



UNIL | Université de Lausanne



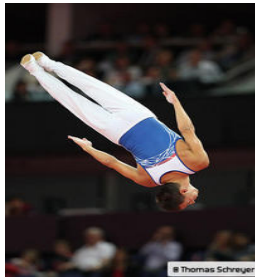
# Mental Health of Elite Athletes

## Overview and practical considerations

# Présentation

PRENDRE

Sous la direction de  
**MARC DURAND**  
**DENIS HAUW**  
**GERMAIN POIZAT**



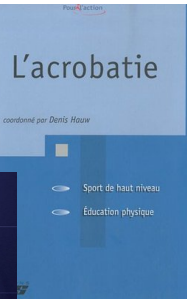
Thomas Schreuer



10 cas pratiques  
en psychologie  
du sport

L'apprentissage  
des techniques  
corporelles

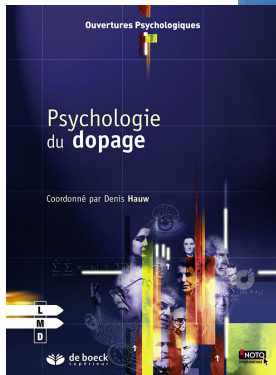
Sous la direction de  
Roberto Antonini Philippe  
et Denis Hauw



L'acrobatie

coordonné par Denis Hauw

Sport de haut niveau  
 Éducation physique



Ouvertures Psychologiques

Psychologie  
du dopage

Coordonné par Denis Hauw



- In ISSUL, since 2012 as the first Prof in sport psychology in UNIL
- Academic & Practionner
- Psychological life of elite athletes..
- Deviant behaviors (substance use – doping- interpersonal violence...)
- Sport psychology services
- Support program for student elite athletes in UNIL



Unil

UNIL | Université de Lausanne

1

Prof. Denis HAUW - ISSUL

# Introduction: set the question of Mental Health (MH)

The benefits of sport participation

But

The difficulty to maintain a balance sporting life and mental health

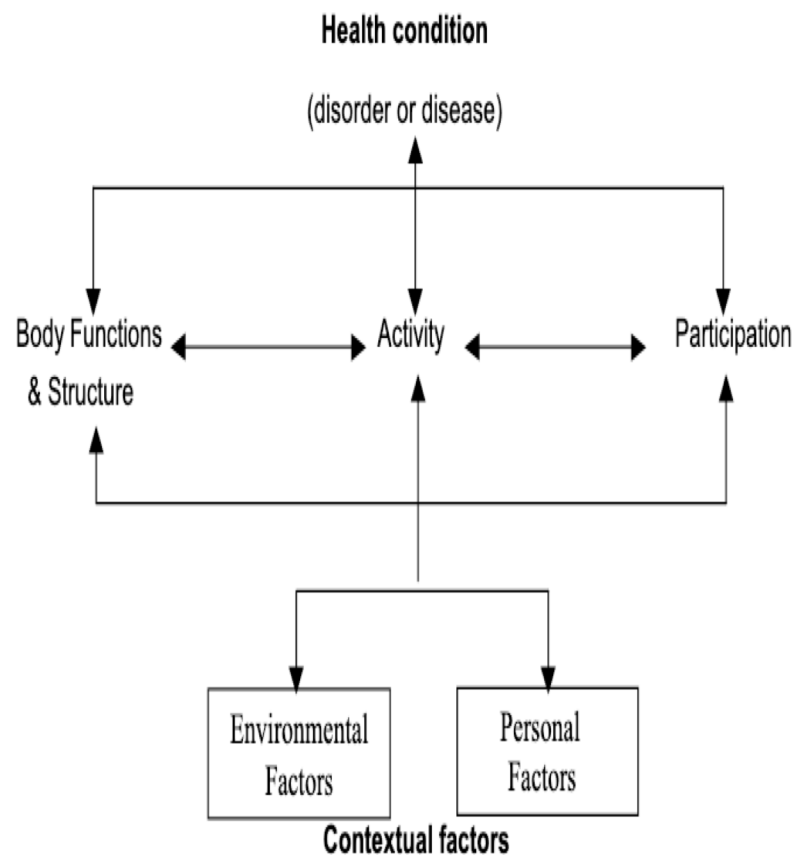
Well-being, Mental health,  
satisfaction with life

VS

Mental Health Problems, issues in  
mental health, personality difficulty  
and disorders



Health «Positive physical, mental,  
and social well-being that  
contributes to efficient human  
functioning (WHO, 2016).”



# Introduction: set the question of Mental Health (MH)

## Environmental Challenges

High competition

Career development\_ Talent identification and development (super elite/elite/junior elite)

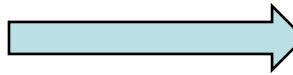
High intensity training

Specificity of the social Relationships

## Psychological(mental) dimensions

Personality dispositions  
Mental Skills

Well-Being states  
Negative Consequences  
Mental Health Problems



Pict from England Boxing

# Athletes well-being ?

## Efficient athletes functioning...

Satisfaction with life (Diener, 1985)- Five Items Lickert scale 7 points  
Max 35 points (cut-off at 15, 20, and 25 points).

In most ways my life is close to my ideal	1-2-3-4-5-6-7
The conditions of my life are excellent	1-2-3-4-5-6-7
I am satisfied with my life	1-2-3-4-5-6-7
So far I have gotten the important things I want in life	1-2-3-4-5-6-7
If I could live my life over, I would change almost nothing	1-2-3-4-5-6-7

Habe et al., 2019  
338 top Slovenian athletes  
(mean age 22.4)  
Mean score 24.45 (SD= 5.57) = Slightly satisfied

Hauw et al., 2020  
118 youth athletes in Canton de Vaud (mean age 14.5)  
Mean score 24.5. (SD= 6.34)  
= Slightly satisfied



# Mental Health Problem

Impairment in athletes functioning... ICD 11

Self (identity, self esteem, accuracy of self-view...)



Anxiety and Depression

Impulsivity

Eating disorder

Narcissism

Interpersonal relationships



Perceptions of others

Respect contracts and rules

Violence

Types of relation and autonomy

Qualifiers

Negative affectivity

Detachment

Dissociality

Disinhibition

Anankastia

Difficulty

Mild disorder

Moderate disorder

Severe disorder





## Does elite sport protect athletes ?

- Prevalence and types Elite athletes = general population
- Females are in general at higher risk.

## Prevalence

- **In France**, 17% athletes experienced a psychiatric disorder within the last 6 months (females: 20.2%, males: 15.1%).
- **In Australian**, 46.6% athletes experienced symptoms of a psychiatric disorder (females: 53.4%, males: 38.7%).
- **In the UK**, 47.8% meet the cut-off criteria for symptoms of a depression and/or an anxiety disorder (females: 54.1%, males: 42.9%).
- **In Sweden**, Point prevalence Total 11.7% (female: 13.8%, male: 8.8%), Lifetime prevalence Total 51.7% (female: 58.2%, male: 42.3)

**Depression Anxiety**

**Eating disorder**



**Drinking and drug use**



**Interpersonal impairment**



## Description

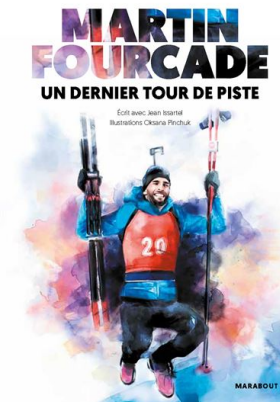
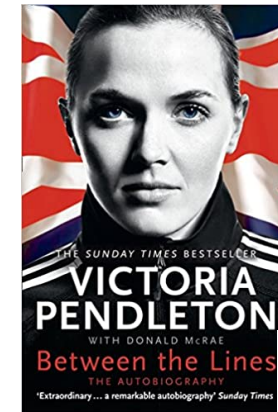
- Physical and emotional exhaustion, sport devaluation and a reduced sense of accomplishment
- Burnout, Overtraining Syndrom (precursor hard training/unsufficient recovery) - injury
- Linked with high level of Anankastia (Obsessive disorder)

## Prevalence

- Hammond et al. (2013). 50 Canadian olympic and world elite swimmers\_ 68% life time prevalence Higher female than male
- Nixdorf et al. (2013). German elite athletes – 15% depressive symptom with higher in individual sport than team sport
- Gulliver et al. (2015). Australian elite athletes- 23% male et 30 % Female with depressive symptoms
- Foskett et al. (2018). 143 UK athletes 47.8 signs of anxiety and depression, 26.8 distress

## Management

- Early recognition... regular screening: Beck questionnaire and PHQ4-9
- Mental skills and treatment (self-regulation, TCC, ACT)
- Headspace...



## Description

Anorexia / Bulimia / restrictive food intake

Perfectionism / Self esteem / body issues

## Prevalence

- Prevalence with athletes (13.5%) > general population (4.6%)
- Bratland-Sanda & Sundgot-Borgen (2004; 2013): from 0-19% in male athletes and 6-45% in female athletes
- Male athletes was greater in antigravitation sports (22%) than in endurance sports (9%) and ball game (5%)
- Female athletes competing in aesthetic sports (42%) higher than in endurance (24%), technical (17%), and ball game sports (16%)



## Management

- Prevention social-cognitive framework, with a focus on enhancing self-esteem by strengthening self-efficacy.
- Other programs that have shown reduced behaviors of ED include peer-led educational programs, education targeted at coaches, and electronic programs.

## Description

- Binge drinking
- Regular use
- Recreational drugs

## Prevalence

- Prevalence with athletes > general population
- Grant et al. (2004)- US athletes\_ past 2-week binge drinking rates of 57% to 62% and 48% to 50% among male and female college athletes
- 33% female collegiate athletes reported consuming more than four alcoholic drinks in one sitting, 44% of collegiate male athletes reported consuming more than five, and 16% of collegiate male athletes reported consuming over 10 drinks in one sitting (NCAA,2014).

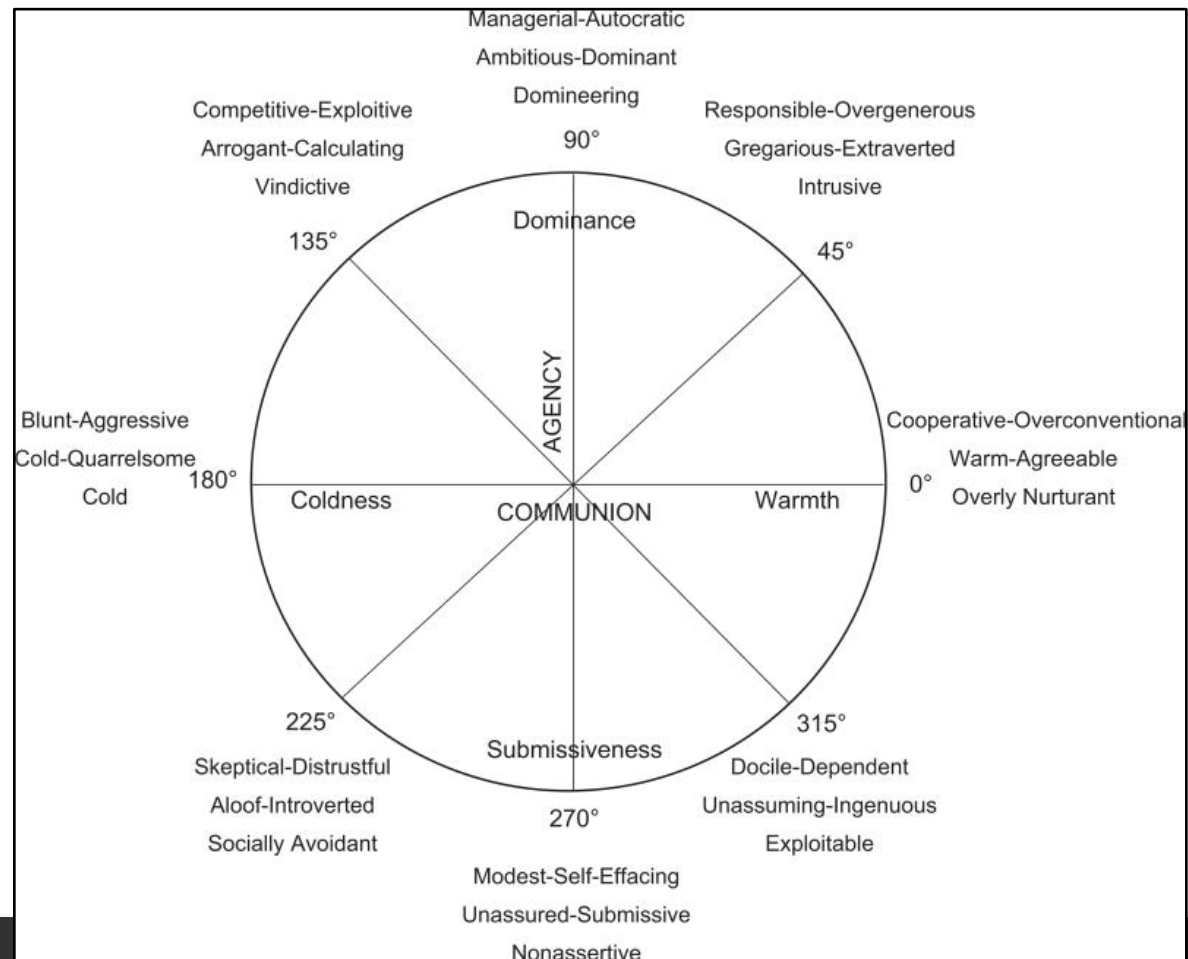


## Management

- Brief intervention (feedback + specific motivational interview)
- Prevention social-cognitive framework, with a focus on enhancing self-esteem by strengthening self-efficacy.
- Anti-doping prevention

# Interpersonal impairment

**Description:** Interpersonal disorders which refers to interpersonal situations and relationships, and includes attitudes toward, behaviors in, and goals for relationships; cognitions about the meaning of relationships; affect and behavior in interpersonal interactions; and interpretation of others' interaction behaviors.



# Interpersonal impairment

## Relevance 1:

- Sport participation prevention (Somerset et Hoare, 2018)





## Relevance 2

➤ Kavassanu & al, (2016), Hauw et al., (2020), Rutten & al., (2011)

PAB in Sport Scale:

Antisocial behavior toward opponent > elite athletes and team sports

Moral behavior

Tried to injure an opponent  
Tried to wind up an opponent<sup>a</sup>  
Deliberately fouled an opponent  
Intentionally distracted an opponent  
Retaliated after a bad foul  
Intentionally broke the rules of the game  
Physically intimidated an opponent  
Criticized an opponent





## Relevance 3

- Jones et al. (2015); Hauw & Rolland (in progress)
- Antisocial trait in personality in elite athlete score at the same high level than narcissism
- Moral disengagement – Impulsivity - Respect of the rules



# Personal and sport environmental protective and risk factors for MH

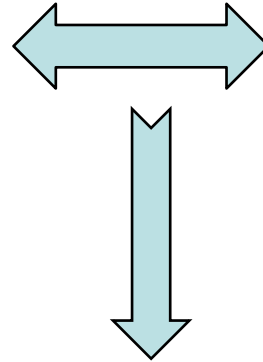
## Athletes

### Protection

- Protective skills
- Feelings of competence, autonomy and affiliation
- Recovery
- Career satisfaction

### Risk

- Injury, overtraining
- Risky behavior and inefficient coping
- Female
- Adverse life event
- Poor general health
- Poor life skills (sleep, eat, drink)
- Maladaptative personality
- Negative social relationships



## Environment

### Protection

- Mental health support
- Trusting and mastery climate
- Positive relationships and support
- Support for career adjustment

### Risk

- Sport specific stressors
- Individual and aesthetic sports
- Management of career
- Lack of support from social environment
- Stigma towards help-seeking

- The importance of monitoring athletes' mental states
- Akesdotter et al. (2019): less than 30 % of Sweden elite athletes reported seeking help (females: 37.8%, males:16.8)
- **New responses ?** Igen – distance learning – self-development – high quality

**Key targets:** emotional regulation / interpersonal relationship / development

## Personal approach

- Assessment: vulnerability – dysfunctional personality (e.g., TD12) – prevention – monitoring – self assessment
- Internet Treatment Service with various topics (eg., interpersonal relationships, depression, mental skills, how to be flexible ?)

## Environmental approach

- Guidelines
- Talent Development Environment (TDEQ) (Martindale et al-. 2018; Gesbert & al. 2020)
- Works with coaches (assessment, Internet treatment service...)

# Conclusion



Thank you for attention !  
[denis.hauw@unil.ch](mailto:denis.hauw@unil.ch)