

Soccer -- the link between managers and captains

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Soccer managers regard their captains as an extension of themselves, according to new research from Northumbria University, which could explain why Fabio Capello quit as England manager following the FA row over John Terry's captaincy.

The research, by Senior Lecturer in Sport Development Dr Paul Davis and postgraduate student Ronnie Regensburger, is based on interviews with 15 [managers](#) from professional clubs including the Premiership.

The research set out to examine [soccer](#) managers' perceptions and expectancies of leadership characteristics in team captains. The research discovered that managers considered their captains to be vital in their ability to carry out their management duties.

Managers identified a number of duties they expected their team captains to perform. Further, a number of key leadership skills and characteristics were highlighted as being important. These included the ability to motivate, good communication, consistent performance, game knowledge and decision making – all skills the managers themselves must be highly proficient in.

Managers also stated that two prevalent leadership types are effective in their captains – either an aggressive approach or a technically skilled leader who inspires others through their own performance. A combination of both was ideal.

Dr Davis said: “We found that in many ways the captain was to be an extension of the manager on the pitch. The manager would look to the captain to have good interpersonal skills and characteristics and also be honest and trustworthy.

“If you take the analogy of John Terry being Capello's extended arm on the pitch, then Capello may be feeling that he had his arm cut off by the FA. Their rejection of the person he had selected to captain the side could be interpreted as a statement on his own ability to manage.

“In our research, the managers acknowledge that the captain has to also act as an ambassador for the club; the FA appears to place great importance on this role for a captain. The next manager of the English soccer team may be well served to prioritise this characteristic when selecting the next [captain](#) of the English team.”

Provided by Northumbria University

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