



Abstracts

RIGA, 2025

Eating Right, Sleeping Tight? The Evaluation of the Student-Athlete Paradox

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Background: Student-athletes face the dual challenge of balancing academic and athletic commitments, which can simultaneously promote healthy lifestyle habits while increasing psychosocial and physiological stressors, especially in female student-athletes. Despite the growing participation of women in high-level competitions (e.g. Olympic Games), female athletes remain underrepresented in sports science and health research. Understanding how these competing demands affect key behavioural (e.g. dietary habits, sleep and chronotype) and psychological (e.g. body image) factors is essential for supporting their overall well-being. Therefore, the study examined body dissatisfaction, adherence to the Mediterranean diet, sleep quality, and chronotype in female student-athletes and sedentary peers. Methods: 12 female volleyball student-athletes (age 21.6 ± 2.4 years, body mass 64.3 ± 8.1 kg, height 168 ± 7 cm, BMI 22.5 ± 2.3 kg/m²) assessed during their competitive in-season period, and 16 female university students (age 24.0 ± 3.2 years, body mass 64.0 ± 8.2 kg, height 164 ± 5 cm, BMI 23.8 ± 2.8 kg/m²) completed the Mediterranean Diet Adherence questionnaire (PREDIMED) to evaluate dietary habits, the Pittsburgh Sleep Quality Index (PSQI) to assess sleep quality, the Morningness–Eveningness Questionnaire (MEQ) to determine chronotype, and the Body Image Dimensional Assessment (BIDA) to assess body dissatisfaction. Results: Student-athletes showed significantly higher adherence to the Mediterranean diet (8.5 ± 1.5 , $p < 0.01$), although experiencing poorer sleep quality (PSQI: 6.8 ± 3.0 , $p = 0.03$) compared to sedentary students (PREDIMED: 6.7 ± 1.6 ; PSQI: 4.6 ± 2.3). Conversely, comparative body dissatisfaction was significantly higher ($p = 0.04$) in sedentary students (19.4 ± 24.5) than student-athletes (5.6 ± 10.5). No significant differences emerged for chronotype or overall body dissatisfaction. Conclusion: These findings highlight a paradoxical health pattern among female student-athletes, characterised by healthy eating behaviours contrasted with compromised sleep quality, underscoring the complexity of balancing dual academic-athletic commitments. The results emphasise the importance of comprehensive wellness strategies that integrate dietary habits, sleep hygiene, and psychophysiological factors to support dual-career, particularly in female student-athletes.

Keywords: Student-Athletes, Physical Activity, Sedentary Behaviours, Mediterranean Diet, Sleep Quality.

Challenges and opportunities for implementing and developing a student-athlete support program in the Federal District (Brazil)

This work was funded by the Fundação de Apoio à Pesquisa do Distrito Federal (FAPDF), under project number 00193-00002180/2023-11.

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Given the tension between the demands of the educational and sports fields (Ryba et al., 2015), our general objective is to analyze the legal and political context surrounding sports training and the athlete’s career in the Federal District (Brasília/Brazil), which led to the proposal and approval of the law that supports the Comprehensive Protection of the Student-Athlete (Distrito Federal, 2019, 2021, 2022). As complementary actions to this project, we conducted a technical visit to the *Unidades de Apoio ao Alto Rendimento nas Escolas* Program (Costa et al., 2025) and analyzed a sports talent identification and development policy implemented by the Federal District Department of Education (Santos et al., 2025).

The results of this research highlight the absence of public hearings, technical reports, or any reference to best practices in student-athlete support in the dual career context that could have provided a technical basis for the legislation under analysis. We identified procedural imprecision in addressing athletes’ demands by the Department of Education, which is also unaware of the size and profile of its target population. The absence of clear and objective legal provisions regarding the status and support of student-athletes in the educational system of the Federal District is a topic that deserves a qualified discussion involving athletes, their families, the sports training network, the local Department of Education, and researchers. The legal basis for the recognition of student-athletes in the Federal District calls for public debate, review, and updating, aligned with international best practices (Costa & Veloso, 2024). The production of quantitative and qualitative data on the dual career context of student-athletes is an essential requirement for proposing a support program suited to the local reality.

University mentoring network to facilitate the dual career of athlete-students

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Despite the legislative and theoretical advances on the dual career of student-athletes, no concrete and adapted actions have been implemented that would allow progress to be made in this area. This Network (RUMDE), created under the auspices of the CSD's 2024 Call for Proposals, is making progress in the knowledge and action of the accompaniment of high-level student-athletes entering university. RUMDE has identified the consequences of the lack of intervention protocols for this group (Álvarez et al, 2014; Sánchez-Pato et al., 2022; Rodicio-García and Ríos-de-Deus, 2025; Rodicio-García, et al., 2020). This led to the initiative of RUMDE, which proceeded to design a Dual Mentoring model for student-athletes (MEDEAN) to accompany and facilitate their dual career. As a continuation of the work carried out, the aim of the Network is to create a culture of dual mentoring that facilitates the integration of high-level student-athletes into the university. RUMDE has grown from 8 universities (7 Spanish and 1 Italian), with a total of 20 researchers belonging to 11 initial research groups, to 16 universities (12 Spanish, 1 Italian, 1 Maltese and 2 Portuguese), with a total of 36 researchers, belonging to 18 research groups, in the current call. In 2025, the expansion of the Network will continue, disseminating, disseminating and involving more universities and academic and sports institutions -national and international-, co-responsible for dual career policies, and to ensure good practice in the development of the same. A three-phase procedure is proposed: disseminate the MEDEAN model, disseminate the RUMDE Network and its progress through social networks, and organise an International Congress. The aim is to achieve the consolidation of an innovative Dual Mentoring model capable of transferring existing policies into specific and homogeneous intervention plans and protocols for high-level student-athletes

Key words: dual mentoring, dual careers, peer mentoring, student-athletes

Advancing Dual Career Officer Training and Support Across Europe

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The transition from high-performance sport to academic or professional life represents a critical challenge for athletes, making the role of Dual Career Officers (DCO) increasingly relevant in Europe. The AFTERMATCH 2.0 project builds upon the European framework for dual careers, responding to the growing need for structured, innovative support systems for athletes. This communication presents an academic overview of the project, focusing on (a) the state of the art of dual career research and practice, (b) the design and continuous improvement of the Dual Career Officer Guide, and (c) the implementation of specialized training across the consortium's countries.

The guide was developed as a comprehensive tool to analyze organizational and athlete needs, design personalized dual career pathways, and provide clear procedures for reporting and follow-up. It integrates best practices from European initiatives and emphasizes a holistic, athlete-centered approach that combines educational, vocational, and psychosocial dimensions. Training modules were piloted in multiple partner countries, incorporating blended methodologies, case-based learning, and cross-national exchange to enhance professional competencies of DCOs. Preliminary outcomes indicate that the AFTERMATCH 2.0 model has strengthened the capacity of sports organizations to support athletes' transitions, fostered the exchange of good practices among institutions, and contributed to the European dialogue on sustainable dual career frameworks. This initiative underlines the academic and social value of structured dual career mentorship, highlighting its potential for replication and future scaling in European sport ecosystems..

Finnish high school student athletes' perceptions of the implementation of the dual career

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A dual career refers to a situation where elite sport persons are combined with studies/training or work (Ryba et al. 2016a; Stambulova et al. 2020). Young athletes studying in sports high schools are therefore pursuing a dual career. Sports high schools play important role in Finnish competitive sports system, which aim is that all athletes should complete a secondary education

The aim of this study was to study athlete students' perceptions of the implementation athletic career with high school studies. Students' perceptions of the implementation were compared according to gender, grade level and the sport.

The data was collected from Finnish sport high school students in spring 2021. The final sample included 912 sports high school students from 13 sport high schools around Finland.

Student athletes' perceptions of the integration athletic career with high school studies were investigated using a questionnaire which contained 4 likert-scale items related to the students' perceptions of 1) Received guidance to high school studies 2) Received guidance related to further studies 3) Received guidance and support for being a sport high school student and 4) cooperation between the actors of coaching and study guidance to support the implementation of dual career

The results revealed that most of athlete students perceived that they received quite a lot or lot guidance and support to integrate high school studies and athlete career. When examining gender differences, boys perceived higher levels of guidance related further studies, and the cooperation the actors of study guidance and coaching to supporting the implementation of dual career compared to girls ($p < 0.001$). The differences were most clearly observed in summer team sports. In grade levels compare, differences were found only item guidance related further studies between grade 1 and the grades 2 or 3-4 ($p < 0.001$).

Young athletes perceive that they receive guidance and support for implementing a dual career during their high school studies. One reason for this could be long-term efforts have been made in Finland to develop sports high school system.

Key words: sports high school, competitive sport, dual career

PORTAL Project: Building an Inclusive European Platform for Olympians' Post-Career Transitions

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PORTAL is a 24-month project addressing the intricate challenges faced by Olympians during their transition to post-retirement life. The project's core objective is the development and implementation of an inclusive online platform, complemented by a network of Real-Life Transition Officers, to provide comprehensive support to Olympians. In particular, the general objective is to create an inclusive and diverse system emphasizing social inclusion and outreach of individuals facing fewer opportunities (e.g., Olympians without medals, with health issues, or limited financial and educational resources). Furthermore, PORTAL aims: i) in the short term, to raise awareness and conduct research on Olympians' challenges, developing mental health and career retirement resources; ii) in the medium term, to develop and pilot an online platform with dedicated officers; and iii) in the long term, to establish a sustainable support system fostering social inclusion, active citizenship, and lifelong well-being. PORTAL introduces innovations in athletes' career support, mental health, societal engagement, and life skills development. The project promotes collaboration among stakeholders from sport, education, and health, fostering a cross-sectoral approach to maximize its impact. In line with EU guidelines, PORTAL integrates IT tools and face-to-face support, ensuring flexibility, accessibility, and real-time monitoring of elite athletes' careers. To inform the platform content design, three preparatory studies were conducted: 1) a systematic and umbrella reviews on elite athletes' mental health and career transitions sustainable support; 2) a survey with European National Olympic Committees, mapping existing support practices; and 3) a survey with over 100 European elite athletes on perceived challenges and needs. This evidence-based approach will ensure the creation of a research-driven, stakeholder-informed, and tailored to end-users platform.

Designing and Evaluating a Stakeholder-Informed Mobile App to Promote Physical Activity in Children: The Walk Around the Earth Erasmus+ Project

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Background: Prolonged sedentary behaviour and associated obesity are recognized risk factors for poor health across the lifespan. Globally, data show that many children and adolescents aged 5 to 17 significantly increased their sedentary behaviours during the COVID-19 pandemic, failing to meet recommended physical activity levels and reporting increased smartphone use. While mobile devices and video games have been traditionally linked to physical inactivity, novel formats like exergaming, that combine gameplay with gross motor activity, offer potential to promote physical activity and cognitive engagement. However, many digital health tools for children are developed without incorporating feedback from key stakeholders and end users (e.g., children, teachers and guardians).

Methods: This project describes a prospective study that aims (1) to identify the most influential factors or characteristics affecting the engagement and usability of a mobile application promoting physical activity among primary school students; (2) to develop a mobile application for children based on the identified factors and characteristics. The project employs a group concept mapping approach to identify such factors, involving primary stakeholders (e.g., children, teachers, guardians, and physical activity experts) to ensure that the app's features align with end-user needs and motivations. Following app development, its effectiveness in increasing physical activity levels and reducing sedentary behaviour will be evaluated through a mixed-method design, incorporating anthropometric data, validated physical activity questionnaires (Physical Activity Questionnaire for Older Children (PAQ-C) and International Physical Activity Questionnaire (IPAQ)), and engagement metrics.

Conclusions: The E-Walk project integrates participatory design with educational content and activity-based challenges, representing a novel, multidimensional strategy for promoting health, learning and motivation in children. By encouraging an active lifestyle combined with educational elements, the project supports children's holistic development and lays early foundations for skills and attitudes that resonate with the broader concept of dual career. Ultimately, this project contributes to the development of user-informed digital interventions that foster sustainable behaviour change in line with broader goals of child health, education and digital innovation.

Abstract: Elevate DC – Building the Future of Elite Athlete Careers in Latvia

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The Elevate DC project represents a transformative step in redefining Dual Career (DC) pathways for elite football athletes in Latvia. Developed through strategic collaboration between NYSA Sweden, RFS Football Club, and the Latvian Dual Career Federation (LUSF/LASS), the initiative positions Latvia at the forefront of European innovation in athlete education and career development.

Anchored in best practices from Erasmus+ initiatives, COMPATH, WIN-WIN, and DCMENTOR, Elevate DC introduces a comprehensive operational framework that integrates elite sport with academic, vocational, and personal development. At its core is the repositioning of RFS 2 into Latvia's first High-Performance, LTAD Dual Career Academy Hub, serving as a resource centre for athlete education, sports science, coaching, employability skills, and career mentorship. The project advances several strategic ambitions: embedding dual career support into club structures; delivering 21st-century skills curricula for employability; deploying structured decision-making training via the Cynefin framework; launching a digital athlete career mentorship platform; and internationalizing academic and sporting pathways through Erasmus+ and partner universities. These interventions aim to elevate RFS into a European leader in dual career development, while providing Latvian athletes with sustainable opportunities to thrive both on and off the field.

Through its structured work packages, policy alignment, framework development, athlete empowerment, public awareness, and sustainability, Elevate DC not only addresses immediate developmental gaps but also establishes long-term capacity for systemic change. By 2026, the program seeks to achieve recognition within European Dual Career ecosystem, secure sustainable EU funding, and build an international mentor and alumni network to reinforce its legacy.

Ultimately, Elevate DC aspires to reshape the Latvian dual career landscape by creating a replicable, scalable, and sustainable model of athlete-centred development. Its ambition is to ensure that elite athletes are not forced to choose between education and sport, but rather equipped to pursue integrated, lifelong career pathways that strengthen both individual futures and the wider sporting ecosystem.

Choosing Non-Teaching Paths in PETE: An Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis of Dual-Career University Footballers

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Physical Education Teacher Education (PETE) programs often enroll students who continue to compete in sport and weigh teaching against coaching. Using Social Cognitive Career Theory (SCCT) to explain why some head toward non-teaching futures, this study examines how perceived self-efficacy and outcome expectations shape career decisions regarding teaching versus coaching. Using interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA), three male PETE student athletes who play football (ages 20–21) completed one in-depth, semi-structured interview each.

Four SCCT-aligned themes emerged. (1) Coaching Self-Efficacy: Mastery, mentoring, and social reinforcement on the pitch (e.g., drill design, micro-corrections, video/RPE/GPS) built coaching self-efficacy. (2) Low-Autonomy Practicum–Constrained Teaching Self-Efficacy: A low-autonomy, diffuse-impact teaching practicum plausibly depressed teaching self-efficacy. (3) Outcome expectations: coaching was linked to agency, visible impact, and growth potential, whereas teaching was associated with stability and routine. (4) Coaching-Oriented Engagement: Contextual and affective constraints (time–energy debt, injury-related emotions) reweighted capability and payoff appraisals; academic effort then concentrated where efficacy and value were perceived to be highest, yielding selective engagement aligned with a coaching orientation.

Implications follow directly from SCCT mechanisms: practicum designs that engineer frequent mastery opportunities and timely feedback, mentor architectures that provide targeted social persuasion for teaching, and program–club coordination to reduce avoidable structural frictions. Small all-male sample, and cross-sectional timing limit generalization but clarify process-level pathways through which PETE experiences are translated into career intentions in Türkiye.

Keywords: Phenomenology, Student-Athlete, Social Cognitive Career Theory, Self-efficacy, outcome expectations, PETE

Fostering Success in Young Biathletes: Addressing Cultural and Educational Challenges

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The DC4Biathletes project aims to support young biathletes in achieving both their sporting and educational goals through a holistic dual career path. The expected short-term impact of the project includes the development of educational resources and programs for young biathlon athletes and coaches, which will improve their understanding of dual careers. The project also seeks to reduce the number of young athletes who prematurely abandon biathlon or education due to challenges in balancing both.

Since the project's goal is to help international athletes (biathletes) reach their full potential in sports while maintaining academic excellence, it also focuses on exploring cultural differences among athletes. Athletes' cultural backgrounds significantly influence their values, behaviors, expectations, and experiences, which affect how they balance sport commitments with school and sport goals. Recognizing and understanding these cultural needs is crucial for creating support programs tailored to the diverse needs of athletes from different regions and cultural contexts. The findings from qualitative focus groups with 120 young biathletes, conducted using the Cafe method, will be presented. Using focus group interviews gave the participants the opportunity to speak freely about experiences around certain topics from a personal perspective and to discuss their thoughts with others (Gratton and Jones 2004). The interview guide was structured around the following themes: (1) balancing DC and (2) cultural aspect of DC. These results provided insights into identifying gaps and areas for improving support for young biathlon athletes in dual career pathways.

Boxing, Books, and Belonging: The Case of Turkish Female Student-Athlete Duo

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This study explores the lived experiences of two Turkish female student-athletes in boxing, a sport often culturally linked to working-class masculinities. Both participants are graduates of science high schools in Türkiye and currently enrolled in Physical Education Teacher Education (PETE) programs, despite possessing the academic capital to pursue careers in medicine, engineering, or other elite professions. Their trajectories illustrate the complex intersections of gender, class, education, and sport.

Guided by the Social Ecological Model (SEM), the study examines how individual, relational, institutional, and socio-cultural layers interact in shaping their identities and career orientations. Methodologically, this is a qualitative case study employing life-history interviews and participant observations, with analysis conducted through thematic coding.

Findings reveal three interrelated themes. First, “Cultural Decision: Athletes must choose Sport Sciences” highlights how PETE enrollment represents both a pragmatic career option and a compromise between academic potential and sporting passion in Türkiye. Second, “The Centrality of the Coach: Master–Apprentice Relations” underscores the enduring authority of the trainer in boxing culture, where mentorship functions as both a disciplinary force and a source of belonging. Finally, “The Swept-Under-the-Carpet Reality: Being a student-athlete in Türkiye” exposes hidden struggles, including time pressures, marginalization of academic identity, and the lack of systemic support for balancing dual careers.

Overall, the study contributes to understanding how the SEM captures the multi-layered dynamics experienced by young women as they navigate academically elite backgrounds, subcultural sporting practices, and gendered expectations in individual sports.

Keywords: student-athletes, boxing, Social Ecological Model, case study, gender

Supporting High Level Athletes at INSA, France

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From basic support for dual projects to meticulous support for the very highest level – 45 years of expertise in dual career.

INSA Lyon is the largest engineering school in France with an integrated preparatory class and more than 5,000 students, all of whom are future engineers. Every year, it graduates more than 1,000 students, including around 20 high-level athletes. The high-level sports section brings together 200 athletes in three concentric circles.

Among them are nearly 50 students who have very ambitious dual career at an international level in their age category. Their sporting level is recognised by the French state, the Ministry of Sport, the National Sports Agency and the school. The challenge is to find a process and key factors for each of the student athletes so that they can successfully complete their dual career. This support therefore requires very specific skills, a networked organisation with the sporting world, in-depth knowledge of the university ecosystem and exceptional financial resources to see the dual projects through to completion.

I will outline all of these factors and illustrate them with current examples:

Louise CEVERA, Ilca 6 sailing world women's champion in 2024 in China

Sarah Madeleine, 8th in the 1500m at the World Athletics Championships in Tokyo in 2025

Margot RAVINEL, French mountain skiing team, set to be selected for the 2026 Turin Olympics.

Cléo HAGEL, under professional contract with the French Rugby Sevens Federation for LA 2028.

Emilien Maire, in talks with the Olympic Modern Pentathlon team and INSEP to prepare for the 2028 LA Olympics games.

Ugo VIGNOLLES, under professional contract with a rugby team in France.

Dimitri GRANJUX, Oly, French para-swimming team member who competed in the Paris Olympics and is in the running for LA 28.

Bartholomé SANSON, French under-20 rugby team and 4th in the world rugby cup 2025

Koceila MAMMERI, Oly, who competed in the Paris Olympics in badminton for Algérie.

I hope you will be interested in INSA's commitment and innovation in enabling athletes to achieve their dual goals.

Forms of support for the student athletes in the Academy of Physical Education in Katowice

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The Academy of Physical Education in Katowice is a public university which specialises in sport and physical education. It is one of six such universities in Poland and the only one in the Silesia region. The university is attended by a significant number of professional athletes, including members of Olympic national teams. In the report prepared for the Ministry of Sport and Tourism entitled „Dual career of athletes in Poland. Diagnosis of the situation”, the Academy of Physical Education in Katowice is mentioned as one of the best universities in Poland in terms of support for dual career of student athletes.

The main goal of my presentation is to show various forms of support for the student athletes who maintain a dual career in the field of education and sport at the Academy of Physical Education in Katowice.

The presentation will present the following forms of supporting student athletes in combining higher education with professional sports training:

1. Recruitment for studies.
2. Personalised Plan and Study Program.
3. Scholarships, funded by the government's budget and by the university's own resources.
4. Using the modern research laboratories.
5. The Academy of Physical Education University Sports Association Club activities.
6. “National Academic Team” – The Polish Program Supporting Student-Athletes' Dual-Career.

Observation of the existing forms of support for student athletes allows us to conclude that they increase the effectiveness of these students' studies.