

**Research project title: Learning from elite athletes' mental health experiences**

You are being invited to take part in a research study. Before you decide whether or not to take part, please take time to read the following information carefully. Thank you for your time and consideration.

**What is the purpose of the study?**

The present study aims to broaden our understanding of elite athletes' experiences of mental health issues. Using semi-structured interviews, we would like to explore and generate an in-depth understanding of participants' 'at the time' perceptions *and* post hoc reflections on their experiences of mental health issues. The study will particularly focus on what kind of mental issues have been encountered, how it was diagnosed and how elite athletes, who have experienced mental issues of clinical severity during or immediately post their career, have dealt with it.

**Why have I been invited to participate?**

As a first step, an invitation email was sent out to our contacts in sport environments. This was likely forwarded to performers on their database. You are likely to be one of many who have received this invitation email.

**Do I have to take part?**

Your participation in this project is entirely voluntary and your contribution would be much appreciated. Furthermore, if you do not want to answer to a question, we can stop discussing the particular question and move on to the next one. You are also free to withdraw from the project at any time, without having to give a reason. Please note, however, that you will be unable to withdraw from the study once the data from the interview have been anonymised.

**Can I take part in this study?**

If you are interested in taking part in this study, you must be a current or retired elite athlete who has experienced mental health issues of clinical severity at some point during or immediately after your athletic career. By "clinical severity", we mean that you have experienced a mental health issue (e.g. depression, eating disorder, anxiety disorder, OCD, addiction, etc.) for which you have been formally assessed and diagnosed. Mental health issues "*are generally characterized by some combination of abnormal thoughts, emotions, behaviour and relationships with others.*" (WHO, 2016). Nevertheless, in order to take part in this study, you must (1) either be free of ongoing mental health issues or (2) have your condition safely under control

Whereas the definition of an elite athlete used within this study was based on Swann and colleagues' definition (2015): "*Successful-elite athletes not only compete at the highest level, but have experienced some success at that standard (e.g., winning an event or a medal).*" (pg.11). Success at elite level is therefore considered an essential criterion for participation.

### **What will happen to me if I take part?**

If you decide to participate in this study, you will be asked to take part in an interview conducted by a clinical psychologist. This interview will last approximately 90 minutes and will be recorded for the purpose of transcription. Before starting the interview, you will be given this information sheet to keep and will be asked to sign two consent forms (one for you, and one for the researchers). This is to confirm that you have read and understood the information given in the information sheet and that you are willing to participate. Finally, and as part of the validation of the collected data, you will be asked after an initial data analysis phase to give a feedback on our understanding and interpretation of your experience.

### **What are the possible benefits of taking part?**

There will be no direct benefit to you by taking part, but we intend that findings will inform research and better practice when offering psychological support to elite performers.

### **What are the possible risks of taking part?**

There are no serious risks of taking part in this study, but as the questions will be related to mental health issues you have experienced during or immediately post you career, you may feel some discomfort. If this is the case, then we can stop discussing the particular question and move on to the next one or you can decide to stop the interview and withdraw from the study.

### **Will what I say in this study be kept confidential?**

The information provided will be kept and analysed confidentially, and only the researchers (who are all qualified sport or clinical psychologists) will have access to the interview transcripts. All data will be kept securely on a password protected server at the University of Central Lancashire. No information enabling your identification will be revealed in order to protect participants' anonymity and confidentiality. Data generated by the study will be retained in accordance with the University of Central Lancashire's policy on Academic Integrity. Therefore, the data generated in the course of this research will be kept securely in electronic, password protected and encrypted form for 5 years from the end of the project.

### **What should I do if I want to take part?**

Please contact me via email (contact details are included at the end of this sheet). It would be helpful if you could include the times and locations that would be most convenient for you to meet. You can register interest and be interviewed until I stop collecting data. Please

understand that you will be unable to withdraw from the study once the data from the interview have been anonymised. This means that you must withdraw your consent before the 30<sup>th</sup> April 2017.

### **What will happen to the results of the research study?**

The results will be part of my PhD project and might also be published as articles in different journals. You should be aware that data collected during the course of this project might be used for additional research. If you would like to receive a summary of the results of this research, please email me at [flebrun@uclan.ac.uk](mailto:flebrun@uclan.ac.uk) with the contact details you would like the results sent to.

### **Who has reviewed the study?**

This project has been reviewed by the UCLan Research Ethics Committee for Business, Arts, Humanities, and Social Science (BAHSS No. 395). Should you have any concerns about the way in which the study has been conducted, you can contact our University Officer for Ethics at [OfficerforEthics@uclan.ac.uk](mailto:OfficerforEthics@uclan.ac.uk).

If you have any questions about this project, please feel free to contact me, *Florence Lebrun* ([flebrun@uclan.ac.uk](mailto:flebrun@uclan.ac.uk)) or the project supervisor *Dave Collins* ([DJCollins@uclan.ac.uk](mailto:DJCollins@uclan.ac.uk)).

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Kind Regards

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