should take place, for suite 123. The man makes a confession that the agent told him to collect a package that was supposed to be in the room, which was exactly what he was planning to do before Manson spotted him. After the confession, Mason discovers mentioned 50 thousand pounds inside the bag in a freezer. After this discovery he called the agent again seeking for answers. He found out that the particular deal was one of the many, but in this case, Zarco was in a hurry for the money for some reason. After the call, Manson returns to the suite 123 and with a hope that he will find other clues. While looking from a kitchen window, he remembered the injuries detailed in Zarco's autopsy report, and suddenly everything became clear. Zarco was not beaten to death, but he was pushed out of a window. One could think it could also be a suicide, but not in this case, not when we are talking about Joao Zarco. Moreover, his sunglasses was laying on the floor, which contributes to the fact that nobody spotted him in the time of death. To check this theory, Mason climbed the Silvertown Dock himself using a brake rope. The trajectory of the fall corresponds with the spot where Zarco's body was found.

In the end, all clues lead to one suspect and it was not any of the football managers, players, agents or owners, it was a far simpler and more everyday life-related matter, it was connected to neighbouring family of Zarco's. To explain, there was some long-time building work going on and the Cruikshank family was affected by it very badly, so much that it was a reason to kill somebody. The day when Zarco was killed, he agreed to meet Mr and Mrs. Cruikshank in the suite 123 right before the match. Zarco was offering them money, which should provide comfort while repairs had been undertaking. Nevertheless, it got out of the hand when Zarco accused both of them of ripping him off. The situation ended up with Zarco's death. The one thing that was left to be solved was, who killed him. Was it Mr or Mrs. Cruikshank? While interrogating them, the idea was that Mr. Cruikshank takes responsibility on his shoulders. But it was obvious that Mrs. Cruikshank had the temper to

kill. Also, the scratch on her neck matched the tiny amount of skin founded underneath Zarco's fingernails.

2.2 *Hand of God*

In the second novel of the *Scott Manson* series called *Hand of God* which was published in 2015, Scott Mason continues as a manager of London City FC. In the beginning, the team embarks on the pre-season tour to Russia, which turns out to be a bad idea as one of the players shows support for a banned organisation which led to his arrest and only thanks to club's officials, he was freed to leave the country with rest of the team. Moreover, on the pre-season, a new Nigerian wunderkind called Prometheus has joined the team. Although, he was bought without the approval of Scott Manson. But currently, the team is found in Athens where they ought to play a Champion's League tie against Olympiacos. After a few minutes of play, the City's key player Bekim Develi collapses and dies. Both sides agree that the match will be finished the next day. London City lost 4-1. Although, more important information subsequently arose, because it turned out that Devili was in a company of a young call girl the night before, who was also found dead, weighted down at the bottom of the harbour. As a result, the whole squad is considered suspects and held in Greece until the case is resolved. It represents a huge problem because on the weekend the team ought to play an important game against Chelsea in the Premier League, which is now postponed and the dates of their other matches are questioned. But the second leg of Champions League has been moved from Silvertown Docks to the Panathinaikos stadium, the great rival of Olympiacos. Moreover, the actual situation in Greece is catastrophic, as a financial crisis peaks and governments employees have not been paid in months, they do not have much interest in solving the crime. Because of it, Mason steps up and starts to do digging himself, in a hope to bring the team back home as soon as possible.

After he got some information from players who knew Develi had a girls company, and from talking with other call girls, who knew the dead girl, he realized that a person who can shine some light into this case he had already known. Her name was Valentina, she was a call girl for the wealthier businessmen. Mason had an affair with her while he was in Greece a few weeks ago. He found out that the dead call girl stole anti-allergenic pills from Develi as he found these pills in her handbag. It turned out that Develi was allergic to chickpeas which allergic reaction could cause a heart attack. It was also obvious that someone who

wanted dead of Bekim Devili, paid that girl to steal those pills. Scott had a feeling that it could be someone who also bet on the outcome of the match.

Throughout the investigation, Scott discovers that the murder of the call girl could be related to some older case from 2008 when some girl was also dumped in the marina, but the killer was never found. But when he discovered her emails and the one with a suicide note in particular, it was more than clear that it was not murder, but suicide. She felt guilty because she thought it was her fault that Devili was dead, and she could not handle the situation, so she took her own life.

The team nutritionist insisted that Devili has not had any chickpeas before the match. It meant that he had to get to contact with it somehow else. Everything adds up while Scott was watching the second-leg match against Olympiacos. It turned out that a new technical director Kojo, who have also led African soccer academies and offered some players to the club for lower prices, made an agreement with some Russian betting syndicate, which have made a significant bet on the first City's match against Olympiacos. Only one question was left unanswered. How did the allergenic substance get into the Devili's body? Scott found out the answer in the tunnel before the second match. When the teams were preparing in the tunnel before going on the pitch, Scott saw Kojo with some woman who was taking care of children that accompany the players on the pitch. From a conversation with a lady, he discovers that Kojo provided snacks for all the children, which was odd because normally these kids do not have any food. The food included hummus which was a sticking point because as children went hand in hand with players, one of them had to have the hummus on their hands and it could be enough amount to cause an allergic reaction.

The match ended 4-0 for City which meant that City secured qualification for the next round of the Champions League. Nevertheless, Scott was very disappointed with the way, how everything ended and he resigned from the club.

2.3 *False Nine*

In the third book published in 2016 called *False Nine*, Scott Mason finds himself currently unemployed after leaving the London City FC as he discovered a moonlighting of the club's owner. He is now looking for a new job. Even though he has an interview with a small Scottish club, he accepts a lucrative offer from Shanghai to coach a Chinese Super League club. But he only finds himself in the middle of a scam between rich Chinese billionaires and rivals of the team which he was about to work for. He leaves China disappointed and

humiliated. Although, it did not take long and he was offered another work opportunity, this time from Barcelona FC. However, Scott has not been proposed a manager job, but he was offered a huge fee to play a detective and track down one of the Barcelona's missing star player Jerome Dumas who was in Barcelona FC on loan from Paris Saint-Germain, and who has gone missing and nobody knows about his whereabouts. Scott accepts the job offer mainly because he had already worked for Barcelona FC at the beginning of his coaching career.

Scott follows the last trail of Jerome Dumas which leads him to Antigua where Dumas was on holiday but never made it back to Spain. But firstly, he stopped by in Dumas's apartment in Paris, which he found empty and up for sale. While he was in Paris, he found out from Jerome's girlfriend that he was smoking weed, was looking for a gun, and was even a suspect of a rape investigation. But his actual arrest passed by because the police were accused of racism and the whole case was dismissed. Then in Antigua, Scott is said by police that it is only a matter of time when the police find him, but he knows he can do better than the police and continues solving a mystery on his own. He meets an attractive woman who offers him help from her unknown client who thinks he knows where Dumas could be. Scott has no other choice than to accept the help from the lady as he has not found better clue himself so far. His next steps take him to Dumas's home island of Guadeloupe which lies about one hundred kilometres from Antigua. Shortly after they arrived in Guadeloupe, they find a missing man in his house – he was not hiding at all. Dumas invited them in and told them the story from his point of view. He told them that he wanted just a little room from all the negative things that were going on. But Scott founded the main reason why Jerome did not come back. Jerome was already on the airport, but when he read a newspaper saying that his father was accused of murder, he could not leave him behind. It turns out that the arrested man was actually the unknown client of the mentioned lady. Moreover, it turned out that Jerome has a twin brother. They look exactly the same, and it was helpful because Jerome had some kind of hearth problem and the twin brother had to take Jerome role and undergo physical tests, otherwise Jerome would not sign with any football club. This would not be their first rodeo, they had already fooled Jerome's previous teams. In addition, the situation got even worse when an owner of a boat worked it out and demanded some money from their dad. When Jerome got to the airport and saw the newspaper, he guessed what must have happened.

The dilemma was now on Scott, because he had to decide what to say the Barcelona's officials who hired him. He decided to say the truth to Barcelona's officials because he felt

that he would let the club down when he would be lying. Nevertheless, he told nothing in PSG so Jerome could still play there, but Scott makes a deal for both brothers with one Chinese club, which had no problem with the medical tests because these tests are not a big deal there. Scott comes back to London and he gets wind of murder of his former employer Viktor Sokolnikov. Soon after, he gets a call from his daughter who now owns the London City FC. She asks him to coach the team again, and that is where the *Scott Manson* series ends.

3 AN ANALYSIS OF THE SCOTT MANSON TRILOGY

The theme and importance of football setting are fading away consecutively as the series develops. In the first book of the *Scott Manson* series, the theme and the background of football world seem to be the most significant. It is because the narrator wants to show a reader, where the story takes place, which means he has to depict it. Moreover, in the first two books, the narrator is a manager of the football club, which predestines him to be in contact with players and be present at the stadiums during matches and training sessions. That is another reason why is the football setting much more important in the first two books of the series. In the last book, the narrator and protagonist is no longer a football manager so it takes a reader necessary away from the football world.

3.1 Analysis of *January Window*

The genre of the novel *January Window* is thriller or detective fiction which corresponds with the main plot. As is usual in the works of detective fiction, the story is basically about finding a killer. But what sets this novel apart is the setting of football. The football environment is very specific because there is a lot of action on a football pitch as well as off a pitch. At least half of the story is set somewhere around a football pitch, for example at the stadium of the London City FC, stadiums of other teams, training ground or directly on the field. The action of the game represents a big opportunity for a writer to portray the game in various ways. Some descriptions of the game are so unique that it is not very common to see similar ones while describing other sports. Of course, some sports are from the action point of view closer to the football one, for instance, rugby or American football. Although, sports such as volleyball or individual sports such as tennis are much harder options for picturing the action sequences because, in these sports, the game situations are very repetitious which leaves a writer with fewer scenarios how to portray the action of particular sports. On the other hand, football offers a big portfolio of descriptions of play with many details that can be used, such as how well a ball was kicked or how a tackle was executed, or unlimited possibilities to depict a scored goal.

Another interesting thing to look at is a comparison of football setting as a representative of a team sport with some individual sport like tennis. For a team sport is characteristic a big level of competitiveness between players and staff in the same team, which in some cases leads to an argument. That is also true for the novel as there are relationship issues in the team and the author tries his best to capture these sequences. However, in the individual

sports are not often these problems, because athletes work most of the time alone or only with a coach which means they do not have to be bothered by these unpleasant situations or not in that big magnitude.

In the novel, there are many dialogues between coaches themselves or coaches and players, which means that to set the story in the environment of an individual sport like tennis, would drastically lower the possibility of these dialogues and arguments because there would not be many people to talk to. In addition, after the team is stroked by the news of the death of their manager, the tendency in collective sports is usually to come together and be united in the worst of the times. It is shown when Scott appeals on players before a match to play for Zarco. “I pointed to Zarco’s picture on the wall. ‘Take a good look at that man before you walk out there. Ask yourself what it would mean to him if you won this game tonight. Really look him in the eye and listen to his voice in your head because I promise you that you’ll hear it, as clear as bell. I think he will tell you this: you’re not going to win this game for me, or for Scott Manson, or for Mr. Sokolnikov. You are going to win this game for all believers out there.”³⁵ The bond between players and coaches like the one in the story would not be possible in an individual sport, therefore a speech would be almost impossible to make and that would make a huge difference in the atmosphere of the whole narrative.

With the story set in a professional football league, the theme of money is another point that should not be overlooked. Would be the narrative somehow different if the story took place for example in other collective sport such as handball, where is the economic situation considerably different. It can be said that money influence materialistic part of the narrative, as football players live in luxury houses or have sports cars that are mentioned in the narrative. Nevertheless, the main plot would not be affected by different economic conditions because the setting does not act as a place where everything is nice and luxurious. More important for the narrative are the characters and overall plot which would not be any different if the story took place in a handball team with lower economic possibilities. There would still be a sport setting with its characteristics, even when the players would not drive sports cars.

As Michael Oriard mentioned, the duration of a story in football fiction writing can be handled from various angles. The story could pass off in a single career, one season, or even just one match. In the *January Window*, the duration of the story is, as the name of the novel

³⁵ Philip Kerr, *January Window* (London: Head of Zeus, 2014), 583-584.

suggests, about one month, January, which means a few matches from a football point of view. But in the narrative there are also flashbacks to the past of Scott Manson, such as to his career of a football player or from his time in prison. Moreover, Scott also contributes to the narrative by telling football stories from the past or mentioning some former players and their actions either on or off the pitch.

The whole story is narrated by the protagonist Scott Manson. It means that in the narrative are also present his thoughts and beliefs. In addition, there are many dialogues which are basically Scott's talks with players, staff or police detectives. Probably only Scott can be called a major character of the story, because he is the only character that a reader gets to know, his thoughts, emotions, motives, and his actions, but most importantly, he is fundamental figure in terms of the narrative.

The setting of the story is the 21st century in England. Mostly the story is set in London where the club has its base and also where the protagonist Scott Manson lives. In general, football is perceived as sport number one in English society at this time. However, with this period in history is connected an issue of judicious perception of gay people by the society. Many people still look at them through their fingers, and it is even more problematic when people are in the crowd of other fans at a stadium. That is shown on the example of a young player who confides to Scott about being gay and Scott advises him not to go public with this information. He is mainly afraid of the mentioned perception from fans that can be mean to players who are somehow different.

From the beginning of the story, the reader is shown, what it is like to be on Christmas break as an assistant coach of London City. The match schedule is perceived as ironman triathlon as there are three games in six days. The first one takes place on Boxing Day, the second on twenty-eight and last one is right before a New Year's Day. The time needed for players to properly rest is not long enough and injuries then starting to occur.

This is perceived as a problem not only in the novel but also in the professional football. Football managers have fought a long-time war with the Football Association desiring a winter break, because of the player fatigue. They have referred to the other major football leagues where the winter break is totally normal as in Spain or Italy. That is why football association has decided that from the season 2019-20 Premier League clubs will have a two-week winter break.³⁶

³⁶ Jason Burt, "Premier League to introduce winter break from February 2020," *The Telegraph*, June 8, 2018, <https://www.telegraph.co.uk/football/2018/06/08/premier-league-introduce-winter-break-february-2020>.

A picture of how football is important to players is well displayed on the character of Matt Drennan, who was a teammate of Scott Manson at Arsenal 10 years ago. Now, he comes to visit his old friend, but for Manson, it was hard to believe what person he has become after his career was ended in twenty-nine when he broke his leg. He was now fighting with depression, he drank a lot, had an addiction to cocaine and was in prison for drunk driving and assaulting a police officer. As they were remembering the old times on the football pitch, it was obvious that the guy would do anything to go back in time and play again. After they have ended the discussion, Scott ordered a taxi for Drennan. A few days later the man was found dead as he hanged himself. It was a shock for Scott who started to blame himself for not being a real friend in times when Drennan needed him most.

One of the BBC articles mentions that it is not uncommon that football players or any pro-athletes can experience a hard time after retirement. It is not an easy task to put all of the hard work, dedication, and passion away just like that. For many pro-athletes, the sport has become a part of their identity, so it is threatening for them to lose their lifetime purpose. Consequently, this transition from a sport's life to an ordinary life can lead to some serious problems such as depression, addiction or self-harm. Apart from a psychological factor, the economic factor is also something to look for, because when the athletes retire, in most cases their income is drastically lowered.³⁷ The nice example is made by professional football player who has likened the relationship to a sport as to a loved person. "Most guys don't understand that playing the game is only what you do... it's not who you are. Players who fall in love with the game get heartbroken because the sport doesn't have a heart or the ability to love you back."³⁸ This is exactly the case of Matt Drennan who had felt without a purpose and which led him to prematurely end his life.

In the novel is sometimes used the method of description, which basically stops the narrative to portray the setting. "The City's training ground, at Hangman's Wood, was the best of its kind in England, with several full-size pitches, an indoor training facility, a medical and rehabilitation area, saunas, steam rooms, gymnasias, physiotherapy and massage rooms, a number of restaurants, an X-ray and MRI clinic, hydrotherapy pools, ice baths, an acupuncture clinic, basketball courts and a velodrome."³⁹ It was also a place where the entry of press and public was strictly dismissed. It was mainly because the fact that in the

³⁷ "State of Sport 2018: Half of retired sportspeople have concerns over mental and emotional wellbeing," *BBC*, February 5, 2018, <https://www.bbc.com/sport/42871491>.

³⁸ Robert Laura, "How Star Athletes Deal With Retirement," *Forbes*, May 22, 2012, <https://www.forbes.com/sites/robertlaura/2012/05/22/how-star-athletes-deal-with-retirement/#64b582a92a4e>.

³⁹ Kerr, *January Window*, 41.

professional football from time to time occur some tiffs and arguments in a team, so it is better for everybody when the public is not aware of these incidents, the London City was no exception. Like many managers, Zarco has usually let the training sessions under control of his assistant coach (Scott Manson) and same as other managers, he has liked to observe the trainings from the sidelines. He was responsible for picking the right players for matches, match-day motivation, tactics and overall philosophy of the club. The Scott's responsibility was to make sure that the players are match fit and to teach them some technical skills in the process. Based on everyday contact with players, the assistant manager create a more personal relationship with players, because he is perceived by players as one of them. The managers usually shouting instructions from the sidelines and criticising mistakes or lack of effort. When one of the drills ended, Zarco walked on to the pitch and the players gathered around him waiting for his comments. He looked exactly as you would expect from a central back defender from the 90's, which ensured him some respect between the lads. From the beginning of his speech, he started to criticize lazy playing style of some players. The one player that was affected by it the most, was senior player Ayrton Taylor. "You play like a stupid baby. Not a man. Look at you. Bootlaces undone, socks hanging down – why don't you suck your thumb as well, like little Jack Wilshere? You're not even out of breath, my friend. I look at you and I see an asshole that's not good for shit."⁴⁰ Taylor was pissed off and only because of other players, he did not get a fight with Zarco. Nevertheless, the very same afternoon, Taylor was put on the list of players for January transfer, which only shows how interpersonal relationships run also a world of professional football.

In a book called *Sport psychology for coaches* is shown that being a respectable coach, one needs to be a good psychologist. When taking care of a problem, the coaches must be good at handling them, because in such a competitive environment as professional football, the conflicts are very common. One way for coaches to deal with them is to try resolving the problem naturally depending on their character features. Nevertheless, this approach does not always bring positive results or guarantee success. David Johnson introduces five strategies of how to react when a conflict occurs. These strategies are turtle (withdrawing), shark (attacking), teddy bear (smoothing), fox (compromising) or owl (collaborating). In the book, Zarco turned to the shark type, which is the case where someone wins and someone loses, nothing in between. Sharks will do everything necessary to achieve their goals without

⁴⁰ Kerr, *January Window*, 49-50.

worrying about the feelings of others.⁴¹ Due to this technique players are likely to feel discredited before the others and such behaviour from coaches is not helpful in terms of establishing healthy relationships with players. Moreover, the athletes' performance can be affected too because of the negative interpersonal communication. In general, the negative communication to players or athletes is why many coach manuals are published. Nonetheless, it is difficult to back up that such behaviour from coaches appears in the professional or even amateur football environment, as there are not many available studies which depicts such manners, but if you have ever played some team sport, you know that these things happen.

In addition, when Zarco was speaking to his players, Scott as a coach assistant started translating what Zarco was saying for two Spanish players. Scott has got a university degree in modern languages at Birmingham University so he was able to speak fluent many languages such as Spanish, German or Italian.

The professional football in England has become a multilingual as foreign players come to play to the Premier League. European players are put in the same locker room as players from Africa, South America and even Asia which can make the communication between players and staff complicated. It is always a good thing when you have someone, who can speak other languages. Sometimes even players can contribute to effective communication as some of them have played in different countries and have learned various languages. One of the most recognizable coach Arsène Wenger has suggested that football itself is a mode of communication, and added that: "People who cannot speak together can play together because you use your body and the way you understand the game to communicate, and you can share exactly the same vision of the game. A Russian, an American and a Japanese can play together and have a fantastic time together without talking together, and that's where football is sometimes an obstacle, because players feel they don't need to communicate, and we have to push them to learn English well. They feel sometimes that to play together is enough."⁴²

Another coach-player relationship is pictured when Scott is already appointed to be a manager of the club, after the unpleasant death of his forerunner Joao Zarco. Scott finds Ayrton Taylor (the player who was put on the transfer list by Zarco) and give him a pet talk,

⁴¹ Quoted in Damon Burton, and Thomas D. Raedeke, *Sport psychology for coaches*, 1st ed. (Champaign IL: Human Kinetics, 2008), 29-30.

⁴² Ed M. Wood, "Languages And Football: How The Beautiful Game Became Multilingual, And How The Players Cope," *Babbel*, June 7, 2016, <https://www.babbel.com/en/magazine/languages-and-multilingual-football>.

in which he admits that the way Zarco treated him was unfair. Nevertheless, Scott is passing on the experiences that he has gained throughout his career like that he witnessed much more intense arguments than the one which Taylor had with Zarco, and suggested that these arguments can be eye-opening for the player and manager. “In my day as a player managers did much worse than that... Big Ron Atkinson chased a player around the dressing room at Villa and ended up punching the wrong bloke... Lawrie McMenemy had a ruck with Mark Wright in the showers at Southampton. And when he was at Forest Cloughie punched Roy Keane... Keane says now it was the best thing that ever happened to him.”⁴³ Scott encourages Taylor to work hard and to be rightful member of the team and have a chance to be called to the England national team. The openness and good attitude motivated Taylor to work hard again and from that moment on, he started to be a key player for the team. Based on the differentiation of coaches’ types in the book *Applying Sport Psychology: Four Perspectives*, Scott acts as a prototype of cooperative coach. Typical for this type of coaching is accepting a role of an adult and implement it in the interaction with an athlete. The purpose of this type of coaching is to persuade players to take the responsibility for their actions and achievements, and through that help them to reach shared goals.⁴⁴

The protagonist sometimes uses action from a pitch to describe a life situation. Just like when he tries to catch a fake police officer, he describes the act of his pursuing as a situation on the pitch when a defender has to stop the opposite attacker. “As tackles went, this one was just as high as Roy’s, and of course was well off the ball; and it was probably just as well that the fake copper’s leg wasn’t on the ground when I struck with both feet against his knee, otherwise I could have done him a lot more damage.”⁴⁵

A Roy who is mentioned here, is the Roy Keane, Irish footballer who throughout his career played for instance for Manchester United, and the reason why he is mentioned is basically because he was always perceived as an aggressive and tough opponent to play against. When mentioning him, Scott points out to one of his tackles from 2001 when he took down one of the Manchester City’s midfielders and got a red card for his tackle. This description of the event shows that once a footballer always a footballer. Throughout his career Scott has definitely done many tackles like this and even after his retirement, his

⁴³ Kerr, *January Window*, 377.

⁴⁴ Jim Taylor and Gregory Scott Wilson, *Applying Sport Psychology: Four Perspectives* (Champaign IL: Human Kinetics, 2005), 167.

⁴⁵ Kerr, *January Window*, 443.

thinking as a football player has not change, so when catching a bad guy he knows exactly what to do, because he has done it million times before under the lights on a football pitch.

In the team of City's players was also a young 21 year old German striker named Christoph Bändchen. He had a potential to become one of the best strikers in the world. One day, he had a talk with Scott in his office where he made a confession that he is a gay. It was a good thing that they talked in German as nobody could overheard what they were talking about because nobody else in the club talked German. He told Scott that he had a hard time and asked him for an advice if he should have come straight and tell the guys in the team that he is a gay. Scott advises him to tell no one, because he thought that it would affected the young boy career in a negative way, and also because of the fans that could use it against him and insult him because of being a gay. Thus, Scott says, that he should never talk about it with anybody else in the club except him, and advised him to let it be until his professional football career was over. It is no surprise that Christoph was not happy with this piece of advice but accepted it and did not let anyone know about his sexuality.

From the Scott's point of view, he behaved exactly as a couch should behave as he offers an advice when one of the players asks for help. Maybe it was also the reason why the player went directly to Scott and not to Zarco, because he knew his personality and character from his participations in the training sessions. The effective communication between a player and a couch is fundamental to develop a positive relationship. This relationship can then affect a player's performance in and out of the pitch. The coach should be able to effectively communicate with the players, but to do so, he also has to actively listen to what a player has to say to be able to truly understand the meaning of a player's message. Scott understands the feelings of his player as he mentions that "a small part of me wanted to applaud him for his desire to be so open, but mostly I felt I'd told him how it was."⁴⁶ Scott realized what the young player was going through in the particular moment, and although he felt with him, he gave him the advice which he thought was the most appropriate in his situation. He talked from his own experience, because he knew that a confession about being gay has already ruined a career, and even cost a life, of one player who has committed suicide after he publicly made a confession about being a gay.

The day of Zarco's death, he was usually obliged to give a motivational speech to players before a match against Newcastle at Silvertown Docks. When he was getting late, Scott started to wonder what could have happened to him. It was the first time, he thought

⁴⁶ Kerr, *January Window*, 155.

that he could have some health problem such as a heart attack. He started to think about managers who have experienced it by themselves such as Alex Ferguson, Glenn Roeder or Barry Fry.

To be a manager of a professional football club is definitely a high-pressure job which can definitely affect one's overall health even when the managers are in good shape. There are many managers who have gone through it. The *Independent* newspaper states that little less than half of the football managers have some sort of heart problem. It is basically because 44 percent have increased factors of cardiovascular diseases and therefore are more susceptible to heart disease.⁴⁷ "They are particularly susceptible to them, because when their playing days stop, they stop with physical training but eat the same amount of food or even more. They put on weight, especially around the waist, which only accelerate the problem. They work long hours and are subject to a lot of stress."⁴⁸ This description exactly fits for Zarco, as he was a professional football player until his thirties, and then from all of the sudden, his career ended. As a consequence, he does not exercise as much as he did before, his lifestyle is getting worse because of no purpose to be fit and strong, and doing so stressful job as to be a manager in professional football only makes it worse. Even though the heart attack was not cause of death, Scott's concern about this possibility indicates that the issue of heart problems in professional football is real and people involved in football keep it in mind.

When the players and staff find out about the death of their manager, they are shocked. Scott who was a big admirer of Zarco was highly struck with the news. The players identified the situation as very unpleasant which led them to keep silence on their social media. Moreover, "several of the older players were waiting patiently inside the entrance and fell silent as I walked in the door. They all looked suitably sombre. A few were already wearing black or sporting black armbands."⁴⁹

The black armbands are worn to mark tragic occasions, some catastrophes or any other unpleasant incidents. Typically, the use of the black armbands conveys condolences to the

⁴⁷ Nick Harris, "Nearly half of football managers suffer serious heart problems," *Independent*, March 24, 2005, <https://www.independent.co.uk/sport/football/nearly-half-of-football-managers-suffer-serious-heart-problems-529705.html>.

⁴⁸ Harris, "Heart problems."

⁴⁹ Kerr, *January Window*, 302.

people most affected by an incident. It is a sign of mourning and they are usually worn on the players' right arm.⁵⁰

The author could be picked from many occasions when these armbands were used as they are not uncommon in modern football. For instance, they were used in matches of Leicester City at the end of the year 2018 when the club was shocked by the news of the catastrophic death of its owner Vichai Srivaddhanaprabha who had died after his helicopter crashed. With the use of armband is also connected a hold minute's silence on the sports events.

When the team and the whole club was mourning, the DCO (Doping Control Officer) and FATSO (Football Association Supervising Officer) have come and wanted samples from four of the City's players. It was not enough that on the stadium was present the police, now there was also a drug testing under control of the Football Association. These guys just know how to choose their moments. Nevertheless, Scott has no other choice to agree to this because defiance would only cause other problems for the club.

As *Guardian* mentions, football is the sport number one in England, and it is no surprise that a lot of money is invested in it. Therefore it is no surprise that the anti-doping budget in football is the highest in all UK sports. Consequently, the number of players tested far outpaces other sports. These anti-doping tests are mostly conducted on the elite levels of football such as Premier League and are typically unannounced exactly as in the *January Window*, where the test commissars came in the times of mourning for Zarco's death. Players can be tested anytime, anywhere throughout a whole season and players have to provide their urine and blood samples. This is connected with a fact that football clubs should know about players' whereabouts and are then responsible to provide this information to the doping authorities. When the officers find some substance, which should not be in the bodies of the players, the FA (Football Association) can charge a club or a player some fees or even stop a football career of a particular player.⁵¹

Joao Zarco was notorious for his sometimes arrogant style of managing, but it cannot be taken from him that he was also a good man with a heart in the right place. When his father José died of prostate cancer, he decided to tirelessly support Prostate Cancer UK, charity fighting against prostate cancer. He set an example himself. "Growing a terrible

⁵⁰ "Footballers' black armbands: Why do players wear them?" *BBC*, November 4, 2018, <https://www.bbc.co.uk/newsround/46018609>.

⁵¹ Paul MacInnes, "FA's increased drug testing to focus on Premier League players," *The Guardian*, July 31, 2017, <https://www.theguardian.com/football/2017/jul/31/drug-testing-fa-premier-league-players>.

moustache every November to help raise funds was only a small part of what he did for this charity, which had already tweeted their grief on learning of his death.”⁵²

In the real world of football, support charities or foundations by managers or footballers is not rare. For instance, the charity mentioned in the *January Window* called Prostate Cancer UK charity has been supported by the Premier League managers for many years. The managers and some reporters wear a 'Man of Men' pin-badge, which is a badge in a shape of a man, and they proudly wear it on their suits typically in closeness to their heart during matches. They want to bring awareness of the prostate cancer to the fans all around the world, and because the matches are watched by millions of people, it is a useful tool for this mission.⁵³

In addition to donating and supporting charities, football managers occasionally take advantage of their time in front of a camera to state some political opinion. This is shown in the *January Window* when Zarco was being asked about the FIFA World Cup in Qatar, which should take place in 2022, and he gives a firm opinion about this topic. He touches topics such as alcohol prohibition, deaths of workers, women's rights or weather. At the end of his interview, he subtly points to the corruption of FIFA officials who were responsible for picking up a country like Qatar to host the World Cup. “Speaking for myself I don't really want to visit a country where I can't drink a glass of wine with a friend from Israel, perhaps. Or a gay friend... Meanwhile I read in the *Guardian* that almost a hundred Nepalese workers have already died on construction sites in Qatar. Think about that. A hundred people are dead just so one little country can host a meaningless football tournament. This is madness.”⁵⁴

However, commenting any political related matter or wearing items with deeper political meaning is forbidden according to FA regulations: “The appearance on, or incorporation in, any item of clothing (including football boots) of any distasteful, threatening, abusive, indecent, insulting, discriminatory or otherwise ethically or morally offensive message, or any political message, is prohibited.”⁵⁵ But even these restriction have not stopped some managers to publicly say or show what they truly stay for. For instance,

⁵² Kerr, *January Window*, 501-502.

⁵³ “Who's the Man? The story behind the badge that every football manager is wearing,” Prostate Cancer UK, accessed April 7, 2019, <https://prostatecanceruk.org/about-us/news-and-views/2017/1/who-s-the-man-the-story-behind-the-badge-that-every-football-manager-is-wearing>.

⁵⁴ Kerr, *January Window*, 55.

⁵⁵ Lawrence Ostlere, “Pep Guardiola charged by FA for wearing yellow ribbon in support of Catalan independence,” *Independent*, February 23, 2018, <https://www.independent.co.uk/sport/football/premier-league/pep-guardiola-catalan-independence-fa-yellow-ribbon-manchester-city-a8225591.html>.

Pep Guardiola, well-known football coach who is currently working for Manchester City FC has been charged for wearing a yellow ribbon, which symbolizes support for two of his good friends who were imprisoned in Spain as a consequence of the Catalanian referendum on independence.⁵⁶ Some managers just have a tendency to say what they have on mind, and even they are right, they have to respect restrictions of the Football Association or otherwise expect sanctions. Those are the rules in English football nowadays.

As was mentioned, the role of football in January Window is probably the most important in terms of the whole series *Scott Manson*. The protagonist is portrayed as an enthusiastic football coach, who was playing the game by himself in the past. This fact is useful when he frequently brings up different football topics and issues. In addition, he uses descriptions of the historic moments of the game as a relation with some ongoing situations. The detective plot leads most of the most to somebody from the football world so it also keeps the protagonist in the environment.

3.2 Analysis of *Hand of God*

The setting of the *Hand of God* is for the most part set in the 21st century in Greece and partly in Russia, Germany, and England. The economic problems in Greece play a big part in the background of the story as officials or government employees are not paid salaries and their work ethic is being negatively affected by this negative economic situation. This is one of the reasons, why Scott has to play a detective again because it would have taken a long time for the police to solve the crime.

With the second novel, the football setting has still its importance, but a reader also starts to have a feeling that and the whole theme of football begins to diminish. It is most obviously demonstrated at the end of the book when a depiction and the importance of the second match of Champions League is put aside to make a room for the main storyline. A reader who wanted to know, how the football storyline will escalate, feels like he has been cheated, because apart from the main detective storyline, the football one fades away in times when it should culminate.

The first thing mentioned in the *Hand of God* is the World Cup in Brazil. Scott wonders how superstitious are players in today's football. It is not only that they simple knock on wood or do some similar ritual to help them feel good before a match, but some football

⁵⁶ Ostlere, "Pep Guardiola charged."

players take it to a whole new level. Scott gives examples of a few City players who participate in the World Cup in Brazil and does extraordinary things to feel better on the pitch. For instance, one of them, young Mexican just know how to score a goal because God basically tells him, or Ayrton Taylor who broke one of his bones simply because he did not bring his lucky silver bulldog statuette and did not prayed before the game. But it was nothing against one Ghanaian player whose good sport form was conditioned by wearing a leopard fur in his underpants.

As mentions the UEFA, the superstitions represent some belief for players. A belief that when they do their usual ritual before a game, their performance or anything else will develop in their favour. It gives them a sort of reassurance and the feeling of calm before a game. Performing these rituals is nothing uncommon, many players have at least some small ritual that they do repeatedly. Look at Kolo Touré who had to be the last man leaving a dressing room in his time at Arsenal. Gary Lineker, one of the best England strikers, for example, did not take any shot before a game started, simply because he did not want to let slip out his luck.⁵⁷ It can be assumed that a list of all players with at least some ritual would be much longer.

Scott mentions buying a Fergie's book (Alex Ferguson), who was a manager of Manchester United for 27 seasons. When he reads about the relationship which Fergusson had with David Beckham in Manchester United, he has to agree with Fergusson opinion that players' wealth and glory depend on the fans who sit on the terrace and help to pay players' wages. That was the problem with David Beckham, who was from the Fergusson point of view, too focused on his appearance and did not realize, that for some people his manners and fancy cars or whatever, meant a disrespect towards them. Scott thinks about a football like a business and in business, people have to be aware of a public relations, because as he says: "Perception is all and I've no wish to see supporters storming the fucking barricades in protest against the disparity in wealth that exists between them and professional footballers."⁵⁸ Scott is afraid that football can lose its touch with ordinary people and therefore says his players to behave with a respect to their supporters.

It can be said that there is definitely a big wage gap between the wages of a professional football player and other ordinary jobs. The curious fact is that these ordinary people are the ones who support teams and pay for the tickets or souvenirs which then contribute to the

⁵⁷ "Friday 13 special: European football superstitions," UEFA, accessed May 1, 2019. <https://www.uefa.com/memberassociations/news/newsid=2208535.html>.

⁵⁸ Philip Kerr, *Hand of God*, (London: Head of Zeus, 2015), 20.

salary of players. Nevertheless, it has to be pointed out that we are talking about the real top of the chain of football. For instance, from all 1.5 billion English youth players who are playing in organised football, only 180 of them will make it to the top as Premier League players.⁵⁹ According to this information, the chance to play in PL seems almost like science fiction. There needs to be also taken into account that to get there means many years of hard work, dedication and a lot of sacrifices. People often see only the glamorous top, fancy cars, houses, and so on. But they do not see the journeys which has got the players to the top and which were full of hardships and obstacles.

Moreover, the players' careers last only about 15 years when they are lucky and their body is in good shape. Which means, that they have dedicated their youth for playing 15 years for good money while knowing that there is a very small chance of achieving it. And regardless luckily succeeding and having their star careers, even so, after that when they are already in their thirties or forties, they have to start again from the bottom. Of course, some former players as Scott Manson or Zarco can find themselves passing on the experiences gained throughout their careers and continue in football-related positions such as managers, but there is definitely not a room for every football player to become one. Some Premier League players have secured themselves for a lifetime thanks to their salaries. On the other hand, a majority of players need to redesign their lifestyle to be able to pay all of their expenses. A football career doesn't last forever and players need to secure themselves and their families for the rest of their lives and not just for their playing career. Therefore it is necessary for players to think about their future before they actually retire, otherwise, it could be too late and they could start to have financial problems because they could no longer afford a lifestyle on which are used. "All players believe they are Peter Pan and think they will play forever. When their career suddenly stops, it can be a shock. If you play until you are 35 - which would be lucky - you are still a very young, healthy individual with another 35-40 years in which to work, live, bring up your family and put your kids through education and university."⁶⁰

Generally, the second novel *Hand of God* is close to the first novel in many aspects. Even when the story is most of the time set in Greece, the football setting is a major theme of the narrative. Nevertheless, as the story is unfolding, the protagonist is pushed to the other

⁶⁰ Mark Bailey, "What do footballers do when they retire?" *The Telegraph*, August 15, 2014, <https://www.telegraph.co.uk/men/active/11028666/What-do-footballers-do-when-they-retire.html>.

non-football settings. The role of football can be then perceived as the second best option for the narrative, right behind the main detective storyline, which is unfortunately aimed at other settings.

3.3 Analysis of *False Nine*

In the last novel called *False Nine* is the setting of football portrayed very briefly and most of the time, a reader does not even get in contact with it. Apart from the previous two novels, the protagonist is no longer a football manager and therefore he has no possibility to communicate with staff and players, to lead training sessions or just have his presence on a football stadium. For this reason, the football background totally fades away in this novel. The protagonist has the role of a detective and football is no longer a key aspect of the narrative. Of course there are mentions of football clubs as FC Barcelona or Paris Saint-Germain, some football deals going on, but in the end, a reader who expects some depiction of game sequences is disappointed because there are not many of them.

Due to the story set in the other environments than the football one, the question of whether the football setting is still irreplaceable get to the point when it starts to be relevant theory. It should be right to assume that the story could take place in other settings such as other sport's environment or even in ordinary ones such as school background. It is basically because the main storyline is about to find out, what has happened to somebody while discovering clues along the way. This scenario can be set in various environments, and because the football background is mentioned only as a direct result of the connection with the first two novels of the series, and is no longer significant for the narrative.

As was mentioned, the story is only occasionally set in the football environment. One of these occasions is when there is a mention of racial abuse of the missing player committed by his own PSG fans. This racial abuse contributes to his poor performances and then also his worsening mental health. It also points to the topic of racial abuse in French football. "It's really dispiriting when your own fans are the ones shouting the racial abuse,' Dumas said."⁶¹

Nevertheless, the racism on the football stadiums is only the reflection of the society of a particular country. As is mentioned in one of the New York Times articles, racism is not a problem of one country, because the problem with racial abuse is also visible in other

⁶¹ Kerr, Philip, *Hand of God*, (London: Head of Zeus, 2015), 113.

European leagues.⁶² FIFA and UEFA, two biggest football associations of professional football share a campaign against racial abuse called “Say no to racism”. “Fair play and mutual respect are fundamental to football. Discriminatory behaviour is not permitted. We ask you to maintain the principles of fair play and to take part in football in a spirit of unity, respect and equality.”⁶³ Because of the ethnical diversity of French population which basically consists of three basic races - white, blacks, Muslims - racism from the French society is then taken on the football stadiums.⁶⁴

The last novel of the *Scott Manson* series, unfortunately, does not bring many football themes. The protagonist is too busy solving the mystery and the football setting then loses its importance.

⁶² Elian Peltier, “Racial Abuse, Then a Beating, on a French Soccer Field,” *The New York Times*, October 15, 2018, <https://www.nytimes.com/2018/10/15/sports/soccer/france-soccer-racism.html>.

⁶³ “Say no to racism - My game is fair play,” FIFA, Accessed May 1, 2019, <https://www.fifa.com/confederationscup/videos/y=2017/m=6/video=fifa-say-no-to-racism-my-game-is-fair-play-2895097.html>.

⁶⁴ Peltier, “Racial Abuse.”

CONCLUSION

This thesis has two main purposes that were set out to reach in the introduction part. Both of them were based on the analysis of the *Scott Manson* series written by Scottish writer Philip Kerr.

The primary purpose of this thesis aimed to find out if the role of football in the individual novels of the *Scott Manson* series is significant or not. The analysis showed that in the first novel called *January Window* is the role and setting of football the most important and therefore has the most significant role in terms of narrative. It is mainly because of the story, which was developing most of the time in the football environment such as football stadiums or training ground. The role of football was supported with complements of the protagonist's recollections of the historic football events. In the second book *Hand of God*, the role of football is still a major factor of the narrative, although, the detective storyline took the protagonist away from the football setting and therefore it slowly started to lose its significance. The role of football in the last novel *False Nine* has small importance, mainly due to the fact that the protagonist is no longer a football manager, and the novel depends only upon his detective skills.

The second goal of this thesis was to figure out if the football setting in the *Scott Manson* series was a true reflection of the real-life football world. The analysis showed that the author has either his own experience with or he has gained the knowledge of the football environment because he mentioned many football related issues throughout the series. However, the analysis showed that due to the fading role of football in every other novel, so consequently was declining the number of allusions to the football. On the other hand, the depiction of the football background seemed to correspond with the world of professional football, because the analysis demonstrated that in the novels were displayed relationship issues in the club, problems that professional football club has to face such as an anti-doping control, handling interviews, and many others. Most of the mentioned topics has been supported by the secondary sources.

To conclude, Phillip Kerr and his *Scott Manson* series built a bridge between two very different things – football and detective fiction. The author supported the idea of McGowan, Taylor or Oriard that football can be a good bedfellow with so much renowned genre of the literature as detective fiction surely is. He showed that putting two completely different things together can sometimes be a risk worth taking.

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