

UNIVERSITY OF LJUBLJANA
SCHOOL OF ECONOMICS AND BUSINESS

MASTER'S THESIS

**ANALYSIS OF AGENT-PLAYER RELATIONSHIPS IN SLOVENIAN
FOOTBALL**

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AUTHORSHIP STATEMENT

The undersigned Nika Kovač, a student at the University of Ljubljana, School of Economics and Business, (hereafter: SEB LU), author of this written final work of studies with the title Analysis of agent-player relationships in Slovenian football, prepared under supervision of Full Professor Tomaž Čater, PhD.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

- CAS** – The Court of Arbitration for Sport
- FA** – The Football Association
- FFAR** – FIFA Football Agent Regulations
- FIFA** – International Association Football Federation
- FAS** – Football Association of Slovenia

1 INTRODUCTION

Sport is a diverse and very dynamic activity that connects people around the world not caring about gender, religion, or any other personal characteristics. It continues to be one of the fundamental aspects of human existence, a necessity for movement and the production of elite athletic performance while also increasingly emerging as a crucial link to the business world (Šugman et al., 2002). In today's world, sport is not just a tool to pass the time because nowadays sport is becoming one of the fastest-growing businesses all around the world. People do not know the athletes solely for their sports achievements but also for their activities outside their chosen fields. With sport becoming such a big industry and athletes being in the public spotlight they need to have certain people beside them to help them navigate through life and career. And that is where the role of an agent comes into play. Not just a role of negotiating a better contract, but also a human role in motivating, supporting, and advising the player. In this master's thesis, the focus is on the situation in football as it is constantly named as the most popular sport in the world. It is played in the vast majority of nations worldwide because it is easily accessible, fairly simple to play, does not require special equipment, and can be enjoyed by all generations (EADF, 2022).

A sports agent job is considered to be fairly unique and fascinating, almost glamorous, as people usually just see the percentages top agents get from their biggest transfers. It is easy to overlook the amount of work and effort required to complete a high-profile transfer. With football consistently ranked as the most popular sport in the world, we can confidently claim that it represents one of the most lucrative industries in the world. Not just football, but also sport as a whole is persistently developing as an industry and is becoming one of the most popular types of entertainment for everyone who follows it. Consequently, a significant amount of money is invested in football daily which creates a need for sports agents because footballers need somebody to guide them because their focus is mainly on the football field (StudyCorgi, 2021). As the agents are usually not replaced regularly, and almost become a family member for some, it is also important to understand the dynamic that such a relationship brings. It is of great significance that the relationship is in harmony on both levels – personal and business.

The first people who act as agents are parents because they are the ones who introduce their children to sports and sign them into different sports clubs. If the child continues with the steps in the professional world, the need for a proper agent becomes bigger. However, as Stein (2016) points out in his book, the profession of a sports agent is still taken lightly. The majority of people see them as someone who can just convince an athlete to accept a better contract. Furthermore, there is no specific education needed for the job which surely also plays a role in people's opinion. Another aspect of focus in the master's thesis is also to show what the profession of sports agents consists of to portray the real side of the sports agent job. Agents add a layer of equality in the negotiation process between the athletes and

the club's management making the athlete heard and fairly treated in the process while also in certain cases presenting some sort of guidance for the player (Shrupshire et al., 2016).

Additionally, it is vital to distinguish between a sports player's agent and a sports manager. They do share certain characteristics, including the need for both business and sports expertise. Therefore, it is simple to lump them together. However, it is important to point out that those are two different professions because a sports agent always deals with a player directly while a sports manager usually keeps the relationship indirect (Šugman et al., 2006). There are more differences between the two. They are explained later in the thesis.

Since it is crucial to comprehend the fundamentals of the position football sports agents represent, the portrayal of the profession will play a sizable part in the thesis. Furthermore, the focus is on analyzing the relationship between the two because it is very specific. I used the theoretical components to characterize the field as a whole and to present the guidelines that sports agents must adhere to. My research questions are related to the best possible connection between theory and practice.

The purpose of this master's thesis was to help the agents with suggestions for any possible improvement to the agent-player relationship while gaining some understanding of the function football sports agents play in the lives of professional football players. Furthermore, the ambition of the thesis was to provide some sort of a guidebook to aspiring professional athletes of the role their possible future agents might have in their careers. Therefore, the primary purpose was to educate both parties by demonstrating what kind of obligations they can expect from one another, as well as to show them how they can strengthen their relationship. In addition, it was in my interest to expand my knowledge on the topic thus making my knowledge broader in the industry of sport.

The main goal of the master's thesis was to provide an analysis and paint the whole picture regarding the profession of a sports agent, as well as provide an outline of what a football agent does. Furthermore, the goal was to evaluate the impacts each side has on the other and to analyze from real-life examples how the relationship between the player and the agent works in real life.

In the master's thesis, I was interested in the following four research questions:

- What are the ways the agent affects the career development of the football player?
- How does an agent influence the football player's private life?
- What expectations do both parties have for each other?
- In what ways do authorities control the regulations in real life?

I tried to answer these questions by conducting interviews with different football agents and by conducting an anonymous survey that was done among football players who signed under the interviewed football agents.

The following scientific research methods were used for the implementation and analysis of the master's thesis: the description method was mostly used in the first and second parts of the thesis for describing the profession of sports agent, legal regulations, and financial aspect of the profession following by compilation method, also used in the first and second part of the thesis for summarizing the claims and views of other authors. A comparative approach was used to demonstrate how a sports agent's job differs from that of a sports manager. For the empirical part of the thesis, two approaches were used. One of the approaches used was conducting interviews with the selected football agents, and the other approach used was the method of a survey questionnaire.

Furthermore, both primary and secondary data were used in the master's thesis. Initially, I acquired secondary data to design a theoretical framework for the thesis with the help of literature and sources available online (Google search, ResearchGate) and in the libraries (Cobiss library system and other library sites, such as Internet Archive, EBSCO host, and so on). Moreover, I went through the regulations of the official legal parties and institutions, such as FIFA (International Association of Football Federation) and the Football Association of Slovenia. After the theoretical framework, I collected primary data for the empirical part. That was collected through interviews of selected agents in Slovenian football and also through surveys done with players of those agents.

2 PROFESSION OF A SPORT AGENT

Throughout history, sport has evolved into more than just entertainment for the crowd as it has become one of the biggest growing businesses in the world. Athletes are recognized in every corner of the world becoming heroes for many people. With increasing recognition, athletes are desperate for proper guidance and help which opens up a door for sports agents. Consequently, the business of sports agents investigates one of the most fascinating professions to have emerged in the sports industry (Shropshire et al., 2016). It is said, that nowadays talent and success on the field are not enough to build a successful career. Athletes will always need a person who will take care of the business outside of the field, allowing them to focus solely on the sport. Agents will take on the role of marketers, arbitrators, and consultants, and in some cases, they will even form a friendship with their clients. As there are so many aspects to the job, the profession is known to be highly demanding and hectic, yet at the same time incredibly rewarding (Ede, 2022). However, developing a lucrative profession takes time and requires a person to be highly motivated. Sports agents should be aware of the specific characteristics that are unique to a given sport as it is necessary to have theoretical and practical knowledge for every sports agent involved (StudyCorgi, 2021).

2.1 Difference between a manager and a sport agent

The term "manager" can be used to describe a director, manager, coach, etc. It is a broad term used to describe a person who ensures the efficiency of a particular organization. The

skills and traits of managers are generally mirrored in sports managers, with the difference that sports managers have to connect two fundamentally different fields. By this, Šugman et al. (2006) mean sports activity with its diverse nature and the business side which presents the laws of economics. Managers can occupy various work positions, such as sports directors, sports facility managers, sports event managers, strategic analysts, advisors in the field of sports, etc. Nevertheless, a good manager in sports is well known for skills and traits with which he or she successfully coordinates the whole team and leads the employees to achieve organizational goals. The core functions of a manager are there for problem-solving in the business process, coordinating technically disparate tasks into a logical whole, and carrying out a company's common task with others' assistance. Furthermore, the four fundamental responsibilities of a manager are planning, identifying objectives, and methods for achieving them, and coordinating and defining long-term relationships amongst personnel. Manager has to have the ability to solve complex issues, both within the organization and its environment (Čater, 2015). In the broader aspect, sports managers are no different than managers in business companies as they also have a wide range of duties. Their main objective is assurance that athletes can concentrate on winning without having to bother about the administration or commercial side of the sports. Sports managers put a lot of effort into ensuring that their athletes receive the right tactical and physical training and care so that they can compete to the best of their abilities. Whether that is by hiring a coach, nutritionist, or psychologist, their job is to make sure every member of the team works cohesively to maximize the potential and the result. However, team sports managers have a different set of responsibilities. Their job is to maintain the proper balance with the employees in the organization, as well as the balance of the whole network needed for the team to function effectively. Team sports managers are there for responsible monitoring of the organization's internal operations as well as mediating between the team, its managers, and support staff in the event of a dispute. Moreover, they also serve as a liaison between the team's owners and players, becoming a glue that ties all the stakeholders together. On the contrary, a sports manager of an individual athlete acts as a representative. To give their client a positive public image and acceptance from the outside public they have to maintain a close working relationship with the media. It is also important to point out that the position of the manager changes regarding the sport. In European football, a sports manager often represents a synonym for a team's head coach whereas, in American sports, the manager's role is considered to be smaller, with more of a delegating duty to other coaching staff (Manager Skills, n. d.).

Sports agents are often called brand managers. In today's world, athletes are becoming a brand consequently making agents brand managers. The job of an agent includes multiple different tasks from negotiating a good deal for the athlete to being simply a friend, a confidant, a marketer, etc. For them to find young talents, the work duty also consists of them traveling to sports academies, high schools, tournaments, and club matches acting as scouts. To discover and sign a young promising player, agents are required to have a keen sense of skill and a solid grasp of the sport. Managing the media part can be difficult but top

agents can successfully market their clients. Some agents may also keep an eye on or even manage athlete's social media accounts. Furthermore, since new opportunities are present everywhere, agents must recognize and capitalize on these opportunities. Agents have to assist players in developing their careers and finding the best deal possible for them to advance in their profession. When athletes are embroiled in a dispute it is the agent's job to help them resolve the issue by keeping their public image intact. Apart from negotiating a good deal, agents also need to have enough legal knowledge to make sure that the contracts fulfill all statutory requirements. Moreover, there is one important side that is usually forgotten, and that is that agents have to be trustworthy. Athletes need to trust the agents and agents should never see the players just for their achievements (Ede, 2022).

The power of sports agents has grown over time but even though they are now an essential component of the sports industry clubs still occasionally view them as being manipulative during the negotiation process. The amounts spent on transfer fees and salaries are nowadays skyrocketing and according to the contracts, agents receive a portion of those sums as a payment for their services. Better terms negotiated for players mean better commissions for them (Bile, 2020).

Knowing the basic duties and tasks of both, it is crucial to note that even though the line is blurry, these two represent different professions. It is fairly easy to group both of them as they do have a lot of things in common, such as the requirement for both business and athletic expertise. Anonymous agents explained that while agents and managers share opposite views, there is also a fair amount of skepticism and suspicion among them. Yet, they share the same slice of the business (Secret Agent Man, 2022).

The main distinction between managers and agents is that agents negotiate and settle contracts looking out for the best interest of their athletes whereas sports managers are the ones who propose contracts from the club's side looking out for the benefit of the organization. Yet, the sports managers may also serve as the athletes' coaches while agents are always just agents. Another difference is that sports managers typically maintain an indirect interaction with the players whereas sports agents always engage directly with them (Šugman et al., 2006). Furthermore, agents have to be licensed by the umbrella organization or a country while the manager's position does not require any qualification. However, a manager – if acting as a coach – does need a Union of European Football Association license otherwise the club gets punished. Sports managers are opposed to sports agents employed by the organization. The position is internal whereas agents belong to the external group of people. While managers work for the organization and not for individual players, the duties of the managing profession are also to maintain a healthy work-life balance for the organization, plan and organize training sessions, and coordinate daily tasks between team or organization members. Duty of the agents that is different from manager duties is also negotiating endorsement deals with signed athletes. If they do not work on contracts, they spend their time marketing the value of their players. Moreover, several athletes are frequently represented at once by one sports agent or agency (Manager Skills, n. d.).

2.2 History of sport representatives

The appearance of modern sports agents was first spotted in the United States of America. Baseball tournaments of a semi-professional level were already taking place around the nation during the Civil War between 1861 and 1865. These baseball competitions were organized by various middlemen whose function was comparable to that of a current sports agent. The existence of the agents is connected to the evolution of professional sports. As professional sports were taking the stage in the United States, in Europe that was not the case. At that time, Europe was still dominated by supporters of amateur sports. Back in the States, the government decided not to treat sport as a state issue, allowing the private sector to dominate the formation of the sport. This decision allowed sports organizers and promoters to have a great deal of freedom, providing them with a chance to stand out. Due to the low financial stakes at that time, agents represented the players as a part of a commercialization process that would eventually result in the acknowledgment of sport as a working profession. The rise of sports agents can be partially attributed to the increase in monetary inflows brought on by sponsorship deals and increasing media attention to sports. Nonetheless, the sporting circles were not amazed by the increasing power of sports agents. The disagreements between the two groups swiftly turned into conflicts of interest where the confusion about the responsibilities of an agent was already a problem. The freedom and autonomy of the business that agents possessed was seen by the official authorities as a threat. Furthermore, in the 1990s, the first legislative initiatives to control the agent industry were presented. The legal restrictions primarily protected student-athletes and inquired agents to be registered and have licenses issued by the adequate state entity. European agents have tried to employ the concepts, techniques, and procedures that Americans successfully applied in the sports markets, primarily in basketball, football, and tennis (European Union, 2009).

2.2.1 Rise of sports agents in Europe

Professional sports in Europe began to develop mostly in the second period of the 19th century. The establishment of (today's oldest football association) The Football Association (hereafter: FA) came as the first powerful resistance towards professional sport. By making various adjustments, specifically the payment of fees for players participating in the FA Cup matches, the FA tried to reverse the trend towards professionalism. Nonetheless, the FA finally agreed to approve professional football in 1885, highlighting the necessity of establishing the process of interpreting the reputation of the game. England was split over the decision, with the North favoring professionalism and the South preferring to protect the ideals of the amateur sport. Why is this important? Agents can survive if there is money and profit. If the status of the sport is amateur there is no need for agents, and only transition to professionalism made the profession valuable and needed. In football, agents have been present since the first organized tournament where the first transfers occurred. In the era of amateurism, agents had a relatively low profile and were requested to act as trusted advisors

only in delicate and challenging situations. Exposure of agents is strongly connected to the liable position of players against other sports entities, given that the latter has bigger economic strengths and a propensity for profit maximization (European Union, 2009). After the professionalization of the sport's primary role, in this case, football agents were to serve as scouts for clubs that wanted to find specific types of players. After that clubs developed a system of internal scouting, which is where agents shifted towards working essentially for athletes giving them a higher and better negotiating stance. Specifically in Europe, the Bosman ruling played a significant role in their development (Bull & Faure, 2021). The Court of Justice of the European Union (EUR-LEX) made a ruling in December 1995 that allowed free transfers of players in the European Union when their contract had ended while at the same time, banning the rule that limited the number of European players playing for one team. The latter rule stayed in place for the players with non-European citizenship (Union Royale Belge des Sociétés de Football Association ASBL v Jean-Marc Bosman, 1995). This ruling changed the narrative of football as it increased the freedom of players to switch teams and provided clubs with a greater motive to either sell players who were still under contract or to offer players better terms before their contracts expired to keep them. It gave agents a clear rise as suddenly players were in the position to negotiate and needed a middleman to help them get the best deal. Agent profession, therefore, developed into a necessity in the football world as players turned to them to enhance and strengthen their position towards the clubs (Bull & Faure, 2021).

2.2.2 Necessity of sports agents nowadays

While sports agents often display glamorous images of their lives, their main role is aimed at providing beneficial services for athletes involved in an increasingly complex business environment aside from their chosen sport. Sports agents offer an equal stance in negotiations between sports club management or any other business entity and players or coaches. Managers of clubs have spent years perfecting their negotiating skills while athletes only get one chance to negotiate their contracts. Therefore, agents are necessary to help them in those situations as they have also negotiated numerous sports deals and can represent a reliable counterweight to the club or brand management (Shropshire et al., 2016). Additionally, athletes always anticipate greater things from their agents. Yet numerous of them fail to recognize that the agent's negotiating abilities depend on their performance on the field, ice, or court. Additionally, although an athlete needs an agent mostly when negotiating contracts, there is also a need for the agent when requiring guidance on the legal aspects of the contracts, or any other business matter. Athletes necessitate the presence of agents to ensure that their agreements and financials are safe and prudently invested. As mentioned above, despite an athlete's skills being the strongest negotiating asset, sports agents are still required to ensure the athletes' protection, compensation, and longevity in the sport. Although agents at times exaggerate their influence and neediness in contract negotiations, they still hold worth and are important for athletes to fully comprehend all contractual, legal, and monetary matters (Evans, 2010). Player agents are, therefore, an

unavoidable aspect of an athlete's transfer system especially considering the enormous salaries and skyrocketing compensations.

2.3 Different types of agents

Although sports agents frequently emit an exciting and alluring lifestyle, in truth they acquire their clients mainly by providing essential assistance for athletes caught up in progressively intricate business endeavors of their chosen sports field. They offer a stance of equality in negotiations held between clubs and athletes (their clients) or other organizations with whom athletes have agreed to work (Shropshire et al., 2016, p. 23). Athletes must choose the right agents to help them navigate through their careers. At the very beginning when parents realize their child has the potential to become a top athlete, they face a series of tough decisions. One of the most challenging choices is selecting the right agent. With multiple agents vying for their attention and making numerous offers and promises it can be hard to make the correct decision. Even when athletes start making their own choices about agents it is crucial that they find someone who has their best interests at heart. They need a dependable and trustworthy person to help them navigate through their careers. For many, the focus is on picking an agent with whom they can establish a reliable and long-lasting relationship. Making the right choice can be difficult as agents come from diverse backgrounds. Some of them are former athletes, some coaches, and some come from big agencies. Numerous athletes choose to have their parents as their agents trusting and valuing them to most, making for a perfect partnership on paper. However, it is important to note that not all agents fit neatly into the categories described below (Lipscond & Titlebaum, 2001).

2.3.1 Former players

The majority of athletes tend to remain active in sports even after retiring from their professional careers. They can do so by pursuing various outlets, such as coaching, journalism, player representation, or sports management. Historically, there were not many high-profile players who transitioned into becoming agents and even today the number of such individuals is relatively low. However, recently former players have been showing an increasing amount of interest in this field of profession. Having experienced the ups and downs in their career and having their every move planned by others it has become appealing for former players to become agents. The profession offers them a sense of freedom and independence while at the same time providing them with the opportunity to help young and talented players succeed (Evans, 2020).

There are numerous advantages to having prior experience as an athlete. Throughout their careers, players can establish a broad network of contacts, gain valuable experiences, and develop an intricate understanding of the sports industry. These indispensable resources and insights can help them transition from players to a new career as sports agents while also

providing them with a competitive edge over others. One significant benefit is their familiarity with the tricks and traps of their sport. Furthermore, they know how players think and what they need throughout their careers. This creates a great advantage for them as it emphasizes the advisory role of agents. Being a professional athlete grants access to a specific layer of emotions and thoughts that only professional players can understand. These experiences foster a connection that can strengthen the relationship between both parties and elevate agents to a player's confidence level (European Union, 2009).

While there are many advantages, we must also identify potential disadvantages. Although former players can offer valuable insights into sport-related emotions and decisions, they may lack professional expertise in certain areas. It is crucial to handle contracts correctly and having insufficient knowledge of legal requirements could pose a challenge. Additionally, there is another key factor to consider – networking. While former players may have an extensive number of contacts, their relationships are typically limited to players and coaches rather than club managers or corporate executives (Unwin, 2021).

2.3.2 Family members

It is unusual to see family members involved in the professional life of an athlete, regardless of the sport. Nevertheless, in many sports, we can find instances where family members have taken the role of the agents. Football, for instance, is a sport where it is not so uncommon for relatives to become involved in a player's career. In 1999, Nicolas Anelka's move to Real Madrid was arranged by his siblings. Nowadays, family representation has become more common, with players like Mbappé, Neymar, and Messi all being represented by their family members. One logical connection could be that athletes are often the primary breadwinners for the entire family and their careers can create opportunities for employment within the family circle. Having a family member as an agent means that any commission they earn for their services is kept inside the family. However, having a parent act as an agent does not necessarily guarantee that the athlete's best interests will be looked after. Parents can be prone to taking things more subjectively and personally, leading them to approach contract negotiations much more emotionally (Sogut, 2021).

Like any other relationship, a parent-agent dynamic also has its advantages and disadvantages. Undoubtedly, the most significant advantage is trust. According to Sogut (2021), agents bear the weight of a negative reputation that is linked to their occupation. This leads to athletes being wary that the agents will not always perform their services in their best interests but be instead driven by their financial gain. The trust and bond that a player places in an agent can never come close to the trust athletes feel toward family and relatives. This goes especially for the young players who are even more cautious in picking who to trust as their agent. With trust having such a significant impact it gives family members a heads up as trust in family is almost a given thing. By default, who is the player going to trust more – a stranger they have just met or their parent? Athletes have faith in their parents

to make the best decisions for them and prioritize their best interests. Hence, most of the athletes rely on their parents since the early stages of their careers making the transition to the agent-player role a natural one.

An interesting question is also what triggers players to change their family members as their agents. There are not a lot of cases in the sporting world. However, they do happen. According to Pinder (2019), football star Rabiot was forced to change his mother as his agent as she did not fulfill her duties and did not manage to ensure her son's transfer to Barcelona. Problems occurred because, at the time, there was no licensing system in football. Therefore, anyone could be an agent without the proper knowledge, experience, and expertise to close or negotiate the deal. Another example happened in basketball as Mike Conley Junior was initially represented by his father, a licensed agent. However, he later made a switch to be represented by one of the biggest sports agencies – Creative Artist Agency. What prompted the change was not told publicly. Nevertheless, he has shared with the media in the past how the whole situation with his father representing him is unnatural. Some players struggle with changing dynamics from having a professional relationship to having a family relationship. It was also rumored that with that change he was able to get a much better deal as if he would have stuck to his father as an agent (Aston, 2019).

Despite numerous advantages, examples of parents representing their children have also disrupted family dynamics as the agent industry can create numerous tensions within a family. Mixing business with family matters always possesses certain risks. The combination of both may result in significant disagreements and clashes. Furthermore, relatives are not excluded from developing a desire for wealth from being their family member's agent. For instance, Drew Brees a former American football quarterback, opted to be represented by a registered National Football League agent, which strained his relationship with his mother as she wanted to be his representative (Schackman, 2007). Similarly, Jack Johnson a National Hockey League player, is no longer in contact with his parents after they mismanaged his finances leading him to bankruptcy after wrongfully representing him (Burnside, 2014). Furthermore, looking at disadvantages parents are often limited by their lack of professional expertise and are prone to becoming too emotionally involved. The difficulty that many parents face is the ability to view their child solely as a player. This is compounded by their lack of professional knowledge and the fact that they are not given the same respect as professional agents by the opposite negotiating party. In football, the new rules will demand that relatives undergo a FIFA Agent exam if they want to continue representing their relatives. There will be no exemptions and many think this is a step in the right direction as it will give them a base level of education and qualification to act in the agent industry (Sogut, 2021).

2.3.3 Casual agents

Individuals who entered the world of sports agencies without any significant athletic background except for their passion for sports or business interests are considered to be casual agents. Some of these individuals may have played in semi-professional leagues but never reached the top tier while others may have come from diverse backgrounds, such as law and entrepreneurship or a combination of both. For instance, one of the most known football agents Mino Raiola began his career as an entrepreneur, later abandoning his legal studies to take on a position at his local football club making his first steps into the sports world. Casual agents appear to make up the majority in professional sports as they create their internal hierarchy with many regular agents and a few chosen ones who operate at a higher level than the rest (Warrior, 2017).

As mentioned above, the majority of casual agents come from legal or business backgrounds making it a great advantage for them. Many of them possess legal expertise which gives them an upper hand in interpreting contracts while others have experience as business or sports managers which equips them with extensive professional knowledge and a vast network of global connections. Additionally, some take up the agent role as a pastime or supplementary occupation which reduces the pressure of their work. Analyzing weaknesses, we can firstly conclude that lack of sports background could be one of them. For the casual agents who never participated in any sport becoming a sports agent presents a difficulty but the crucial question is whether the athletes are open to facing that difficulty. The underlying concern is whether the players seek assistance exclusively for matters related to their profession or also from a trusted confidant to discuss any sports-related problems they might encounter (Lowen, 2019).

2.3.4 Agencies

It is not a secret that becoming a full-time agent is a significant investment which is why some begin their journey in the business as interns for big agencies. While conducting research, it was often emphasized how a lot of agents nowadays started the agency profession as a side job. In the beginning, it is costly to travel around the world looking for clients and conducting meetings with potential clubs. Furthermore, being a small agent does not give you an advantage over the players. As Martins (interview, August 8, 2023) pointed out: “The willingness to listen also depends on the reputation of the agency. For smaller agents, I believe it is more difficult as they do not have a track record. In that case is important for an agent to build a more personal relationship with trust”.

An advantage of working under a big agency is a vast network of connections to access clubs and organizations globally. Approaching clubs and players from a renowned agency with a track record opens doors much easier than approaching them as a small agent. Additionally, it is simpler to retain already signed players and to also allure new ones. With more clients and track records history, players believe there are more chances to achieve a greater

contract. Big agencies also have the advantage of having more personnel and a higher percentage of resources which shows in greater impact and much more influence in the business. More personnel could also lead to several individuals who are specialized in a particular subject, such as law, taxation, or brand image, to provide a full service to the players (Rest, n. d.)

On the other hand, there are also disadvantages. The primary limitation is the limited amount of time available for each client. When working with large agencies and numerous clients, direct and regular interactions with clients (players) are likely reduced. Additionally, lower-ranked athletes may receive less time and attention compared to higher-ranked athletes, which can result in a negative experience for those lower in the hierarchy. The involvement of multiple agents can also lead to confusion for athletes as they may not know who to contact when they encounter a specific issue or problem. From the perspective of agents, it is more challenging to establish a strong worldwide reputation for themselves when working in a larger agency. Ultimately, the athlete decides to determine their preferences but certainly, large organizations are not suitable for those seeking to form intimate and long-lasting connections (Rest, n. d.).

2.4 Sports agent functions

The portrayal of agents is a multiplex and often misinterpreted field of work. The professionals in the field have been subjected to intense scrutiny due to issues arising from agents improperly carrying out their duties and charging high fees for their services (Stein, 2006). As a result, agents have become more reclusive towards the public eye. Additionally, the number of responsibilities associated with this line of work and agents' ability to handle them are often overlooked. Over the years, the role of a sports agent has significantly increased to the point where it is difficult to imagine professional sports without them. In team sports, agents are particularly visible during transfer windows as they negotiate on behalf of their players. According to Bukleski (2020, p. 23), sports agents' duties are far more complex and go beyond just the sporting aspect as they are involved in all aspects of publicity and high-paying contracts. Stone (2014) is referring to a form of vertical integration that enables athletes to connect with the markets outside of their specific sports industry. Compiling a comprehensive list of duties that characterize the profession could prove to be a challenging task. In sports that do not involve transfers (such as tennis and athletics), agents typically manage the athlete's public image and endorsement deals. Nevertheless, the section below will delineate the prevalent responsibilities of agents.

2.4.1 Advisory function

Achieving success in influencing players through communication requires an understanding of their behavioral traits. Nevertheless, individuals commonly resist any form of influence due to concerns for their security, fear of the unknown, or any personal gain. According to

Šugman et al. (2022), it is easier to influence individuals when the intervention aligns with their objectives and interests. These objectives and interests stem from unfulfilled desires that empower sports agents with the capacity and expertise to inspire their players. The prime objective of the advisory role is to guide the athletes in every aspect of their lives as it is the agent's foremost duty to assist them in making appropriate decisions at various stages of their careers. The majority of questions arise when seeking a new employer for the athlete and subsequently when finalizing a contract. In such instances, the athletes mostly rely on their agents, entrusting them to make the right choices in the given situation. The agents also guide the athletes about their participation in other ventures post-retirement and offer advice on engaging in charitable or other extracurricular sporting activities. It is imperative to note that legal consultations are also crucial. Although many agents have legal backgrounds, even those without such a qualification possess some legal knowledge. Professional athletes require legal guidance and advice when signing professional contracts whether it is with a sports club or an endorsement sponsor. Establishing trust between both parties is crucial for the effectiveness of the advisory role (Ribič, 2021, p. 29). Additionally, some agents also advise players with their nutrition plans, help them organize their vacations, and prevent them from investing in questionable proposals. It is an all-around service, advising and helping players in every aspect of their personal and sporting life (Kuper, 2023).

2.4.2 Negotiation function

A well-known and common responsibility of a sports agent is to engage in negotiations. The negotiation process typically involves three parties: the client (an athlete or a coach), the sports agent, and the sports club or endorsement company. The sports agents act as an intermediary during negotiation, advocating on behalf of their clients. Athletes, for example, expect their representatives to secure the most favorable contract terms possible, including monthly salary, performance-based incentives, medical care provisions, playing time, and more. During negotiations, it is crucial for agents to carefully assess all factors and determine the best approach to achieve optimal outcomes for their clients. By having a representative, athletes are better positioned to negotiate with clubs and wield higher bargaining power (Ribič, 2021, p. 29).

While negotiating, sports agents must exhibit innovative tactics when discussing different bonuses, no-trade clauses, and multiple-year extensions. Since the duration of an athlete's profession is comparatively brief, athletes depend on their agents to secure them the highest possible contract to guarantee their financial stability in the future (Evans, 2010).

2.4.3 Agent as a confidant and motivator

The majority of the players form a close bond with their agent as they must establish a trustworthy relationship. Athletes must have faith in their agent since in most cases, the latter is responsible for managing their public image in the media, as well as overseeing the

athlete's career. Although professional sports may appear to be a privileged profession, there is a darker side to it. Athletes often feel isolated with many questions and concerns weighing on their minds. Being at the top can be a vulnerable position, particularly when facing harsh criticism from the public, media, and coaches. When athletes feel this way, they often turn to their agents first. Their role at that moment is to listen to the player, offer reassurance, and motivate them to strive for even greater success (Reynolds, 2014). Agents often stress the significance of the players having faith in them. Many of these agents regularly receive calls before important matches from players questioning their abilities and drowning in negative thoughts. Although players may receive support from their families, they often fail to recognize the pressure that a player faces. With mental problems being talked about more in a professional sport, agents must recognize those tendencies in their players. This presents a situation where former players might have an upper hand. However, experienced agents should have the ability to recognize also negative feelings. As adults, players do not need another parent. When the stakes are high and the money is abundant, however, numerous temptations start to arise and the agent's role is to be present to prevent any distractions and keep the player's focus on the sport (Fly on The Ball Blog, 2022). Zlatan Ibrahimović, a top former football player, recalled (Lagercrantz & Ibrahimović, 2012) many times in his book, how his agent Raiola was more of a friend than anything else to him. There were numerous times he would call him and ask for his opinion on football things or things of a private matter.

2.4.4 Managing the athlete's image

The supervision of an athlete's image encompasses all tasks associated with the athlete's public image. In this case, sports agents act as representatives who advocate for their clients in different forms of media, ensuring their overall public image is well presented. They promote their clients through public relations, media features, and the clients' active involvement in various charitable and work events. Communication is, therefore, an essential skill for sports agents when they manage athlete's public relations activities. They have to juggle the feelings, interests, and opinions of a large number of people, making social intelligence a key factor in agent's careers. In individual sports where no transfers occur, this is the activity to which agents dedicate a substantial amount of time (Ribič, 2021, p. 30). According to Martins (interview, August 8, 2023), commercial deals can be very broad. Clients can be ambassadors of the brand. They can participate in meet and greets and many other commercial activities. Making this deal involves a lot of dialogue between brands in terms of what are their wishes and also what are the client's (player or a coach) wishes. An example given was a brand involved in the oil business and a player who is very environmentally conscious. By default, players will not want to be associated with that kind of company or brand. As Martins (interview, August 8, 2023) pointed out, many variables have to be taken into consideration, and in the end, the role of an agency is to facilitate a dialogue and alignment between the client and a brand.

In the new world, influencing social media presents an important image-building and marketing tool. Athletes are represented as role models in the media making the experience of following a favorite athlete dear to all the supporters. Furthermore, sponsors are attracted to big following based on social media making it a necessity for athletes to have them. On social media accounts, athletes can indirectly interact with fans and show them their sponsor's products even when not doing their job on the field, ice, or court. Athletes need to understand that managing a social media account is not their additional occupation. Athletes' sole responsibility is to give everything to their chosen sport as their job is not to be influencers. Spending hours on Instagram and analyzing followers' growth, deciding what to post and when to post it, requires a significant amount of time and effort that the athletes do not have. That is why many agents are taking over this role and providing athletes with the option of also taking care of the whole social media context for them (Kuper, 2023).

2.5 Problems

One of the paradoxes of the sports agency industry is that not only external observers but also many agents share the same opinion of looking down on agents. In the opinion of many, the current state of the business scares them as it has become uncontrollable with the enormous amounts of money involved in sports. Moreover, many individuals agree that the erratic behavior of some agents loses touch with reality. Furthermore, the sports industry and its rules constantly evolve and change due to ongoing rivalry between agents. Unethical behaviors that are often reported include allegations of improper agent behavior, such as stealing players, spreading falsehoods about agents, and offering athletes inappropriate incentives. Additionally, modern agents who have just been starting might not have the advantage of a mentor who can offer professional advice and help them sign their first client. Many agents often struggle even to retain the clients they can recruit. Novice sports agents frequently express disappointment at losing athletes to agents who are prepared to resort to unethical methods to persuade players to sign a contract with them. Agents are stereotyped as unethical people lacking empathy and being soulless because they are, in a raw sense, selling their clients for money. However, there are also opinions acknowledging them for their diligence, sports expertise, and outstanding negotiation skills. Furthermore, building a profession as a woman is a challenging task as the sports agency world is known to be predominantly male-dominated. In this chapter, the focus will be on all the problems sports agents might face in their quest to reach the top (Shropshire et al., 2016).

2.5.1 Competition for clients

It should be noted that the profession of agents is highly ruthless in almost every characteristic, which adds a significant layer of complexity to the profession. In every aspect of the work, an agent must compete with other agents in the sports industry. Financial success and career advancement are directly linked to the amount of work and dedication agents put into their work. They face challenges as they always have to be reachable as there

are always other agents ready to take the same opportunity. From acquiring players to finalizing deals, agents are under continuous pressure competing straight up with other agents. A lack of professionalism or focus may result in missed opportunities as other agents will use any means necessary to get ahead of each other (Sogut, 2022a).

During gathering and analyzing information, many athletes emphasized that finding a potential agent does not present a challenging task. To eliminate those agents who lack a history of successful representation, athletes usually ask the crucial question of who else they represent. This legitimate query of an agent's track record can present the most significant obstacle for new aspiring agents as they find themselves in a situation where until they negotiate a contract with their first player they are excluded from the business while their fellow agents with signed clients continue to prosper. To this day, personal contact is still considered to be the most effective way of recruiting the players. Agents who make the first contact via an email, phone call, or even a letter are usually less effective in persuading the players to sign with them. Furthermore, it is difficult for the players to envision the future. The majority wants to know what the agents can provide for them in the present moment. Therefore, it is important from the viewpoint of an agent to provide the athletes with the resources to envision their career steps beyond the present moment. This presents a way to enhance their service and beat the competition (Shropshire et al., 2016, p.54).

Many of the agents turn to unethical approaches when trying to get players. Especially in the past when regulations were flakier, agents took advantage of that and used suspicious methods when it came to signing a player. Paying a certain amount of money to the player is still very much a practice but in the past, some agents turned to blackmailing and threats. Moreover, some agents showered prospective athletes with luxurious gifts, immediately gaining an advantage over those who could not afford to do it or refused to do it. A common issue is also stealing the players which means that an agent knows the player is taken but still tries to persuade the athlete by either spreading misinformation about the athlete's agent or promising the athlete unrealistic things (Shropshire et al., 2016).

2.5.2 Conflicts of interest

Sports agents have always been scrutinized for their involvement in activities that may lead to a conflict of interest. The agency relationship is characterized by the agent's duty to provide absolute loyalty and act faithfully. These responsibilities prevent agents from representing parties that are averse to their principals. A conflict of interest arises when a commitment to one party is jeopardized by a conflicting interest or a consensus with a third party. As will be demonstrated below, agents are expected to encounter various circumstances where they must act with caution to avoid infringing upon the fundamental duties of absolute loyalty and faithfulness that their clients expect from them (Shropshire et al., 2016).

Dual or even multiple representation presents a perfect scenario for a conflict of interest. This refers to a situation where a sports agent represents both, the player and the team trying to sign that player during the same transfer window. The practice of dual representation where an agent represents both parties during transfers is one of the most known characteristics in the football world. A prominent example of this phenomenon is the case of elite football agent Jorge Mendes and Wolverhampton Wanderers Football Club as the owners of the club own a part of Mendes's sports agency. Additionally, there is another possibility of conflict when agents represent both the players and the coach of the team or even numerous players on the same team. In some cases, agents represented both the general manager and the coach. These scenarios show that there are numerous situations where conflict of interest may arise, and in several cases, even the most cautious agents may not anticipate them in advance due to possible player injuries, changes in the ownerships of the clubs, and unexpected trades (Booker, 2019).

2.5.3 Ethics

Ethics plays a huge part not just in sports but in everyday life. While there is always talk about ethical behavior, there are no real punishments apart from a bad public image. Numerous supporters and people involved in sports hold the opinion that the greediness of players is fueled by agents, destroying the current professional sport. Attempts have been undertaken to establish laws upon which the agents have to act and are supposed to minimize their unethical practices. Apart from licensing tests, however, there are a very small number of requirements or possible past checks. This issue, as a result, generates the predicament of incapability to pursue actions against unethical agents. Furthermore, licensing does not give out guidelines and training for moral rules and actions. Especially in the negotiating process, agents have to maintain the balance of being as tough as possible while also taking into account the optimal game plan for their clients considering all the ethical approaches. The enormous amount of money flowing into the sports industry does not help it. Athletes expect their agents to ensure them the most money possible leaving agents with no choice but to (sometimes) turn to unethical tactics to maximize their profits. In many cases, agents prioritize their financial gain over securing the most optimal contract for their clients. Moreover, agents may resort to hostile and deceitful tactics in such circumstances. They do so to maximize their clients' short-term financial gain and also to create a false impression that all the financial benefits were made solely due to their negotiating skills. It is imperative to enforce responsibility among agents for any unethical conduct that emerges in such circumstances. One more example of unethical behavior is also a dubious tactic done by agents in persuading their signed athletes to reject contracts that were not negotiated by them in exchange for new contracts where the agent would receive a substantial commission (Evans, 2010).

Another interesting and fairly strong ethical point comes from critics saying agents are nothing more than human traffickers. The context for the word goes in the following way.

Every sports enthusiast has a passion for keeping up with his favorite sports player trades. As the deadlines for transfer windows trades approach, many fans closely monitor possible trading actions until they reach the word “sold” to a team or a piece of news saying that a certain player was traded to the team without knowing the trade was even happening. Nowadays, the realm of morality identifies the act of selling or trading individuals to others as slavery. By the word in this context, Dobel (2014) tries to convey that an individual, in this case the athlete, can be traded to another individual or sports entity for money without his or her consent. However, there is an important distinction in sports cases. Athletes can leave the team if they want, they receive a salary, and also, they are the ones signing a contract lending their services and knowing the possibility of a trade. That is why many players aspire to have a non-trade condition in their contracts.

It is difficult to write about morals as each individual possesses a certain subjective moral compass. Everyone has formulated a set of beliefs and morals that guide his or her actions and for everyone, those sets are different. While these values and principles differ greatly from one person to another, they undeniably exist. In the end game, every agent has a certain reputation that sticks with him or her through the end of their days. Reputation, however, is of little importance for agents lacking ethical values. As a result, personal integrity should be one of the most relevant and crucial qualities for a player seeking an agent (Dee, 1992).

2.5.4 The gender barrier

As in many other professional business areas, gender also plays a role in the sports agency world. Despite the growing number of female agents in the sports industry, men still dominate the sports agency world. Comparing men and women, there is undoubtedly a lower number of female agents. Some talk about the glass ceiling issue which represents a social barrier hindering the promotion of women in the professional world while others argue that we should not be talking about discrimination against women in this context. Their argument goes in a way that the agency world is a challenge for everyone, regardless of gender. Furthermore, the reason for fewer female agents has also been indicated as a higher comfort level male athletes feel with male agents (Shropshire et al., 2016).

Regardless of the male dominance, females break the stereotypes showing that gender is not an important factor when negotiating the contracts and representing athletes. In football, Rafaela Pimenta is known to be one of the elite agents. In a recent interview, she emphasized how she struggled as a female in a man’s world. Even after the death of her business partner, elite football agent Mino Raiola, she faced attacks from other agents threatening to persuade her players away from the agency. Furthermore, she explained that the majority of the negative comments come from a prevalent belief amongst men in football that they are the only ones with enough knowledge about the sport. She also emphasized it is often assumed that just on the merit of being a woman, she cannot carry out a successful transfer (Kuper, 2023).

3 SPORTS AGENTS IN FOOTBALL

The strength of football agents is to acknowledge and comprehend the market. Their job is to help the best players in the world acquire the best contracts and make sure their primary focus is on playing the sport, rather than worrying about sponsorship deals or the details of a club's contract (O'Neal, 2008). The world of football can be a harsh and brutal place which consequently applies to football agents also. Football agents are always on the go as being an agent is not a 9-5 job, but a 24/7 type of job. Players may contact agents at any time with any demand or require, and the agents must be there to help. If players cannot reach their agents that can lead to a strain on trust which can have a significant impact on the relationship. Therefore, it is the agent's responsibility to be available for their players at all times in any way possible (Sogut, 2022b).

In this part of the thesis, the focus will be specifically held on football agents, defining football agents and their services, explaining the delicate relationship between a football agent and a player, and explaining the whole process behind the profession.

3.1 Football agents

A football agent is defined as a physical person, licensed by the International Association of Football Federation (hereafter: FIFA) to offer football services and whose primary goal is to represent a client in a legal transaction. Football players, coaches, team members, professional leagues, and associations can all be represented by football agents. From October 2023, only those who have been granted a FIFA license can provide their services (Nzs, 2023).

Apart from being a sole football agent, the FIFA regulations book also defines the term – Connected Football Agent. The term belongs to a football agent who is simply affiliated or linked with another agent. The book defines four examples of such possibility. The first example shows the connection as a result of employment or contractual association of both agents with the same agency. The second example defines a connection between connecting agents as a result of both being shareholders, partners, or directors of the same agency. The third example links agents together as a result of a marriage or personal partnership, relation as siblings, or any other family relation. The final, fourth example is defined as entering into any formal or informal agreement to repeatedly collaborate or to divide the earnings or gains from any aspects of their football services. The definition of a Connected Football Agent and the examples are defined to avoid any type of possible conflict of interest (FIFA, 2023).

3.1.1 Becoming a football agent – FIFA agent license

To pursue a career as a football agent it is important to have extensive knowledge and comprehension of the world of football and its industry. Every agent should be well-

informed about the regulations established by both the FA and FIFA. Additionally, from October 2023 on, it is again mandatory for every agent to obtain a FIFA Football Agent License. Regarding other requirements, any natural person who desires to pursue a career as a football agent is eligible. To become a football agent, one does not need any specific education or prior profession. Furthermore, there are no language demands. However, to obtain the license an individual has to pass the FIFA licensing exam which is done in English, French, or Spanish language. Therefore, from a practical point of view, a candidate has to know at least one of the mentioned languages. Surely, the more languages an agent knows, the more chances to become successful he or she has. As far as becoming one, however, there is no condition upon spoken languages apart from the practicality of taking the exam. However, one condition will be taking effect from October 1st, 2023, and that is the FIFA mandatory licensing system. This is not a new system because, before 2015, all football agents had to be licensed by the umbrella organization – FIFA. Many individuals opposed FIFA’s decision to discard its licensing system in 2015 but FIFA maintained its stance citing a lack of resources to successfully regulate football agents. Nevertheless, the popular opinion at the time was that FIFA aimed to reduce the influence and authority of football agents, thereby opening the transfer market to everyone. Following the change, the football world became inundated with individuals, many of whom lacked experience and were fighting for their place in the business. Disputes among all parties involved increased, with no solution to resolve them. Furthermore, the absence of official regulations led to an increase in the abuse of the system (FIFA, 2023).

3.1.2 Football agent services

Services provided by football agents are services connected to football and carried out by football agents in the name of the clients – football players and football coaches. These services include negotiating, communication in the prior process of the negotiations, and any other communication linked to the negotiating process, or any other correlated task, with the aim, goal, and/or purpose of finalizing a deal. In its pure essence, this implies any measure to aid or accomplish (FIFA, 2023):

- the hiring, enrolment, or removal of a player of the team,
- the hiring of a coach of the team,
- the relocation of the enrolment of a player from one team to another,
- the establishment, conclusion, or modification of an individual’s employment conditions.

Other instances of football agent services provided by the FIFA Regulations Book (FIFA, 2023) are:

- offering guidance and support in negotiations and finalization of a transfer and any contractual agreements regarding employment, which may include payments, exit clauses, compensations, and benefits,

- securing suitable job opportunities for both, players and coaches,
- serving as a mediator to foster positive relations between clubs and players or coaches,
- arranging and overseeing player trials,
- handling all communication related to player or coach transfers,
- assisting in the smooth transfers of players from one club to another,
- attending meetings on behalf of clients,
- negotiating the terms and conditions of potential deals with clients,
- working with clubs to identify and secure available players or coaches,
- organizing meetings between clubs and players/coaches, or any other organizations,
- acting as an intermediary in club-to-club transactions.

3.1.3 Other services

Apart from football services, agents also provide other services for their clients. These additional services, defined as other services in the Regulations Book, refer to services carried out by football agents in the name of the client, aside from football services described in the previous chapter. These services may include but are not limited to offering legal guidance, scouting, financial management, creating public image, negotiation of sponsorship deals, and consultation. Usually, these services tend to be more private in nature and, according to the Regulations book (FIFA, 2023), consist of:

- giving clients legal, financial, or economic guidance,
- recognizing, overseeing, and evaluating players or coaches for any club or association (this service is known as a scouting service),
- arranging situations where players or coaches are satisfied and their basic needs, such as housing, healthcare, education for their children, and insurance are met,
- helping with tasks that are indirectly connected with football, such as managing public relations, liaising with fans, overseeing social media accounts, etc.,
- providing support in other contractual agreements including sponsorship deals, image rights, or any possible endorsement and advertisement.

3.2 Relationship between agent and the player in football

In most cases, a football player's career begins when a relationship between an agent and a player is established. In all off-field situations, agents act as a player's official representative replacing any family member, coach, or guardian. As such, agents oversee players' contracts, endorsement deals, nutrition plans, transfers, and a plethora of other responsibilities including deciding how to invest any additional earnings. By using simple common sense, it becomes clear that the player's value to the agent as a client increases with the level of the player's success. Nevertheless, a positive and productive partnership comes out of respect

from both parties. To function effectively both the agent and the player must cultivate a dependable and strong relationship (O'Neal, 2008).

3.2.1 Influence of an agent on the footballer's career

The occupation of a sports agent involves both, the management of a footballer's career from a business perspective, as well as the management of a footballer's personal life. It is commonly believed that the agent's primary responsibility is to secure the most favorable contract terms for the player. Nevertheless, in the case of a young athlete, financial gain should not be the predominant factor in a transfer decision. In such instances, the agent's influence is crucial as he or she is expected to look out for the player's best interest and guide him or her toward the right professional choices. When players start thinking about high numbers, they naturally get excited. Therefore, football agents must guide and influence them into looking at the best long-term opportunities. These opportunities could include improving their skills as a player, finding the right team, and getting plenty of playing time. Furthermore, football agents serve as the link between players and clubs, and players often follow their guidance during and after the negotiations. Undoubtedly, agents have to always consult the player before making any important decision. This also applies to non-football business contracts as agents must ensure that these contracts do not interfere with their clients' football careers. Ultimately, it is the agent's responsibility to influence players to sign the correct contracts and make the best decisions for their careers (European Union, 2009).

Another important aspect interfering with both business and personal life is a nutrition plan. Proper nutritional practices, which involve consuming enough energy and proper distribution of macronutrients, are an important factor in the success of elite athletes. By having good nutritional habits, athletes (not just footballers) can cover their nutritional requirements, sustain desirable body weight, prevent possible injuries, and increase the level of needed energy (Stare, 2021). Some agents, including elite agent Rafaela Pimenta, offer their players a full service, including preparing nutritional plans (Kuper, 2023).

3.2.2 Influence of an agent on the private life of the football player

Athletes are unquestionably held to a greater standard than normal people. They are considered to be role models to young people and are willingly or not, affecting millions of lives. Due to these commitments and responsibilities, the repercussions of athletes' errors are significantly greater than those of other non-famous people. Moreover, when an athlete commits a mistake, everyone is eager to learn about it. The price of fame of being a successful footballer comes together with many eyes watching every step footballers make, anticipating any potential error or misconduct. Being in the public eye is an integral part of the footballer's profession, and they must be aware that certain standards must be upheld. Those standards do not consist of just their performance and acts on the football field but

also their actions in private life. Whether footballers approve of it or not, they are perceived as role models and are expected to act as such in their private lives (Blackburn, 2010). Elite football agent Pimenta stated in an interview (Kuper, 2023) that her services consist also of organizing her clients' holidays. This shows that elite agents are involved also in the private lives of footballers, assisting them with any possible needs including organizing a vacation after the season.

An interesting aspect of an agent influence also comes from Ibrahimović's autobiography, where he describes the start of a relationship between him and his (former) agent, the late Mino Raiola. The latter has influenced Zlatan from the beginning of their relationship, making him stop wearing luxury watches and driving luxury cars in his private life. Raiola immediately instilled a sense of discipline and motivated him to put in more effort. Ibrahimović recollects how he suddenly realized this was what he needed as he became way too satisfied with himself with everyone around him praising him. He adopted the luxurious lifestyle off the pitch and stopped training to reach his limit. With Raiola breathing behind his back, he started to find the motivation and his inner fighting spirit (Lagercrantz & Ibrahimović, 2012).

3.2.3 Expectations and duties of both parties in the representation relationship

In an agency relationship, a footballer and an agent come to an understanding to form and agree on conditions that enable the agent to perform on behalf of the player. The representation relationship is regulated by regulations that define what is permissible and what is not. However, every side tends to expect certain services subjectively. It is emphasized that it is of utmost importance to share the expectations at the very beginning of a representation agreement. Thus, a negative feeling of expecting too much from the other party is avoided. While performing interviews, two of the agents (L. Kovač, interview, July 7, 2023 & A. Ružnić, interview, July 14, 2023) pointed out that the biggest expectation from a player is that the agent will get them the best possible contract. In theory, players expect communication from the agent, help with personal matters, help with mental issues, etc. According to the agents, however, in the end, what matters is whether they manage to arrange a good contract. If the agents fail to do that, everything else they did does not matter. Moreover, the main duties of football agents are negotiating deals for their clients, helping their clients with any personal or business matters, keeping the client's public image intact, guiding their clients in the right directions, and being aware of all possible opportunities (Fly on The Ball Blog, 2022).

Looking from the agent's perspective of expectations from the players, the most commonly mentioned are loyalty from players, communicating all of their concerns and thoughts, sharing their (negative) feelings, and also, giving their best performance every time they step on the football field. The latter expectation is the most important one. If the players give their best on the field, the job for the agent also gets easier and contracts become more

rewarding for both sides. The duty of the players is, therefore, to take care of their bodies and live a professional, healthy lifestyle with minimum distractions possible. Another important expectation and duty of both parties is loyalty. From the player's side, this means not talking to other agents while having an active representation agreement, and from the agent's side, this means looking out for the best interest of the player at all times. Agents also have to perform their services according to all legal regulations, as well as have a FIFA Agents License from October 2023 (Ede, 2022).

3.3 Sports agents in Slovenia

Sports agency in Slovenia is still in the early stages of development, waiting for the boom it has experienced in larger economies. The pursuit of top footballers in Slovenia is ideal for quasi-representatives as top athletes are logically far more intriguing to sponsors. Bigger popularity amongst potential sponsors results in higher earnings for athletes, hence agents earning higher commissions. However, from October 2023, the Slovenian football governing body will be obliged to align their regulations according to the ones of FIFA, allowing only authorized agents with a FIFA license to operate in Slovenia. According to Bolcar (2008), it is concerning that currently every individual having a mere five minutes of free time and a motive to earn additional income can function in the agency world without being enlisted as an agent. In Slovenia, sports agents' services are performed by individuals who are neither properly educated nor even trained for the job. It is of utmost importance that sports agents are equipped with knowledge about the sport, marketing, and everything that consists of their profession.

Furthermore, to manage the career of an athlete effectively, collaborating with coaches and other team members is imperative to ensure the well-being of the athletes. A harmonious relationship with team members can also lead to improved financial opportunities, as well as more favorable conditions in practices. In the Slovenian sports industry, it is not uncommon for coaches of team sports and even presidents of team clubs to take the role of an agent. In many sports, such as hockey and football, coaches act as scouts and agents at the same time. However, it is important to consider whether a coach can handle all the additional responsibilities while still being fully committed to his coaching duties. Juggling multiple responsibilities is not an easy task and can result in unprofessionalism which is not an uncommon situation in the Slovenian sports industry. Furthermore, there is a question of whether coaches favor players they scouted or acted as agents in the transfer process. Quickly, a conflict of interest can arise, though it is difficult to prove that, especially if there are no agent regulations in play (Prošt Šilc, 2016, p.36).

3.3.1 Evolution of football and sport representation in Slovenia

Sports representation and professional sports go hand in hand. If there is no professionalism, there is no need for agents. Sport in Slovenia started with the introduction of cycling,

football, swimming, and athletics. Other activities were known as physical education in post-WWII times (Svenšek, 2020).

Football was brought to Slovenia from Austria, specifically from Vienna, and was introduced to the Slovenian public by students who had returned from studying abroad. In the beginning, it was played by children at school, slowly starting to gain popularity in 1900 when the term “football” was adopted in the country. The first official football ball and football shoes were brought to Slovenia by Stanko Bloudek from Prague. Ten years later, pupils from secondary school established Hermes, a student club formed in Ljubljana that represented student football. In 1911, the first official football club was formed in Ljubljana, Slovenian Football Club Ilirija, laying the foundation for further football development in Ljubljana. Football activities diminished during World War I but resumed after the collapse of the Habsburg monarchy. In 1920, a new football association was formed in Ljubljana and new football clubs in Slovenia started to arise. After World War II, the official Slovenian Football Association was formed in 1948 but was canceled by Yugoslavia four years after its establishment. Around that period professional football started to see the light. At that time, Football Club Olimpija was the most prominent and successful club on Slovenian soil. The next big year for Slovenian football was the year 1991 when Slovenia seceded from Yugoslavia. The forming of the country was without a doubt a turning point in Slovenian football. Just days after Slovenian independence, the Football Association of Slovenia (hereafter: FAS) cut all ties with the Yugoslavian Football Association. The same year, the First Slovenian Football League and Slovenian national football team were formed (Šafarič, 2021).

With the establishment of a domestic professional league and Slovenian football players beginning to venture overseas, the demand for agents undoubtedly increased. However, it is uncertain when agent activities first emerged in Slovenia as the area of sports representation is still relatively unknown. Currently, apart from football, no other sport has a recognized governing system for sports agents. Furthermore, the vast majority of players are usually left to themselves as only the ones with notable results and talent get spotted by agents. Before 1991, there were no real professional football agents in Slovenia. According to Babačić (2008), there were examples of them in former Yugoslavia. In his article, he emphasized Predrag Naletilić and Ljubo Barin as undoubtedly the two most influential figures in the Slovenian region in the year before the formation of Slovenia. Those two football agents possessed extensive connections across Europe as their remarkable ability to sell players was their strength. In the article, Babačić goes as far as saying that one well-played game was all it took for a player to secure a place in a major club because of them. One of their big transfers was Predrag Spasić who signed a contract with Real Madrid football club under their guidance. In Slovenia, Tone Hrovatič was the first football agent licensed by FIFA. After him, many more followed. Currently, Slovenia still has a rather small amount of football agents compared to the other bigger European countries. Interestingly enough, the majority of top Slovenian football players have a Slovenian representative. According to the

Transfermarkt website, AR Sport Management under the eye of Amir Ružnić represents the vast majority of them. Furthermore, a Slovenian young hope Benjamin Šeško is represented by a Slovenian football agent, as well as Jan Oblak, currently the best Slovenian football player (Transfermarkt, n. d.).

3.3.2 Comparison of representation in Slovenia versus abroad

The representation in Slovenia is not any different than representation abroad. Slovenian agents do not work exclusively for the Slovenian market as they are present in all markets worldwide. The FIFA rules apply to all countries although it is correct that each country may add up additional rules on being registered and recognized by their football association. According to Ružnić (interview, July 14, 2023), he had to additionally register with the Italian Football Association for the recent transfer of a Slovenian player Begić to the Italian Serie B League. The major difference is in the size of the markets and the quality of the national football leagues. That shows in the transfer amounts and consequently in player's contracts. Looking at the five biggest transfers that occurred from the First Slovenian Football League, we can see that the amount did not exceed five million euros. The top five transfers in Slovenian football history are:

- Ezekiel Henty from Olimpija Ljubljana to Lokomotiv Moscow – 5,0 mil EUR; season 2015/2016.
- Jan Oblak from Olimpija Ljubljana to Benfica – 4,0 mil EUR; season 2009/2010.
- Andraž Šporar from Olimpija Ljubljana to Basel – 3,8 mil EUR; season 2015/2016.
- Jan Mlakar from Maribor to Brighton – 3,0 mil EUR; season 2018/2019.
- Žan Vipotnik from Maribor to Bordeaux – 2,8 mil EUR; season 2023/2024.

If we compare the five biggest transfers from the First Slovenian Football League to other bigger leagues, the biggest difference is the amount of money the transfers happened for (STA, 2023). As far as representation, there are no major differences as those just differ from agent to agent and player to player. Each agent has personal characteristics and norms he or she works by and which are not dependable on the country.

3.4 Legal aspects of being a football agent

3.4.1 The representation agreement

The first step towards representation is scouting a player, which is believed to present the most difficult part of being an agent. Players are usually keener to cooperate with an agent who has a good track record and has successfully managed transfers of many players. If you are a new agent, it is difficult to build up the trust that you will be successful at your job. For that reason, some agents start their path under mentorships of renowned agents or working

in big agencies getting the much-needed experience, knowledge, and connections (Shropshire et al., 2016).

Focusing on the legal process it is important to follow the laws and regulations of governing bodies. There are rules regarding approaching players and signing a representation deal with them. However, apart from scouting the player, the first legal step toward representation is signing a contract. A contract represents a legal term for an agreement between parties concerning mutual commitments. When the contract is signed between a footballer and an agent, the first official step towards representation is made. The aim of signing a contract is to establish a binding and valid contract between both, the agent and the footballer. Such a contractual arrangement outlines various provisions that both parties must comply with, making it crucial to ensure that the terms are beneficial and acceptable to the player (Cornell Law School, n. d.).

The contract provides a level of legal protection for both parties involved, in this case for the footballer and the agent. As long as the agreement includes all necessary details and conditions, it prohibits any misconduct from either party. Violating the agreement can result in justifiable termination, therefore safeguarding the player in case the agent acts unprofessionally, allowing the player to end the contractual agreement. On the other hand, the exclusivity clause within the contract offers protection for the agent by preventing the player from working with other agents (Sogut, 2022b).

In this section, the key factors that need to be taken into account when dealing with individual articles will be highlighted. Currently, it is crucial to understand that in the FIFA Agent Regulations (hereafter: FFAR), FIFA has released a mandatory set of conditions that have to be present in the representation agreement. One important change with new rules is that representation agreement is crucial for the agents to perform their services. Article 12/1 of FFAR clearly states that agents are allowed to perform football services for their clients only if before that, a written agreement has been reached. Furthermore, in Article 12/3 a two-year validity rule has been added. This means that after two years, both parties have to sign a new representation agreement as the old one cannot be renewed automatically (FIFA, 2023, p. 16). Mandatory conditions must be included in every rendition of a representation agreement in any FIFA member federation. However, domestic federations are free to add any additional conditions and clauses to the agreements. Furthermore, FIFA specifically requires that the representation agreement outlines and explains the nature of the legal connection between both parties. As a result, FFAR is mentioning the following mandatory required conditions (FIFA, 2023, p.17):

- the identity of the contract parties (footballer and agent),
- the time scale of the contractual agreement,
- the sum of the commission payable to the football agent,
- the type of football agent's services that have to be provided, and
- the signature of both parties.

Apart from the mandatory regulations written above, there can also be an additional range of clauses within the representation agreement. In the following segment, the emphasis will be on particular clauses that are the most significant elements of a representation agreement. These are the clauses that establish the monetary responsibilities of the agreement and also the clauses that delineate the duties that the player is obliged to fulfill during the duration of the contract. The following are the types of conditions and clauses that if not being fully understood and agreed on, may result in unfavorable consequences (Sogut, 2022b).

1. Exclusivity presents a highly crucial clause of a player's representation agreement. The exclusivity clause will specify that the agent is the one to represent the player in all agency-associated matters alone and exclusively. In other words, a footballer cannot cooperate with any other agent or sign any other contract that would allow other agents to provide their services to the footballer. Breaching such a clause can lead to a termination of the contract and also to a fine paid by the player to the agent (Sogut, 2022b).
2. Penalties are a highly important clause in any contract. Both parties have to be aware of their responsibilities and the consequences of any wrongdoing. A penalty clause is important within the contract as it aims to hold footballers accountable by (usually) paying a substantial amount of money if they violate the contract. The amount of money a footballer has to pay as a penalty is typically disproportionate to the harm that was incurred as a result of the violation of the contract. Penalty clauses are different than other clauses as they are there to address the damages the aggrieved party received, and they suggest a monetary sum that is so significant that it penalizes the party in breach, as opposed to compensating for the damages they have inflicted (UGSA, 2022).
3. Obligations of the footballer present the crucial point that footballers have to read carefully before signing a contract. In addition to explicitly outlining the services that the agent offers to the player, the representation agreement should also include the precise responsibilities and obligations of the footballer. The obligation clause goes hand in hand with penalties as breaching obligations can result in a penalty for the player. Usually, obligations consist of footballers giving the right to the agent to look through their pending contracts, insisting that footballers perform to the best of their capability, the rules of how provisions and awards will be paid to the agent, and so on (UGSA, 2022).

If the representation agreement is not conscientiously examined that could lead to troublesome consequences that could have a significant impact on the footballer's career. Previous sections show how contractual agreements are complex legal documents, presenting a foundation of the player-agent representation relationship. To that end, it is crucial to comprehend the meaning of each contractual clause. A suggestion given by Sogut (2022b) is that representation agreements should always be renewed in accordance with both parties. Each renewal should be signed after the initial contract expires (no more than two years after the new rules) as the automatic renewal can bring a lot of unwanted issues and dissatisfaction for both, the footballer and the agent. Only by re-evaluating the work and

expressing their doubts, possible improvement can be made and both can be satisfied and work towards the greater good together.

FFAR also includes reasons for terminating the representation agreement. Instances of valid grounds to terminate the written agreement are there to help one party if the other party does not act as agreed and expected. In general, all representation agreements should be in accordance with the principles of honesty and trustworthiness. The reasons for termination according to FFAR are (FIFA, 2023):

- a player or a coach (client) getting prohibited from participating in all activities related to football,
- client neglecting to remunerate the service fee to the agent,
- an agent having his or her license revoked or suspended, and
- a penalty for a club for registering new players for a minimum of one registration period.

3.4.2 International and local regulations

The main governing body under which all national football associations have to comply regarding international matters is FIFA. After a couple of years, on the 6th of January 2023, FIFA published a new set of regulations that all parties involved in the business of football have to follow. The biggest change is that after some years, FIFA has again reinstated the agent's exam. In the period from 2015, there was no licensing, therefore, every individual who wanted to become an agent could do so without any proper knowledge or obligation. From October 2023, every agent working without a FIFA agent's license will not be able to legally cooperate on any transfer. Individuals wanting to obtain the license will be able to apply for the exam three times per year in January, April, and September respectively. Elsner (interview, July 11, 2023), an agent passing the exam in April 2023, explained that the exam consists of 20 multiple-choice questions. Some questions had multiple correct answers and the main focus of the questions was on legal matters. Not so much on the actual work of agents, but more emphasis on the legal frameworks. Compensations, transfers of younger/underage players, and so on. For the year 2023, the option of applying is cut to two times, one in April and the second one in September. Once the exam is passed, agents will only have to renew their license once per year with paying a fee. The intention of reinstating the licensing system came with an attempt to establish a better and more transparent world of football transfers. In the sea full of agents judging by the words of FIFA officials, a monitoring system was a necessity. The new reform aims to improve ethical practices, making the actions and transfers more transparent, and protecting the players at all costs. Apart from re-establishing the licensing system, the new regulations will also be reinstated. The change is argued by current agents, insisting that players' positions will drastically change for the worse and that FIFA attempts to "get rid" of them. To see what differences the new reform will bring, it is important to mention the previous sets of rules briefly. In the past, two major sets of rules were established, one in 2008 and the other one in 2015. In

2008, rules demanded that individuals pass the agent's exam to receive the license, as well as limiting those licenses only to natural persons. The current practice of representing players through legal entities will no longer be permitted. The representative can be exclusively a natural person who will have the ability to do business deals through a legal entity. For example: an agency will not be allowed to make a deal while an agent will be allowed to make a deal through the agency. Furthermore, until now, certain regulations were in place that did not allow dual representation. One interesting difference was also naming agents, "FIFA agents", as opposed to the 2015 set of regulations naming them "intermediaries". Looking at the 2015 Regulations named "*FIFA Regulations on Working with Intermediaries*", one clear distinction is seen immediately. There was no licensing system because FIFA recorded in previous years that only around 30% of official agents are included in all player transfers. That number led them to the conclusion that the majority of parties were not following rules. Therefore, they opened up the world of agents to everybody who wished to participate in it. The sole requirement was registration done by every agent while also legal entities were permitted to participate in transfers. It is important to mention that the 2015 regulations were there to guide the national associations as they only introduced the minimum standards everybody had to work under. A problem that occurred was that since the national associations did not have a connected system, agents could only work under the association they were registered under. Furthermore, if it came to a dispute, the intermediaries, in this case, were not able to resolve it under the jurisdiction of FIFA. With only The Court of Arbitration for Sport (hereafter: CAS) and local national courts available, their situation was not ideal. CAS would be too expensive for the majority of cases and local courts had the issue of not having the necessary knowledge to make rulings in cases involving sports disputes. To better the conditions for players and agents, FIFA officials, therefore, announced a new set of regulations which were partially implemented on the 9th of January 2023. The new set of regulations is expected to come into full effect on the 1st of October of 2023. All the national associations are obliged to implement new agent rules that are in accordance with the 2023 FFAR by the 30th of September. This date is not important only for associations but also for agents that have obtained the FIFA license before 2015. If they wish to work as agents, they will have to submit an application and showcase the proof they already possess a FIFA license. In doing so, these particular agents will not have to pass the exam and will have their old FIFA licenses renewed (Malvestio & Wray, 2023).

It is important to highlight that FFAR rules exclusively apply to global transfers and operations, and not to domestic (local) transfers which fall under the jurisdiction of guidelines imposed by national associations. FAS, as well as other national associations, will have to align their rules with the FFAR by the 30th of September. Otherwise, local laws will contradict official legislation. Furthermore, it is worth noting that all national football associations have the authority to implement even more stringent and regulated rules but not more lenient ones. Simultaneously, it is important to write that the FFAR regulations

regarding the functioning of agents will not apply to representation agreements finalized before December 16, 2022.

3.4.3 2023 FIFA Football Agent Regulations (FFAR)

As mentioned in the segment above, the new FFAR Regulations (FIFA, 2023) will come into full effect on the 1st of October 2023. The Regulations were created to encourage contractual solidity and guarantee that the behavior of football representatives aligns with the fundamental goals of the football transfer structure. Specifically, the rules aim to:

- elevate and establish minimal requirements and standards for the agents,
- supply a rational and equitable agent service fee,
- restrict and control possible conflicts of interest,
- put a stop to the mistreatment of footballers.

The document consists of the following chapters written in order: general rules, becoming a football agent, acting as a football agent, rights and obligations of clients, disclosure and publication, disputes, disciplinary matters, final provisions, and football agent working group.

The General Rules chapter is quite general as it covers the explanation of definitions, as well as a brief presentation in the form of basic regulations, aims, and a range of regulations. The chapter provides information telling us that FIFA is the body legally responsible for the monitoring and governing of all matters connected with the transfer system. It emphasizes, that the main goals of the transfer system are to safeguard the contractual stability of both parties, promote the development of young players, shield minors, promote the development of young players, and ensure a fair competitive system. Furthermore, FFAR should also ensure that the behavior of agents aligns with both, the goals of the transfer system and the following goals in establishing and maintaining minimum professional and ethical standards, guaranteeing the quality of services provided by agents, restricting conflicts of interest, enhancing transparency and safeguarding players that are less educated on the topic. The scope of FFAR, according to the Regulations, includes everyone with a global capacity. The last article in the general chapter instructs national (member) associations with deadlines and instructions for implementing the new regulations.

The Becoming a Football Agent chapter explains the agent's exam procedure, defines eligibility demands, and describes the procedure of obtaining and maintaining the license, as well as touches on the subject of license suspension, which will be explained in a separate chapter.

The Acting as a football agent chapter consists of every subject and area of the agent's job. It covers representation agreement and its demands and rules on representing players under eighteen years old. Furthermore, it gives a detailed description of the agent's service fees, as

well as the maximum percentage an agent can receive from a transfer – the so-called “service fee cap”. Moreover, it defines the agent’s rights and duties, such as always acting in good faith for the footballer, respecting legal obligations and regulations, and so on. The chapter ends with the requirements for obtaining the FIFA license.

The Rights and Obligations of the Client’s chapter consist of instructions to footballers and clubs. It is precisely written what they have to provide to the agents and what are they entitled to request from them. Furthermore, the chapter also defines the rules of what actions are not allowed to be made or how they breach the FFAR.

The Disclosure and Publication chapter is fairly short and only consists of exact information that FIFA is obliged to make public.

The Disputes chapter defines the responsibilities of the Agents Chamber of the Football Tribunal.

The Disciplinary Matters chapter implies the responsible body for implementing the sanctions to rule-breaking parties. In the chapter, it is also written that the national (member) association holds responsibility for sanctioning their agents if they violate the Regulations. In the end, the FIFA general secretary is mentioned with written assignments regarding monitoring of the FFAR.

All things considered, the summary of the most important Articles within FFAR will be summarized now. First and foremost, the most important thing is the already mentioned agent’s exam. After 2015, FIFA again has made the exam the obligatory tool for anyone wanting to become an agent. After passing the exam and receiving the license, agents will be obligated to pursue ongoing education to uphold their license. The FIFA license will only be given to natural persons who will pass the exam and, at the same time, satisfy certain conditions. Those conditions are written in Article 5 under eligibility requirements. The obligatory exam is an example of suitability criteria that will hinder individuals with doubtful credibility from engaging in the football agency world. Qualification requirements are assessed both before acquiring a license and throughout its duration (Bolcar, 2023).

As part of the new rules, FIFA has placed significant emphasis on the protection of young (underage) players. According to the new regulations, agents are forbidden from making contact with players who are underage and/or their legal guardians more than six months before the minor reaches the age, at which they are eligible to sign their first professional contract, as determined by the relevant laws in the region of the club that a player will sign for. For some, this is seen as a positive change as now agents will receive the payment for their services only when players sign a professional contract. Furthermore, agents are required to complete a FIFA course specifically designed for underage players and fulfill conditions for representing them before engaging in any transaction that involves an underage player (Bolcar, 2023).

Furthermore, one of the most controversial rules is the limit on the percentage agents will be allowed to receive. Under new FFAR rules, there is an upper limit on the fee that agents will be allowed to receive from their client's gross salary. In the next chapter of financial aspects, the amounts will be thoroughly explained (FFAR, 2023).

Moreover, agents will be unable to concurrently represent three parties – agent, selling club, and purchasing club. This is one of the controversial rules and limitations on the business of the agents. Up until now, within specific limitations, agents were permitted to act for multiple parties in one transaction. Under the updated FFAR rules, agents will only be able to represent one party in the transfer or they will be able to represent the player and the club to which the player will be transferring. However, agents are no longer allowed to represent the club that their player is transferring from (Bolcar, 2023).

One big and important change is also that representation contracts done between agents and clubs are not bound by any maximum period of time. On the other hand, there is a change regarding contracts between agents and players or coaches as they will be limited to a maximum of two years. What that means is that the contract will not extend automatically or have a no-time frame clause on it. After two years, parties will have to sign a new contract (Bolcar, 2023).

A major change is expected in the field of exclusive representation as any contractual clauses that would restrict the ability of the represented party to autonomously negotiate and form an agreement without the cooperation of the agent or include a contractual penalty for breaking exclusivity will be deemed null (Bolcar, 2022).

3.4.4 Conditions for maintaining a license and reasons for license revocation

Every agent passing the exam will be subject to further requirements to keep his or her FIFA Agent License. The ongoing requirements (FIFA, 2023, p.12) for maintaining the agents' license expects football agents:

- not to have made any untrue, deceptive, or insufficient declaration in their application,
- to pay the annual fee within the provided deadline,
- to have never been suspended for two years or more or removed or disqualified from any sports authority body due to non-compliance with regulations related to ethical behavior and expertise conduct,
- not to ever been found guilty of a criminal offense concerning issues linked to drug trafficking, acts of violence, money laundering, sexual abuse, manipulation of matches, human trafficking, unauthorized use of funds, tax evasion, etc.,
- to adhere to reporting requirements,
- not to hold any official position or employment by FIFA or any other member (league, club, association, etc.) that advocates for their interest. The sole exemption of this

requirement is when the applicant has been chosen to serve on a FIFA committee or member association to defend and represent the interests of agents,

- not to possess any interest, either individually or through their agency, academy, or club,
- to follow the guidelines for continuing professional development,
- within the previous two years before license submission, never had been found providing football agent services,
- in the five years before the filing for a FIFA license, not to be a key part of a company that has declared bankruptcy or not to have disclosed personal bankruptcy,
- in the twelve months before submitting an application refrain from having any stake or an interest in an organization that organizes or engages in sports gambling activities to win money.

As a result of not meeting the mentioned requirements, the license will be automatically and temporarily suspended. As FFAR Regulations state, the penalties for football agents violating the rules will be the following: a reprimand, fine, warning, a ban on engaging in all activities related to football, or the suspension of the agent's license. Apart from that, agents can also ask for a temporary hold on their license at any time. This temporary hold has no set time limit and can be requested for valid reasons, including personal or medical circumstances. Throughout the license suspension, these individuals are prohibited from functioning as football agents in any situation (FIFA, 2023).

3.5 Financial aspects of a football agent

The economic sides of the football agents are the predominant factor in comprehending their impact and authority. Agents generally generate their revenue through percentage fees that are agreed upon in representation contracts and transfers they arrange for their players. The amount of percentage received by agents from clients' salaries differs among them. However, it will be limited with the acceptance of the new FFAR rules. A prevalent practice for agents is to obtain a portion of a player's profits which includes a portion of the player's earnings, bonuses that are based on the player's performance, signing bonuses, and additional sources of income. All the financial agreements done between agents and their clients are open to discussion between them and can be affected by different factors. Usually, agents with better reputations and a more elite profile, which they received through many successful and big transfers, demand higher rates of commission. The financial side of the agent industry has been closely looked upon and criticized due to the possibility of lavish fees and conflicts of interest. Top transfers that involve elite athletes result in a high agent fee which sparks discussions about the ethics and fairness of the payments (Raul, 2023).

3.5.1 Assessment of agent fees

The usual percentage of an agent's commission is generally somewhere between five and ten percent of the player's salary although the amount can differ based on the agent's status

and the intricacy of the negotiating procedure. With the new FFAR rules coming into play from October 2023, the percentage that agents will be allowed to receive will be subject to limitation. Table 1 shows the maximum amount of percentage fee agents will be allowed to receive from their clients.

Table 1: Agent's service fee cap

Client	Individuals yearly gross salary lower or equal to 200.000 USD	Individuals yearly gross salary above 200.000 USD
Individual (player/coach)	5% of the individual's yearly gross salary	3% of the individual's yearly gross salary
New club (club transferring to)	5% of the individual's yearly gross salary	3% of the individual's yearly gross salary
New club and individual	10% of the individual's yearly gross salary	6% of the individual's yearly gross salary
Old club (club transferring from)	10% of transfer compensation	10% of transfer compensation

Source: FIFA (2023).

As shown in Table 1, agents will be restricted to a maximum of 3% of the player's total salary if that salary exceeds 200,000 dollars per year. If the player's salary is under 200,000 dollars per year, the commission will be limited to 5%. In the case of dual representation, when the agent is acting on the behalf of footballer and the purchasing team, with both sides being aware of the situation and possible conflict of interest, the agent will be allowed to receive a maximum of 6% of the individual's total salary (if it exceeds the 200,000 dollars per year) or to a 10% if the individual's salary falls below that number. Moreover, when determining the cap, the amount of commission to be taken into consideration must exclude any contingent payments. However, the final amount of payment on which the highest percentage of the commission cap is based consists of all contingent payments. Another important thing is to show an example of how salary percentage commission will work. If the client receives a salary of 500,000 dollars that means that only for the amount above 200,000 the rules regarding 3% or 6% apply. For example, a footballer's yearly salary is set at 500,000 dollars. In this case, the agent will receive a 5% commission on the first 200,000 dollars, and a 3% commission on the other 300,000 dollars (FIFA, 2023).

The payments to the agents will be due after the transfer period window in which the transaction was completed ends. Payments will be also allowed in installments every three months for the entire length of the signed contract. The payment that the client will receive will be the only subject to the payment of the agent's commission. As a result, agents will not be eligible to receive a commission payment for any salary owed to their client by the club. The main goal of such a rule is to ensure that agents will continue to represent their clients actively even after the contract has ended. Additionally, agents will not be entitled to

a payment for the portion of the contract that was not fulfilled because the agent's client had transferred to another club early by agreement. Also, in the case of representing a club, the payment to agents will be due once the club receives the money from the other club (Bolcar, 2023).

3.5.2 Payment by the player

As seen in Table 1, an agent will be limited to the maximum amount of percentage fee payable from a player's football contract. As explained in the chapter above, the maximum percentage fee a player will be obliged to pay is 5% of the yearly salary if the salary is lower or equal to 200,000 dollars, and 3% of the player's yearly salary if the salary exceeds 200,000 dollars. Apart from the football contract fee, a representation contract can also consist of other possible services done by the agents with an agreed commission for them. Those commissions are not under FIFA's FFAR rules, which means that there is no maximum cap on them. The player is obligated to pay the agent fee however they agreed on it in the contract. Those other agent's fees are a percentage of sponsorship deals, marketing activities, promotions, advertising, and so on (UGSA, 2022).

3.5.3 Payment by the club

As a part of a transfer, agents can get a commission fee from players, as well as from the clubs. Clubs will pay the agent their fee as a part of the transfer agreement. Under new FFAR rules, a club will only be allowed to pay the agent's transfer fee on behalf of the footballer if the footballer's salary is lower than 200,000 dollars per year. Also, in the case of representing a club, the payment to agents will be due once the club receives the money from the other club (Bolcar, 2023).

3.5.4 Transfer fee

In football, a transfer means a business deal where a player switches from one club to the other. If a player has signed under the agreement, the club desiring to obtain the player's services is anticipated to provide remuneration – also referred to as a transfer fee. As part of the new rules, the agent can receive a maximum of 10% commission on transfer deals. In this case, the player's yearly gross salary is not relevant as in the previous case of the fee paid to the agent by the client (FIFA, 2023).

4 RESEARCH AMONG FOOTBALL AGENTS AND PLAYERS IN SLOVENIA

4.1 Research methods

For a more qualitative and deeper understanding, I chose two approaches for conducting the empirical part of the thesis. I believe this was the sole way to obtain the bigger picture and information from both sides to answer the written research questions. The two approaches used were a qualitative method of individual partially structured interviews and a quantitative method of a closed survey.

4.1.1 Qualitative method

To enhance my understanding of the topic, the qualitative approach enabled me additional in-depth questions that gave a bigger picture to my understanding of the subject. In doing so, I used the most commonly used tool for collecting data in qualitative studies – interviews. Conducting individual and partially structured interviews provided me with a more profound understanding and increased adaptability as it allowed me to acquire additional data that would not have been possible with any other alternative approach. The initial process started with me formulating a set of questions that were developed using a theoretical framework and research on international and domestic literature.

The primary objective of the interviews was to obtain answers to the research questions I presented in the introduction from the agent's perspective. Their perspective and opinions were the primary reference for the creation of the interview questions. Utilizing interviews I wanted to gather as much information from agents as I could with an emphasis on how they understand their role, what expectations they have towards their players, and also how they feel about new FFAR Regulations.

Interviews were done face to face, as well as on the Zoom platform followed by a transcript of all individual interviews. In my research, I conducted four interviews with agents involved in the football industry. Three of the agents perform their work both in Slovenia and internationally. The fourth individual is heavily involved in the business of football and agency worldwide. Agents were selected according to the perspective they could give to the research, consequently using purposive sampling for conducting the interviews. Ružnić was selected because the reason of being the most known and successful Slovenian agent as the majority of Slovenian players are represented by him. Kovač and Elsner are smaller agents compared to the other two agents. Kovač was chosen because he cooperated on the recent fifth biggest transfer in Slovenian history and is a representative of younger players whereas Elsner is a newly licensed FIFA agent and a former successful player. Martins, however, operates on a much bigger scale and market. Hence, he was selected to present a bigger perspective on the thesis topic. My aim of the research was to acquire a broader perspective

on the world of agents and, simultaneously, obtain a contrast of the mindset of smaller and bigger agents.

Table 2: Description of interviews

Number	Agent's name	Date	Duration (min)	Interview method
1.	Rok Elsner	11/7/2023	28	Face to face
2.	Luka Kovač	11/7/2023	17	Face to face
3.	Amir Ružnić	14/7/2023	16	Face to face
4.	Hugo Martins	4/8/2023	24	Zoom platform

Source: Own work.

Three of the agents had similar questions whereas for the fourth interviewee, the questions were a bit modified as his work is much broader. All of the interviewees were very relaxed and open to talking about their opinions on the topic. The interview list was made firstly to gather information on their background, continuing on their role in footballers' lives, expectations of both, and concluding with agent's regulations imposed by FIFA.

I would like to emphasize that I am aware of the potential problem due to the smaller sample but I strongly believe that the latter is still sufficient to be able to answer written research questions. Slovenia has a small market and most of the agents do not have a broad list of players signed under them. I believe having a top agent in Slovenia with the most signed players and two of the smaller agents gave a clear enough picture of the situation in Slovenian football.

4.1.2 Quantitative method

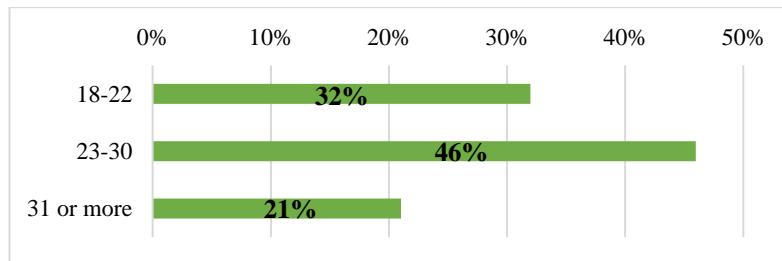
The second method I used was a quantitative method of a closed online survey intended for football players. The idea of the survey was to compare players' opinions with the answers given by their agents in the interviews. I chose the survey as it gave players privacy to truthfully answer the questions and it gave me another aspect of the topic that I could compare with the agent's point of view. Having an understanding from both sides I could compare the expectations of both and provide information on the relationship between the two. The survey intended to see how the footballers see the roles of their agents in their careers and how much influence and effect the agents have.

The survey was done among 28 players primarily playing in the Slovenian Football League. I asked each interviewed agent to share the survey link amongst their players playing primarily in the Slovenian League. Players were chosen randomly by the agents. Therefore, a random sampling method was used. In the results, surveys done by players playing abroad

were also included as the results showed whether the relationship and opinions are any different between players playing internationally or domestically.

According to the data on the age structure of the participating players, the majority of them (46%) were between 23 and 30 years old. The complete age structure of the participating players is shown in Figure 1 below.

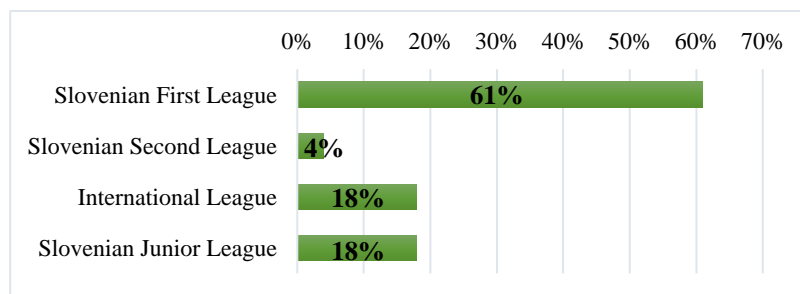
Figure 1: Age structure of the respondents



Source: Own work.

Continuing on the structure of respondents, I wanted to know in what league the respondents play. As the main target group, 61% of the respondents play in Slovenian First League (see Figure 2). I also included answers from players playing internationally as I believe their input is still relevant to the research.

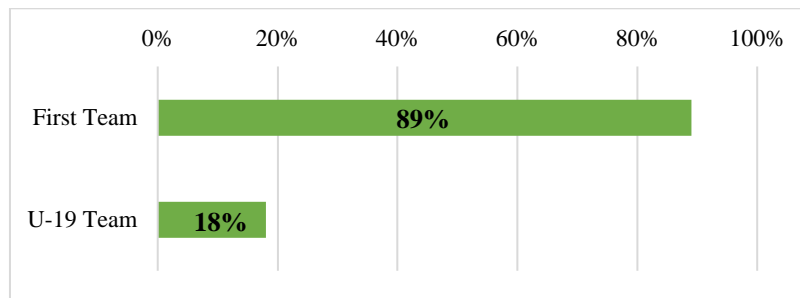
Figure 2: Rank of the competition respondents play in



Source: Own work.

Furthermore, the analysis of the team selection is shown in Figure 3. Answers showed that the majority of them play for the first team. The percentage of them was 89%. It was interesting that there were three cases of respondents that, according to the results, played for two selections, the U19 and the first team. Usually, this is the case with young players who also get an opportunity to play for the first team aside from playing for their selection.

Figure 3: Selection of the team respondents play in



Source: Own work.

4.2 Research questions

The main goal of the master's thesis was to provide an analysis and paint the whole picture regarding the profession of a sports agent, as well as to provide an outline of what a football agent actually does. Furthermore, the goal was to evaluate the impacts each side has on the other and to analyze from real-life examples how the relationship between the player and the agent works in real life. To reach this goal I have written four research questions that I will try to answer. Those research questions are:

- What are the ways the agent affects the career development of the football player?
- How does the agent influence the player's private life?
- What expectations do both parties have for each other?
- In what ways do authorities control the regulations in real life?

4.3 Results

This chapter will consist of the relevant questions that were asked to the interviewees and the results of the survey among players. Based on the obtained answers and the analysis of the primary data I wanted to understand both sides of parties in the representation relationship. This information will show a wholesome picture of the relationship between the football player and the agent. Data analysis and interpretation of findings will follow in the next subchapter.

4.3.1 Results based on interviews with agents

When conducting interviews, the first main question referred to the agent's point of view on (1) how they see their role in the development of a football player. I wanted to see how agents would prescribe their role in the footballer's life and what the ways agents think they affect footballers' careers are. Furthermore, I intended to see whether there is any difference in the agent's role between younger and older players.

Based on the interviews, all agents emphasized that they do not intervene in player's tactical development. For that reason, the player already has a coach and they do not see their role in helping the player develop tactically. However, they all seem to agree that their role depends from a player to a player. Every player is different and every player has different needs and desires. The first interviewee emphasized that the role in development has to be divided into two categories. One of those categories is the development of a young player, and the other category is the development of an older player (25 years old and older). He talked about the role of an agent being much bigger with younger players because older players already understand many things in and outside football. If I quote: »But it is true that nowadays every player needs an agent, but the focus or communication with the player in terms of development is greater with younger players, as you can help them more than older players who already have their own experience« (R. Elsner, interview, July 11, 2023). Furthermore, the other interviewee (L. Kovač, interview, July 11, 2023) pointed out that his role always depends on the player. He said that every player has a different character and consequently every player has different needs. If I quote him: »Someone wants you to be their nanny, friend, agent, lawyer, and the list goes on. On the other hand, someone else does not need that, he just needs someone to bring him a club on the table«. He also talked about agents having adequate experience for them to realize what is that the player actually needs. But in the end: »what someone needs, and what is my role it depends a lot on the situation«. However, during this question, it was emphasized that he will not be involved in the tactical matters as that is the coach's responsibility. The word used in describing the role was also orientation. L. Kovač (interview, July 11, 2023) said: »My role with younger players is above all orientation, that if they have a goal in front of them, that they know what they need to do to reach that goal. That they understand what steps they need to take on and off the field, and what they have to devote to that goal. The competition in sport is abnormal, the pressures are enormous, and if a young footballer does not understand those steps it will be difficult for him to achieve the goal. So, the situation where I would guide him on what he should do on the field, from that I like to distance, but showing the path what he needs to do in order to reach a top, that is where I guide him«. A. Ružnić (interview, July 14, 2023) talked about the importance of the agent in a footballers life as their presence can have positive and negative effects on the player's development. In his words: »I never get involved in tactical things and the game itself as I do not have that right. Coach and sports director it is one thing (segment); me and my client are something else. I am exclusively concerned only with my tasks«. in his answer, he also mentioned the following aspects where the role of an agent is greater: counseling, direction of the player, and sports equipment.

The next question was aimed at the influence the agent has on a footballer's playing career. I asked: (2) "In what way do you influence the player's decisions regarding his football career and contract signing?" I wanted to see whether there are cases where the agent would persuade the player to sign a contract with a specific club or whether the influence is more informational.

The common belief amongst interviewed agents was that the end decision always has to belong to the player. However, they will always share their opinion on what would be the best option in their opinion. That is especially relevant when having a younger player. Ružnić (interview, July 14, 2023) mentioned: »It is enormous difference whether we are talking about younger or an older player. If we are talking to a younger player, a 16-year-old it is one thing, when we are talking about a player such as for example Šporar, it is something completely different. Younger player will always need a bit more developing advice and orientation than an older player«. He said further he goes by the rule of always saying what he thinks but never making a decision on the player's behalf. He shared an experience from his career where he greatly influenced the decision of a player who later blamed him for it. Another point of view was added by Kovač (interview, July 11, 2023) as he explained that footballers do not have a clear picture of what steps are good for them. In his opinion, this should be a quality of a good agent. He furthermore said: Development of the player is of maximum importance for a young player and there is where I share my opinion. If a sixteen- to twenty-one-year-old player develops properly with the right coach and the right club, the money will come in the future«. Agents also agreed that there is a fine line between giving a good advice and not looking too persuasive. An agent pointed out (R. Elsner, interview, July 11, 2023) that the line is very delicate. He gave an example of a 20-year-old player with two offers. One offer hails from Saudi Arabia and the other offer from Belgium. For him, this is a no-brainer that the player should go to Belgium as the Saudi League would make no sense for the player's development. In that kind of situation, he would put more pressure on directing the player to Belgium. Elsner also emphasized that currently: »There is a one big mess in this world of agents. From 1st of October the agents should be regulated a bit more but, now, there are many bad and corrupt agents who will only look at where they can make more money and persuade the player into that direction. But as a good agent the matter is a bit different. I believe you have to look at the development of the player, which offer would be the best in terms of that. Also sporting wise, financial wise, how good the league is, what kind of experience the player will get, whether he will be in the eyes of a national team coach, but in the end, I will only offer my advice and thinking«. He followed that statement with his main role being bringing the club to the player and offering the player his honest opinion. In the end, he believes, the player has to make the final decision. This is the experience he shared because he was a professional player himself. He mentioned that a player already has many people influencing his final decision. Therefore, an agent has to be the reasonable voice in the equation.

The third question was aimed at the involvement of the agents in the personal life of the player. The question I asked the agents was whether in their experience (3) an agent plays a special role in the player's private life, and if so, what kind.

All the agents agreed they do not play any special role in their players' private lives. However, all presented a bit different answer to the question. Elsner (interview, July 11, 2023) went in the direction that there are not any rules regarding the matter. He confirmed

that there is a weekly conversation with players. Therefore, he knows what is going on in their lives but far from having any sort of a strong influence. In his words: I will not interfere in player's daily life, and in my opinion the impact on the private life, is not as great as on other things«. The other interviewee said that he would not interfere in the player's private life unless the player specifically asked for it or if he saw that the player had deviated from the right path (L. Kovač, interview, July 11, 2023). Ružnić (interview, July 14, 2023) was very short and direct. If I quote: »I leave the private life to the player. There is a strict dividing line in this situation«.

I still had questions about involvement in private life so I continued the question with a follow-up, in (4) what situation they would interfere in the player's private life. As I understood from the answers to the previous question, there are certain situations where the agents would break their rule regarding not interfering with their players' private lives.

The answer was mainstream as all of the interviewed agents said they would interfere if they saw the player losing his focus or putting his efforts into the wrong things. Ružnić (interview, July 14, 2023) said: »If you know that the player has done something bad, as an agent you definitely intervene«. He gave an example of a player going out to nightclubs almost every day or having some bad influenced people around him. In that case, he would sit down with the player and tell him this was not the right path that would lead him to achieve his dreams. He concluded with: »If you see that the player's actions are problematic and that they should be done better, my influence will for sure be greater«. Furthermore, Kovač (interview, July 11, 2023) gave an example of a young 17-year-old player with a girlfriend who wants to be an Instagram influencer and he consequently hangs on Instagram for 20 hours per day. He would intervene and tell the player that this is not the right path. His advice would be to stay focused on himself and follow his path. He concluded with: »It sounds brutal, but a football player has to be in his own world and only live for football«. Another example he shared would be an extreme presence on a nightlife scene and any other sort of disturbance that would intervene with the player's football career. Elsner's (interview, July 11, 2023) answer was in sync with the other two agents' answers as he also pointed out the player losing his focus. He pointed out examples of nightlife, and also, the lifestyle of footballers attracting certain types of women and people in their lives. He finished that in principle he likes to keep players' private lives separate from the business but in such extreme cases, he would surely intervene.

To conclude involvement in the footballer's private life, I was interested in finding out whether (5) the services agents provide consist also of taking care of the player's private life (e.g., organization of holidays, consulting, helping with moving situations, etc.). While doing research for the theoretical part, I learned that some agents in the world also perform that kind of service. Therefore, I wanted to paint a clear all-around picture backed with empirical data research.

The main lead was that hypothetically this could also be a part of the agent's services. However, this depends on a player heavily. An agent said the mentioned services are really dependent on the individual. In his words: »Someone likes to organize holiday for himself, while someone does not know how to go to booking.com and make a reservation«. Although these are not services he would initially promote and provide, he stated that in a situation where the player would want those services, he would help (L. Kovač, interview, July 11, 2023). Ružnić (interview, July 14, 2023) also stated that generally speaking those services could be a part of an agent's job description. However, he personally only deals with the sporting part of the business. He gave an example of his services and said: »As for the sports management this is all in my domain. Sports equipment, arranging contracts, looking for a new employer, finding fitness trainers, nutritionist and so on«. Elsner (interview, July 11, 2023), however, gave a different aspect on the situation as he pointed out that in the top leagues, for example in the Premier League, this type of thing will be taken care of within the club. He continued, that as far as our reality, it depends on the player alone. If his player would want that from him, he would get in touch with responsible employees in the club. Furthermore, he mentioned that an agent cannot just leave and go for three weeks with the player only to find a home for him. He concluded with: »If a player would ask me to help him I would, but primarily I do not deal with those things«

Moving forward on interviews, I wanted to gain knowledge on what a player expects from the agent and vice versa. I started with the agent's point of view and asked (6) what they (agents) think players expect from them. Thus, I could then combine the answers from the survey that players have done to get the opinions of both sides.

The overall opinion is that the main thing a player expects is a contract. Players hire agents to find them a club and the best possible contract deal. Ružnić (interview, July 14, 2023) emphasized that players want him to be 100% theirs. When they need something, he has to be there to try to make their wishes happen. He said: »In the end they are only interested in money and want you to negotiate the best deal for them. You can do everything for them, but in the end, it comes down to the contract you bring them«. Another agent stated that the players wanted the whole package, from point A to point Z. He followed that with the primary expectation which was finding a club. He also added many more things players might expect from agents, to be psychologists, tax advisors, finding sports equipment, and so on. He ended with: »Player also wants me to be intermediary between him and the club, and that I make his wishes come true« (R. Elsner, interview, July 11, 2023). Additionally, I received two more answers to the question. One answer went in the way of the agent touching a bit more emotional side of the player. He stated that he believes a player would expect him to be there in any difficult situation where certain things need to be resolved. Furthermore, he added one layer of thought that players would also expect him to anticipate those difficult situations and give them good advice or open the door for them to clubs that would be good for the player's development. He concluded: »I have encountered many different characters and some players expected me to be there all the time in all life

situations, and some just wanted me to bring them the paper to sign« (L. Kovač, interview, July 11, 2023). Furthermore, Martins (interview, August 4, 2023) also added that in the end players expect a deal. He also emphasized that while it is not morally imperative, it is important that an agent helps a player psychologically in a situation where he would see a player struggling.

Continuing on the player-agent expectations, I was interested (7) in what agents expect from their players. Only by getting the opinion of both sides, I can provide an all-around complete answer on a topic. Furthermore, I found it interesting to compare the given answers of players and agents on the same topic.

The main answer to this question was that agents expect a player to give his maximum on the football field. They explained, that they expect their players to do their maximum no matter the situation, on and off the field. Elsner (interview, July 11, 2023) added, that he expects the player to take care of their agreement to the fullest. By taking care of the agreement, he pointed out the payments and everything that was agreed on in the contract. Two of the agents also added loyalty as something they expect from their players. Kovač (interview, July 11, 2023) made an interesting point in saying: »I do not expect from him to call me all the time and tell me everything, I expect for him to trust me enough that he knows if he has a problem or a question the doors are always open«. Ružnić (interview, July 14, 2023) emphasized loyalty the most out of the interviewees. He added that loyalty is becoming less and less apparent and he also experienced how money can change certain players. He said: First and foremost, I expect loyalty from them. Doing their job on the football field should be a given thing. But the fact, that a player will not sell me at the first better offer, that is what I expect«.

Furthermore, I wanted to see whether the agents (8) see any room for improvement in their current relationships. I believe it is a difficult question but it was an interesting question where I caught the agents off guard and made them think about their current relationships.

All of the agents needed the most time to start talking about this question. I did not receive any specific answer. However, they all started with the fair sentence of every relationship having a space for improvement. They all agreed that the improvement is always possible, and everybody should strive for the perfection at all times. Kovač (interview, July 11, 2023) pointed out that every relationship is unique and it is a learning process. He believes that from each player, and situation, one learns something that gives him or her knowledge to make some situations better in the future. Moreover, Ružnić (interview, July 14, 2023) believes all the agent can do is be honest with the players and fight for them at all times. However, he pointed out that he does miss more information on the player's side. He said: »When it is in their interest, they call all the time, but when it is not, they are inactive. I miss the fact that even in worst moments, they treat you the same as in good moments«. Elsner (interview, July 11, 2023) took a different route and searched for improvements in the size of the agency and the market the agency is based. He believes that improvement also depends

on the financial aspect. He said that: »The bigger agency you have, the more people you can add and the more services you can offer«.

In the last part of the interviews, I wanted to learn more about the rules and penalizing system of the official authorities. I started with the question to find out whether the agents (9) encountered any kind of official control from the authorities.

To this question, I received the most different answers. Two of the agents agreed that there is no control at the moment for the agents. Kovač (interview, July 11, 2023) mentioned that he has never encountered any official control in his career but has heard of morally doubtful ethical examples every day. An example of morally doubtful example was given in terms of parents demanding large amounts of money in cash from agents to sign their child with them. Additionally, he expressed: »In my opinion, it would be great if the system was made like in the NBA and NHL, because the system is clearly defined and everyone knows who drinks and who pays«. Furthermore, Elšner (interview, July 11, 2023) added that currently there is no control and there should be more control and rules. He mentioned the new FFAR Rules coming up but he gave an interesting insight in saying: »I have information that even these rules might not happen, as in Dortmund and the Netherlands, the Supreme Court has already refused to limit the commission for the agents«. He continued: »The current situation is insufficient control from FIFA. I will not say FAS because they are in a way a branch of FIFA, and you also have to register with them to work in Slovenia. But overall, the whole system is not good, there are too many paratroopers who try to negotiate and mediate the transfer because they know somebody somewhere and they are not suitable for the business«. Ružnić (interview, July 14, 2023), on the other hand, explained he does not see any issues with the current rules. He explained that FIFA rules define exactly what can and cannot be done. He believed that transparency is guaranteed as for every transfer an agent is obliged to register with the football association. He said: » I had to register with the Italian Football Association for the transfer of Begić. The commission I received is transparent, everything is deposited to the association in which country you perform the services, so it is well regulated and control exists all the time«.

While staying on the same topic, I still wanted more answers regarding the rules and restrictions. Therefore, I continued the previous question with an inquiry on (10) their opinion on whether there should be more rules and restrictions from the official organizations.

Ružnić (interview, July 14, 2023) stuck to his opinion that rules right now are okay as they are. He emphasized that he feels the new rules are sort of an attack on the agents and he mostly does not agree with them. He said: »If we defend the free movement of labor in the European Union, then we cannot restrict it... Personally I hope they will fail«. He also continued on the reason for the implementation of the new rules as he said: »...at one point, the agents had too much influence over the whole business because the commissions were so high, that the agents were, in quotes, rulers of life and death. And because of this, now

they want to limit us to three percent, which is also not okay. It is necessary to find a balance and a reasonable path«. Elsner's (interview, July 11, 2023) point of view was that just like in any company or country there has to be a sort of control, and the agency is missing that. The procedure was to register with FAS and pay a certain amount, which was something that practically anyone could do. The process was way too easy. He also said: »Even people who do not have a registration number do this business, and in the end, they are not even the subject of control«. He concluded that because of the lack of rules »the value that should be present in a football agent has been lost due to the spread of fraudsters amongst agents«. Kovač (interview, July 11, 2023) explained that in the football world, nothing is really respected. He said: For example in the NBA it is very clear who can be an agent, how much is agent paid and how can the agent work«. In a contrast to the other two agents, he believes that commission is not even the biggest stumbling block. He furthermore explained: »Now, the agent comes into the club and asks for 30% because there is already a deal behind that director gets 10%, the coach gets 5% and the agent gets 15%. If there is for example a clear rule that 6% is a universal percentage for everyone and is contractual bound why not«.

For the conclusion, I saved the least controversial rule from the new FIFA rules. I asked all the interviewees (11) what their opinion on the reintroduction of the FIFA agent's exam is.

As I learned from them throughout the interviews, this was the least controversial rule, and a rule that everyone believed it is a step in the right direction. Elsner (interview, July 11, 2023) emphasized that he wants to work honestly. Therefore, he believed the exam was a step in the right direction. He has an issue with the commission. In his words: »Who can limit how much your knowledge, abilities and your people are worth? « Furthermore, he explained that a certain limit would be okay but in the new rules, the limit is set really low, and as a result of that, some people will surely find a way around the rule. In the end, he concluded that the reintroduction of the exam was the right way. However, he is not sure the whole package of rules was done correctly. Therefore, he doubts the rules can be successful in the long run. Kovač (interview, July 11, 2023) also agreed that the exam is a good step and added another interesting layer of agents having a proper education. He said: If you want to be a surgeon you have to go through several years of school, just like a lawyer and any other job role. As far as I am concerned it is the only way. But if that would be the case, probably 90% of the people doing the agent's job today, would not do it«. He believes that agents should be properly educated and that right now it is a bit of unjust what kind of the bad reputation the agents have. He continued that agents are looked at as the bad guys but in the end: »Just as you have good and bad doctors, you also have good and bad agents. However, it is true that because the profession is not regulated and systematized most of the problems occur. So, yes, I think exam is a good step forward and should be obligatory«. Ružnić's (interview, July 14, 2023) opinion was not different in this case as he also believes the exam is a good move by FIFA. In his words: »The reintroduction of licensing is great in my opinion, because every butcher will not be able to do the profession. The exam is the basis. Anyone who wants to engage in this business must go through it«. The broader aspect

of the topic was shared by Martins (interview, August 8, 2023) as he explained that we should look at it from two different dimensions. One dimension is whether it is good for agency activities to be regulated and to have a code of conduct and boundaries for what can and cannot be done. In that case, he believed this was a positive step. However, looking at the other dimension, we have to ask ourselves whether this was made just to achieve some other goal such as limiting the agents. In his words: »In the end players need agents because they are the weakest link in this chain, they do not know how things work... This is where the agent brings value as he can help players see the unfair clauses, and negotiate a fairer deal. So, in the end, the agent reduces imbalance of power between player and other parties«. He concluded his thought with: »In theory I agree, and I want to see whether this is not just to limit the activities of agents, but to improve the quality of the agents. If this is to improve the quality then it is positive«.

4.3.2 Results based on a survey among players

The survey was made out of ten questions with the majority of them being in the form of a Likert scale where the players chose their answer according to the seven different provided variables from strongly disagree to strongly agree. The survey was shared among players of the interviewed agents with 28 players successfully solving the survey. Three of the questions were structurally oriented while the other seven were aimed at analyzing the player's point of view regarding their relationship with their agent. In this part, those seven questions will be further analyzed.

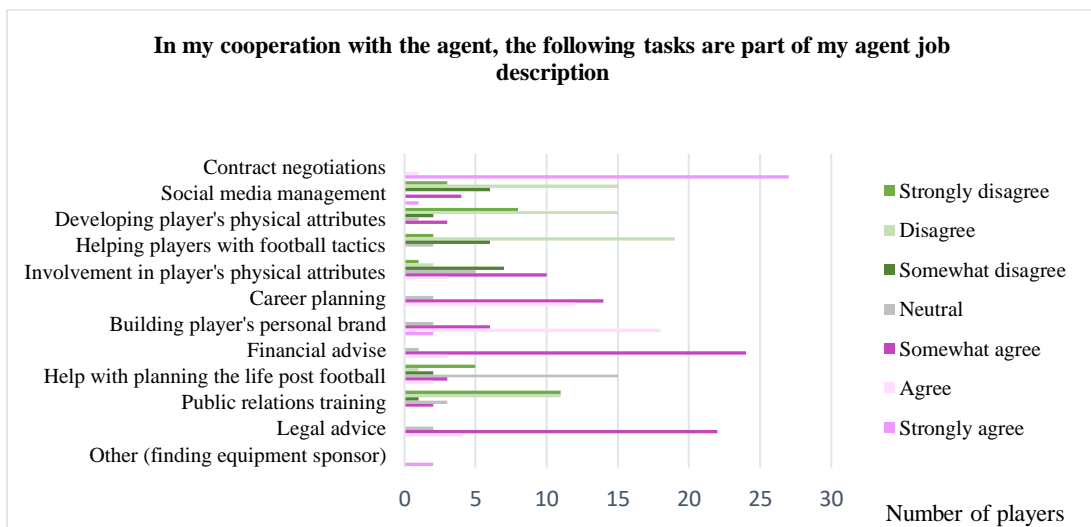
The questions will not be analyzed in an exact order as presented in the survey but in the specific segments. The research topic will be divided into four parts. The first part will show an analysis of the agent's influence on players' careers followed by expectations, personal relationships, and control. The pink columns in the figures represent positive values while the green columns represent negative values.

The first area I analyzed was the effect and influence agents have on the player's careers and their development. The binding element of analysis in this part is also the player's perspective on the agent's work duties.

The first analyzed survey question is related to players' opinions on the work tasks that fit their agents' job descriptions (see Figure 4). Players were given multiple agent task possibilities from which they had to choose how strongly they agreed or disagreed with every one of them. Figure 4 shows that 27 of the players, which results in 96% of respondents, strongly agreed that contract negotiation fits their agents' job description. Furthermore, 18 players, or 64% of the respondents, agreed that an agent is also responsible for building a player's personal brand while the combined number of 26 players resulting in 93% of respondents answered positively on the statement on the agent's help with career planning. Strongly on the positive value side are also tasks of giving legal and financial advice to the players. Moving on to the negative values, tasks players strongly disagreed were part of their

agent's job were: social media management with 54% of respondents (15 players) choosing disagree answer, helping players with football tactics with 68% of the respondents (19 players) disagreeing, developing player's physical attributes with 54% of the respondents (15 players) disagreeing, and 29% of the respondents (8 players) strongly disagreeing. An interesting result was provided on the help with planning the life after football statement where 54% of the respondents (15 players) chose the neutral value and a combined 18% of respondents (6 players) just barely agreed with the statement and a combined 29% of the respondents (8 players) disagreeing with it.

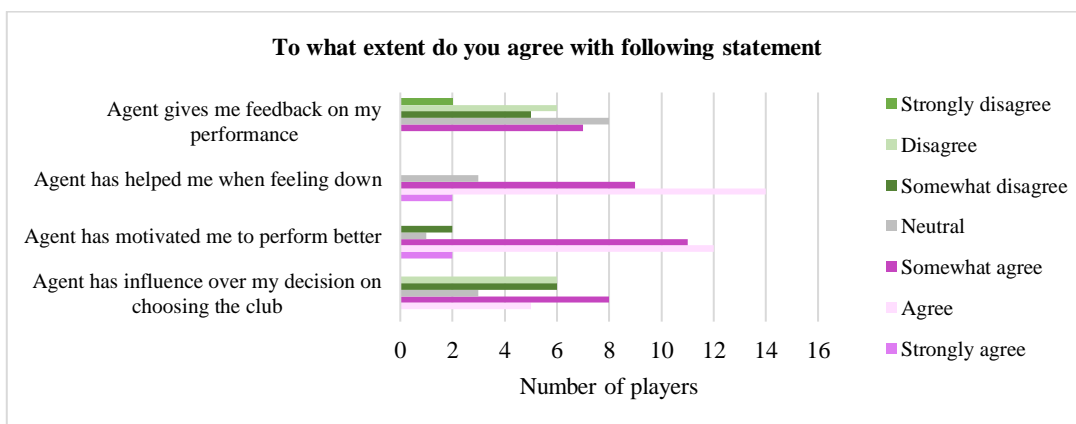
Figure 4: Agent's job description according to the players



Source: Own work.

Moving forward, players were asked to choose how much they agreed with already provided statements regarding the influence of their agents on their careers (see Figure 5).

Figure 5: Ways agents are affecting career development according to players

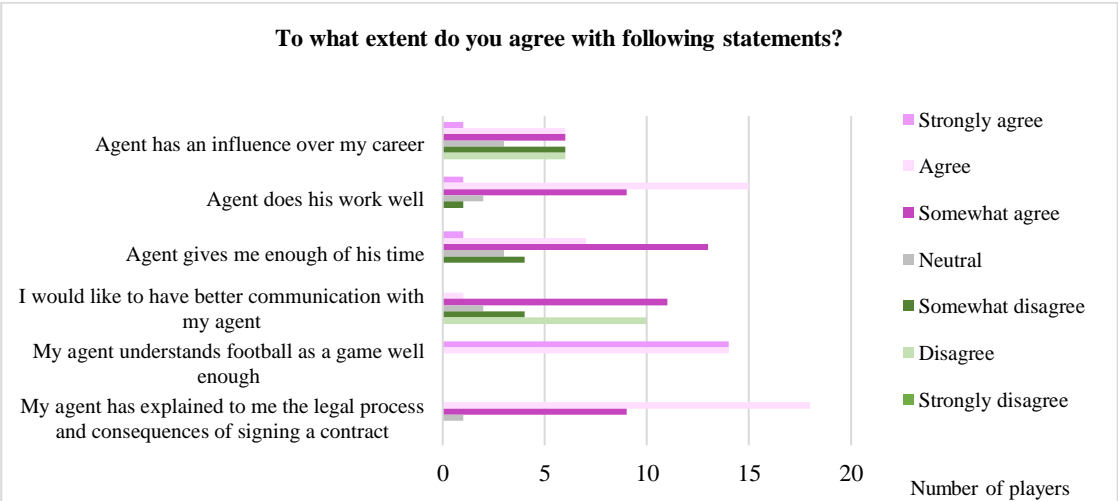


Source: Own work.

The biggest divide amongst players is seen in the statement asking how much influence agents have over their decision on choosing the club. A combined total of 47% of the respondents, which results in 13 players responded positively, with 29% (8 players) of them somewhat agreeing and 18% (5 players) of them agreeing. On the other side, a total of 42% of the respondents (12 players) answered negatively, with 21% (6 players) of them disagreeing and 21% (6 players) somewhat disagreeing. Three players (11% of the respondents) chose the neutral option. The positive percentage was high on both motivation and help statements while the feedback on performances resulted in higher values on the negative side with a total of 46% of the respondents answering negatively (13 players). The highest number of neutral values was also in the latter, with 8 players choosing the neutral.

Data in Figure 6 can be analyzed as an effect agents have on their players and also as an analysis of the relationship between an agent and a player. I decided to include this question in the first analyzed area as it also touches on the subject of work duties, as well as the effect and influence of agents.

Figure 6: Player's opinion on their agents



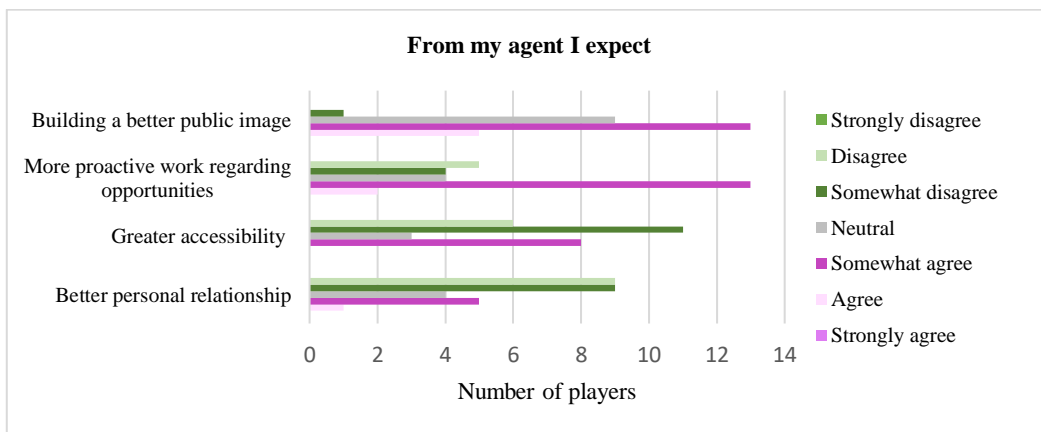
Source: Own work.

As Figure 6 shows, the highest positive value is seen on agents explaining to their players the legal process of signing the contract with 18 players (64% of the respondents) agreeing with the statement. Furthermore, data shows that players are mostly satisfied with the work of their agents. A combined total of 75% of the respondents (24 players) responded positively when asked whether their agent did his job well. A positive value was also achieved when asked if their agent gave them enough of his time. An interesting conclusion can be drawn on a question about the influence of the agents over player’s careers. The answers on the negative side were almost in sync with the positive side. The positive side got a slight edge with one player strongly agreeing with the statement. Players also agreed that agents understand football as only agreed and strongly agreed received an answer. The biggest divide in Figure 6 is seen in the statement regarding better communication with the

agent. The answers were divided with 36% of the respondents (10 players) disagreeing and 14% (4 players) somewhat disagreeing with the matter while 39% of the respondents (11 players) somewhat agreed with the statement. That signifies that the majority of respondents are happy with their current communication.

The next area I investigated was the expectations. In this part two questions will be analyzed, one showing what the players expect from their agents, and the other showing what players think their agents expect from them. Figure 7 shows the expectations players have from their agents.

Figure 7: Expectations of players



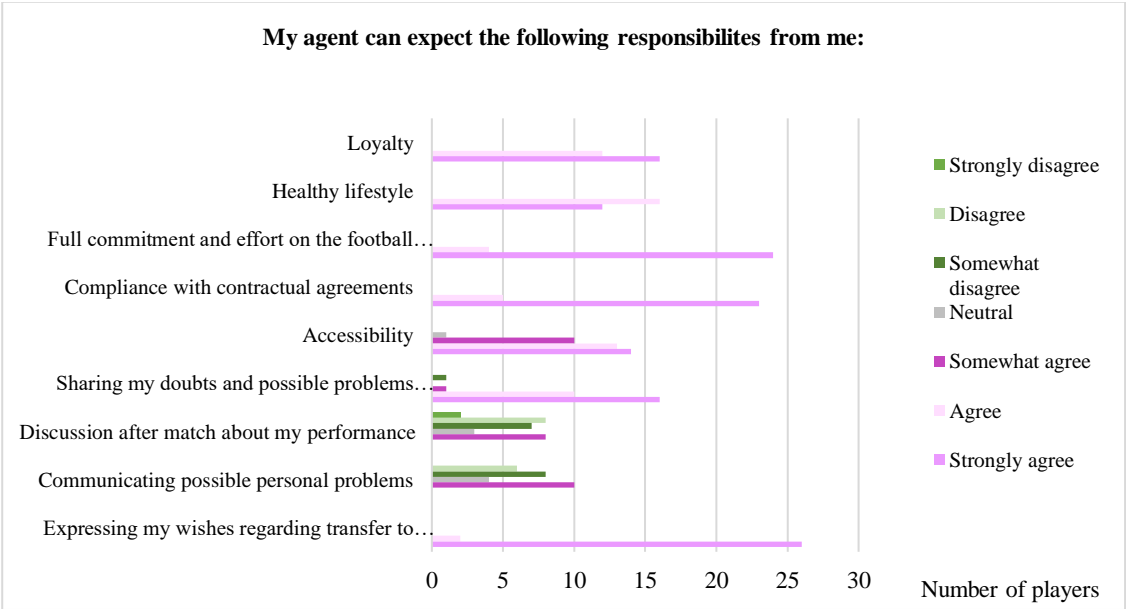
Source: Own work.

According to Figure 7 above, players do not wish for better personal relationships as 32% of the respondents (9 players) disagreed and the same number of them somewhat disagreed with the statement. However, 6 players positively reacted to the statement resulting in 22% of the respondents. Moving on, greater accessibility also showed high negative values with a total of 60% of the respondents (17 players) not wishing their agents would be easier to access. On the other hand, players do wish for greater involvement of agents in building a better public image and more proactive work regarding opportunities. The same percentage of respondents (46%) responded with somewhat agree on both statements.

Next, Figure 8 below shows player’s opinions on what they think their agents expect from them. Players were given different responsibilities on which they had to answer how much they agreed with them. The answers were very straightforward with only two responsibilities on the negative spectrum. Those two responsibilities are post-match discussion and communicating personal problems. Post-match discussion received negative answers from a combined 61% of the respondents which represents 17 players while communicating personal problems received negative answers from a combined 50% of the respondents, which represents 14 players. On the positive spectrum, the highest score on the strongly agree value was given on expressing wishes regarding transfers from 93% of the respondents (26 players), full commitment and effort on the football field from 86% of the respondents

(24 players), and compliance with contractual agreements from 82% of the respondents (23 players). Other responsibilities, such as loyalty, sharing doubts within the club, and a healthy lifestyle were also strongly on the positive side.

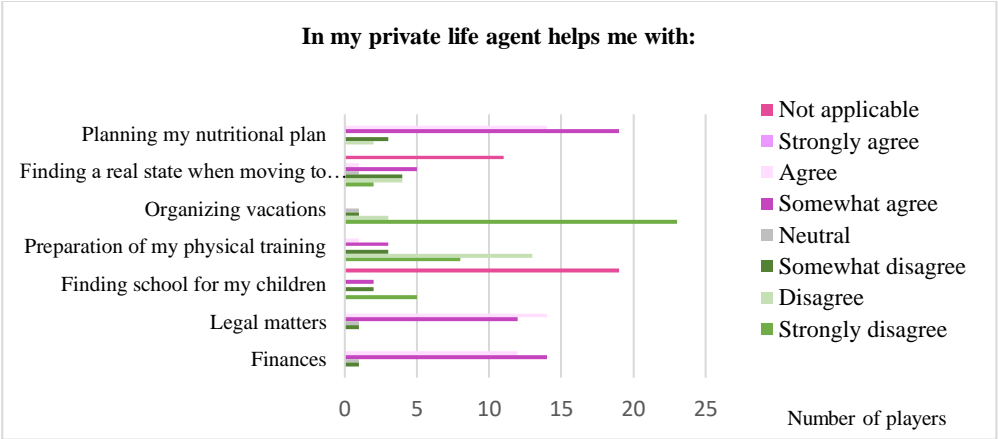
Figure 8: Player responsibilities



Source: Own work.

The third area is investigating the subject of personal relationships between players and their agents. The question covered will be analyzing how much the agents are involved in the personal lives of their players (see Figure 9).

Figure 9: Agent's help to players



Source: Own work.

As seen in Figure 9, organizing vacations received the most negative answers with 23 players (82% of the respondents) strongly disagreeing that the area agents help them. According to

the results, players also do not think it is the agent's job to help them with the preparation of their physical training. However, a total of 68% of the respondents (19 players) somewhat agreed that the agent helps them with the preparation of the nutritional plan. Positive values were also achieved on the help with legal and financial matters. The matter of finding schools for children was also higher in percentage on the negative side, with a combined total of 25% of the respondents (7 players) answering negatively, compared to 7% of the respondents (2 players) somewhat agreeing with the statement. The rest chose the not applicable option. On the finding real estate statement, the majority of the respondents (35%) chose negative values while 18% of the respondents somewhat agreed. The rest chose the not applicable option.

The last researched area was control. The answers to the question about control over the agents were unanimous, with all of the respondents answering negatively to the question of whether they have encountered any control over the agents ever in their careers.

4.4 Discussion

I used research based on interviews with agents and surveys among players to find out what is the relationship between them. I was intrigued to see how both parties looked at each other and whether the relationship was strictly based on business or if could there be something more to it. Furthermore, I wanted to find out what the expectations on the roles of each stakeholder in this relationship are and whether the opinions of both are the same. I wanted also to include rules and regulations by which the agents have to work and, consequently, find out how especially agents feel about them. The main goal of the thesis was to provide an analysis and paint the whole picture regarding the profession of a sports agent, as well as analyze the relationship between a player and an agent in real-life examples. Every interviewee and every player cooperating in the research shared his opinion, experience, and look on the topic. In the continuation, the key findings from the empirical part will be presented and explained according to the theoretical outlines.

The profession of sports agents is a difficult all-round job that requires numerous skills. The job difficulty is often overlooked by people seeing them just as a necessary evil. However, it is important to understand that as pointed out in the interview: »...agent brings value as he can help players see the unfair clauses, and negotiate a fairer deal. So in the end, the agent reduces imbalance of power between player and other parties« (H. Martins, interview, August 8, 2023). The bad image of agents is undeniably present among people. In sports, there is a lot of money, especially if we take the example of European football. The provisions agents receive are skyrocketing, and just as in any other profession, there are good agents, as well as bad agents. Sadly, the public perception is built on the idea that all agents are money-driven bad guys (Loughborough University, 2021). However, the theoretical inputs in this thesis should present the specter of tasks agents are responsible for and the amount of work that is put into making one transfer.

Sports agents are a necessity in modern sports and they have gained popularity throughout the years as they can allow athletes to focus on their performance without worrying about contracts and other work or personal matters. To be able to do that, however, athletes need to trust their agents. This is where the relationship aspect of the matter becomes more important. In most famous cases agents usually work with their athlete clients in the long run. Nevertheless, the most long and successful agent-player relationships are put to the test and even the most successful ones sometimes do not make it.

Looking at the biggest threats to the profession – money and power –, it is important to be aware of the regulations of the job. The agency world is such a big industry, and with what seemed a future of limitless money transfers, it had to be somehow limited. It is important to understand why the new regulations take place and how they bring value to the representation process as only acceptance of the rules by agents will mean that they will work according to them.

4.4.1 Theoretical and practical implications

Theoretical and practical implications will cross and connect providing a complete answer. The answers to posed research questions will be answered with the help of empirical research with the theoretical inputs provided in the first part of the thesis.

The first research question was (1) What are the ways an agent affects the career development of the football player?

According to the interviews, the general answer to the question is that it depends on the situation and the players. Not one player is the same and every situation demands a different approach. As far as career development, the answer heavily depends on whether agents deal with a younger or older player. Similar to article by European Union (2009), my research also found that with younger players agents are going to be influencing them much more than older players. It is of huge importance that young player develops correctly and the agents see their role in guiding that player down the correct path that will allow the player to succeed and achieve his or her dreams. As compared to earlier findings (European Union, 2009), my research also showed that the financial matter should not be the first criterion to look at with younger players. The way interviewed agents would affect the situation would be with a lot of advising and orientation to the players, presenting the players with all of the options and guiding the young players towards the best developmental option. Therefore, younger players are more influenced and steered to the clubs that provide a good developing opportunity, rather than looking just at the money. During interviews, agents emphasized their role is to present the player with all of the options and explain to them what each option would mean for them in the future. As far as the older players, agents affect them way less. They will share their opinion but in the end, the decision is left entirely to the player. Looking at the answers received from the survey showing the player's point of view, players strongly emphasized that an agent does play a role in career planning while, for example, they highly

disagreed that it is an agent's role to develop a player's physical attributes. From this, the connection with the agent's point of view is visible as they said they do not intervene in football tactics but will share their opinion regarding the best clubs in their opinion. It can be concluded that agents have some influence on the club a player chooses. However, compared with Evans's (2010) findings, my research also showed that in the end players have room to decide for themselves. Agents will guide them and that guidance will surely affect the player's decision. Nevertheless, the final verdict will come from the player.

In the second research question, I wanted to find out (2) how the agent influences a football player's private life.

Contrary to Kuper (2023), my research showed that agents do not have any special influence over player's personal life. Kuper explained in the example of elite agent Pimenta how agents can be involved in the personal lives of players and also include in their services, for example, organizing players' vacations. From my research on agents and their players, while they both agree this could be part of the services, agents do not interfere in personal situations like organizing vacations for players or searching for schools for player's children. However, according to the answers, there are situations where agents would intervene and try to influence a player's personal life. That would happen in the case of a player asking for it, or more importantly, when agents would see the player going down the wrong path and losing focus. Those situations are extreme partying, drinking, hanging with the wrong people, etc. In those cases, they would sit down with the player and try to influence them to get back on the right path and explain to them that this is not the right way to success and will not bring the wanted results.

In the third research question, I wanted to see (3) what expectations both parties have for each other.

Comparison with earlier findings (Fly on The Ball Blog, 2022) on agents being mostly responsible for negotiating deals shows alignment with my research. One of the biggest expectations for agents from players, according to my research, is a contract. Players expect agents to find the best possible deal for them as they see that as their main job task. Furthermore, provided answers from both players and agents were fairly similar and gave similar conclusions. From an agent's perspective, players are expected to be fully committed on and off the field, as well as loyal and trusting to their agents. Trust was heavily emphasized as agents said they wish players to know they can share with them any problems they come across. This again shows alignment with prior results as Ede (2022) described how loyalty and trust are important and expected from both sides towards the other. Furthermore, Ede also emphasized the expectations for players to give their full effort on and off the field. My research showed that players also believe those are their responsibilities as they strongly agreed with those expectations in the survey. Another thing my research showed is that agents are expected to be an intermediary between the player and the club. The mentioned matter connects with theory as Shropshire et al. (2016) talked about how

important it is for agents to present a connecting link to the club from the player's side. On the other hand, players are also expected to share potential problems within the club with the agent, and the agent is consequently expected to take care of those problems. Furthermore, players do expect agents to build their personal brand image they emphasize that they want their agents also to find sponsorship deals for them and not only football deals. Building a brand image was also talked about by Kuper (2016) as he emphasized that players should focus on their game while other non-football things should be taken care of by agents.

The final research question was pointed at (4) in what ways do authorities control the regulations in real life?

The research showed different answers ranging from 'there are no rules' to 'there are enough rules'. To dig a bit further into the question, the way authorities control regulations is non-existent at the moment. In the current system, there was no agent licensing system or limitation on commission fees. Even though there were rules about agents being registered, therefore, those rules were so broad that everyone could do it. From October 2023, new rules regarding agent's work come to play and the licensing system will be imposed again. According to FIFA (2023), the goal of the new rules is to make a world of agents more ethical and regain the agent's reputation in the public eye. How will FIFA impose control of the new rules is yet to be seen. However, each national football association does have a specific ruling. Therefore, to do a transfer, the agent still needs to go through certain procedures that, according to some agents in the research, are enough.

4.4.2 Suggestions for agents and players

Based on the conducted research and studied theoretical literature, I will give some suggestions and practical directions in the following segment.

My suggestion to both parties involved in the relationship would be to keep up with the good work. According to the theoretical frames, a base for a good representation relationship is trust. Players need to trust the agents to keep the relationship running successfully and in the long term. Since the survey gave the answers on players being in a good place with their agents, I would suggest that they do not change things too much.

Answers from players were positive regarding agents giving them enough time, having a good personal relationship, as well as being accessible to them. Since players are satisfied, I would suggest that players look at themselves and give the same attitude back to the agents. Not to only call them when things are going great but also to keep them in the picture when things are not going well. Only in this way, a truly trusting and long-term relationship can be formed.

Furthermore, I would suggest both of them to keep up with the communication. Since some players feel that they want more proactive work regarding building their personal brand

image, I think communicating that to agents is of big importance. Also, for agents to put pressure on negotiations with the club, players need to be direct and confident about their needs and requirements.

5 CONCLUSION

There is a lot more to modern football than the game's 90 minutes of playing time. The sophisticated intricacies of the game expand beyond the playing pitch creating a web of managers, agents, and owners in the chase of victory. Disputes over agent fees have the strength to either go forward or back down with the deal. New FFAR rules coming into effect from October 2023 are there to limit those fees and, consequently, diminish those disputes. Whether the off-field game of transfers will be more restricted is a matter of time. Only time will tell us whether the new rules are really there to make the world of agents clearer and fairer in the public eye or are the new rules there just another pile of written promises that will stay hidden in the drawer (Warrior, 2017).

Football agents belong in football. Players need a safeguard, a person taking care of their business and personal matters. Therefore, they can fully focus on the game and their performance. Additionally, agents have been a staple in football since the sport's professionalization. However, their involvement has increased significantly during the past decade following the Bosman ruling. Modern football's quick rise in popularity and media attention, together with the corresponding increase in money, has unveiled its economic potential making it more tempting for agents to try and take advantage of it. This resulted in the agency world being flooded with agents who do not have enough capabilities to perform the tasks and also agents who give good agents a bad reputation in the public eye. However, we have to remember that just in any other profession, there are good and bad agents in the agency business. It is not fair that because of a few bad guys the whole profession is looked at in a bad way. In the end, agents are there to add value and a layer of protection for the players. Their main role is to look after their players and not let anyone take advantage of them.

With the help of theoretical inputs, I researched what belongs in a sports agent job description. I wanted to show the full picture of the agent's work and also showcase the problems that agents face. Furthermore, my focus shifted to football agents as my intention was then to explain solely the role football agents have. However, I did not focus just on the role but on the whole picture of football agents, on the rules and regulations they are obliged to follow, as well as on their relationship with players.

In the empirical part, I answered posed research questions with the help of interviews and the survey I have done with agents and players. Moreover, I have written certain suggestions I found important for a good relationship between players and their agents.

After conducting research and looking through the results, I have looked at whether I completed my goals in the beginning. My goal was to provide a thorough analysis of the agent's profession, providing an outline of what a football agent does. In addition to that, I wanted to show how the relationship works in real life which I have done through conducted interviews with football agents and the survey among players.

The end conclusion is that the relationship is something that always needs work. It is also hard to group all relationships into one because every player is different. Therefore, an agent needs a different approach for each player. However, I believe communication is the most important thing. If a player communicates his needs properly and if the agent communicates his role clearly, that gives a good starting base for a successful representation.

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APPENDICES

Appendix 1: Povzetek (Summary in Slovenian language)

Sodobni nogomet je veliko več kot pa le 90 minut igralnega časa. Prefinjena zapletenost igre se razvija in širi tudi ven z igrišča in ustvarja mrežo agentov, menedžerjev in lastnikov klubov v lovu na lovorike. Spori glede honorarjev za agente imajo moč potrditi ali zaustaviti igralčev prestop. Nova FFAR pravila, ki bodo stopila v veljavo oktobra 2023, bodo omejila honorarje agentov in posledično zmanjšala omenjene spore. Ali bo igra nogometnih prestopov zunaj igrišč bolj omejena, je vprašanje časa, kajti čas bo pokazal, ali so nova pravila zato, da svet agentov postane bolj jasen in pravičen v javnosti, ali pa so nova pravila le še kup pisnih obljub, ki bodo ostale skrite v predalu (Warrior, 2017).

Nogometni agenti brez dvoma sodijo v nogomet. Igralci potrebujejo osebo, ki skrbi za njihove poslovne in osebne zadeve, da se lahko popolnoma osredotočijo na igro in na svojo nogometno predstavo. Poleg tega so agenti nogometna stalnica od profesionalizacije športa, čeprav se je njihova vpletenost močno povečala šele v zadnjem desetletju po sodbi Bosman. Hiter porast priljubljenosti in medijske pozornosti sodobnega nogometa skupaj z ustreznim povečanjem denarja je razkril njegov gospodarski potencial, zaradi česar je za agente ta svet še toliko bolj zanimiv. Posledica tega je, da je svet agentov preplavljen z agenti, ki nimajo dovolj znanja in sposobnosti za opravljanje nalog, ter hkrati z agenti, ki mečejo slabo luč na svoje kolege. Ne smemo pa pozabiti, da tako kot v vsakem drugem poklicu, tudi v agentskih vodah obstajajo tako dobri kot tudi slabi agenti. Ni pošteno, da se zaradi nekaj negativcev na vse agente gleda slabo. Konec koncev so agenti zato, da dodajo vrednost in plast zaščite igralcem. Njihova glavna vloga je, da skrbijo za svoje igralce in ne dovolijo, da bi jih kdorkoli izkoriščal.

S pomočjo teoretičnih vložkov sem raziskala, kaj vse sodi v opis dela športnega agenta. Želela sem prikazati celotno sliko dela agenta in hkrati prikazati tudi težave, s katerimi se agenti srečujejo. Nadalje sem se osredotočila na nogometne agente, saj je bil moj namen pojasniti vlogo zgolj nogometnih agentov. V nalogi se nisem osredotočila le na vlogo, ampak tudi na celotno sliko nogometnih agentov, torej tudi na pravila in predpise, ki so jih dolžni upoštevati pri svojem delu, ter na njihov odnos do igralcev. V empiričnem delu sem nato odgovorila na zastavljena raziskovalna vprašanja s pomočjo opravljenih intervjujev z agenti in ankete med njihovimi igralci. Poleg tega sem napisala še predloge, ki so se mi zdeli pomembni za ohranjanje dobrega odnosa med igralci in njihovimi agenti.

Po opravljeni raziskavi in pregledu rezultatov sem pogledala, ali sem izpolnila svoje cilje, ki sem si jih zadala na začetku. Moj cilj je bil zagotoviti temeljito analizo poklica agenta, ki bi orisal, kaj točno počne nogometni agent. Poleg tega sem želela pokazati, kako deluje razmerje z igralci v resničnem življenju, kar sem naredila s pomočjo intervjujev z nogometnimi agenti in anketo med igralci.

Končni zaključek je, da je odnos nekaj, na čemer je treba vedno graditi. Prav tako je težko združiti odnose v eno, saj je vsak igralec drugačen, zato potrebuje agent za vsakega igralca

drugačen pristop. Vseeno menim, da je medsebojna komunikacija najpomembnejša. Če igralec pravilno komunicira svoje potrebe in želje in če agent jasno komunicira svojo vlogo, je to dobra izhodiščna osnova za uspešno zastopanje.

Appendix 2: Interviews

INTERVIEW 1

Rok Elsner. Date of interview: 11/7/2023.

1. How did your career as an agent start?

The 2019/2020 season was my last professional playing year. The leap into agent waters started in 2016 when I was playing in China. I was there alone without my family, so there was a lot of time to think about what to do next. When I thought about it daily, I came to a conclusion that the intervention between the player and the club is something that would make me happy. As a result of that, the step into agent water after my professional career was almost automatic. Also, I had both positive and negative experiences with agents and I wanted to help as many players as possible. So, it was a pure automatic step, but it is true that when you play for thirty years, what else do you know what to do best? And for a former football player path to either being a coach, sporting director, scout or a player is the most obvious. My path led me to become an agent.

2. How do you see your role (the role of an agent) in the development of a football player?

In my opinion, we have to divide the role in two categories. One is the development of a young player, where the agent will surely play a bigger role and will help the young player with his whole team of nutritionist, psychologist, or me as a former player who understands the player on the field and can share my experiences with the player. In this case the influence of the agent will be very strong. In other case, where we have players above 25, 26 years old, they already understand many things in and outside of football. In this case, the influence of the agent is lower. But it is true that nowadays every player needs an agent, but the focus or communication with the player in terms of development is greater with younger players, as you can help them more than older players who already have their own experience. With the older players, my role will be more focused on just finding them a club. Of course, also young players need a club but the process is a bit different.

3. In what way do you influence the player's decisions regarding his football career and contract signing? What kind of influence is involved – is it a piece of mere information or is it more of a persuasion?

At the moment there is one big mess in this world of agents. From 1st of October the agents should be regulated a bit more but, now, there are many bad and corrupt agents who will only look at where they can make more money and persuade the player into that direction. But as a good agent the matter is a bit different. I believe you have to look at the development of the player, which offer would be the best in terms of that. Also sporting wise, financial wise, how good the league is, what kind of experience the player will get, whether he will

be in the eyes of a national team coach, but in the end, I will only offer my advice and thinking. In my believe, the player has to make his own decision regardless of his age. I am here to bring the club and offer my opinion, but the player has to make a decision for himself, where does his heart or brain lead him and I do not intervene in that. However, it also really depends on a situation. There is a very fine line of interfering or not. For example, if I have a 20-year-old player who has two offers. One is from Saudi Arabia and the other one from Belgium, of course I am going to put a little more pressure and direct him towards Belgian League, because the Saudi league makes no sense for development. Overall, I am there to offer my advice based on my experience and look in a long run for the player. There is also one aspect to look at, and this is that player has many people around him that influence his final decision. Player can have a family and children going to school so there is a big question what to do. Speaking from my personal experience, when I was playing in China in 2016, I had to go alone, as I did not see my two kids and wife leaving there.

4. In your experience, does the agent play a special role in the player's private life, and if so, what kind?

I personally do not think there are any rules regarding it. It is true that you have weekly conversations with the player and you have to keep the contact and communication. If I focus on purely private live, to say that I have an influence would be wrong. Again, I can offer my experience but it depends on the player if he asks for it. But in general speaking, I will not interfere in players daily life, and in my opinion the impact on the private life, is not as great as on other things.

5. In what situations do you interfere in the player's private life?

If you know that the player has done something bad, as an agent you definitely intervene. For example, if you see your player going out to nightclubs almost every day, you have to sit down with him and tell him that this is not the right path that would lead him to achieving his dreams. So, if you see that the player's actions are problematic and that they should be done better, my influence will for sure be greater.

6. Is part of the services you provide also taking care of the player's private life (e.g., organization of the holidays, consulting, and helping with moving situations)?

Depends on the situation. In the top leagues, let's say in the Premier League, this will be taken care of within the club itself. If we go more into our reality, it depends on the player himself. If the player wants that kind of a service, as an agent I can be in communication with the responsible individuals and make things happen. If it's a bigger club is also easier for us. But you cannot just go for 3 weeks with a player to find school and home for him. But again, depends on a situation. If a player would ask me to help him I would, but primarily I do not deal with those things.

7. What do you think a player expects from you?

The whole package, from point A to point Z. Primarily, the player certainly wants an agent to find him a club. However, as we already mentioned there are many things an agent can help the player with; from schools, tax advice, psychologists, sports equipment and so on. In the end, these can also be things a player will want from me. Many times, the conflicts start with financial matters. The player wants more all the time. For example, the club gives a player 300 euros for apartment, but the player wants 500 euros. Me as an agent, then tries to make it possible for the player. So, he for sure wants me to be an intermediary between him and the club and that I try to make his wishes come to light.

8. What do you expect from the player in relation to you?

I expect a player to behave well and to give his maximum on the football field. To perform up to his maximum on the football field regardless of what is happening off the field, and to take care of our agreement.

9. Where do you see room for improvement in your current representation relationships?

There is always room for improvement. One aspect is also financial. How much can you do with your capabilities. The bigger agency you have, the more people you can add and the more services you can offer, this is for sure one way to improve in the future. Slovenia is quite small compares to other markets, so there is for sure some reserve if we compare ourself to big international football agencies regarding player services.

10. In your career, have you already encountered any kind of official control from the authorities? If so, in which case and in what way was the control carried out?

I have personally not encountered any control. There really is not any control and there needs to be more rules and control. New FIFA rules are coming from 1st of October. Also, the agent's exam will be mandatory again. However, I have information that even these rules might not happen, as in Dortmund and Netherlands the Supreme Court has already refused to limit the commission for the agents. In the end who can determine how much you are worth. The current situation is insufficient control from FIFA. I will not say on SFA side also because they are in a way branch of FIFA, and you also have to register with them to work in Slovenia. But overall, the whole system is not good, there are too many "paratroopers" who try to negotiate and mediate the transfer because they know somebody somewhere and they are not suitable for the business. It is a big mess at the moment, even with commission restrictions, as it is uncertain what the morally objectionable amount is. There is unwritten rule of 10% but somewhere this number can be adjusted in different ways.

11. Do you think there should be more rules and restrictions from the official organizations?

There must be definite control, just like in every company and country. Here, however, there are hardly any. It means practically nothing that we are registered with SFA, as just about anyone can do it. You pay a fee, and receive a registration number. It is way too easy. Even people who do not have a registration number do the business and, in the end, they are not even subject of control. The value that should be present in a football agent has been lost due to the spread of fraudsters amongst agents.

12. What is your opinion on the reintroduction of the FIFA agent's exam?

It is the right way. I personally want to work honestly so I think the exam is good step. However, it is true that I also find limit of commission questionable. Who can limit how much your knowledge, abilities and your people are worth. I do not see such a limit as a solution. Of course, the normal limit is welcomed and not problematic, but the commission by the new rules is really small, and as a result, some will find other way to make themselves satisfied financially. So, it is a right way, but I am not sure that they did it correctly in a way that it can be successful in the long run.

13. You recently passed the newly reinstated FIFA Exam. Can you tell me how did the exam look?

Yes, I passed the exam on April 2023. The exam was held at the SFA Headquarters, where it was officially monitored. The exam consisted of 20 multiple choice questions. Some questions had also multiple correct answers. The main focus was on the legal matters, not so much on what the agent's work is mainly about. A lot of legal regulations, how the things should be done, how much compensation does the agent get, how to perform a transfer of a younger underage player and so on.

INTERVIEW 2

Luka Kovač. Date of interview: 11/7/2023.

1. How did your career as an agent start?

Since I was little, I had an aspiration to work in sports and be a sport agent. So, when I stopped my playing career, I wanted to do nothing but be a sports agent. I started my career in Singapore, quickly becoming one of the biggest agent names in Indian football league. In the past years, I started to focus my career also on European market and consequently targeted Slovenian players.

2. How do you see your role (the role of an agent) in the development of a football player?

My opinion is that a lot of people have an influence on footballers. A lot of wrong people, a lot of people who have no experience or knowledge. Moreover, I think that the influences are the same with a young or an older player. The difference is that the players are different in character and that everyone has different needs. Someone wants you to be their nanny, friend, agent, lawyer, and the list goes on. On the other hand, someone else does not need that, he just needs someone to bring him a club on the table. There is no right way, because players are different, so you have to listen to them, be a psychologist and know how to put yourself in their shoes, and have adequate experience to be able to advise him in situations where he needs help. This can purely be a matter of life, a technical matter, an economic or legal matter. The point is that if you want to do this business in the long term and correctly, you have to have knowledge of all those matters. What someone needs, and what is my role in their life depends on the situation. Even when I have a young player it depends a lot on the situation. As far as tactical matters are concerned, the coaching staff of the club is responsible for that, and I do not involve myself in that. Yes, some agents give opinions to a player after the game, but I like to distance myself from that, because if I say something, coach says something, family says something, the player gets lost. My role with younger players is above all orientation, that if they have a goal in front of them, that they know what they need to do to reach that goal. That they understand what steps they need to take on and off the field, and what they have to devote to that goal. The competition in sport is abnormal, the pressures are enormous, and if a young footballer does not understand those steps, it will be difficult for him to achieve the goal. So, the situation where I would guide him on what he should do on the field, from that I like to distance, but showing the path what he needs to do in order to reach a top, that is where I guide him.

3. In what way do you influence the player's decisions regarding his football career and contract signing? What kind of influence is involved – is it a piece of mere information or is it more of a persuasion?

An agent can be very influential for a player in signing a contract. Guys do not have a clear picture of what steps are good for them, but a good agent has this picture clear. My opinion is that in the initial (early) stages of a young footballer, the financial part should not play a big role, but the development of the player is of maximum performance for a young player and there is where I share my opinion. If a 16-21-year-old player develops properly with the right coach and the right club, the money will come in the future.

4. In your experience, does the agent play a special role in the player's private life, and if so, what kind?

I do not interfere in player's private life unless he asks me to do it, or unless I see that he has deviated from the path he is supposed to follow.

5. In what situations do you interfere in the player's private life?

I would interfere if for example I have a younger 17-year-old player who has a girlfriend who wants to be an Instagram influencer and consequently hangs on Instagram for 20 hours per day. In such case, I would tell him I am very sorry but that is not the right way. Follow your path and be focused on yourself. It sounds brutal, but a football player has to be in his own world and only live for football. Another example would be extreme presence on a nightlife scene and any sort of distraction that would interfere with player's football career.

6. Is part of the services you provide also taking care of the player's private life (e.g., organization of the holidays, consulting, and helping with moving situations)?

It again depends on the individual. Someone liked to organize holidays for themselves, while someone does not know how to go to booking.com and make a reservation. In such a situation, if he wants, of course I can help. But for the most part I will take care of all the sport management things, unless the players seek help also elsewhere.

7. What do you think a player expects from you?

I would think that players expect from me, that when there is a difficult situation and certain things need to be resolved, that I am there to help them in those situations and, that I also anticipate those situations and give them a good advice, or open the door for them to clubs that are good for their development. However, I have encountered many different characters and some players expected me to be there all the time in all life situations, and some just wanted me to bring the paper to sign.

8. What do you expect from the player in relation to you?

To do his job to the maximum every day. That the player does not look for the shortcuts and that if I invest my energy in him, that he also invests his maximum on all fronts. And above all also loyalty, that he trusts me that I will find best possible thing for him and he does not doubt me. I do not expect from him to call me all the time and tell me everything, I expect for him to trust me enough that he knows if he has a problem or a question the doors are always open.

9. Where do you see room for improvement in your current representation relationships?

Improvement is always possible and wanted. You are always learning and you always try to give your maximum, which sometimes is not enough. Right now, it is hard to say what could be improved from both sides, but it is a learning process and for sure there are always situations that you learn from and make them better in future encounters.

10. In your career, have you already encountered any kind of official control from the authorities? If so, in which case and in what way was the control carried out?

The control is not sufficient. At the moment it is difficult to say that there is any control at all. In my opinion, it would be great if the system was made like in the NBA and NHL, because the system is clearly defined and everyone knows who drinks and who pays. At the moment there is no control and no system, and I highly doubt they will be able to establish it with the new rules. I have never encountered any official control in my career. I hear about doubtful ethical examples every day such as, parents demanding thousands in cash from agent to sign their child and so on.

11. Do you think there should be more rules and restrictions from the official organizations?

Yes. My opinion is that the football game and business would be much cleaner. For example, in the NBA it is very clear who can be an agent, how much is agent paid and how can the agent work. However, nothing is respected in the football business. If we look at new rules, for me, the commission itself is not even a stumbling block. If I give you an example: now, the agent comes into the club and asks for 30% because there is already a deal behind that director gets 10%, the coach gets 5% and the agent gets 15%. If there is for example a clear rule that 6% is a universal percentage for everyone and is contractual bound, why not.

12. What is your opinion on the reintroduction of the FIFA agent's exam?

My opinion is that, like any other profession in the world, also the agents would need a proper education. If you want to be a surgeon you have to go through several years of school, just like a lawyer and any other job role. As far as I am concerned, it is the only way. But if that would be the case, probably 90% of the people doing the agent's job today would not do it. But that is the way to regulate and clear up the profession. Right now, the agents are looked as the bad guys of the business. In the end we have to know just as you have good and bad doctors, you also have good and bad agents. However, it is true that because the profession is not regulated and systematized most of the problems occur. So, yes, I think the exam is a good step forward and should be obligatory.

INTERVIEW 3

Amir Ružnić, Date of interview: 14/7/2023.

1. How did your career as an agent start?

I started my agent's career after my professional playing career. When I finished my playing career, I did not know exactly what to do, so I started a hospitality business which turned into a failure. After that, a friend who still works with me, encouraged me to try being an agent. He said you were a football player; you have many contacts and connections and I went for it. Now I am in the business for the 18th year and the decision showed to be the correct one.

2. How do you see your role (the role of an agent) in the development of a football player?

The role of the agent is in my opinion very important. As a player, it is important what kind of person you have by your side, because an agent can have a very positive or a very negative effect on the player's development. I think that a good agent, a quality agent, is the one who has to take care, not only of the transfer, as there are so many other things that you as an agent also have to take care of. From counselling itself, sports equipment, direction for the player. The transfer itself is only the final act. I never get involved in tactical things and the game itself as I do not have that right. Coach and sports director, it is one thing (segment); me and my client are something else. I am exclusively concerned only with my tasks.

3. In what way do you influence the player's decisions regarding his football career and contract signing? What kind of influence is involved – is it a piece of mere information or is it more of a persuasion?

With my players I have the following approach: I always say what I think, but I never make a decision on their behalf. When I bring a club, I say what we have, but then I always leave the decision to the player. This is because I once did it differently and greatly influenced the decision of a player who later blamed me for it. From that experience, I said I will never again influence player's decision and I will let them decide for themselves. However, it is an enormous difference whether we are talking about younger or an older player. If we are talking about a young player (for example a 16-year-old) it is one thing, when we are talking about a player such as for example Šporar, it is something completely different. Younger player will always need a bit more developing advice and orientation than an older player.

4. In your experience, does the agent play a special role in the player's private life, and if so, what kind?

I leave private life to the player. There is a strict dividing line in this situation.

5. In what situations do you interfere in the player's private life?

If I would see that the player would completely lose his focus and go out of the focused way, I would intervene. There are often problems, but if it is not really extreme, I do not interfere. For example: Football players have a lot of money and they can quickly attract a certain type of women and people. Nightlife can also be an example, and everything that comes with it. So, in such extreme case I would interfere, but in principle I try to keep their private life separate from our business.

6. Is part of the services you provide also taking care of the player's private life (e.g., organization of the holidays, consulting, and helping with moving situations)?

Generally speaking, an agent's job could also be that. However, personally I only deal with the sporting part. As for the sports management this is all in my domain. For example, sports equipment, arranging contracts, looking for a new employer, finding fitness trainer, nutritionist and so on.

7. What do you think a player expects from you?

Everyone expects you to be 100% theirs. Also normally, they look at money. In the end they are only interested in money and want you to always negotiate the best deal for them. You can do everything for them but in the end, it comes down to the contract you bring them.

8. What do you expect from the player in relation to you?

Above all loyalty. This is becoming less and less visible. Over the years I have seen that players can change a lot once they get to the money. So first and foremost, I expect loyalty from them. Doing their job on the football field should be a given thing. But the fact that the does will not sell me at the first better offer that is what I expect.

9. Where do you see room for improvements in your current representation relationships?

It is hard to say. I cannot do more than being devoted to them and fight for them. More than being honest with the player and telling him good and bad things and informing them about new opportunities, I cannot do. From their side I am missing more information. When it is in their interest, they call all the time, but when it is not, they are inactive. I miss the fact that even in worst moments, they treat you the same as in good moments. You see them when they are not playing, when they are unhappy with their salary, and that is where you also see who is really loyal to you.

10. In your career, have you already encountered any kind of official control from the authorities? If so, in which case and in what way was the control carried out?

The rules are pretty neat. The FIFA rules define exactly what can and cannot be done. In contrast to other sports, football is regulated fairly well. Transparency is guaranteed, for every transfer you have to register with the football association. Recent example: I had to register with the Italian Football Association for the transfer of Begić. The commission I received is transparent, everything is deposited to the association in which country you perform the services, so it is well regulated and control exists all the time.

11. Do you think there should be more rules and restrictions from the official organizations?

With the new FIFA Regulations, my opinion is that this is a big attack on us agents, as big amounts of money are involved. In my opinion, the accepted restrictions are not okay. If we defend the free movement of labour in the European Union, then we cannot restrict it. Something will happen with these rules and we will see what. I personally hope they will fail. As it was until now, it was great as far as the rules were concerned. But what happened is that at one point, the agents had too much influence over the whole business because the commissions were so high that agents were, in quotes, the rulers of life and death. And because of this, now they want to limit us to three percent, which is also not okay. It is necessary to find a balance and a reasonable path.

12. What is your opinion on the reintroduction of the FIFA agent's exam?

The exam for agents is a good move. The introduction of licensing is great in my opinion, because every "butcher" will not be able to do this profession. The exam is the basis. Anyone who wants to engage in this business must go through it.

13. How did you see the development of the profession in Slovenia?

I started in 2007 so long time ago. Evolution and development are scary looking back. Everyone wants to be an agent because everyone sees villas, cars, but not everything is as shiny as it seems. At the same time, a lot of crime and bad people also entered the profession, which ultimately paints a bad picture for all of us.

INTERVIEW 4

Hugo Martins. Date of interview: 4/8/2023.

1. How would you describe your role in a football player's life? Are you also involved in a personal life, or do you cover more of the business part of the career?

It depends on player to player. With some player you have more frequent relationship, with other is more a transactional relationship. But in the end, agent is a professional so the relationship is always mostly professional and that is the main relationship the agent has with the player.

2. How would you describe the main part of your services? Is it more of a brand image for the player or also other things, such as consultations on legal matters for the player?

First it all starts with agency who has all the legal requirements for such work. Furthermore, you build a portfolio for clients. One part of the business would be growing the portfolio for the player which is used to convince players that you are the right agency for them. It is used

for either finding clubs, or also to benefit players from their public exposure. Commercial deals can be very broad. Player can be ambassador of the brand, part of meet and greets, there is a lot of different commercial opportunities. This part also involves a lot of dialogue between brands in terms of what are their wishes, and also a player. Issues involved could be language barrier, willingness of players to associate with certain brands. For example, there could be a brand involved in oil business, and if a player is very environmentally conscious, he will not want to associate with such a brand. In the end there are many variables that you have to take into the consideration. However, in the end the role of an agency is to facilitate a dialogue and alignment between player and brand.

3. In the case of a younger player, do you see your role in advising him?

Yes. Younger players do not have experience, and as agency we were in that kind of situations so we can advise him better in terms of clubs and steps in career. Usually, the players are receptive of the opinion because agency has a good reputation. The willingness to listen also depends on the reputation of the agency. For smaller agents I believe it is more difficult as they do not have track record. In that case is important for agent to build a more personal relationship with trust.

4. What would you say the player expects from you?

Of course, in the end players expect a deal. But with younger players it happens many times that they have a lot of people talking to them (family, friends, other agents), and usually they do not understand well the market and they give the player unrealistic ideas and expectations. Important is to not over promise so a player knows what to expect. It is important to be very direct and say how things are. If you think you have a better option, you can go. We are not depending on one player. For a small agent the pressure is much bigger, especially if agent feels the player is being talked to by other agents, then the tendencies to overpromise start to come. It is important to lay down ground rules.

When the player is not going through a good phase, the agent does not have an obligation but is a morally imperative to help a player psychologically. The trust that the player has in the agent helps a lot, because then the player will also follow the advice

5. If you saw your player going into the wrong path or struggling, would you reach out to the player?

Yes. Totally.

6. Do you agree that brand image services are related to the agent's services? Do agencies have both services together?

It can be separate. Also, this commercial part only works well with player that are already established and well known. They have a fan base. It does not have to be together, many

agents work only the agency part, but it helps, as player knows if he does well and he reaches a point where can benefit for commercial opportunities, we know how to do it and he will get the full service.

7. How do you feel about the new FIFA rules? Do you think this is the right way for agents to be licensed?

This we have to look from two parts. One is, is it good for the agency activities to be regulated, to have a code of conduct and some boundaries and recommendations what can and cannot be done. This I think is totally positive. So, there are ground rules, and there are no abuse and people that are less serious or honest doing this business. In this case I totally agree on having certification and some control and structure for the activity. The other part is this going to be a way of achieving different goals like limiting the agency activity. Because in the end players need agents because they are the weakest link in this chain, they do not know how things work, it is their first time in that kind of situation. This is where the agent brings value as he can help players see the unfair clauses, and negotiate a fairer deal. So, in the end, the agent reduces imbalance of power between player and other parties. But this can only work if agents are competent and serious and work well. So, in the theory I agree, and I want to see whether this is not just to limit the activities of agents, but to improve the quality of the agents. If this is to improve the quality, then it is positive.

Appendix 3: Survey

Dear players,

My name is Nika Kovač and I am a student of a master's program Management in Sport at the School of Economics and Business, University of Ljubljana. As part of my master's thesis, which I am writing under the mentorship of Professor Tomaž Čater, Ph. D., I am researching agent-player relationships in Slovenian football.

The survey is intended for players in the Slovenian football league who have a contract with a football agent. The survey will take you no more than 5 minutes to complete.

Responses are anonymous and will be used solely for the master's thesis. Thank you for taking the time to complete the survey, and I wish you a lot of success in your football career. Best regards, Nika Kovač.

Q1 – In my cooperation with the agent, the following tasks are part of my agent's job description:

Scale from 1-Strongly disagree to 7-Strongly agree

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Somewhat disagree	Neutral	Somewhat agree	Agree	Strongly agree
Contract negotiations							
Social media management							
Developing player's physical attributes							
Helping players with football tactics							
Involvement in the player's personal life							
Career planning							
Building player's brand image							
Financial advice							
Help with planning life after your football career							
Public relations training							
Legal advice							
Other (please specify):							

Q2 – To what extent do you agree with the following statements?

Scale from 1-Strongly disagree to 7-Strongly agree

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Somewhat disagree	Neutral	Somewhat agree	Agree	Strongly agree
My agent influences my decision to choose the club							
My agent has motivated me to perform better							
My agent has helped me when feeling down							
My agent gives me feedback on my performances							
Other (please specify):							

Q3 – From my agent, I expect:

Scale from 1-Strongly disagree to 7-Strongly agree

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Somewhat disagree	Neutral	Somewhat agree	Agree	Strongly agree
Better personal relationship							
Greater accessibility							
More proactive work regarding opportunities							
Building a better public image							
Other (please specify):							

Q4 – My agent can expect the following responsibilities from me:

Scale from 1-Strongly disagree to 7-Strongly agree

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Somewhat disagree	Neutral	Somewhat agree	Agree	Strongly agree
Loyalty							
Healthy lifestyle							
Full commitment and effort on the football field							
Compliance with contractual agreements							
Accessibility							
Sharing my doubts and possible problems within the club							
Discussion after the match about my performance							
Communicating possible personal problems							
Expressing my wishes regarding transfer to another club							
Other (please specify):							

Q5 – To what extent do you agree with the following statements?

Scale from 1-Strongly disagree to 7-Strongly agree

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Somewhat disagree	Neutral	Somewhat agree	Agree	Strongly agree
My agent influences my football career							
My agent does his work well							
My agent gives me enough of his time							
I would like to have better communication with my agent							
My agent understands football as a game well enough							
My agent has explained to me the legal process and consequences of signing a contract							
Other:							

Q6 – In my private life, my agent helps me with:

Scale from 1-Strongly disagree to 7-Strongly agree

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Somewhat disagree	Neutral	Somewhat agree	Agree	Strongly agree
Planning my nutritional plan							
Finding a real state when moving to a new club							
Organizing vacations							
Preparation of my physical training							
Finding a school for my children							
Legal matters							
Finances							
Other (please specify):							

Q7 – Have you ever encountered any kind of official control from the authorities over agents?

Multiple answers available

Yes. Please specify:

No

Q8 – Your age

18-22

23-30

31 or more

Q9 – What is the rank of the competition you play in?

Slovenian First League

Slovenian Second League

International League

Other (please specify):

Q10 – What selection of the team do you play for?

Multiple answers available

First team

U-19 team

Other