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## COMMENTARY

### The Legacy of Cheryl and Jack Taunton in Sports and Exercise Medicine: Pioneers, Mentors, and Friends

Darren E. R. Warburton<sup>1</sup>, Shannon S. D. Bredin<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Physical Activity Promotion and Chronic Disease Prevention Unit, Faculty of Education, University of British Columbia, Vancouver, BC, Canada V6T1Z4

\*Corresponding Author: [darren.warburton@ubc.ca](mailto:darren.warburton@ubc.ca)

#### Abstract

This commentary outlines the remarkable contributions of Cheryl and Jack Taunton to the exercise sciences, kinesiology, high performance sport, and sports and exercise medicine. We also highlight the role that the Tauntons have played in our lives. We outline our more than 20 year relationship with the Tauntons beginning as colleagues progressing to trusting friends. We emphasize how many of our achievements and that of our trainees and children can be attributed directly to the mentorship, guidance, and friendship provided by Cheryl and Jack. We discuss our experiences working together with Cheryl and Jack during important international events (such as the 2010 Winter and Paralympic Games and the Masters Games), working with various professional teams and Olympic athletes, and various other initiatives that they have spearheaded over the years. Through these experiences, we have seen first-hand the influence that this dynamic duo has had on the lives of others and elite sport, clinical physiology, and sports and exercise medicine (to name just a few areas). We are honoured to call them friends and mentors. **Health & Fitness Journal of Canada 2020;13(3):3-7.**

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#### Introduction

We are truly honoured to participate in this special tribute to Cheryl and Jack Taunton. We can think of no more deserving couple for this esteemed recognition. We trust that our words will do justice to the remarkable contributions that they have each made to diverse fields (such as the exercise sciences, kinesiology, high performance sport, and sports and exercise medicine) and to the lives of countless athletes, academics, sports scientists, physicians, and trainees from across the world. In particular, we would like to express our sincere gratitude for everything that they have done for our careers and our family.

When attempting to write a commentary of this nature, it is difficult to capture all of the extraordinary accomplishments and attributes of two such influential and caring people. Cheryl and Jack are simply outstanding people. Their academic and professional accomplishments are the things of legend; however, their most important attributes are their compassion for others and the remarkable family that they have raised.

We have attempted to create a summary of some of our experiences over the more than 20 years of working and being mentored by Cheryl and Jack. As they are involved in so many initiatives (and have graciously included us in so many of these important enterprises) we will have to

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limit our response to provide a brief summary of some of the lasting memories that we have developed through working with Cheryl and Jack.

### **Mentorship**

We both moved from the University of Alberta to continue our studies at the University of British Columbia. First Shannon for her PhD, and then Darren followed for a post-doctoral fellowship with Dr. Don McKenzie.

Coming to the University of British Columbia was a major departure for both of us. At the time of this decision, there were offers to Ivy league schools in the United States. Looking back, coming to the University of British Columbia was a great decision for us both professionally and as a family. Don McKenzie provided great leadership and mentorship during post-doctoral studies, and we were both able to secure faculty positions at an internationally renowned institution. The weather was a bonus as well in comparison to the colder climates of our youth.

Early into the arrival in Vancouver, we were introduced to Cheryl and Jack by Dr. McKenzie. For a long time, we did not realize the relationship between Cheryl and Jack. Every day Cheryl would provide a welcoming smile at the Allan McGavin Sports Medicine clinic (e.g., the Pizza Hut in the Field) and ask how our day was going. At that time, we did not know that Cheryl was the boss who made sure that everything ran smoothly.

We quickly developed a close affinity for the Tauntons. We had not met the Cheryl or Jack prior to arriving at the University of British Columbia; however, we were both well aware of their legacy and contributions to the field. Despite not being their trainees, the Tauntons warmly welcomed us into their team. For example,

our oldest son's first Christmas gift was given to him by Jack who was dressed up as Santa Claus during the annual Allan McGavin Sports Medicine Christmas party. Cheryl and Jack have been there for our family ever since then.

In working with Cheryl and Jack it quickly became apparent that they had figured life, sports, and academia out. They provided (and still do) an example of what a successful power couple can be. One of the biggest lessons was that family is always first for them. We will discuss this further at the end of this letter; however, from the outset we felt part of their family and we still do today.

Cheryl and Jack have very complementary skills that allow them to be exceptional mentors and colleagues. Any student, athlete, physician, staff, or colleague that has been mentored by Cheryl and Jack is truly fortunate. When you look internationally across sports medicine, exercise science, and professional teams you will see the legacy of Cheryl and Jack. As shown in this special series, there are countless former trainees of Cheryl and Jack that have gone on to become internationally renowned and global leaders. This is certainly the result of the mentorship and networking that Cheryl and Jack provide to each of their trainees. It should be highlighted, that although Jack was the faculty member, Cheryl played a critical role in the mentorship of every trainee. Many of our opportunities were the result of the collaborations that Cheryl had established over the years.

It is easy to state that Cheryl and Jack are willing to help out virtually everyone. No matter what you need, they are there for you, at all times of day. Even when Jack is going through surgery after surgery, he is there to lend a helping hand and provide sage advice. Likewise, Cheryl is always

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there for others. We can remember time after time meeting Cheryl at an ice rink while she was waiting for her grandchildren. When we need something, Cheryl and Jack are at the top of our list. We certainly are willing to support Cheryl and Jack in any adventure. This often means saying yes to some really interesting requests, such as “Shannon and Darren can we store all of the equipment for the 2016 Masters Games in your laboratory?” The simple answer was “For certain.” It was fun seeing boxes upon boxes stacked high in the air in preparation for the 2016 Games. Like our other adventures, the 2016 Masters Games was a great opportunity for us, our trainees, and our children.

### Connections

We have been privileged to work in diverse fields including working in clinical exercise rehabilitation settings and with developmental, Olympic, and professional athletes and teams. In each area, one common theme emerges, everyone seems to know and like Cheryl and Jack Taunton. Their connections and ability to work with others are unparalleled.

It is remarkable how many influential people they know. For instance, during the 2010 Olympics when we needed equipment for related research Jack and Cheryl contacted leading medical device suppliers and had the required equipment shortly thereafter. Their ability and willingness to help out others is truly outstanding. For example, when creating the Canadian Health & Fitness Institute, Jack and Cheryl were the first to identify the major players in the area and forge partnerships that allowed for the timely creation of this important organization (see letters from the Westons).

When we look back upon our careers some of our most influential work will

certainly be the result of connections that were forged by Cheryl and Jack. For instance, we would not have been able to head the health and wellness evaluation and training for the 25,000 volunteers of the 2010 Winter Olympic and Paralympic Games without the recommendation of Dr. Taunton and the assistance of Cheryl. One of our greatest legacies will surely be the protocols that we established during the Winter games that helped reduce the number of adverse events in the volunteers. Jack and Cheryl’s guidance and support during this work was instrumental in the success of this program. We are extremely proud to see the program that we developed being used in subsequent major international and Olympic/Paralympic events. Also, many of our later research programs, community-based, and workplace initiatives have been based on the model that was developed during the 2010 Winter Games.

In this series, are articles by several trainees that we have co-supervised with Dr. Taunton. Uniformly, these students discuss the important mentorship and connections that were provided by Jack and Cheryl. Numerous students working under our supervision have been afforded the opportunity to work with elite Olympic level athletes as a result of the partnerships forged through Cheryl and Jack. For instance, our connections with Field Hockey Canada were established by Cheryl and Jack’s longstanding relationships and commitments to field hockey in Canada. In fact, their daughter, Dr. Kristen Taunton, is one of Canada’s most decorated field hockey athletes. Over the years, we have had the opportunity to work with Field Hockey Canada and the men’s and women’s teams in preparation for world championships and the Olympics. We are truly honoured to have been part of their

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journey to the international events, including the Olympic games. Numerous doctoral and Masters students have had the opportunity to work daily with Field Hockey Canada and their athletes. These experiences have allowed our trainees to take on important roles in the training of Olympic athletes and to develop a unique skill set in high performance sport based on direct application. These experiences have allowed these trainees to go onto influential positions in high performance sport and academia.

Another example is a recent doctoral student graduate (Dr. Oliver Finlay) who completed his PhD under our supervision and that of Dr. Taunton. During his PhD, Dr. Finlay was able to work with diverse elite and professional teams including organizations from the National Hockey League, the National Basketball Association, the National Football League, Major League Baseball, Major League Soccer, English Premiership Football, Premiership Rugby, and the Ultimate Fighting Championship (to name a few). These relationships would not have been feasible without the connections of Jack and Cheryl.

As discussed above, the mentorship qualities of the Tauntons are exemplary. We try as best as possible to emulate their leadership and mentorship style. They lead by example and work tirelessly to ensure that their colleagues, staff, and trainees have as many opportunities as possible. Most importantly they treat everyone as family, with astonishing compassion, empathy, and caring for others.

### **Selfless Giving**

One of the key features of the dynamic Tauntons is their selfless giving to others. Even though being retired from academia, Jack and Cheryl work tirelessly to support

the initiatives of others. Just recently when discussing a major international health and wellness approach, we impressed upon the attendees at the meeting the importance of securing the support of Jack and Cheryl. When contacted, Jack immediately said let us know what we can do to help and we are there. This self-sacrificing behaviour is the hallmark of the Tauntons.

### **Family First**

To complete our commentary, we would like to discuss the examples that Jack and Cheryl have provided with respect to the importance of family. Despite being extremely busy, Cheryl and Jack have always demonstrated the importance of taking a family first approach. We have tried as best as possible to emulate this with our trainees and our family.

As outlined by our sons in an accompanying paper, Cheryl and Jack have been there for our family throughout the years. For instance, our children were very young back during the 2010 Winter Games, but both had the opportunity to participate in various important events surrounding the Olympics. These opportunities were often the result of the collaborations established by Cheryl and Jack. Our work with Own the Podium and the Getting Games Fit program was also inspired and supported by the Tauntons.

When our boys (or their friends) are injured in the sporting arena, the first people we call is Cheryl and Jack. For instance, recently in preparation for the start of the season our son suffered what appeared to be a sprained ankle. We immediately called Jack and he told us the best course of action. Shortly thereafter multiple breaks were observed. The advice of the Tauntons has been instrumental to our son returning to play earlier than anticipated at a level that is above that seen

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before his injury. We can argue that their knowledge of effective sports injury treatment and rehabilitation is second to none. When our other son, suffered a serious knee injury, Jack and Cheryl were there and the treating orthopaedic surgeon was their daughter, Dr. Kristen Taunton. We are extremely fortunate to have them as advisors for our research programming and our family.

### **Summary**

In summary, we are humbled to know Cheryl and Jack Taunton. They have meant so much to our professional and personal development. We have been extremely fortunate to have them in our lives. They are truly two remarkable people.

### **Authors' Qualifications**

The authors' qualifications are as follows: Darren E. R. Warburton MSc, PhD, HFFC-CEP; Shannon Bredin MSc, PhD, HFFC-CEP.