

The role of the entourage in supporting elite athlete performance and educational outcomes

Grant Report for the Advanced Olympic Research Grant Programme

IOC Olympic Studies Centre

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Abstract

The objective of this study was to understand the role of the athletic entourage (e.g., parents, coaches, tutors, sport psychologists) in supporting the dual career of elite adolescent athletes at different developmental stages. A multiple case-study approach was used to examine five cases in the UK: A tennis academy, a football academy, a national field hockey squad, a high performance swimming squad, and an elite canoeing programme. Interviews were conducted with two athletes and their associated entourage from each case. Interviews were transcribed verbatim and within case and cross case analysis was conducted following the qualitative analysis procedures outlined by Miles and Huberman (1994). Analysis resulted in the identification of numerous ways in which the entourage supported athletes. When examining this support across the cases, it was apparent that entourage members were consistent in understanding the demands of a dual career and being flexible in requirements, placing a great value upon education, supporting athletes' sporting and academic engagement, providing integrated support, engaging in constant communication, educating athletes regarding the demands they would encounter, and trusting athletes to guide their development. With regards to additional support required, financial assistance and further integration and communication were identified across the cases.

Key Words: Dual Career, Youth Sport, Education, Social Support, Entourage, Parent, Coach

Executive Summary of Results

The pursuit of excellence in sport is characterised by an extraordinary dedication to training and competition (Conzelmann & Nagel, 2003). Similarly, attainment in academic settings necessitates a huge commitment from individuals (Wylleman & Lavallee, 2004). Unfortunately, with both athletic and academic pursuits placing extensive demands on athletes, maintaining involvement and achieving in both domains simultaneously can be extremely challenging (Aquilina, 2013). The overall objective of this study was to understand the role and experiences of the athletic entourage in supporting the dual career (e.g., education and sport) of mid-adolescent and late-adolescent athletes.

A multiple case study approach was used to address these objectives. Five different cases in the UK were studied: A tennis academy, a national field hockey squad, a high performance swimming squad, a football academy, and an elite canoeing programme. Within each case, two athletes and members of their entourage were interviewed to examine the experience of maintaining a dual career, the roles of the entourage in supporting the dual career, and the additional support that would be beneficial in facilitating a dual career. Each case comprised a different structure through which athletes combined their educational and sporting commitments. For example, in the tennis academy, the athletes had left the traditional schooling system and completed their training and education at a tennis centre, while both the swimmers and the hockey players were maintaining their education through the traditional school system. Within the football academy, one athlete was completing his education at school, while the other was carrying out his education at the academy. The canoeists had both completed their schooling through the traditional school system and had recently transitioned to university.

Given the different systems through which the athletes were pursuing their dual career, there were understandably some differences between the athletes' experiences and also the roles their entourage fulfilled in supporting their dual career. However, there were also many similarities across the cases. With regards to the experience of maintaining their dual career, all athletes discussed a number of benefits and challenges. The athletes were united in their belief that maintaining their education was very important and valued having the opportunity to continue learning. The athletes discussed benefits ranging from a desire to learn and develop as an individual, to understanding the need for a "back-up plan," and desiring balance within their lives. The athletes, and their entourage, demonstrated a consistent appreciation of the challenges of becoming and succeeding as a professional athlete. Thus, having an education to fall back on was deemed to be very important. Additionally, some of the athletes and their entourage highlighted the sport and education performance benefits that could result from maintaining a dual career.

The challenges athletes encountered in attempting to maintain their dual career were mostly associated with the time demands that training, competition, and education required. The time commitment athletes had to make to the different domains of their life led to feelings of fatigue and pressure. However, the athletes indicated that they could, usually, manage these time demands through effective time management and support from their entourage. Athletes also described challenges at specific time points in the academic and/or sporting calendars. For example, examination and

competition periods were seen to be particularly challenging to negotiate. The requirements to travel away for training and competition also seemed to exacerbate some of the difficulties associated with the dual career. Nevertheless, the athletes indicated that the benefits outweighed the challenges and they wanted to have an opportunity to continue with their education.

Across all cases, the entourage played a critical role in supporting the maintenance of the dual career. To support athletes it appeared important that the entourage members demonstrated an understanding of the demands associated with engaging in a dual career and were flexible in their requirements of athletes. Such understanding and flexibility ensured that athletes were able to manage the pressures that resulted from maintaining two careers and could fulfill all their requirements to their highest level.

In addition to their understanding of the demands of the dual career, the entourage members also demonstrated an appreciation of the importance of education and the value of maintaining a dual career. Consequently, there was consistency in the goals that everyone within the entourage was trying to achieve. Such shared goals and consistent approach to the dual career ensured that athletes were not conflicted as they strove to complete their educational or training commitments.

The provision of equal (but different) support and encouragement for athletes' sporting and academic pursuits was also apparent across the different cases. The specific manner in which athletes received such support differed depending on the sport and educational structure they were engaged in. However, for the athletes to be able to maintain a dual career they needed to have opportunities to complete their educational and their training requirements. If athletes did not have access to these opportunities a dual career was impossible.

Further, if the support network in either domain was not supportive of the other it was unlikely that athletes would have been able to succeed. Thus, athletes needed to have access to a specific support network that contained key individuals who would support different components of their career. In some of the cases different individuals oversaw one specific domain of the dual career, while in other structures the support was more integrated across domains. Whether it was through individual roles or a more integrated approach, communication between all members of the entourage appeared pertinent. In some instances the athletes and their parents facilitated such communication, while in others it was guided by specific points of contact in the educational institute or the sporting environment. When a specific point of contact for communication was available this was generally perceived extremely positively because it reduced the burden on both the athlete and their parents.

Finally, some of the athletes were provided specific guidance regarding how to maintain a dual career. Such education or guidance was valuable in teaching athletes specific skills, such as time management, that might be beneficial in supporting their dual career. After educating athletes and providing them with pertinent information regarding their dual career, athletes subsequently benefitted from being trusted to guide their own development. Such ownership over their development was perceived to be important because only athletes are aware of all the demands and challenges they are experiencing.

The cases were chosen for this study because these they had been successful in supporting athletes' dual careers. Thus, it is not surprising that the athletes and the members of their entourage were very positive about the support they provided and received. Nevertheless there were some suggestions regarding further support that could be beneficial to further improve the experiences of athletes. Such suggestions included additional financial support to allow parents to better support their children and ensure that education decisions were not dictated by financial constraints. Additionally, further communication and integrated support among the entourage members was also desired. Although it was generally perceived that individuals within the athletes' support networks communicated well, there were some instances where it was perceived that more structured approaches would be beneficial.

In conclusion, the findings of this study highlight the importance of active and purposeful engagement of entourage members in ensuring that athletes are able to maintain a dual career. Despite the different structures studied in the cases, the entourage members were united in their desire to facilitate athletes' dual careers and within each case individuals worked together to achieve this. Thus, this study points to the need for National Governing Bodies (NGBs), clubs, coaches, schools, universities, teachers, tutors, parents, and athletes to be proactive in planning for and supporting adolescent athletes' engagement in sport and education.

Introduction

Over the past decade, there has been a growth in research examining the dual careers of elite athletes (e.g., Aquilina, 2013; Aquilina & Henry, 2010; De Knop, Wylleman, Van Koecke, Martalaer, & Bollaert, 1999; Henry, Aquilina, Amara, & PMP, 2004; McKenna & Dunstan-Lewis, 2004). The stimuli for such research has been the recognition of the individual and societal benefits that arise when athletes maintain their education while competing on the international stage (cf., European Commission 2007, 2011). For example, research has identified that athletes who gain academic qualifications are better prepared to manage transitions, cope with expected and unexpected exits from sport, and can make a positive contribution to the workforce beyond sport (Alfermann, Stambulova, & Zemaityte, 2004; Wylleman & Lavalley, 2004). In contrast, those athletes who decide to end their academic involvement to focus solely upon the pursuit of excellence in sport often experience more negative consequences when they transition out of sport (Cecić Erpić, Wylleman, & Zupančič, 2004; Wylleman & Reints, 2010).

Consequently, facilitating young athletes' engagement in education while they are participating in elite sport seems both appropriate and necessary. However, the pursuit of excellence in sport is characterised by an extraordinary dedication to training and competition (Conzelmann & Nagel, 2003). Similarly, attainment in academic settings necessitates a huge commitment from individuals (Wylleman & Lavalley, 2004). Unfortunately, with both the athletic and academic domains placing extensive demands on athletes, maintaining involvement and achieving in both pursuits simultaneously can be extremely challenging (Aquilina, 2013). Recognising the difficulties associated with maintaining education while participating in elite sport, the European Commission and the International Olympic Committee have acknowledged the importance of studying and promoting policies regarding elite athletes' engagement in education (cf., Amara, Aquilina, Henry, & PMP, 2004; Aquilina & Henry, 2010; Borggreffe & Cachay, 2012; Christensen & Sorensen, 2009). Such studies have illustrated large disparities between the policy-level support available to different sports and countries, and have pointed to the potential consequences this could have for athletes. This information is critical for identifying best practice for helping athletes to maintain a dual career and has been utilised to develop guidelines on dual careers of athletes (EU Expert group, 2012).

The attention to understanding and developing sport and education policies is important to help increase opportunities for adolescent and young adult athletes to succeed in academic and sporting domains. However, in comparison to our understanding of policy and organisational factors associated with dual careers, research explicitly considering the more proximal support athletes require or receive to maintain dual careers is more limited. A recent study by Aquilina (2013) highlighted the social support network university student-athletes utilised to manage their university and sport involvement. At the more distal levels Aquilina highlighted the role of the European Union and the International Olympic Committee, elite training centres, National Governing Bodies, the state, researchers, and medical staff in supporting student-athletes. At the most proximal (or personal) level, the need for support from academic staff, clubs, peers, coaches, and family were highlighted. The current study sought to build on Aquilina's study by explicitly focusing upon the role the proximal support network (i.e., the athlete's entourage)

plays in the dual careers of adolescent and young adult athletes.

Research with adolescent athletes has consistently indicated that balancing school and sport is a substantial source of stress for this population (Nicholls, Holt, Polman, & James, 2005; Reeves, Nicholls, & McKenna, 2009; Tamminen & Holt, 2012). Similarly, research with university student-athletes has highlighted various challenges associated with managing the student and the athlete role (McKenna & Dunstain-Lewis, 2004; Miller & Kerr, 2002). It is understood that athletes' abilities to cope with stressors and demands is largely influenced by the support they receive from parents, coaches, teammates, academies, and others in their immediate support network (e.g., Aquilina, 2009; Doll-Tepper, 2012; Giacobbi et al., 2004; Tamminen & Holt, 2010). However this has not been explicitly explored in relation to the dual career. Thus, the current study sought to extend previous research into stress and coping by explicitly focusing upon the roles of the support network in helping athletes cope with the challenges of a dual career.

Social support is likely to be particularly important at certain school and sport transitions phrases (Wylleman & Lavalley, 2004; Wylleman & Reints, 2010). For example, it has been suggested that athletes might struggle to maintain their education when compulsory schooling ends, if they move away from home to train, or when they transition to university (e.g., Giacobbi et al., 2004; Henry, 2010; Wylleman & Lavalley, 2004; Wylleman & Reints, 2010). Despite these suggestions, little research has been conducted to examine the exact types or sources of support adolescent and young adult athletes require to maintain their dual careers at these transition points. As such, the current study adopted a developmental approach by examining the support adolescent athletes required at key educational periods (e.g., when they were completing GCSE and A' Level examinations¹).

Finally, as research has been growing in the field of youth sport it has become apparent that parents (along with other members of the support team) do not always feel suitably equipped to make decisions regarding their children's schooling (Knight & Holt, 2013b). Moreover, it seems that making such decisions and providing support for elite athletes can be stressful and challenging for members of athletes' support network (Harwood, Drew, & Knight, 2010; Harwood & Knight, 2009a, 2009b). This previous research provides some insights into the potential challenges members of the entourage might encounter in supporting elite athletes. However, the current study sought to build on these previous findings to explicitly identify the help members of the entourage or support network need to be able to appropriately support elite athletes' dual careers.

To this end, the overall objective of this study was to understand the role and experiences of the athletic entourage in supporting the dual career of mid-adolescent and late-adolescent athletes. Specifically, this study sought to answer three questions:

- 1) What are adolescent athletes' experiences of managing sport and education?

¹ GCSE exams are the final examinations taken by all children in the UK on completion of compulsory education (usually aged 16). AS and A' level exams are advanced optional qualifications that are usually taken in the 2 years after GCSEs but can be completed at any time.

- 2) How do members of the entourage facilitate athletes' ability to manage the demands of sport and education at different ages?
- 3) What further support do athletes and members of the entourage require to be able to manage the demands associated with maintaining education while participating at an elite level in sport?

Literature Review

In the following sections, a brief overview of the literature pertinent to this project is presented. This literature has been used to frame the research questions and, following data analysis, to facilitate the interpretation of the findings. The purpose of this section is not to provide an exhaustive review of literature, but rather to provide insights into the key studies that informed the current project.

What is a dual career?

Understanding and supporting athletes in their attempts to maintain a dual career is increasingly important as the demands elite athletes encounter intensify (Conzelmann & Nagel, 2003; Henry, 2010). According to the EU Expert Group “Education & Training in Sport” (2012), a dual career is, “The requirement for athletes to successfully initiate, develop and finalise an elite sporting career as part of a lifelong career, in combination with the pursuit of education and/or work as well as other domains which are of importance at different stages in life, such as taking up a role in society, ensuring a satisfactory income, developing an identity and a partner relationship” (p. 6). As this definition indicates, a dual career might look different for different athletes. For example, for adolescent athletes a dual career would likely account for the combination of academic and sporting pursuits. This combination of academic and sporting engagement might similarly account for the dual careers of young adult athletes, as well as those who have progressed further into their careers. However, for other athletes, the dual career might comprise a vocation or work combined with sport participation.

In addition to differences regarding the activities that comprise their dual career, athletes might also place a different emphasis upon the two components of their dual career. For example, Pallarés, Azócat, Torregrosa, Selva, and Ramis (2011) (as outlined in deSubijara, Barriopedro, & Conde, 2015) described three career trajectories that elite athletes could follow. The first trajectory, termed the linear path, involves exclusive dedication to sport to the exclusion of other activities. The second trajectory, the convergent path, incorporates a sport career and another activity (e.g., school and/or work) but the athlete prioritises their sport career. Thus, the convergent path is an example of a dual career, but one in which sport comes first. The third trajectory, labeled the parallel path, encapsulates a dual career whereby athletes have a sport career and engage in an alternative activity, but place equal importance upon both components.

Adolescent athletes are the focus of this study, and thus the dual career of interest is the combination of academic and sporting pursuits. It is likely that both convergent and parallel paths are present within the adolescent population of elite athletes (Dubois, Ledon, & Wylleman, 2014; Platts & Smith, 2009; Pummell, Harwood, & Lavalley, 2008). However, it is also important to recognise that for some adolescent athletes, school could also take priority over sport (e.g., McCormack & Walseth, 2013), particularly if this is emphasised or valued by their entourage (Dubois et al., 2014; Ryba, Stambulova, Renkainen, Bundgaard, & Selänne, 2014). In fact, the time that athletes spend on different components of their dual career, and the extent to which they prioritise components, are likely influenced by numerous factors such as family and peers, but also social expectation and cultural norms (Ryba et al., 2014). For example, in a recent study on combining elite sport and tertiary education, Cosh

and Tully (2014) questioned the extent to which elite athletes have choice or agency over their sporting and academic decisions. Rather, as Cosh and Tully illustrated, student-athletes' perceive time as a barrier to integrating education and sport, but perceptions of time are influenced by external sources and expectations. As such, understanding the beliefs and expectations that members of an athlete's entourage have regarding dual careers, along with the cultural norms of their sport, is necessary to fully appreciate athletes' experiences and perceptions.

An additional consideration when studying the dual careers of elite adolescent athletes is the ways in which athletes can access and combine their education. The structure and systems available to youth athletes varies greatly (Doll-Tepper, 2012). For example, some athletes will continue with their traditionally schooling and fit their training and competition around the regular school day. Other athletes might also attend a traditional school but have an agreement to miss lessons or parts of days for training. Such agreements might be facilitated through individual coaches and clubs, or due to a long-standing agreement between the academic institution and a sport academy. Other athletes might attend sport schools, which provide opportunities for combined sport training and study and these sport schools might be private or state run (Houlihan & Green, 2008; Coalter & Radtk, 2007). Still further, some athletes might opt out of any formal education, choosing instead to complete their education through home schooling (online or with tutors) that is fitted around their sport schedules (Knight & Holt, 2012). The types of education and sport opportunities young athletes have are likely dependent both upon the country in which they reside and also the sport in which they participate (cf., Aquilina, 2013; Debouis et al., 2014; Platts & Smith, 2009; Ryba et al., 2014). Within the United Kingdom, which is the focus of this study, adolescent athletes can combine their schooling and sport in a variety of manners, with different traditions common in different sports. Thus, the experience of adolescent athletes even within this one country is likely to differ substantially depending on the structures that are in place in their sport to support them.

If athletes progress into tertiary education, their dual career opportunities will continue to vary depending upon the institutional support they can access (Henry, 2010). One particularly comprehensive comparison of university provision for elite athletes, examined the university structures and support across 25 countries within the European Union (Aquilina, 2009; Aquilina & Henry, 2010). Through this comparison, Aquilina and Henry identified four typologies of educational services for elite athletes in higher education: State-centric regulation, State as 'Sponsor'/facilitator, National Sporting Federations/Institutes as Intermediary, and Laissez Faire (no formal structures). In state-centric regulation the burden of providing opportunities for student-athletes is placed on the higher education institution through state regulations and legislation. State as "Sponsor"/facilitator is an approach whereby the state promotes formal agreements to ensure that student-athletes' needs are being met at the university level. National Sporting Federations/Institutes as intermediary utilise established systems that recognise challenges and have sporting advocates to act on behalf of the student to negotiate flexible education provision within higher education institutions. Finally, as the name indicates, Laissez Faire approaches have no structured measures in place and arrangements rely on individually negotiated agreements. With such a variety of structures in place, it is clear that the experience of athletes' dual careers is likely to

vary substantially across different contexts and with it the support they require from their entourage is also likely to differ.

Why should athletes be encouraged to maintain dual careers?

Over recent years, increasing attention has been given to the facilitation of dual careers for athletes. Such attention has likely arisen due to a number of factors, not least because it has been recognised that when athletes engage in a dual career it has many individual and societal benefits (European Commission, 2007; EU expert group, 2012). For example, it has been identified that maintaining a dual career helps individuals to cope with transitions from junior to senior levels of sport and transitions to higher-level training environments (Bruner, Munroe-Chandler, & Spink, 2008; Stambulova, Franck, & Weibell, 2012). Further, Henriksen and colleagues (Henriksen, Stambulova, & Roessler, 2010, 2011; Larsen, Alfermann, Henriksen, & Christensen, 2013) have identified that successful athletic talent development environments are highly supportive of, and facilitate, athletes' engagement in dual (school and sport) careers. Specific benefits of maintaining education alongside sport have also been identified and include a positive socialisation effect, higher employability, reduced stress, and positive effects on athletes' self-regulation (see Ryba et al., 2014).

At the individual level, one area that has attracted substantial attention is the role a dual career has on athletic identity foreclosure, and the subsequent consequences for athlete dropout and life after sport (Lally, 2007; Lavalley & Robinson, 2007). It has been shown that those individuals who maintain a dual career have greater balance in their lives, which limits the development of an exclusive athletic identity (Kerr & Dacyshyn, 2000). An exclusive athletic identity has been associated with the occurrence of difficulties when encountering planned and unplanned transitions out of sport (Grove, Lavelley, & Gordon, 1997). Particularly, it has been noted that the duration of emotional and social adjustment to post-sport life among elite athletes is greater for athletes with a strong athletic identity compared to those who have maintained multiple identities (Cecić Eprič et al., 2004; Grove et al. 1997; Pearson & Petitpas, 1990; Werthner & Orlick, 1986). For example, Torregrosa, Ramis, Pallarés, Azócar, and Selva (2015) recently examined Olympic athletes' experiences of retirement. Fifteen athletes were interviewed pre- and post retirement and asked to reflect on their experiences. Substantial benefits were seen in those athletes who had engaged in a dual career compared to those who had not. For example, dual career athletes were better prepared to plan for retirement, more able to engage with voluntary termination, found the transition process easier, had active coping strategies, and were better able to access social support.

In addition to concerns regarding their cognitive and emotional adaptation to post sport life, the majority of athletes (outside the top few in different sports) will not be able to live off their earnings from their sporting career for a substantial period of time (cf., McCormack & Walseth, 2013). Thus, ensuring athletes have another career upon which they can draw when they retire from their sport is necessary to enable future flourishing and success. It might be assumed (by athletes and those around them) that after retirement athletes will be able to obtain well-paid jobs as coaches or administrators, but these opportunities are limited (McCormack & Walseth, 2013). Unfortunately, it has been recognised that athletes might be uninterested in planning for their athletic retirement, particularly early in their career (North & Lavalley, 2004;

Ryan, 2015). However, personal experiences shared by both active and retired athletes indicate that preparation for a post-athletic career or a dual career needs to begin at an early stage in life (Aquilina, 2009; European Commission, 2007). Given the potential reluctance of athletes to engage in an active process of planning for their post-sport career, ensuring appropriate structures and support are in place to facilitated and encourage the maintenance of a dual career seems necessary.

Athletes often demonstrate high levels of motivation for the maintenance of a dual career (Corrado, Tessitore, Capranica, Rauter, & Topic, 2012; Lupo et al., 2015). However, it is often a challenging proposition and one that is a concern for most high-performance athletes (EU expert group, 2012; Ryba et al., 2014). In fact, in a recent study examining elite athletes' lived career pathways compared to young athletes' imagined career paths, elite athletes identified a key challenge to be the maintenance of a dual career (Henriksen & Mortensen, 2014). Such challenges arise because success at an elite level in sport and success in education or work both require extensive time commitments from an individual (Ryan, 2015). Of particular note for this study is that this time commitment (and the subsequent negative consequences) is seen to increase through childhood and particularly in adolescence as academic workload, along with training and competition load, raise rapidly (Borggreffe & Cachay, 2012). Consequently, maintaining both components of the career simultaneously can be extremely time consuming, resulting in feelings of fatigue, a loss of motivation for maintaining a dual career, and a lack of time and opportunities to participate in activities outside of sport or work/education (McCormack & Walseth, 2013; Miller & Kerr, 2002; Pavlidis & Gargalianos, 2014). Moreover, maintaining a dual career can lead to student-athlete overload and increased risk of injuries (Ryba et al., 2014). Finally, as Aquilina (2013) noted, the enormity of the commitment required to excel in sport might result in athletes ultimately failing in either or both their sporting and academic endeavours.

Despite the potential negative consequences outlined above, when considering the impact of engaging in a dual career on athletes' actual sporting success/career, the results are equivocal (Henry, 2013). Although there has been some indication that the simultaneous engagement in sport and academia could result in a decrease in sporting performance and is the concern of some coaches (Aquilina, 2013), there is also strong evidence demonstrating positive performance consequences (McCormack & Walseth, 2013). For example, Aquilina sought to examine the sporting and educational experiences of elite performers from France, Finland, and the UK. Using a life histories methodology, 18 athletes (six from each country) shared their experiences of maintaining their education while pursuing a sporting career. Athletes highlighted numerous benefits from their dual career that were perceived to positively influence their sporting involvement. Such benefits included; the belief that the skills learnt in one setting (e.g., academia) were transferred to other settings and facilitated learning and understanding; the balance of both intellectual and physical stimulation, which helped to increase motivation and commitment to both domains, and; the feelings of security in their sport, allowing them to perform better because they had a safety net in case they did not achieve in sport. Further, athletes also discussed the benefits of being able to keep sport and educational attainments in perspective because of the focus on more than one activity, and a general sense of balance that came from realising there is more to life than sport.

Experiences of maintaining academic and sporting careers

In studying the dual career of athletes, researchers have specifically examined the experiences of individuals at different stages of their career/development. Much of this literature has focused upon tertiary or higher education, but increasingly some consideration is being given to adolescent athletes. Details of pertinent findings are provided below.

University student-athletes

There are increasing pressures on student-athletes as they attempt to balance their academic and sporting commitments (Aquilina, 2009). As the EU expert group on training and education (2012) explained, it can become complicated when athletes seek to combine education and training during higher education because they often encounter numerous transitions during a short period of time. For example, when transitioning to university athletes often move away from home, leave family, change teams and coaches, and engage in a higher level of study and training (Caput-Jogunica, Ćurković, & Bjelić, 2012). Given the extent of the transitions that occur at this time, it is perhaps unsurprising that many scholars have focused their dual career research on university student-athletes (e.g., DeKnop et al., 1999; Carless & Douglass, 2009; McKenna & Dunstan-Lewis, 2004; Miller & Kerr, 2002, 2003). Such studies have continually highlighted the tension that can exist for student-athletes as they attempt to excel in or maintain both their academic and sporting careers. For example, Giacobbi and colleagues (2004) conducted focus groups with swimmers as they transitioned into higher education to explore the stressors they encountered and the coping strategies they used. A number of stressors were identified, many of which appeared to relate to the maintenance of a dual career, including concerns regarding performance expectations, increased training intensity, and greater academic demands. To manage dual career demands, athletes were particularly reliant upon the receipt of social support, and the authors concluded that athletes facing such a transition should be encouraged to develop a strong social support network. More recently, a study with elite level swimmers and basketball players, identified that the transition into and out of university was seen as a critical point within the development of a dual career (Tekavc, Wylleman, & Erpic, 2015).

Despite dual career tensions, the evidence indicates that maintaining both educational and athletic aspects of an individuals' career is possible (Brown et al., 2015). In fact, McKenna and Dunstan-Lewis (2004) proposed that rather than focusing upon this tension and the potential conflicts between the athlete and student roles, it would be appropriate to consider how they balance and work together. Such consideration is particularly important given the extensive range of structures and systems in place within higher education to support the dual career, which are likely to influence the experience of athletes in different institutions (Caput-Jogunica et al., 2012). Recognising the context-specific nature of dual careers, there is benefit of adopting a case study approach to explore cases or universities that are perceived to be particularly successful at supporting dual careers. In a recent study, Brown et al. (2015) conducted a case study of a British university to examine the transitional experiences of student-athletes. Within this case, it was clear that participants did face some challenges but they utilised a range of internal resources and external resources that were available within the and beyond the institution to manage the demands they encountered. Particularly, athletes drew heavily upon

social support to ease their transitions.

However, it cannot be assumed that athletes will always receive the required social support when moving to higher education. A recent study by Ryba and colleagues (2014) sought to examine the dual career pathways of such transnational athletes. Through this study, Ryba et al. identified three different pathways through which athletes' experienced their dual careers: 1) Within EU mobility: the sport exile dual career pathway; 2) Mobility in the USA: the sport mercenary dual career pathway, and; 3) Mobility in the USA: the nomadic cosmopolitan dual career pathway. Each of these pathways was characterised by different commitments and motivations to continue in education and sport, with some of the athletes choosing to temporarily end or reduce their engagement in either their sport or their schooling. Such decisions appeared to be largely influenced by the pressures, expectations, and support (or lack thereof) from family and coaches.

Adolescent athletes

From the ages of 16 to 18 years, athletes encounter a critical time of life as they experience multiple demands and numerous transitions (Stambulova, Engström, Franck, Linnér, & Lindal, 2014). It is also a period of time when athletes can encounter numerous stressors (Tamminen & Holt, 2012), many of which are associated with their engagement in a dual career. For example, studies of stress and coping among elite adolescent athletes have consistently demonstrated that one of the main sources of stress is balancing education and sport commitments. Further, the time commitments of training and competition and the lack of opportunities to engage in activities outside of sport have also been acknowledged as stressors (Nicholls et al., 2005; Reeves et al., 2009; Tamminen & Holt, 2012). As such, this is a time when support for engagement in a dual career is likely to be particularly important.

Retrospective and prospective studies on talent development have often implicitly or explicitly alluded to the need for support of the dual career during adolescence (e.g., Bloom, 1985; Côté, 1999; Wolfenden & Holt, 2005). In one such study, Bruner and colleagues (2008) specifically sought to examine how elite athletes balanced their academic, athletic, and social roles. Examining these roles from both a developmental and holistic perspective, Bruner and colleagues highlighted the challenges and benefits of a dual career at different stages in athletes' lives. During the initiation stage, athletes described a balanced life because neither component of their career required too much time. During this stage, parents, siblings, and friends were all seen as supporters and facilitators of sporting experiences. As athletes moved into the development stage (generally during mid-adolescence), there was an increasing impact of education and sport, but it was still relatively easy to maintain balance. Parents' supportive roles were perceived to be very important and they were strong facilitators of the dual career, placing a large emphasis upon academic work. At this time, coaches and teachers were also seen as increasingly important in supporting the dual career. Finally, when athletes moved into the mastery (late adolescence/early adulthood) stage, coaches were seen to be both facilitative and restrictive of dual careers, while parents continued to be important.

Studies of within career transitions have also highlighted some of the challenges that arise from attempting to maintain sporting and academic pursuits (Bruner et al.,

2008; Pummell et al., 2008; Stambulova et al., 2012; Wylleman & Reints, 2010). For example, Pummell and colleagues examined the within-career transition (from club to regional level) in adolescent event horse riders. Based on interviews with ten participants, aged between 14 and 18 years of age, a number of key categories were identified. One of these categories accounted for sources of stress, and within this there were two particular themes that related to dual careers. Specifically, participants identified that a lack of support from their school and feelings of pressure resulting from the combination of sport participation and school were sources of stress at this time. Participants particularly discussed the negative influence their sport participation had on their school performance, but similarly indicated that some school demands (e.g., exams) could impact on their sporting involvement as they chose not to take part in certain competitions. Some athletes did highlight a range of support for their athletic development during this transition time, with support being noted from schools in allowing them to miss certain lessons for competitions, recognition of their achievements, and help with time management. However, such support was not consistent across participants, and appeared to depend upon the individual school.

More recently, studies specifically seeking to examine adolescent athletes' experiences of dual careers have emerged. Baron-Thiene and Alfermann (2015) examined the experiences of adolescent athletes from German elite sport schools. Specifically, Baron-Thiene and Alfermann sought to examine the personal characteristics that would predict sport dropout versus continuation of a dual career. Data were collected from 125 grade 10 students aged from 15-18 years, with follow up questionnaires also being completed a year later at the end of grade 11. In the follow up phase of data collection, 30% of the students were no longer competing in their chosen sport. Results indicated that physical complaints, motivation, and volitional skills were important predictors of dropout from sport. For example, the competitive orientation of the non-dropouts and the dropouts varied with the win orientation being the most important motivational predictor for non-dropouts. The athletes who remained involved in sport also demonstrated enhanced self-optimisation skills compared to the dropouts. Further information pointed to the challenges of individuals engaged in winter sports (who have more limited access to facilities) and also that athletes involved in individual sports were more likely to dropout compared to athletes in team sports.

While Baron-Thiene and Alfermann (2015) focused upon the personal characteristics influencing dual careers, Stambulova et al. (2014) recently examined the dual career experiences of Swedish adolescent athletes and particularly focused upon the broader social and cultural influences. In this study, Stambulova and colleagues used a mixed method approach to study athletes as they started at national elite sport schools and then followed up a year later. Quantitative data was collected from 261 students and follow-up data with 250 students from 27 sports at 33 State sport schools. Qualitative data was obtained from interviews with 10 athletes. Overall, the findings of the study illustrated a constantly changing experience, with athletes discussing changes in the demands they faced, their coping strategies and coping resources, their perceived barriers and demands, and their perceived adjustment and satisfaction. Of particular interest to the current study, the participants indicated that they searched for and relied on external support from their families, home coaches, and the staff at their school to manage the demands they were

encountering. However, over time, they perceived less support from their coaches and sport peers. Concluding on the findings, Stambulova et al. highlighted the valuable role social support for studies and sport had on allowing athletes to adjust to the sport school, while social pressures on studies were seen to have a detrimental influence. Taken together the aforementioned studies provide important insights into athletes' dual career experiences and particularly point to the vital role of social support in being able to maintain their involvement in both careers.

The role of the entourage in dual careers

As indicated the extensive demands and increasing pressure placed on young athletes can result in athletes feeling they are forced to choose between their engagement in sport and education. Preventing athletes from being forced to make such a decision, and enabling them to maintain a dual career, requires extensive support and understanding from organisations and individuals within both the sport and the education contexts (Aquilina, 2013; Henry, 2010). As Miller and Kerr (2003) posited, the responsibility for maintaining balance in their life cannot rest solely upon the athlete. Rather, the athlete's entourage (or support network) must also take on some of this responsibility. Stambulova, Alfermann, Statler, and Côté (2009) reiterated such a belief in their ISSP position statement on career development and transitions, and highlighted the importance of athletes' significant others supporting athletes' athletic and non-athletic interests and identities throughout the duration of their athletic career. However, as mentioned previously it cannot be assumed that athletes will always receive the required or desired support from their parents or other members of their support network (cf., Blodgett & Schinke, 2015).

At an organisational and societal level, the engagement of transnational bodies, such as the EU, Government ministries, National Governing Bodies of Sports, along with schools and universities is required to facilitate dual careers (Amara, Aquilina, Henry, & Taylor, 2004). Further, the expectations of sports and clubs will also likely influence athletes' abilities to maintain their dual career. For example, a recent study by Pink, Saunders, and Stignes (2015) examined a specific Australian Football League club, which has been successful in enabling their athletes to succeed on and off the field. The particular manner in which this club has been able to facilitate dual careers is through the development of a coherent club culture that focuses on holistic development. However, despite the support provided for the maintenance of a dual career, there is an expectation that sport is always the athlete's first priority.

At the more individual or proximal level, the appropriate support and understanding of an athletes' support network is key to achieving a well-balanced dual career (Caput-Jogunica et al., 2012; Henriksen & Mortensen, 2014). For example, in Aquilina's (2013) study of elite athletes it was identified that student-athletes were dependent on support from a substantial network of people to help them manage the demands of a dual career. This network included academic staff, coaches, family, peers, and their club at the most proximal level, followed by lifestyle advisors, medical staff, NGBs, national state, and researchers, and finally the IOC, EU, and International Federations at the most distal level. Similarly, in their examination of career development of female soccer players, it was identified that multiple social agents, such as players, teammates, peers, teachers, parents, and siblings needed to optimally interact to ensure that the best talent development and learning environment was created (Gledhill & Harwood, 2015).

However, although it is understood that athletes need the support of their coaches, club, and organising body to be able to manage their dual career, this might not always be available (Aquilina, 2013; Conzelmann & Nagel, 2003). Such a lack of support for the maintenance of a dual career can arise because coaches or sports organisations perceive that the maintenance of a dual career will threaten the sporting development of their athletes (McGillvray & McIntosh, 2006). Further, Doll-Tepper (2012) presented a number of challenges that members of the entourage might encounter in supporting athletes. Firstly, Doll-Tepper acknowledged that athletes and coaches are from different generations, and thus there may potentially be some struggles for both parties in understanding what is required. Additionally, as indicated previously, athletes' motivations for sport and for school are likely to differ and coaches might find that athletes want to leave sport entirely. If athletes remain in the sport and continue to excel, parents and coaches might find that the entourage grows (often rapidly). With such a growth in the entourage, there is increased potential for different views to exist between individuals regarding the importance of education and sport.

The provision of support for a dual career can also be particularly challenging for parents, who are likely to be responsible for making or directing the majority of adolescent athletes' decisions regarding a dual career. Parents have indicated that they often feel unprepared and ill-informed to make decisions regarding the best approaches to maintain their children's education alongside their training (Knight & Holt, 2013b). Further, parents have consistently identified concerns regarding making decisions regarding their children's future development (Harwood et al., 2010; Harwood & Knight, 2009a; 2009b). For example, parents indicated that making decisions about how best to maintain their children's education alongside their training, communication with schools, and missing school could all be a source of stress (Harwood & Knight, 2009a, 2009b). If parents are unsure of what advice to provide, or feel under stress themselves, the extent to which they are able to adequately support their children might be limited.

As Doll-Tepper (2012) stated, "A safe and supportive environment which includes an athlete's entourage is a key component for a healthy and successful sporting career. Athletes at different ages can be empowered, encouraged, and motivated by different significant others. On the other hand, they can also be discouraged, demotivated, sometimes even devastated. It is therefore necessary to inform all members of an athlete's entourage about their roles and responsibilities to ensure that they respect the rules of fair play and, whenever possible, provide training for the competitive field, especially with regard to psycho-social competencies" (p. 17). With these words in mind, it was the intent of this project to understand the role and experiences of the athletic entourage in supporting the dual career of mid-adolescent, late-adolescent, and young adult athletes.

Academic Significance

This project contributes to academic knowledge in many ways, not least because it provides original insight into an important topic that has yet to be extensively studied. That is, although researchers have highlighted the importance of dual careers for athletes (e.g., Aquilina, 2009; Wylleman & Lavallee, 2004), considered athletes' experiences of dual careers (e.g., Aquilina, 2013; McKenna & Dunstan-Lewis, 2004; Stambulova et al., 2014), and examined the structures and policies required to aid the maintenance of dual careers (e.g., Amara et al., 2004; Baron-Thiene & Alfermann, 2015; Henry, 2010), limited attention has been given to the role of the entourage in this process.

Further, this project will extend our understanding of the demands and challenges elite athletes are encountering, particularly during later adolescence/early adulthood, which is often underrepresented in research (Holt & Knight, 2014). Much of the research focused upon the role of the parents and coaches in supporting athletes' involvement is limited to earlier adolescent years (cf., Harwood et al., 2010; Keegan, Spray, Harwood, & Lavallee, 2010; Knight, Neely, & Holt, 2011). Although such insights are valuable, the late adolescent/early adulthood period is characterised by many transitions and is a critical period for attainment in sport and school (Wylleman & Lavallee, 2004). Thus, developing knowledge of this period is vital to enable elite athletes to achieve at their very best.

Additionally, although knowledge of the roles of parents and coaches in the lives of elite athletes is developing (e.g., Bloom, 1985; Côté, 1999; Knight & Holt, 2014; Wolfenden & Holt, 2005; Wuerth, Lee, & Alfermann, 2004), a unified approach whereby parents, coaches, and other members of an athletes' entourage are involved in research is rare. Gaining insights from the extended support system available to athletes will help to provide a clearer understanding of how these different individuals interact and work together (or in opposition) to aid elite athletes in their pursuit of excellence. Consequently, by taking such a unified approach to research, we can gain insight into athletes' support systems beyond the specific topic in question and stimulate questions for future examination.

Finally, by adopting a multiple case study approach to answering these research questions, this study will explore the dual career experiences of adolescent athletes who are engaged in education and sport in different contexts. As detailed below, the participants in this study maintain their dual careers in a variety of different manners (e.g., academy settings, "normal" schooling, home schooling). This study will therefore allow for identification of some of the similarities and differences between different settings and contexts, which may aid in the identification of best practice for facilitating athletes' dual careers.

Link to IOC Priority Field of Research

The current study is directly relevant to the IOC priority field of research regarding the role of the entourage in the athletes' dual career. Specifically, this study is focused upon adolescent athletes' dual careers of education and sport. The roles of the athlete's entourage are critical and also changing as the athlete progresses through the dual career pathways from adolescence and into young adulthood. We have limited insight into the roles of such members as a totality, and the differing contributions they may play at different transition points in the dual career of the athlete. Thus, examining the range, type and function of the support athletes currently receive when they are pursuing such dual careers, as well as recommendations for improvement, will provide valuable information to address this priority field of research. In addition, this study provides insights into the challenges facing the entourage and the support or assistance they think they need in order to provide optimal support to the athlete at each developmental milestone. Such information is pertinent to fully appreciating and consequently enhancing the role members of the entourage can fulfill to aid athletes.

Methodology

Study design

A multiple case study design, which seeks to explore issues through multiple cases within a bounded system (Stake, 2005), was adopted for this study. Case studies provide an opportunity for a holistic, in-depth examination of contemporary issues, questions, or concerns that are bounded within a specific time and place (Creswell, 2007; Stake, 2005). Thus, a case study design was deemed appropriate for the current study because we explicitly sought to uncover the role of the entourage in supporting select adolescent athletes' dual careers at particular time points under different contextual conditions. A multiple (rather than single) case study design was selected because this approach provides an opportunity to show different perspectives (Creswell, 2007), which was desired within this study. Further, this study sought to highlight multiple views regarding athletes' experiences, which is facilitated through a case study design (Yin, 2009).

The intent of a case study design is not to enumerate frequencies to demonstrate statistical generalisations (Yin, 2009). Rather, the intent of case study research is to offer contextually grounded, holistic, and detailed accounts of phenomena from which the reader can draw comparisons with other cases or with their personal experiences (Armour & Griffiths, 2012). Thus, case studies provide information that may have some application to other situations, but one cannot say that all details will apply. An opportunity to present information within a specific context is particularly important within dual career research and case studies have been successfully utilized in a number of dual career and transition studies (e.g., Brown et al., 2015; Dubois et al., 2012). Such an approach has been supported because the provision of opportunities to engage in dual careers and the support athletes receive to maintain dual careers varies greatly across different countries and sports (Aquilina & Henry, 2010).

As a continuing component of this research, the findings presented within this report will be shared with members of the EU athlete commission who experienced alternative dual career provision as youth athletes. This follow-up is desired to further identify and illustrate the similarities and differences among various experiences.

Case selection, sampling, and participants

As Stake (2005) stated, case selection should be based upon opportunities to learn. The selection of cases for this study was driven by an underpinning desire to learn about the role of the entourage in supporting elite adolescent athletes in a variety of different contexts. Such a desire was driven by the knowledge that different sports provide different opportunities for combining education and sport (Knight & Holt, 2011). Thus, specific cases that demonstrate the variability in provision of sport-school opportunities were chosen. Further, it has been proposed that the motives or desire of athletes to maintain a dual career of education and sport might be influenced by the potential to make or maintain a living from their sport in the future. Consequently, it was deemed important to consider the experiences of athletes and their entourage in sports with different career pathways. Finally, given the recognition that the time around finishing schooling or transferring to different types of academic institutions can be particularly challenging, cases focused on these athletes.

Overall, cases were selected based on the following criteria:

Education/Sport Provision

The provision of one of the following types of education and sport combinations:

Traditional schooling

- Athlete attends school and fits training around traditional educational commitments.

Traditional school and academy provision

- Athlete attends a sports academy whereby they attend a traditional school but leave school to attend training sessions. Support for engagement in education is in-built in the academy.

Sport academy and online/home schooling

- Athlete does not attend school, but completes academic requirements (through online courses/home schooling) within a sports academy.

University attendance

- Athlete has completed regular schooling and is enrolled in a university.

Types of Sport

Incorporate one of the following types of sports:

Individual, traditional Olympic sport

- An athlete in an individual sport whose sporting career will not (generally) result in earning a substantial amount of money.

Team, traditional Olympic sport

- An athlete in a team sport whose sporting career will not (generally) result in earning a substantial amount of money.

Individual, professional sport

- An athlete in an individual sport whose sporting career could result in substantial earnings if successful.

Team, professional sport

- An athlete in a team sport whose sporting career could result in substantial earnings if successful.

Developmental Stage

Is attended by:

- Athletes aged 15 to 16 years, currently completing GCSEs and drawing to the end of compulsory schooling and athletes aged 16 to 18, currently completing higher education awards (A' levels or BTEC qualifications) and drawing to the end their additional schooling.
- Athlete aged 18 to 19 years and currently attending University.

In addition to the case criteria, the following criteria were used to ensure the selection of information-rich participants from each case who could provide pertinent information to address the research questions:

- 1) Elite adolescent athlete (aged 15-19 years) competing in a team or individual sport. For the purpose of this study, elite was defined as competing on the international stage or deemed capable of this standard.
- 2) A member of the entourage identified by the selected athlete-participant as critical in supporting their academic and/or sporting career. A member of the

entourage was defined as “people associated with the athletes, including without limitation, managers, agents, coaches, physical trainers, medical staff, scientists, sports organisations, sponsors, lawyers and any person promoting the athlete’s sporting career, including family members” IOC Executive Board, 2011 in Doll-Tepper, 2012).

In total, 5 cases were selected:

- 1) A tennis academy in which athletes complete their education and sport at one venue, with academic work being provided through an online education system and overseen by a tutor.
- 2) A national field hockey squad, in which athletes attend a regular school, access training and competition through local clubs and leagues, and monthly through national training and international competitions.
- 3) High performance swimming squad who comprise international swimmers, accessing education through the traditional school system alongside daily high performance training sessions, supplemented with NGB support and trips.
- 4) A football academy, which caters for elite football players who complete their education through the traditional school system to the age of 16 years and study at the football academy from the ages of 16-18 years.
- 5) Elite canoe programme, with a focus specifically on canoeists who have moved to study at universities and train at specific high performance centres.

In total, 49 participants took part in this study: 10 athletes, 15 parents/grandparents, nine coaches (one was also a parent), seven teachers/tutors, and eight sport scientists. Four of the athletes were male and six female, ages ranged from 15 to 19 years, (mean = 16.7 years). Eight of the athletes lived with two parents, and two athletes lived with one parent. All athletes had between one and three siblings. The parents comprised eight fathers, six mothers, and one grandfather with age ranging from 39 to 67 (Mean = 49.9 years). Of the parent participants, the highest academic qualifications were: Masters degree = 3, Graduate diploma = 2, Undergraduate degree = 5, Vocational training/diploma = 3, School qualifications = 2. All coaches were male, aged between 26 and 56 years (Mean = 38.4 years). All coaches had an undergraduate degree. The teachers and tutors interviewed comprised six males, and one female, aged between 25 years and 37 years (M= 31.7 years) and had a minimum of an undergraduate degree. Finally, the sport science support comprised three sport psychologists/sport psychology consultants, three performance lifestyle advisors/education and welfare officers, a team manager, and a performance advisor. The sport scientists comprised five females and three males, all of whom had a minimum of an undergraduate degree. The participants in each case are detailed in Table 1 and further case information is presented in the results section.

Case	Athlete Information	Entourage Members Interviewed
Tennis Academy	Dillon ² is a 15-year-old male international tennis player. Dillon has frequently represented Great Britain at competitions around the world. Having experienced much international success in the under 14-age group, he has just transitioned into the under 18 age group. Dillon has been competing in tennis for seven years, and has been attending the academy for two years. Dillon has been completing two GCSE qualifications a year since starting at the academy. He is currently completing further GCSE qualifications and a BTEC.	1) Dillon's Mother 2) Dillon's Father 3) Dillon's coach/academy manager 4) Niamh's mother 5) Niamh's coach
	Niamh is a 17-year-old female international tennis player. Niamh is currently transitioning from junior to senior competitions and, at the time of interview, was enjoying relatively large amounts of success. Niamh has been competing in tennis for 13 years, has been accessing education outside the traditional approach since age of 10. Niamh has been with this academy for 5 of the last seven years. Niamh has recently completed her GCSE qualifications and is currently enrolled in a BTEC and an A' level course.	6) Strength and conditioning coach 7) Tutor 8) Performance lifestyle advisor
High Performance Swimming Squad	Lisa is a 15-year-old international swimmer, who has represented her country for the last two years. She has been swimming since the age of five and has gradually moved through the squads to the high-performance squad. Lisa is coming off a successful swimming season and is currently completing her GCSE qualifications at a traditional school. Lisa will continue education into higher education to complete her AS level exams next year.	1) Hannah's mother 2) Hannah's father 3) Hannah's sport psychologist 4) Swimming performance advisor
	Hannah is a 17-year-old international swimmer, who has represented her country in a number of national and international competitions. Hannah has been swimming for approximately 10 years and is identified as an individual who has Olympic potential. Hannah is currently completing her A level exams, having finished	5) Hannah and Lisa's coach 6) Lisa's head of Physical Education (PE)

² To protect the identity of the athletes pseudonyms are used throughout this report.

	her AS levels in the previous year. She is striving to achieve the highest grades in her A' levels.	7) Lisa's head of year 8) Lisa's father 9) Lisa's mother
National Field Hockey Squad	<p>Sofia is a 15-year-old international field hockey player. She has competed for her country in a number of international age group events and is a regular member of the under 16 and 18 national squad. She has been playing hockey for the last four years and has been part of the national squad for the last two. Her father is also her coach. Sofia is currently studying for her GCSE qualifications within a traditional education system. Her club training takes place in the evenings around her education with national training occurring monthly.</p> <p>Cally is a 16-year-old international field hockey player. She has competed for her country in a number of international age group events and is a regular member of the under 18 national squad and also the senior squad. She has been playing hockey for the last six years. Cally is currently studying for her A' level qualifications within a traditional education system. Her club training takes place in the evenings around her schooling with national training occurring monthly.</p>	1) Sofia's father 2) National coach 3) Sofia's mother 4) Sofia's form tutor 5) Cally's father 6) Cally's mother 7) Cally's PE teacher 8) National age group team manager 9) National team sport psychology consultant
Football Academy	<p>Brody is a 16-year-old academy football player. He has been playing football for eight years and has been with the academy for six years. He has had a successful season completing for the club under 16 age group and also being selected for the under 18 squad. He is currently completing his GCSE exams at a local secondary school. He attends the academy for two afternoons a week (on day release) and trains three evenings a week/plays games at the weekend. He has an opportunity to attend educational sessions at the academy to make up the work he misses.</p> <p>Harry is an 18-year-old academy football player. He attends the</p>	1) Head of welfare and education 2) Sport psychology consultant 3) Tom's coach 4) Tom's school head of year 5) Tom's father

	academy full-time having completed his GCSE exams at a traditional school almost two years ago. He completes 12 hours of education at the academy and will obtain a BTEC qualification at the end of this year. He trains all week except for Wednesdays and plays matches at the weekend. He has had a successful season in the U18s.	6) Harry's coach 7) Harry's father
Elite Canoeing Programme	<p>Taylor is an 18-year-old international canoeist. Taylor has represented his country in European and World competitions. He has recently started at university, moving to a university that is close to a high performance-training venue. Last year Taylor completed his A level qualifications, obtaining a high grade in all four. He is currently studying on a very "academic" course, which takes approximately 20 hours of contact time a week. Taylor has been canoeing for approximately 11 years and has been identified as an elite canoeist for the last four.</p> <p>Stacey is a 19-year-old international canoeist. Stacey has represented her country in European and World competitions. She completed a BTEC qualification last year and has moved to university this year. She has relocated for university to be nearer a high-performance training centre. Stacey has been involved in canoeing for the last 10 years.</p>	1) Stacey's grandfather 2) Performance lifestyle advisor 3) Stacey's coach 4) Stacey's University tutor 5) Taylor's dad 6) Taylor's coach

Table 1. Participant information

Procedure

On receipt of institutional ethical approval, appropriate cases were identified. Cases were identified based upon the research teams' knowledge of different sports and through conversations with sport scientist and performance lifestyle advisors working for different organisations in England and Wales. Having identified appropriate cases, performance lifestyle advisors or a member of the sport science support team (those who had aided in the identification of the potential cases) sought approval from the head coaches or managers to conduct the study and approach athletes and enquire into their interest in participating. Having gained approval from the coaches, the athletes were approached and provided with a study information sheet. Another sheet for the parents of athletes aged less than 18 years of age was also provided. Athlete participants were given contact details for the research team and asked to get in touch if they were interested in and available to take part.

Once athletes had contacted the research team, an appropriate time and location for an interview was conducted. Prior to commencing interviews, an informed consent form was received from the athletes' parents and the athletes themselves provided written informed assent. During the athlete interviews, each athlete was asked to visually and verbally highlight the members of their entourage who they perceived to be particularly influential in their engagement in their dual career. The members of the entourage that were identified by the participants were then contacted to enquire into their interest and availability in participating in the study. These individuals were provided with an information sheet and an informed consent form. If these individuals were interested and available to participate, a time that was convenient to conduct a semi-structured interview was identified. Of all the entourage members contacted, only two did not respond to the request to participate.

All athlete interviews occurred in person. However, due to the varying geographical locations and availability of the different members of athletes' entourage, these participants were provided with an opportunity to complete their interview in person, via skype, or on the telephone. In total, 17 occurred face-to-face, 6 occurred through skype, and 16 took place via telephone.

Data collection

Consistent with previous case study projects (e.g., Brown et al., 2015; Dubois et al., 2012), the main mode of data collection for this study was through individual semi-structured interviews with participants. Semi-structured interviews were chosen because they provide an opportunity for the participant to guide the conversation, while also ensuring that the pertinent research questions are addressed (Rubin & Rubin, 2012). The interview guides were developed based on the previous literature on dual careers (e.g., Aquilina, 2013), transitions (e.g., Pummell et al., 2009), and social support in youth sport (e.g., Harwood & Knight, 2009; Knight & Holt, 2013; 2014). The structure of the interviews followed the format used in numerous qualitative studies (e.g., Knight & Holt, 2013a, 2013b), whereby they started with introductory questions, preceded to transition questions and main questions, before finishing with summary questions. During the transition questions athlete participants were asked to create a diagram depicting the members of the entourage who they deemed pertinent to supporting their dual career. Additionally, athletes were asked to illustrate which members of their entourage interacted with other members.

In addition to the interviews, additional insights into the dual career experiences of athletes in each case were gained through observations/fieldwork. Specifically, the interviewer spent between one to three days at the training venue when conducting interviews and observed the day-to-day interactions between athletes and members of their entourage, and also to see how they fitted their schoolwork into their sporting lives. The observations were particularly pertinent for those cases where the athletes were not engaged in traditional school, because this set-up was less familiar to the research team. Observations were used to provide further context to the cases and helped to provide the research team with additional understanding of the phenomena being studied (Yin, 2009).

Finally, to further supplement the interviews and ensure the research team had a thorough understanding of each case, they also reviewed any documents regarding education and schooling related to each of the cases. Such documents were scarce and consisted mainly of school, club or academy brochures that advertised the opportunities they provided and general materials posted online by sports organisations regarding different school and sport considerations. Where documents were available, they were used to provide further understanding of the cases and to corroborate information from the interviews.

Data analysis

All interviews were transcribed verbatim and then read and re-read by the research team to ensure immersion in the data. The transcripts from each case were read and a case description was constructed. The creation of the case description was supplemented with details obtained from the observations and the documents pertaining to the case. Each case (i.e., all interviews for one case) was then individually analysed following the qualitative data analysis procedures recommended by Miles and Huberman (1994). These procedures were used because they provide a detailed approach to conducting within and cross-case analysis appropriate for case study research. Cresswell (2007) recommended that, with multiple case studies, it is appropriate to first conduct within case analysis to identify the themes pertinent to individual cases and then carry out cross-case analysis. Within case analysis occurred in three stages. Firstly, descriptive codes were allocated to the data to identify the raw data themes. Next interpretive codes were generated. These codes group descriptive codes into more abstract concepts. Finally, pattern codes were identified. Pattern codes identify relationships between the interpretive codes and provide an indication of the more abstract/overarching ideas contained within each case.

After within case analysis had been conducted for each of the cases, cross-case analysis was then conducted to provide an opportunity to compare themes across cases and identify any similarities or differences. Cross-case analysis occurred by placing the pattern codes from each of the cases within two types of data displays to allow for systematic review of the data. Data matrices containing the pattern codes and contextual details from each case were created. These data matrices provided an opportunity for themes to be compared across different cases. Data networks were also created, which provided an opportunity for links to be made between the different members of the entourage and the contexts for each of the cases. The conclusions from the cases were then identified and are provided at the end of this report.

Quality of the study

There are numerous criteria against which case study research can be compared to identify the quality of the findings. For example, Stake (1995) provided 20 criteria against which case study research should be compared. Similarly, Yin (2009) provided five criteria against which an exemplary case study could be identified. While both these approaches would be appropriate for assessment, for the purpose of this study, we have attempted to demonstrate fulfillment of the criteria for evaluating a good case study provided by Cresswell (2007). Cresswell (2007, p. 219) provided the following criteria:

- Is there a clear identification of the “case” or “cases” in the study?
- Is the “case” (or are there “cases”) used to understand a research issue or used because the “case” has intrinsic merit?
- Is there a clear description of the “case”?
- Are themes identified for the “case”?
- Are assertions or generalisations made from the “case” analysis?
- Is the researcher reflexive or self-disclosing about his or her position in the study?

We have attempted to fulfill these criteria by providing a detailed explanation of how each case was selected for the study and a justification for the case selection. Similarly, a detailed description, drawing on multiple data collection methods, are provided for each of the cases, followed by a detailed overview of the within and cross-case themes. Finally, lessons learnt from the cases are provided to give an understanding of the general assertions that can be made from the data. To fulfill the final criteria, the lead researcher maintained a reflective journal prior to and during data collection and analysis. In this journal details regarding the lead researcher’s previous experiences and understanding of different settings and perceptions of the cases were recorded.

Case Presentation and Findings

Case 1: Tennis Academy

Case description

Case one is a tennis academy that provides an integrated tennis and education programme. Two athletes, Dillon and Niamh, were chosen as the athletes to represent this case. Dillon and Niamh complete their work through online distance learning programmes, some of which are provided in conjunction with a local college. Although the specific timings might change, Dillon and Niamh are generally provided with three hours of supervised study time each day with a tutor from a local college. The tutor helps monitor progress and oversees study time but is not responsible for teaching material. For certain subjects, it is possible for athletes to access subject tutors for one-to-one guidance. When work is completed it is submitted online and the athlete receives feedback through email or on the phone.

Athletes' tennis and fitness sessions take place before and after study sessions. Both players are also responsible for completing additional self-monitored study sessions. There is a lot of flexibility within the programme, which is important for Dillon and Niamh who spend a lot of time away from the school (for example, Dillon spent approximately half the previous year away for training camps and tournaments). When they are at the academy athletes receive an individual strength and conditioning and tennis programme. Athletes have access to different coaches, with each player having one main coach who sets their programme. Athletes generally train for a few hours in the morning and in the afternoon. Their day usually starts around 8am and finishes at approximately 4.30pm. Both Dillon and Niamh are happy with the academy, believing it has provided them with a good opportunity to maintain their schooling and tennis.

Dillon's dual career progression

Between the ages of seven (when Dillon started playing tennis) and 13, Dillon engaged in a traditional school set-up. During his primary school years (up until the age of 10), it had been relatively easy to manage Dillon's education and his tennis. Dillon's parents indicated that they had been very fortunate because the headmaster of Dillon's primary school was very supportive and helped to facilitate Dillon's dual career. The headmaster helped the family by allowing Dillon to miss lessons to attend training and competitions, and he even changed Dillon's school timetable to ensure that Dillon was not missing "core" subjects (e.g., English, Mathematics, and Science). When Dillon progressed to secondary school, his parents started to encounter more barriers to Dillon's dual career. The school did allow Dillon to miss lessons to attend training sessions and Dillon's parents continued to schedule training around his core subjects. However, Dillon was increasingly missing school for competitions and there were some instances when his parents felt they could not ask the school for any more time off. The school indicated that the current set-up could not continue once Dillon had made his choices for his GCSEs and his parents felt forced to remove him from full-time school. Dillon was seeking to, and has, obtained high grades (A's and B's) in his GCSEs but did acknowledge that this was not always possible due to his tennis commitments. Dillon indicated that the most important members of his entourage in supporting his dual career were his parents, tutor, his coach, and his strength and conditioning coach, who he interacts with daily.

Dillon and his parents also rely on advice and interactions with Dillon's peers and their parents.

Niamh's dual career progression

Niamh started playing tennis at the age of four, and by the age of seven was regularly missing lessons in primary school to attend training sessions. Niamh's mum indicated that Niamh's headmaster at the time was very supportive of her tennis pursuits. The headmaster worked with Niamh's mum to ensure that Niamh would not miss core subjects. By the age of 10, Niamh was regularly missing school and on the advice of coaches and having discussed it with other parents, Niamh's mother decided to take her out of regular schooling and instead attend a tennis academy. Since leaving the traditional school system, Niamh has accessed three different academies, having spent the last three years at the current academy. While at the current academy, Niamh has achieved good grades (A's and B's) in her GCSEs and is currently waiting for more results. She is seeking to obtain a distinction in her BTEC. Niamh identifies her key entourage members as her mother, her coach, the tutor, and the academy manager (Dillon's coach). Niamh additionally turns to older tennis peers, and her siblings for advice, and Niamh's mother relies on support from the performance lifestyle advisor.

Experience of maintaining a dual career

Dillon said that maintaining his education alongside his tennis career is "tough." He said, "I find it [maintaining education while playing tennis] really tough. Like when I'm back here [at academy] it's not too bad because obviously like you have the schedule. When I'm away with tournaments it's tough because first of all you don't have the schedule. Sometimes you don't want to waste your energy on schoolwork because you've got your match and you don't want to be mentally drained. Um, and then it's tough, also just, I find it tough with the motivation, to get to want to do school work and stuff." In contrast, Niamh indicated that maintaining her education and tennis training through attending an academy was good because, "I love playing tennis so much so I just really, whenever I could get onto the court I wanted to be like there, so I really enjoy it."

Both Dillon and Niamh indicated that they were driven to achieve in their education and wanted to get good marks. However, Dillon explained that he could struggle to motivate himself at certain times. He said, "I mean there's some days, I shouldn't feel like this, but some days I just feel like you know what, I can't really be bothered to do it. I can't be bothered to do school work. I'm just not in the mood." Niamh did not share such concerns, instead explaining, "I don't mind it, I think some people may struggle because it is very kind of self-motivated...I don't mind doing it because I kind of enjoy doing the sport [she is studying] as well, I find it quite interesting so obviously that is a lot easier."

The day-to-day challenges Niamh and Dillon discussed were the long hours and mentally shifting between tennis and education. As Niamh said, the biggest challenges are, "finding the time in the day you know if you are quite tired and finishing long sessions and then you have got to do some work it is quite draining, that is one of the biggest challenges, you have just got to do it really." She continued to explain that she could encounter challenges on court if she had concentrated too much on schoolwork and vice versa. Dillon similarly talked about the issues that

arise from having no downtime during a day and having to switch between tennis and school. However, Dillon and Niamh (along with members of their entourage) indicated that maintaining education when travelling was the most challenging. As Dillon explained, "I think that the toughest thing is when I'm away...I find it really tough." Additionally, Dillon highlighted the substantial challenge that could arise if he was unable to access the Internet and thus could not get online to complete his work.

Niamh and Dillon also indicated that there were certain times when they found it harder to maintain a dual career than others. For example, Dillon indicated that around exam periods he could be particularly emotional and worried about his schoolwork, which could influence his performance. He said, "When you're close to the exams I just get a bit nervous, a bit worried, and then all of that just affects me on the court. I get more um emotional and more angry." Niamh similarly explained how hard it could be when certain tournaments and exams clashed, as she said, "It [exam time] clashes with the French and Wimbledon, yeah so they both clash, big tournaments, so you just have to just like work it out."

Despite the challenges, Dillon perceived that there were many benefits of having a dual career. As he said, "well I think just because if you don't, and if you don't make it then you're absolutely screwed...I know that it's probably not going to happen that I'll be a tennis player, so I've got to make sure that I've got other things so that if I'm not a tennis player that I can do other things. Get money in some other way." Similar views were shared by Niamh who explained why she continued to pursue her education, "I like learning new things and I just, also didn't want to focus on my tennis, like tennis is my main focus but, my goal is to be a professional tennis player and that's what I want to be as my career, but if that didn't work out then I would like to have something to fall back on. Because it will be a kind of a tough situation if I am not playing tennis anymore and haven't got my education as well."

The role of the entourage in supporting the dual career

Overall, it was apparent that the entourage played a very important role in supporting the players' dual careers. Based on the analysis of all the data collected regarding this case, it appeared that there were six main ways in which the entourage facilitated the players' engagement in school and tennis in this tennis academy.

1) Consistent belief in the value of education and the benefits of a dual career

Throughout the interviews with Dillon and Niamh's entourage it was clear that they, in addition to Niamh and Dillon, placed great value upon education. As Niamh's coach stated, "It's [education] super important...you want to keep your options open for as long as possible, you know, given that there's only a hundred odd people who make a living out of the game." Similarly, Dillon's coach explained, "We're very clear here that school work comes first." The consistency of such feelings were summarised by the strength and conditioning coach, who said, "I suppose it's just the continued backing and just understanding from all tennis coaches that they're [players] also here to do their education, not just to play tennis, and as long as as a team we all have that ethos then support is optimal at the minute I think." Such consistency between all members of the entourage ensures athletes know what is expected of them with regards to education. This consistent approach seemed to be beneficial not only for the players, but also for the parents who all placed great

importance on education. As the performance lifestyle advisor said, “I think if you have coaches that encourage it [education] then that kind of gives the parents a bit of relief in knowing that actually the coach will support them as well.”

The entourage’s willingness to prioritise education over tennis was underpinned by a realistic understanding of what was required to make it as a tennis player. As Niamh’s mother said, “I think she [Niamh] would like to be a professional tennis player, and I said, ‘you know, you need your education as well’, and she knows that. Because obviously if she doesn’t, you know, it’s hard to get to a professional level and make money out of it, so you know, she’s aware that she needs her exams for her future job prospects.” Dillon’s father reiterated these thoughts, explaining, “I think it’s [education] really important and I have done from the beginning and the reason is I sum it up by saying ‘nobody likes a sick ex-tennis player.’” Consequently, the entourage ensured they were, “keeping players’ options open.” To do this all entourage members sought to have sufficient knowledge regarding to different pathways the players could take in the future. For example, Dillon’s mother said, “We’re doing one of the humanities, because if he goes to American University then he needs a humanities as well.” Similarly, Dillon’s coach explained, “I’ve sort of been able to give a little bit of a steer this year in particular as to what qualifications it would be best for Dillon to do, both in terms of what he needs to be ticking off in order to meet the NCAA [National Collegiate Athletic Association] criteria...I’ve done a little bit of research on that to make sure.”

The entourage’s belief in continuing education was also underpinned by an appreciation of the additional skills and benefits that can be gained from focusing upon players’ holistic development. For example, Dillon’s dad identified that education, “is good discipline,” while Niamh’s coach explained, “it takes away from the madness of the tennis world” and, “the advice is that you develop not just a tennis player, but a whole person and surprisingly if you do that it actually adds to the other areas.” The tutor further explained, “It’s helping them develop other personal qualities and attributes such as time management.” By seeing the benefits of a dual career and consistently demonstrating the value they placed upon education, the entourage members helped Dillon and Niamh to maintain their motivation and drive to achieve in education. Additionally, it seemed to reduce the pressure the athletes felt about succeeding in tennis. As Dillon’s dad summarised, “education keeps that [tennis] in perspective,” and Dillon’s coach explained, “I think that’s [education] invaluable. Um I think it creates a balance to the day and to their life as well.”

2) Monitor engagement in education

When discussing the key roles of his entourage in supporting his dual career, Dillon seemed to place great value upon individuals encouraging and monitoring his education. For example, explaining what helped with his education, Dillon seemed to describe a parent-coach alliance to support his tutor in helping him complete his work. Dillon said, “Well I know that like [coach], if, if I wasn’t on things [tutor] would have a word with [coach], and then [coach] would have a word with me.” Similarly, when talking about the consequences of not completing work while away, Niamh said, “I suppose they [coach and tutor] wouldn’t be too happy with me, yeah they might say you have got to miss a couple of sessions to get myself back where I

needed to be.” The players viewed such monitoring very positively, because they felt it kept them on track and motivated.

The entourage also perceived that such monitoring was important. As Dillon’s coach said, “I guess it’s primarily it’s a combination of um the tutors from the college who we have in to run the school programme here on site. Um, they will set him targets and will uh set him work for when he’s away, so there’s, there’s a very close monitoring that goes on from the tutor, and then I guess equally that kind of falls at the feet of mum and dad as well.” The parents also recognised the importance of monitoring their children’s education. For example, Dillon’s father described such monitoring of Dillon’s education as his main role, he said, “[My role is] just being in the background to check that stuff’s been done, make sure that he’s on track, make sure that he’s not leaving stuff ‘til the last minute and just being in the background just helping out if there are any problems that he has. Such monitoring appeared particularly important to help Dillon to stay on track when he was away at tournaments. He explained, “I just find it tough to get motivated for it [education] if I’m honest. Like I mean because obviously there’s kids there, there’s people at the tournament that you get on well with and you’d rather just chat to them and have fun with them, rather than just sitting in front of a computer doing school work. But then on the other hand it’s got to, it’s got to be done otherwise I’m not going to be in a good place with [tutor] and [coach] and they’re not going to be happy with me.”

3) Understand the demands of a dual career and be flexible in requirements

All participants who were interviewed in the study shared an awareness of the challenges and demands athletes could experience in maintaining their dual career. As the performance lifestyle advisor explained, “I think the bigger challenges for most tennis players is definitely the amount of overseas travel they do....I don’t envy them, a 15-year-old trying to do his homework at school every day finds it tough enough let alone when you’re travelling and you’re having to try and study in between matches and in between training in another country when you’re jetlagged and you’re tired.” Similarly, the strength and conditioning coach explained, “There’s definite kind of pressure on you to compete and do well. Couple that with the matches can go on till late evening if where there’s no break. So yeah it’s quite a tough balance to get right while away and um [tutor] can keep a constant eye on things from an online perspective.” Such an awareness of the challenges of the dual career ensured they entourage provided the necessary support to help the players cope with the challenges. For example, such support for Dillon came from having someone to talk to about the challenges. He shared, “it’s important to have someone to talk to, because if you don’t then you are just going to be depressed and feel like everything just builds up and you’ve got no one there to help you. So it’s good that I’m close to my mum and I can tell her things because she helps me a lot.”

In addition to a general understanding of the demands of a dual career, it appeared particularly important that the entourage were responsive to the specific challenges that could arise at certain times. For example, as Dillon’s mum recognised, “umm, exam periods I think are, the same for everyone, a little bit stress, you know, he wants to make sure he’s got his work done, he’ll do, when I was bringing him to the centre, he would be revising in the car, revising on the way home...” And the strength and conditioning coach summed up, “It’s around the end of year time that they get edgy and normal nerves, so we’re normally quite bespoke with their

programme about that time of year because it's normally down time." Similarly, when exam results are coming out this can also be a challenge, Dillon's coach said, "We've got kids stressing about exams results coming out when they're in the middle of the, for some of them the biggest tournament of their year." Given their awareness of the challenges associated with exams, all members of the entourage indicated being more flexible and amenable to the players' needs during these periods.

The athletes and entourage also indicated a need to be flexible about education requirements. For example, they might be flexible around certain tournament times, as Dillon's dad explained, "As I say when you've got Wimbledon week would you work that week? Nah, out of the window, just too much going on do you know what I mean just, you know, for the excitement of the tournament and everything else and, you know I don't beat him every week into that, because Dillon knows, you know, generally that he can make up at other times." Additionally, there is a need for some flexibility concerning education when players have had difficult or particularly hard training sessions, as Dillon's coach said, "Quite often, they'll have walked straight off the tennis court after a pretty grueling session so that can be challenging um from an academic point of view as well. How sort of I guess how intense the days are is pretty tough... I'd imagine that that's pretty difficult, so it's not a challenge in terms of what we see negative results from, but we're sort of aware that that's tough I think for the guys, it is a challenge on that front." By understanding such demands, the entourage could ensure they made suitable adaptation to make it easier for the players to manage their dual career.

4) Integrated support

All the entourage members were very supportive of the players' dual careers and each member of the entourage took on specific roles. For example, within Dillon's career, his father played a key role in supporting his education, while his mum was more involved in his tennis. Dillon explained, "If like I had any problems with schoolwork I'd always go to my dad. Um, yeah, I'd always go to my dad but it's not, it's not like I don't want to speak about it with my mum, it's just my dad knows a bit more about that stuff." In Niamh's situation, her mum played an important role in overseeing her education, but generally trusted Niamh to complete the work with the support of the tutor. With each entourage member being aware of the specific tasks they needed to complete, it ensured that all aspects of the player's dual careers were appropriately nurtured and supported.

However, although each entourage member had a specific role to fulfill within the dual career, the support was provided in an integrated manner with all members of the team taking an interest in the athlete's sporting and education careers. For example, although Niamh's tennis was clearly her coach's priority, he also took an interest in her education. As Niamh's mother said, "I don't know about all of the coaches, but you know [Niamh's coach] is pretty good, he'll ask Niamh about exams." Similarly, Dillon's coach explained the need for him to talk to Dillon's tutor. He said, "[I need to know] where he's at, what progress he's making and a little bit about, you know, what is he being asked to do at the moment, you know, what is the workload like, what should he be doing and particularly, if I go away with him then I'm going to need to know you know roughly what his targets are and what's expected of him when he's away." The tutor reiterated such need for communication, stating, "We try and encourage them to do work when they're away and if I know the

coach who is away with them, making sure that they know that they should be doing work and stuff. Such an integrated approach was possible because all of the entourage members engaged in frequent formal and informal communication. Such communication and a joined up approach seemed beneficial in ensuring appropriate support would be provided and changes could be made to the player's timetables, requirements, and expectations as needed.

5) Anticipate and plan for problems

Generally it seemed that Dillon and Niamh's dual careers were progressing quite successfully. Nevertheless, there were certain challenges or problems that could arise. For example, if players did not have access to the Internet when travelling they were unable to complete their work. Recognising that this can be a problem, Dillon's parents (particularly his mother) prepared strategies to limit any negative consequences. As she said, "sometimes poor Internet, because when he's...doing the schoolwork over the Internet sometimes it's the facilities that don't allow him to get on with the schoolwork. So even with that what we have to do is try and prepare for that by making hard copies of things that he's going to work on, so that he can at least sit down and work." Similarly, recognising how difficult it can be for athletes to complete work when they are away, the tutor explained the steps he takes to ensure they have every opportunity they can to complete their work. He explained, "It's just making sure they're organised and that's something that I try and do with them. Like Dillon's gone away today, so I'd emailed him like making sure that he'd had all his stuff prepared and everything he needed and anything he needed just let me know."

Although the majority of the issues that had to be planned for were related to completing schoolwork while travelling, the entourage also prepared for issues such as injuries or unexpected trips. For example, Niamh's mum said, it's "you know, organising the schedule with [coach] and making sure everything's up to date with that, if she needs any extra kind of things, um extra schoolwork or extra um physio [physiotherapy] and things like that, all of those things, all the things that cause panic." Niamh's coach also talked about taking care of all the logistical and practical concerns with trips abroad, such as locating restaurants ahead of time and ensuring visas and passports are appropriately organised for players. By anticipating the problems players could encounter, the entourage were able to reduce the pressures on players and create an environment in which the players could focus solely on their education and their tennis.

6) Trust the athlete to communicate and guide their development

Finally, it was clear on reading the accounts of all the participants in this case, that there was a substantial level of trust between the different members of the entourage and the players. Such trust was most readily apparent when discussing player's decisions regarding tennis and education with entourage members happy to allow the players to make decisions about what they wanted to do. Niamh explained, "I wanted to try and focus more on the kind of the tennis side, that was kind of my decision, this year, so I decided to stay and play and see how it goes really." She further expressed, that her mother, "wanted me to carry on doing my education, but she said it was like my decision, yeah whatever I was going to do she was happy." Dillon's mother expressed a similar view, stating, "I would ask him and he'd say, 'No I don't want to go to an academy full time yet,' so we had to wait until it was up to him, we don't want to push him into something. I think we've always let Dillon lead

the way in what he wants to do.” By trusting athletes to make the decisions that worked for them, the entourage not only ensured the players felt in control of their choices but also that they would be happy with the choices.

Similar trust in the athletes was apparent when discussing some of the day-to-day decisions the athletes wanted to make. For example, Niamh’s coach explained how Niamh guided decisions regarding the time she committed to education and training. He said, “She’s almost 18 isn’t she, so she’s an adult, you know so, I just ask her how it’s going, or she’ll come to me to say, ‘I need more time, can I have a week off this week, can I be trained in the mornings,’ or whatever and I always say yes.” The tutor shared similar views when explaining how Dillon guided his education when talking to his coach. The tutor said, “Dillon was the one saying ‘oh ok, I need to go and do some work now’ and stuff like that.” As with the bigger decisions about their careers, the entourage members perceived that it was important to allow athletes to guide their decisions because they know what they need. Although the entourage members trusted the athletes to guide the decisions, they were still willing to provide advice and help them to make their decisions. For example, in reference to issues in education, Niamh said, “I would talk to my mum about it and then I would talk to the tutors about what I want to do and you know and if the coaches needed to know they would get involved.”

Further support required to facilitate a dual career

The players and their members of their entourage were very positive regarding their maintenance of the dual career. However, there was some additional support that was perceived to be useful. These are outlined below.

1) More opportunities to engage in integrated training and education

When making the decision to engage in an integrated education and tennis programme, entourage members were aware that there not many options that equally valued the education and the training. As Dillon’s mum said, “The challenge was actually finding something that fitted into the lifestyle of a sort of semi...almost...I mean they’re almost like professional athletes really umm, finding something that we could work with and that would make life easy for him, but still allow him to achieve all the things he needed to achieve.” While the players and parents were happy with their current situation, they all discussed how much easier it would be if there were more similar set-ups available around the country.

2) More structure and support for education when travelling

Across all members of the entourage, it was apparent that while they perceived Dillon and Niamh’s education to be well supported when they were present at the academy. However, as has been mentioned a number of times, trips away were perceived to be a key threat to the maintenance of the dual career. As Dillon explained, “Well because you’re not like, it’s not always scheduled and, you like, if you’re at normal school you’ve got the tutor there. If you don’t do your work they’ll know about it and you can’t not do the work.” Recognising the challenges associated with travelling, a number of suggestions regarding how to better support education while away were provided. For example, Niamh’s mum suggested, “Coaches all say, you know, I’m sure you’ve got some work to do but they’ll go off to their room and the kids go off to their room, but there’s no one actually watching what they’re doing. If they could stay around and supervise them for an hour that would help.” Similarly,

the performance lifestyle advisor said, “It’s something I would like to see more consistency with and I think further down the line would like to have more influence over the coaches especially the ones that go away with the players and kind of influence and educate the coaches on being there to support the players with their educating and maybe making kind of more study periods where all the players have to sit down and do something.”

3) Support and information for the parents

While the parents indicated receiving a good level of support from the academy and increasing support from the NGB through the performance lifestyle advisor, further guidance and information regarding maintaining a dual career was also desired. For example, Dillon’s mother said, “I think I need a tutor to teach me how...ummm any support for me, I don’t know. I mean that’s a tough one, because obviously as a family it’s really tough when you’ve got a child that’s on the same kind of path as Dillon it kind of splits the family.” While Dillon’s father summarised, “Well just knowledge is a key isn’t it? If you know that there’s stuff around and it’s available then that empowers you to make the right decisions. Sometimes you just don’t know about these things.” Niamh’s mother reiterated, “I think it would’ve been really good to have someone guiding you, as to your options, because I didn’t know what the options were, you know just looking at what older children had gone through, doing their own education. ...If someone like [performance lifestyle advisor] had been around earlier, it would’ve helped.” By having such information, parents perceived that they would feel more certain in their decisions and the options available to them.

4) Develop/Facilitate a culture for dual careers

Finally, individuals who participated in this study spent time discussing the need for a culture shift within the UK towards dual careers. As Niamh’s coach said, “It’s about developing a culture in this country, people are out of school a lot and the majority of them shouldn’t be out of school because they’re never going to make it as tennis players anyway.” Other members of the entourage also discussed how common it was for young children to leave school and go into full-time training, and indicated that a cultural shift away from this was needed. If such a shift was possible, the participants perceived that it would be easier to support a dual career because coaches would better understand the value of education and all players would be in a similar situation.

Case 2: National Field Hockey Squad

Case description

This case describes the role of the entourage of athletes engaged in a national field hockey squad. Two athletes, Sofia and Cally, who are members of the national squad are the focus of this case. The athletes in the national field hockey squad complete their dual career through engagement in a traditional school system. That is, the athletes attend school from 8.30/9.00am – 3.00/3.30pm Monday to Friday. At school the athletes are completing their GCSE or A’ level qualifications. The numbers of qualifications the athletes are seeking to achieve align with school requirements and are consistent with their non-athlete peers. Both athletes indicated that they used their lunch breaks to complete their homework or to catch up on work

they missed. Similarly, both players stay after the school day to complete homework or catch up on missed work when necessary and to gain extra support from teachers.

The athletes' regular hockey training commitments are with local teams and they compete in local leagues. Their training usually occurs approximately two to three evenings a week, with additional fitness sessions as required. Their local training and competitions are supplemented through training camps and competitions with the under 16 and 18 national hockey squad. The national team holds training camps every month, either over a weekend or a three-day period during school half-term. Hockey competitions generally occur during the spring and summer period, with most international events during school holidays. However, there are certain instances when the athletes may be required to miss a few days of school for events.

Sofia's dual career progression

Sofia is a 15-year old international female field hockey player. She is currently in the first year of studying for her GCSE qualifications, and is hoping to achieve high grades. Sofia has plans to complete her A' levels, obtain a university degree, and then hopes to get a job in the medical profession. Sofia has been playing hockey since she was 11 having grown up in a hockey family. Sofia's father was an international hockey player. Sofia has been playing for the national team for two years and is currently a member of the under 16 and under 18 squad. Sofia trains with local teams three evenings a week and attends national training sessions every month. Sofia has travelled with the national team to international competitions a number of times. Sofia has followed a traditional schooling route throughout her time of playing hockey. Sofia identified her parents, teachers, older sister and peers as key supporters of her dual career.

Cally's dual career progression

Cally is a 16-year old international female field hockey player. She is currently in the first year of studying for her A' level qualifications, seeking to obtain high grades in 4 AS Levels. Cally obtained very high grades in her GCSE exams in the previous year. Cally wants to go to University and eventually follow a career in the medical field. Cally has been playing field hockey since she was 11 years of age and has been representing her country for three years. She is currently a member of the Under 18 age group team and has been invited to the senior national team. Cally has always maintained her education through traditional schooling (she is in the sixth form) while playing hockey. Cally trains with local teams three evenings a week and completes her fitness requirements before classes or during breaks. She trains with the national team every month and has travelled with the national team to a number of European competitions. She has ensured that she is able to complete her education to a high standard by spending any free periods and lunch periods to do her work, and she also stays afterwards to catch up on work if required. In addition to her academic and hockey commitments, Cally also has a part time job at the weekends. Cally listed her parents, teachers, older sister, and peers as key supporters of her dual career.

Experience of maintaining a dual career

Overall, both athletes indicated that they had been able to successfully navigate their dual career. Such successful navigation is apparent through their good grades in school, their high level of attainment in hockey, and also through the descriptions

provided by members of their entourage. Such maintenance of education and sport appeared to be facilitated by the setup of hockey, because as one entourage member said, "I think for the hockey structure, it fits into education and sport balance particularly well...it's all done weekends and school holidays, so they don't have the sort of increased contact time that other sports would."

The athletes and their entourage described a strong necessity of maintaining a dual career because the athletes would not be able to make a living from hockey in the future. Cally explained, "Yes, I'm certain on it [education] and I want to achieve it because I don't want to just come out of school and do nothing. Because with hockey, you can't, it's not a paid job, you can't...so I kind of have to keep up with my education to do it, whereas like with rugby you could like go further and football...but with hockey it's harder." Consequently, neither the athletes or their entourage perceived that there was any decision regarding dropping out of school and it did not seem there were any other avenues through which individuals could maintain their education and hockey. Additional benefits of maintaining a dual career were also identified, which the sport psychologist explained, "I think it's like everything, the skills that you get from school as much as you all sit there during lessons and think what are the benefits really, the skills you learn are invaluable, so finding the balance between the two is obviously huge."

Despite having successfully navigated the dual career, the athletes did identify some challenges regarding managing their education alongside their training commitments. These challenges appeared to arise due to concerns regarding time management, as Cally explained, "Well I want to achieve in my education, like but it's hard doing my GCSEs, it was really hard like training, because I train three times a week after school, so now I don't get home 'til like 9.00, so I've just got to fit in at school really and straight after school rather than late at night." Sofia shared similar views stating, "Catching up on work is one problem that I have because it's time to fit it in. Sometimes I can't fit it in at all, so I'm struggling like to work and then if I don't get it then I don't have the time to go and see the teachers, so it's hard on that when I go away." The time commitment of both training and education was also seen to be negative due to the impact it could have on athletes' social opportunities. For example, Cally encountered issues, explaining, "It's just the time really like, and knowing like going out with friends and when you say no, sometimes you get a bit bored of doing it and you just want some social time."

The role of the entourage in supporting the dual career

The entourage fulfilled a number of roles in helping these athletes maintain their dual career. These roles are detailed below.

1) Believe in the value of education and athletes' future academic goals

All members of the entourage, including the athletes, were consistent in their belief that education was important. The value of education was apparent for example, when Sofia's teacher said, "I think it gives her a sort of an all-round education, it leaves more doors open to her in the future if things don't go as she plans. She's got more opportunities, more qualifications etc." Similarly, Sofia's mother suggested, "A good education will set you in good stead...it's just something as a family that we, we feel strong about." The coach further explained, "I think there are benefits of staying in school. At the end of the day you can't avoid education, and education and

qualifications are the things that get you jobs, so you know, don't get me wrong hockey offers them a bigger learning experience in terms of life, in terms of going away, going to different countries, seeing cultures, different cultures, being disciplined in terms of going training and lots of aspects, you know but you know, education does play a part and you can't afford that, I mean, you know, if you can discipline in education you'll be disciplined in terms of sports work too." Such a consistent value being placed on education and an understanding of the short and long-term benefits of education seemed to ensure that the athletes felt supported in their attempts to maintain their education and were motivated to continue. As Sofia's mother explained, "Well yeah you know you get times when you perhaps are a bit shattered, they're tired, and you might get a spell where, perhaps they didn't want to go training or what not, and it's not so much not wanting to do it, but then you get, you just reassure them of the benefits and by putting in all that time what are the rewards they reap from it...all the support that you give them."

In addition to valuing education, the entourage members were particularly supportive in recognising what their athletes wanted to achieve in the future and facilitating their attainment of these goals. As Cally said, "Yeah, I think it's [support of education] really important because I want to go to university and stuff, I want to be in physiotherapy." Similarly, Sofia explained, "I just want a future. I want a future not only in hockey so if I retire I can earn money and I can have a family and all that, so I won't struggle." When asked what she wanted a future in, Sofia indicated the medical professional. With such goals in place, the athletes were extremely dedicated to their studies and the entourage understood this. Both the athletes' commitment and the support of the entourage appeared to be useful in helping to maintain their dual career.

2) Understand the demands of a dual career and be flexible in requirements

While the entourage valued education and encouraged the athletes to maintain their engagement, they also demonstrated a high-degree of understanding of the various demands the athletes encountered in attempting to play field hockey at an international level while at school. Such demands could be the day-to-day commitment of training, which resulted in the athletes feeling tired. Cally's dad explained, "She gets tired, she'll sometimes after a hectic week training, she'll be tired. You can see it and maybe that will affect her concentration a bit. Rude. Obviously, but you know, we'll sort of pinpoint that and we'll cut her back a bit then." Similarly, issues with schoolwork were acknowledged to influence training and the entourage described strategies to manage the demands. The coach said, "I can say well actually if you're stressed today perhaps you don't need to do that type of training, perhaps obviously, do a different type of training, so I can give a lot more guidance in terms of what type of training and when to do it based on how stressed or not stressed she is at school." Such understanding and flexibility helped ensure athletes could cope with the dual career and hopefully succeed in both.

Consistently, issues around the exam period were acknowledged as particularly challenging for the athletes, particularly because exams preceded key international competitions. As the sport psychologist said, "I think leading up to the Europeans the emphasis increases between sort of March and July, so that's probably going to be their main time that they might struggle as they're looking over sort of their plans for the exams that are coming up, that's going to be their main struggle...that's probably

the toughest balance that they'll find as they want to sort of really achieve on both counts." Consequently, a number of steps were taken by the entourage to manage these demands. Strategies ranged from reducing training sessions to integrating revision within field camps. Such strategies were seen as very important because, as the coach explained, "Well part of our education with the athletes is time management and we understand that actually exams are important, so we can't just push them in terms of hockey, hockey, hockey. At the end of the day we want them to stay in the sports, we don't want them to disappear because we force them down into making a choice, so we don't want them to make a choice, we want us to work with the schooling as well as they've got to work with us then, so hopefully they have the buy in and they stay in the centre." The team manager reiterated these comments, stating, "I'm obviously aware of when they have examination time and then obviously in terms of work with the head coach and we sort of plan around that I will sort of look at what specific exams are around specific training times, and then what we'll do is we'll try and accommodate that into the plans."

Such an understanding of the demands athletes' encountered, and subsequent flexibility, was also needed and provided by athletes' schools. As Cally said when discussing international trips, "They [teachers] were really helpful like because like they knew I was going away and they just gave me extra work because sometimes I used to miss lessons, Like I went to the school games and I missed three days, they when like in my lunch time they just helped me catch up and taught me like before everyone else so I knew it." When all members of the entourage were able to understand the demands athletes were facing, particularly at specific times of the year it ensured that necessary steps could be taken to reduce pressure, ensure athletes could succeed in both domains, and increase their feelings of support.

3) Trust the athlete to communicate and guide their development

The athletes within this case were acknowledged as "hard workers" who were dedicated to succeeding both in their sport and in their schoolwork. A seemingly critical strategy through which the entourage supported athletes to maintain their motivation and continue to enjoy their dual careers, was to trust them to guide their development. Cally shared, "I decided myself I wanted to go to sixth form because I knew I wanted to go to university. And I knew I wanted to go into [certain job] and stuff. So, that's how it come about really. My parents support me whatever I want to do." And Sofia more succinctly explained how she makes her decisions about education, "I just tell them [her parents]."

Such independent decisions were not restricted to the sporting environment. For example, Cally's father explained how he would allow Cally to make decisions about her hockey training, "She'll sort of decide herself when she's got too much work and right, like not go to training if it's nothing important on." Similarly, athletes were allowed to take control of their decisions regarding school work, as Sofia's teacher said, "If she needs it, it's not that it's being provided as such, but she knows that we are here and available and she can use us if and when she needs to." Cally's father reiterated these sentiments explaining, "We'll leave it to you [Cally] how you manage your time and manage your revision. You want some help, we'll give you some help, no problem. I always check on her make sure she knows what she's doing and does she need anything?"

However, although athletes were trusted to make their own decisions, the entourage ensured that they provided pertinent information to ensure athletes were making informed decisions. As Sofia's father explained, "I leave the choices to them tell you the truth, because I'll say it's your choice, but I'll spell out the consequence that if you make this choice then this is what'll most probably happen, if you make that choice but I'll leave it ultimately down to them." Parents were also ready to step in if required. For example, Cally's father said, "I won't push her into one way or anything, she's got to go down the road she wants to go as long as she's happy, fine. But yeah, she's on the right road which is good, if she was on the wrong road I'd check she'll be ok."

4) Encourage and support athletes' sporting and academic achievements

Different members of the entourage engaged in different tasks to support athletes' dual careers. For example, when listing the roles she fulfills Sofia's mother said, "the usual you know, you're the washer, the cook, but you're also the supporter and you help manage the time with things you know, make sure with homework, you know, and running her back and to places, back and fore places, but it's a support role, more than anything you know?" All the parents shared such roles and tasks, with other entourage members taking care of technical and sports training. In addition to providing encouragement for different components of their education and sport, the athletes and their entourage also highlighted the importance of their entourage explicitly providing support for their overall dual career. For example, Cally's teacher described conversations she and Cally had, she explained, "I know she found that [changing clubs] a bit difficult to kind of weigh up the pros and cons also with her trying to do her A levels as well, so having had discussions about that, we've also had discussion about how best to balance it and thinking in the long term does she need to be playing national league now with her A' levels..." Similarly, Sofia's teacher thought her support was important because it's, "Encouraging her and making her feel that it's okay to be involved in both things, because she is a bit of a worrier and so just giving her that support and making her feel ok, ok about both really."

Of particular value was entourage members supporting areas outside of their traditional responsibilities. For example, Sofia enjoyed her teachers supporting her hockey, as she explained, "They encourage me a lot with my hockey, like well done and all that and like PE lessons, they just give me like nice comments about my hockey and all that. So it's nice." Such support from teachers for sport was particularly appreciated by the athletes and appeared to be important because, as the sport psychologist said, "I think it's easier for them to focus on education than it is the sport to be honest, I always find that's more readily available the support for the education aspect, whereas the sport side of it if you really want it I think you need to go out there and look for the avenues of time management and how you're going to make it work for you."

However, it was not always easy for the entourage to support athletes' dual careers. For example, Cally's father shared his experience, "Trying to fit it all in, fit her activities in with my working life and my partner's life is pretty hectic sometimes, you know, but I've got to give the opportunity really." To manage the demands that the entourage members encountered it was suggested that communication was critical. As the team manager said, "It's [our programme] player centered and for players to

feel supported, for parents to know what's going on and actually for, you know, the coaches, the management, the parents to all be working in order to support the athletes, so I think communication's vital, you know, in order to support your player really." By communicating, the entourage members were able to feel supported in their endeavours and also ensure they were committing time and effort in the best possible way to support their child/athlete.

5) Educate athletes regarding time management and future expectations

Within this case, a number of steps were taken to actively teach the athletes about how to cope with their dual careers. For example, the team manager explained how they used older elite athletes as role model for their younger athletes. He said, "She [a player] actually came to talk to the players about how she got that balance right, about how she had the confidence and gained confidence in speaking to coaches about, you know, what was right for her development and what was not, so like for example I think she's been a huge role model." The sport psychologist further explained how role models were used in this programme. She said, "I think talking to a couple of the senior players has probably helped them realise where the expectations lie within the national hockey team...So the sort of balance that she's shown to get to the Commonwealth Games is obviously something that the likes of [players] are going to be striving for and they've got that role model within the setup for them." Cally explained what she had learnt from such sessions, "Some people have to dropout of camps because of revision, so I tried not to do that because obviously, the coaches were a bit, they knew our exams were coming up, but also if you wanted to go further in hockey we had to balance both and that's what they kind of taught us to do. So I'd do it in school and do it all before I went away, so I'd have nothing to worry about."

In addition to educating the athletes, steps were also taken to educate parents so that they could also be better prepared for what they and their child were likely to encounter. The team manager explained how they educated parents around exam time, "What we did as a national age group for last year we actually sent a letter out to parents explaining, you know, we understand the importance of exams, but also the importance of training time when you are an international hockey player." Educating and support parents increased the likelihood of parents being able to support their children's dual career. Further, by communicating directly with parents, the coaches and manager could ensure that everyone was on the same page, which could reduce the potential for conflict.

Further support required to facilitate a dual career

The athletes were experiencing great success in their schooling and sporting lives. Much of this was attributed to the support they received from various members of their entourage. Nevertheless, there were certain areas that the athletes and their entourage felt would benefit from more support.

1) Greater communication and integration throughout the entourage

Despite the support and understanding that was received by the entourage, it was also suggested that it might be beneficial if there was greater communication between entourage members, particularly between the sport and school. As one member of the entourage explained, "An understanding between all the parties involved really, the more that communication can be opened up between all of them

and a personal plan's put in place the stronger it's going to be." Such support was deemed necessary because, as the sport psychologist said, "Athletes can be feeling the pressure from sort of everyone at that point, parents, coaches, school, everyone making sure she has the right balance but probably nobody communicating with each other, they are all just telling her what the expectations are from their angle rather than sitting down and working out the best thing for that individual in the middle. I think that's the toughest one with sport and education."

2) More recognition from the education institution

Although particular teachers were deemed to be extremely supportive, there was a suggestion that some teachers would benefit from a greater understanding of the commitment the players were making and the success they were achieving in sport. As one of the teacher's explained, "The biggest challenges sometimes is speaking to teachers who are not PE teachers and trying to make them understand how much she's got going on." Such an understanding was desired not only so that teachers and the school could be flexible in their requirements of the athletes, but also so that athletes could gain more recognition for their achievements. As one of the parents said, "I've had to phone up because once or twice because you know, unless it's rugby they don't want to know basically....They've [the player's] never known recognition for the hard work that they've put in you know and how much time consuming, because, obviously, you know, there is a lot of work, school work, if you want to do well for yourself isn't there." However, at another school, the hockey player had received recognition, and this was deemed very beneficial by her parents in helping to motivate and encourage the athlete.

3) Access financial assistance

Finally, the entourage members highlighted the huge commitment that parents particularly had to make to facilitate their children's engagement in their dual career. This resulted in a large financial commitment from the parents. As Cally's father explained, "Funding is a big thing with it, there is no funding basically....it's the financial side of it, it's a big impact you know since, we've just talked about just over 12 months to spend £2,000 odd that's a big smash of my wages in there. I'm feeling it." Consequently, participants indicated a desire for more financial assistance to ensure they were able to continue to support their children's dual career.

Case 3: High performance swimming squad

Case description

Case three accounts for a high performance swimming squad, which provides elite level training for national and international level swimmers. Two international swimmers, Lisa and Hannah, were chosen to represent this case. Both swimmers have competed for their country in European and World competitions. The swimmers have eight to ten training sessions per week, with training occurring before and immediately after school. Swimmers will usually be in the pool from 6.00-8.00am Monday to Friday, and then attend a two-hour squad after school. The swimmers also complete dry land (out of pool) training and fitness sessions around their swimming sessions. In total, the swimmers are usually accessing approximately 20+ hours of in pool training and an additional 5+ hours of dry land training every week. Swimmers in the high performance squad might also access additional training through national or international training camps, which often take place abroad and

can be during school time. Domestic competitions usually occur at the weekends or over academic holidays. International competitions generally take place during academic holidays but might overlap with educational time.

The swimmers in this squad complete their education through traditional/regular school and higher education hours. Until they complete their GCSE qualifications, swimmers would generally attend school from approximately 8.30/9.00am – 3.00/3.30pm, with lessons scheduled throughout the day. However, once athletes have completed their GCSEs and are studying for their A' Level exams there might be more flexibility in their academic timetable, as teaching hours reduce. Thus, once they start their A' Levels swimmers might be able to leave lessons slightly earlier or use free periods to complete work. Given their training commitments and the distance to the pool and school or high education, swimmers in this squad might spend up to 14 hours a day away from home throughout the week.

Lisa's dual career progression

Lisa began swimming at the age of four and started regular swimming practice from the age of approximately six. Lisa is now 15 and is in the final year of her GCSEs. She has gradually progressed through the swimming rankings and as she has progressed she has changed clubs to access better coaching and facilitates. She moved to the performance squad approximately four years ago and has improved substantially since being there. Lisa lives approximately 45 minutes away from the pool she trains at, which increases the time that her and her parents must commit to getting her to the pool and then transporting her back to school. She finds this additional commute very challenging and has chosen to change schools once she completes her GCSEs so that she will be closer to the pool. Lisa is described as a very bright student who is achieving well at school. She is highly dedicated to achieving high grades and expects herself to be able to manage her schoolwork and her swimming. As she said, "Obviously, [I want] to do both to the best of my ability, not slack off training for school and not slack off school for swimming. I think it's, like I don't like making excuses either so when I go into school and I have to say 'Oh I haven't got it because I've been swimming, I don't like that. I'd rather say 'Oh yes, I've got it and I've been swimming.'" Lisa experienced large amounts of success at international competitions in the previous season and is hopeful for similar results this season. Lisa indicated that the most important members of her entourage are her parents, coach, specific teachers, and also her swimming peers.

Hannah's dual career progression

Hannah is a 17-year-old international swimmer, who has been swimming since approximately the age of six. Hannah has experienced great amounts of success over the past 12 months, being selected to represent her country at a number of key international events. Hannah is extremely dedicated to her swimming and education and wants to achieve at the very highest levels in both domains. She achieved top marks in her GCSEs and similar marks in her AS levels. She is currently in her final year of her A' levels and is finding this the most difficult time for balancing her dual career. She explained, "GCSEs were like difficult but I think it's just time now at A' Levels, it's so much more work and um you know, like a lot of the teachers will say you know, we expect you to do the amount of hours that you do in school at home...So I think it's definitely time and then like tiredness as well like and school like." Hannah has always maintained her education alongside her swimming

commitments and does not like to miss out of any education. However, she has decided that she is going to take a gap year after completing her A' levels so that she can commit fully to swimming for one year. She will then go to University where she would like to train in the medical profession.

Experience of maintaining a dual career

Both swimmers and their entourage explained how difficult it is for the swimmers to maintain a dual career due to the time commitments required for training and the need to complete work at home. Lisa explained, "Well they, obviously I don't get home until some nights it's 8 o'clock when I get in and it's when work builds up. I find if I've got one piece of work I can get it done. It's when work builds up and they, like some teachers will give it to you on a Monday and say it's got to be in by Friday and then by the Wednesday you've got like another two things and it's just that's the hardest, getting it all in and getting to bed on time and keeping training like going pretty well." Similarly, when explaining why she found it tiring and challenging, Hannah explained, "I think I have 15 hours of lessons a week but I train 20 hours in the pool and that's just in the pool like nothing else. Um, and like I filled in a form in a day and I think we worked out that like it was like 31 hours in the pool, travelling to the pool, like land training and everything, which like that's a lot." Given such a time commitment from the swimmers, and the time of training, it is perhaps unsurprising that both swimmers discussed instances where they had fallen asleep in classes or not trained as well as they could because they were tired. However, they were unanimous in their view that as Hannah said, "It is a challenge, but at the end of the day I'm choosing to do it so just get on with it as much as I can."

In contrast to some of the other sports, it appeared that simply maintaining the day-to-day training alongside school was one of the most challenging components of the swimmers' dual career. As Hannah's mother said, "I think it's hard, very very hard, but she's so determined." Her dad also explained, "She is just head down and struggles on, but she she'll give up her social life won't she. She has no social life." In addition to the day-to-day commitment, there were certain times that were seen to place additional pressures upon the athletes. For example, Lisa explained how the clash of exam and major training blocks caused problems, she explained, "On the summer it gets hard when there's exams and competitions. And like, a whole weekend will be taken up by competitions and all week will be taken up by training and you've still got to find time revise and stuff that's quite hard." Despite such clashes, the athletes indicated that they attempted to maintain both their training and their education as best they could. Hannah said, "I definitely have tried to like always keep it equal as much as I can like. I like during exams and stuff I don't really miss training and then the same, you know, when big competitions come I try not to miss school so I've always tried to keep it quite equal, which is difficult sometimes, especially now."

Despite such challenges, all members of the entourage and the swimmers identified a number of benefits to maintaining their education alongside their swimming. Not least because, as Lisa said, "That's the only bad thing about swimming, it can't be a career. So at this age, you have to keep doing both because you can't let school go." However, it was not only the necessity of swimming that motivated the athletes to maintain a dual career, they all perceived that being involved in each domain helped in the other, as Hannah explained, "I think it's something else to think about like

when things aren't going good in the pool, you know, you think you've got something else to concentrate on so you're not totally always focused on the like the negatives. I think it works the other way round as well, you know, if things aren't great in school then you've always got swimming like release and things." She further explained, "I think it pushes you a lot more, just because I know if I don't do it now, I'm probably not going to get the chance to do it again." It was the recognition of these multiple benefits that helped to motivate the athletes to keep training and maintaining their high academic grades.

The role of the entourage in supporting the dual career

The athletes indicated a great deal of involvement and support from a variety of sources, including their parents, coach, members of the sport science team, and certain teachers. These entourage members helped to facilitate their engagement in a dual career in the following ways.

1) Believe in the value of education and know what the athlete wants to achieve

All participants related to this case shared a consistent belief that education was important. For example, Lisa appreciated the view of the National Governing Body, as she said, "they [the NGB] are quite, they understand that school is important too. They don't try and tell you 'oh no swimming is more important,' they understand, which is good." Similarly, talking about her parents, Hannah said, "They [parents] they'll tell me that school is like more important, but then swimming is really important as well, so they do their best to make sure that I can do both." The value placed on education appeared to stem from two sources, one because it provided options for the future. For example, Lisa's dad shared the following sentiments, "Swimming is never going to be a money maker is it. It's never going to be a life changing sport, you know she's not going to earn £28m is she. We all know that's never going to be the case."

Secondly, there was value placed upon education because it was deemed to be beneficial to swimming. The performance advisor said, "I just think it provides balance to their life anyway and I think a huge part of being an elite athlete is to try and keep some degree of normality and I think education is something that everyone does and I think it can play a really important role in that." The coach did indicate that, for some athletes, there was a time when they needed to prioritise swimming over education because there was only a limited window for sporting success. But nevertheless, he did value his swimmers involvement in education because, as he said, "You often find that swimmers that have nothing else they come training and they go home and if swimming's not going well then that's when they tend to get depressed and they struggle with motivation because their at home thinking about how badly their swimming's going." The consistent perception that maintaining education was important, either because it was a necessity for the future or because it helped maintain balance, ensured that athletes valued their dual career and felt supported in their attempts to maintain one.

The value of education was in fact very high for the swimmers in this study, with both athletes being extremely motivated to achieve in this domain. Lisa's mother explained, "She's very focused, she wants to do well in school as well as in here. I think because we told her if school starts slipping then somethings got to give. It'll be hours in there rather than anything else." Moreover, both athletes were perceived to

be very capable, which placed an additional need on ensuring they received the appropriate amounts and types of support in their careers. As Lisa's head of year shared, "We're talking about an elite athlete, but also a very very gifted pupil, you know, she's always been in the highest sets in school, her attainment has always been very very high and this is one of the things that's most challenging with Lisa." Her PE teacher expressed similar sentiments, explaining, "With somebody as gifted as Lisa, I mean I daresay, you know, she's got aspirations for university, so we need to make sure that everything's put in place now so that she can pursue the sporting career with the education and the qualifications to back up whatever she wants to do in her future basically." With such capable students, who have clear plans for the future, it was important for the entourage to provide this understanding and support to help them achieve their goals.

2) Understand the demands of a dual career and be flexible in requirements

The athletes commit extensive amounts of time to their training and schooling. Recognising this commitment and the constant demands they encounter, both sets of parents interviewed indicated how they reduced the additional demands they placed on their daughters at home. For example, Lisa's mother said, "I think as a parent you cut her that slack almost that because of the hours that she's doing in there and then if she is home, it's either sleeping, eating, or doing school work. So, you almost let her get away with being...the mundane, tidying, cleaning sort of things you know." Similarly, Hannah's father explained, "I think it's tough because we don't ever want to see your own child struggling or getting stressed. She's too young to get stressed, I think. Stressed is what I should be in work. She should never be stressed. Sometimes you know when you've got to back off because you just know perhaps you're getting right to the end of her little sort of thread and if you push too hard at home than you'll just, it'll go." Such an understanding of their child and the demands they were encountering ensured that parents were able to limit any additional burden being placed upon their child.

Similarly, sport and school staff also recognised the day-to-day demands of the dual career and made suitable changes to requirements if needed. For example, when talking about her coach, Hannah explained, "So he's [coach] like really good and understanding of that. Um, and it's just little things, like if I've got something on like that in school, as long as I tell him and he knows you know, he'll work a way around it. So he's good with stuff like that." Such understanding also expanded to the schools, as Lisa's dad said, "Having understanding teachers, well not understanding teachers, but having somebody within the school environment who understands the stress levels, but also the commitment and time that these individuals are putting in because they only see the individual between 9[am] and 3pm and then they don't see anything that goes on around that." Such understanding could be demonstrated through flexibility regarding academic hand-in dates and providing opportunities for athletes to complete work during their lunch break. As Lisa's head of year explained, "I mean on a day to day basis it's supported by her teaching staff, what usually happens is, you know, the staff are incredibly flexible in our school. I think that pupils are very very fortunate in terms that staff are always willing to give up their lunchtimes, break times, you know, that the staff are very well briefed on, you know, how much time Lisa has to dedicate to the sport, you know, we're all aware of how tight things are in her schedule, so staff will always be available on a lunchtime or a

break time to help her if she's you know, for example missed a lesson because she's competing."

This recognition of the burden that athletes are encountering was particularly apparent when discussing the issues around exams, revision, and their clash with training and competitions. Hannah said, "When exams are on that's normally the most stressful time just because you're being pulled two ways because there's normally like exams from like May, April time and that's when my big training starts because I've got the biggest things coming in July and August. So you're trying not to miss training and the same time you're trying to revise." Recognising the burden of exams resulted in entourage members taking additional steps to support athletes at this time. For example, Hannah described what her school had done, "My head teacher was the best, like he'd support swimming and school at the same time, like he'd always make sure that I was ok in school and like during my GCSEs they'd like give me a room to sleep in. Just when I was getting a bit tired but obviously I was training more and I was having like two or three exams in a day."

All members of the entourage were consistent in their belief that training should continue around exam periods, but they did recognise that there might need to be some flexibility. For example, the coach said, "What we never do is get rid of swimmers or kick swimmers out if they miss training when their exams are on, because you know, we do understand that they are important but you know, they also need to understand that if they miss training and then they are not going to develop. And we're quite honest and open about that, you know, if you miss." Such education about the potential consequences of missing training was particularly important for the coach, who wanted to ensure that athletes learnt to balance their demands and always made informed decisions. Consequently, the coach engaged in informal education of swimmers and their parents from a young age to teach them about the importance of balance and maintaining both components of their dual career. This was deemed to have a positive effect, as the coach explained, "Once we start that education process they tend to be pretty good. I don't know what they are like in other sports, and other clubs, but you know, if you educate them well enough, they should be ok I think."

3) Trust the athlete to communicate and guide their development

The members of the entourage all indicated that they trusted the athletes to make decisions regarding their future and to know what was best for their development. For example, when discussing an invitation to a training camp that would have clashed with exams, Hannah's mother explained how Hannah decided what to do. She said, "So we knew that she'd been invited and she came in and said 'look, this is the email you had' and I said 'yes, what are you doing?' and she said I'm not going. She didn't even want to discuss it, she said 'I've decided I don't need to go' and 'I said fine.'" Hannah had been similarly decisive with regards to making the decision to change schools for her A' Levels so that she could be nearer to the school. Her dad explained, "She said all along that I'm going to go to [name of school] because it's literally behind the pool. So fair dos, we phone up, I took her to a parents evening, had a chat, put in an application and they accepted her right away. So she did a lot of the research there didn't she. I just took her to the school one night." Entourage members indicated that they were able to trust the swimmers to make decisions because, as Hannah's mother explained, "The thing is, because she

knows what she wants and because she's so focused, to support because, you can see it's working, so it's not out of a whim, nothing is done on a whim." Moreover, it was perceived that at the level these athletes are, it should be their decision. The coach explained, "It tends to be swimmer's decision when it gets to the level that I'm coaching at. I don't have much, I don't have much to do with the parents if I'm honest, with my swimmers."

However, the athletes were not entirely alone to make their decisions. Entourage members committed to ensuring that athletes had the necessary information to make appropriate decisions. Lisa's dad explained, "She's very much of her own mind but she needs to be sort of guided in the right direction like you know, it's about balancing and not being seen as being pushy parent, and offering up the opportunity she needs you know." By providing information the entourage ensured that athletes were then able to dictate their own decisions, which was perceived very positively by the athletes. As Lisa said, "Well you've taken your information and now it's down to you and if you want to do it then you do it and if you don't do it then don't moan when you don't do well. Like I think that's the sort of approach she [mother] has sometimes. Which is, I think that sort of makes me do it even more, knowing that they like trust me to do it. Trust me to get on with it and they're not on my case all the time." In providing athletes with the opportunity to make their own decisions the athletes indicated being in charge of their own future and consequently described being motivated to achieve what they wanted to achieve.

4) Be proactive in planning for education and sporting commitments

Given the continual demands these athletes faced it appeared that they and their entourage had recognised the importance of being proactive in planning for and providing support for the dual career. Such forward planning was demonstrated by Hannah who said, "If I can get ahead then that's normally what I'll try and do but just to stay in track and stay level with people, but it is difficult, especially when a few of my friends don't really do anything outside school and they're struggling."

Recognising the time commitments of the athletes, the school could help by, as Lisa's dad said, "She has to sort of organise her time really around doing her homework at lunch time in school and she gets that extra bit of time, extra bit of pre-warning if you like about homework so she can structure it over a weekend." A proactive approach from the schools was deemed to be extremely important, because it not only demonstrated the schools' commitment to the athletes but also helped them. In Lisa's school, the parents and athletes had been asked what the school could do to help. Lisa's dad said, "So they wanted information from the parents of what they could do as a school, if it was achievable, to make it easier for the kids to you know, excel in education as well as in these sports like... So she does that, she goes in late. They've given her a classroom on a dinner hour to be able to go somewhere quiet to complete any kind of homework that she may not have a chance to do in the evening and they sort of give her a heads up as well." The coach also viewed this proactive planning and development to be extremely important, explaining, "That's part of our job really, it's not just, well it's not just about being their swimming coach. We have to make sure that every area of their life is, is structured and organised because otherwise that wouldn't work and affects everything in what they do in their performance."

To enable such a proactive approach to be adopted, it appeared that communication from the athletes, and to some extent their parents, was important. Lisa's PE teacher explained, "I think we've been quite active in making Lisa realise as well that she needs to be keeping the staff onside if you know what I mean, regarding making sure that she keeps them up to speed on when she's not going to be around and any work is caught up." This was reiterated by Lisa's head of year who explained, "This is why the communication is so important with the home so that I know what's coming up in terms of where she's going to be competing, so then we can just get a plan in place early enough to make sure that she's got all the support she needs. So the communication's excellent." Similarly, Hannah said, "Most of them [teachers] I've got to say are pretty understanding and when I've got my head of year on board she'll like speak to them as well so she'll email them when I'm going away so they'll know."

5) Constant communication and integrated support

Finally, linked to the previous theme, it was apparent that constant communication between all entourage members to enable them to provide integrated support for the athletes was critical. That is, athletes' abilities to maintain their dual career appeared to be greatly dependent upon the extent to which the different members of their entourage communicated with each other. As Hannah's dad said, "Her school has been fab [fabulous]. They will email all her work no matter where she is in the world. So I think it's vital that she carries on doing education but I have to say that the school have been really good with her as well." The coach would also communicate with schools if necessary. As he said, "I would have a conversation with the schools if, it's going to sound really bad, if the swimmer was good enough. So, for example, Hannah, I have spoken to her school about her exams and things." Similarly, communication from the National Governing Body to the school was deemed positively, as Hannah said, "a couple of times we've gone away like the coaches and people who have been in charge of it have written letters for me to take into school just explaining what we're doing, why I'm going away and I think that helps when it's sort of like signed from like you know the GB [Great Britain] stamp."

Such communication and integrated support was deemed positively by the athletes, as Lisa said, "It's good like, it's good to know that if I'm struggling, like I know that I've got like a lot of people that I can speak to. And it's not, that's the thing for me, because it's not struggling that I need help, it's struggling that I need more time." Similarly, this integrated support was deemed to be helpful to parents, who were often struggling with the amount of time and money they committed to swimming. As Lisa's dad explained, "That's probably the biggest challenge is balancing the day-to-day life with work, with on call, with running the household, the cleaning, the ironing the cooking, whatever else, just keeping her swimming and the pickups and the drop offs and the pre-planning you know. And making thing work for the other one as well like." Consequently, the parents were reliant upon their own support network, as Lisa's dad explained, "There's a support network in work for both of us to let me have some time as well, you know, I manage like in work and [wife] and the other management are quite supportive because the know where she's at, but I think the key to it is our parents, well my parents anyway."

Further support required to facilitate a dual career

Despite the large burden experienced by the athletes and their entourage, there were only two main areas that they perceived would be beneficial to facilitate the athletes' dual career: financial assistance and further communication and integration.

1) Financial assistance

Financial assistance was raised as a concern for both the athletes and their families. As Lisa said, "People are starting to understand now, just like the funding side of it, the way things are at the minute it is hard." Similarly, Hannah (who had recently begun to receive funding) said, "Funding has been crucial just because most of my friends in school work and if I didn't have that it would be a struggle." The lack of financial assistance was deemed to be challenging for the parents, as Lisa's dad explained, "Funding would be a good thing for us. You know, if we had some kind of education funding for her would be really good because there's a massive drain to keep a child in...that's the difficulty with a young athlete because they're not, she hasn't got to an Olympics as yet, so she's not on the top end, well in fact she's not on any funding yet." Parents indicated that financial concern could influence future decisions regarding education, as Hannah's father said, "I think finance. I think the biggest thing for he is going to be deciding if she goes to uni [university], where....I think that will also have an impact on the decision she makes for uni perhaps, is the financial side of things."

2) Further communication and integration

Despite the excellent communication that was apparent between the entourage members in this case, it was perceived that the situation could be enhanced further with even more communication and integration. As Hannah said, "I think just communicating a bit more, like having like swimming maybe email school a little bit more and stuff and just letting them know. But I'd say a lot of it has to be from myself as well, like you know, I have to make sure that teachers know what I'm doing and stuff." Lisa shared similar thoughts, explaining, "Sometimes I think, sometimes the communication between coach and school could be better. And that's probably not their fault because they don't really think of it but like, when I go away, I think it would be handy for my coaches to brief the school." Such communication was deemed as a necessity because, as Hannah's mother said, "There were a couple of teachers who just didn't get it...I don't know whether or not there could be perhaps a little bit of communication from the organisation or from the school." Similarly, the coach explained, "Schools never tend to feed that information back to us either, so maybe if we had something that was structure, ok, we are going to meet now December, April, we might, it might be a little bit easier and that, that, that would help the swimmer I think, in terms of their stress levels and making sure they're on target."

Case 4: Football Academy

Case description

Case 4 is a football academy that provides integrated support for education and football. Such support is provided in conjunction with traditional schooling until players have completed their GCSEs. If players are retained by the club once they have complete their GCSEs they join the academy in a full-time capacity, and receive their education through the on-site education support. Players who are full-time at the academy are, generally, required to complete a BTEC through the academy. There are occasional exceptions where players complete A' Levels or

additional BTEC units while they are full-time at the academy but this work takes place outside of academy hours. The academy provides approximately 12 hours of education to the full-time players, split across three days. For full time players, training occurs throughout the week except on Wednesday's, with matches at the weekend. Players at the academy receive support from coaching staff, sport scientists (including sport psychologists, nutritionist, and strength and conditioning coaches), and education and welfare staff. Prior to joining the academy full-time, the players continue in the traditional schooling system, but receive "day release" from schools to access the academy. This day release is usually limited to a day a week or two afternoons a week unless players are joining in with the older squads. The majority of the younger players' training occurs over three evenings per week, with matches at the weekend. Younger players also receive support from coaches, sport scientists, and education and welfare staff. Specifically, with regards to education, younger players are provided with education hours to complete homework or catch up on work that is missed at school.

Brody's dual career progression

Brody started with the academy six years ago, and has been continuing his education at a local school alongside his academy training. Initially his training took place outside of school hours but as Brody has improved he has started to access training during the school day. He is currently a member of the U16 squad, for which he is released from school for two afternoons a week. However, he has also received invitations to join with the older squads (U18 and U21), for which he has required extra time off school. Brody is a high achiever at school and has been able to manage his dual career to date. The school has been very amenable in allowing Brody to take time off for football because he has always stayed on top of his work. However, as the time demands have increased they are aware of the potential implications this could have on his education. However, the school has not restricted his attendance because his school achievements continue to be good. One area for future consideration is his transition outside of school to the academy. The school believe that Brody would be able to achieve at school in his A' levels but when he goes full-time at the academy he will only complete a BTEC. Brody indicated that his parents, teachers at school, and the education and welfare officer were key in supporting his dual career.

Harry's dual-career progression

Harry started playing with the academy almost eight years ago, continuing with traditional schooling alongside football until last year. Last year Harry received a contract with the academy to go full time and is currently completing his BTEC alongside his football training. He has had a successful season and is enjoying being at the academy. Harry believes that he is quite strong academically and as such he has not struggled to maintain this alongside football. However, he did indicate that, "If you are an athlete and you are trying to become an athlete in this specific sport education is going to have to take a back seat because if you are trying to keep both levels, you want to be studying something at uni [university] and you have also got football, it will take an effect on your football, you become stressed and bogged down with stuff." When he initially joined the academy full-time Harry had chosen to take on some additional units of work to "get more UCAS points [the points required to access university] which looks better." But, as he said, "I gave it up because I thought, I wasn't in the best mindset anyway, I wasn't going great at football and I

wasn't, I can't really handle this extra stress at the moment...so I thought just leave it and get a good grade in the education which I have to do from there." Harry indicated that the education and welfare officer and his teammates were key in keeping him motivated to work.

Experience of maintaining a dual career

Brody and Harry indicated that they had been able to maintain their dual career relatively easily. For Brody this had been possible because, "Obviously you've just got to be organised and make sure that you remember the stuff you've got to do and that you're not doing at school." Similarly, Harry indicated that you just have to recognise what's important and focus on maintaining both aspects of the career. He explained, "I think it's beneficial to be fair, education I mean, it's like, you don't have to be a smart guy to make something of the education, it is good to have it there, to stick with it, not to give in, make sure you have got something there just in case anything goes wrong, like injuries or anything, you get banged or anything like that, it is good to have something to fall back on, it is beneficial to keep it, definitely."

However, the athletes did recognise that maintaining a dual career could be challenging at times. They perceived that these challenges could be managed through good communication. As Brody explained, "Like sometimes there is quite a fair bit to do but as long as you tell people your workload is getting a bit too much and don't stress yourself it's alright." He further explained that he sought to maintain balance, which helped him to manage his career. He explained, "I think the most important thing is getting a balance between the two and also giving yourself a little bit of time off on a Sunday, you can get over worked if you just, if you don't really manage it properly."

The athletes' motivation to maintain their education appeared to be facilitated by their understanding of the benefits of maintaining an education. Brody shared, "Learning as a whole is just something that I enjoy and being able to just know stuff I feel is quite important and combined with the football here just gives you a good sense of what is to come in the future, so I feel that is important." Harry, while seemingly slightly less interested in education, also recognised that the benefits of having a back-up plan to football and being required to maintain education, ensured that he found a way to manage his dual career.

The role of the entourage in supporting the dual career

The athletes within this case had access to an extensive support network, similar to that of professional athletes. Consequently, there were numerous individuals to attend to their education and sport. These entourage members appeared to support their dual career in four ways.

1) Specific roles within the dual career, facilitated by good communication

Within this case there were dedicated staff to take care of different aspects of the athletes' dual careers. For example, at school athletes had access to dedicated mentors, as Brody said, "They give you a mentor at school, mine was from the PE department, he knew a bit about football and some of the things you have to cope with but it's quite good." At the academy, the education officer was key, as Harry explained, "It's more [education and welfare officer] to go to, he's the only guy that is on this, tutors obviously, but the coaches don't really get involved it's not their area

you know.” Such a distinction in roles was reiterated by one of the football coaches who, when talking about education said, “There’s people at [club] who’re employed to take care of all this. I’m employed to take care of the football.” By attending to these specific roles, the academy was able to make sure that athletes received the support they required in different domains of their life. However, communication between individuals was also necessary. Brody’s coach explained, “The people who deal with the education are education and welfare officers ...but I think every single member of staff pulling in the right direction, we always want to make sure that we are getting the best out of the player whilst they are at the football club but also whilst they are at school.”

It was clearly important that certain links were maintained and that the different roles communicated to ensure athlete support was maximised. For example, the education and welfare officer explained how important it was that there was a link with the schools. He said, “So again we had to have a rapport with the school staff and the teachers there. So we always elect one link person at the school. We’ll have one rapport with one person at the school because communications can be quite difficult.” He continued, “It’s school link and liaison that’s the key thing it means were not professing to be the ones that are educating the boys, were not professing to be teaching the boys, what we are doing is we’re providing them with a football led opportunity that works alongside education.” Similarly, Brody’s father explained how parents could communicate with different support staff. As he said, “Every time we’re, if [club] have any question or they’ve got any questions there’s a teacher that sorts something out for him, which is pretty supportive of the school.” And Brody’s coach said, “It’s that trust between the coaching side which I head up, Brody the player, and [education and welfare officer] as the head of education, all of us know each other, as long as we all know where Brody is in his education and football side of things, it’s just that constant communication really.” Thus, although different people completed different tasks, communication ensured that athletes were supported in the best manner possible.

In addition to the communication between the different members of the support network, it was apparent that the athletes also needed to communicate. Brody’s head of year explained, “Brody has always communicated with the staff about his lessons, usually it is completed in advance as well.” Brody reiterated this view, stating, “I think the links between my school and the club here is quite good, like they communicate a lot and me too so, and it helps me out and sometimes maybe if my workload gets a bit too much then I get a bit of a break in my schedule to get some more work and also we had day release sessions here so you come out of school for a bit for time to play and train.”

2) Facilitate opportunities for football and for education

For athletes to be able to maintain their dual career, they were provided with opportunities to succeed in school and to succeed in football. Such success in football was facilitated by parents providing support, as Harry’s dad said, “There has been a lot of sacrifice involved and a lot of travelling up and down...but I said to myself I am not going to let my boys not have what I didn’t have, at least I can give them support, there are not guarantees but they are going to get that [support] because I never had it.” Similarly, Harry’s coach highlighted the importance of athletes receiving support to enable their sport participation, as he explained, “The

amount of support network around these players is unbelievable really. I was, I was quite surprised with the level of professionalism, not the level of professionalism but the depth that the player's support network goes to, it you know, it's incredible. To have everything for them to help them progress."

Alongside the support for sport, the athletes also received support to succeed at school. Such support was available through flexible timetabling at school, as Brody's head of year explained, "That's correct, yeah we went through his timetable quite early on in year 11 when his sporting commitments and training increased and in year 11 there is educational demand. So what we did is we went through his timetable, we identified slots on a weekly basis where I can move him from his lessons, I think the PSHE [personal, social, and health education] is a good example, of a lesson where I was happy to remove him from at this stage." The athletes also had strong support for education at the academy, as Harry's coach explained, "There's an onsite education facility which is very very top draw... and obviously, all their education programme, the welfare, they get coaching badges, the, you know, they leave with four or five bits of qualifications that they can use straightaway." By ensuring that athletes were receiving structured and consistent support for both elements of their dual career, it was simple and easy for athletes to maintain their dual career.

3) Understand demands of dual career and be flexible in requirements

As the athletes developed there was an increasing emphasis on their football careers and the importance of them achieving on the field. Nevertheless, educational commitments are required until athletes reach the age of 18 and thus, there was a need for all members of the support network to understand the demands associated with the dual career and subsequently be flexible in their demands. Brody explained how his school adapted to his need to be at the academy during school time, "At school the liaison that I talked about earlier, he talks to [club], I had to work with him and just asked, 'give me a little bit more free time' and now things that aren't core have sort of changed about a bit so I am not missing out on core subjects." Similarly, Brody explained how the club were amenable to change around exams, he said, "I used to go out of school on Tuesday afternoon and Thursday afternoon, during the exam times obviously there is a lot more revision that you need to get done and deadlines that you need to meet, so the club is alright with me not training on Tuesday and Thursday afternoons and just come in on the evenings to get the work done and to get to train." The flexibility and understanding demonstrated by both the school and the academy ensured that athletes felt capable of maintaining their dual career and could maximise opportunities for success in both domains.

Understanding and flexibility was deemed to be particularly important if athletes were not achieving in their education while they were still at school. As the education and welfare officer explained, "If athletes are not achieving we see if we can support them and guide them and help them and try and tailor what they are doing to help them attain at school and that has to be the priority at that age group. In terms of parents I mentioned the three reviews that we do each year in liaison with the school." By altering demands upon athletes, the academy ensured that athletes were able to maintain their standards on the pitch and in the classroom. Parents and players, who understood the importance of gaining an education, viewed this

flexibility positively, particularly when athletes were seeking to achieve good GCSE results.

4) Demonstrate importance of education and hold athletes accountable

Although there was increasing importance placed on athlete's football career as they aged, it also seemed necessary that the athletes' entourage demonstrated the importance of education to athletes. As Brody said, "Before the season starts, the club will talk to people at school to make sure I do have their permission to leave but also they have stopped people leaving school if they are falling behind on subjects, so that also shows how important they think education is, it's good." Similarly, Harry said, "I would probably say they [education and welfare officers] would need support from the coaches to drill it into them [players] more you know, like you need to get this, you need to try and get the best grades possible and then just keep them mentally focused on getting their education done." Summarising the benefits of the entourage valuing and supporting education, Brody's head of year provided the following example, "Brody's parents have attended every parents evening, anytime they needed to be in, they have been. They have all had a proactive approach to education as well, they have been very keen to make sure that his progress towards his academic target hasn't suffered and that obviously makes the job of the school much easier when you have got proactive and supportive parents. It means that we can ensure that the balance between his commitments at the school and football can remain on track."

In addition to reinforcing the value of education, it was also apparent that athletes were held accountable for their educational achievements. Brody explained in reference to poor engagement and behavior at school, "They [the club] would stop you from going to day release and leaving school to go, they would follow up the report and then see if your behavior does improve." Talking about the level of achievement required in education Harry said, "If you think you should get a distinction obviously it would be down to you what kind of work you produce but the tutors would be expecting you to achieve at least a merit grade if you should be working at distinction you can't just kind of slack off, you can't be bothered, just get a pass rate, and the tutors will be coming down on you." In talking about the education and welfare officer, Harry further explained, "I think every club will need a guy like that, because otherwise there will be no stipulated kind of thing... he makes sure things are done properly otherwise if the kids start taking liberties, your work won't get done, coming late to football and all that stuff is messy, so I think every club needs a guy like [education and welfare officer]". Further, when explaining who encouraged him to complete his work and how, Harry said, "I don't know maybe just the coaches and the tutors, maybe your parents actually, they should have a rough idea of how much you have to do. As long as you can keep on top of it and they trust you to do that you should be ok."

Generally the coaches chose not to become involved in the education. However, as Harry's coach explained, "If we have to step in then we would do, with a bit of encouragement. But they've all been very good this year." Similarly, Brody's coach said, "His [Brody's] parents have said that we will work with the school, we all work in unison to get the best out of that individual, which in this case is Brody so the, with Brody its making sure that education wise he is working as hard as he can there as what he does here and vice versa." However, if required all staff at the academy

would step in. As the education and welfare officer explained, “So where we’re doing anything if we have any involvement with that child and their not achieving and achieving well at school then that’s where our responsibility arrives is to help the school maximise their potential no matter how they’re doing with the club it’s our responsibilities with them.”

Further support required to facilitate a dual career

As indicated, the athletes and their entourage received and provided a large amount of support to athletes to facilitate their dual career. However, there was a suggestion that further communication and additional options for education would be of further benefit to supporting athletes’ dual career.

1) Enhanced communication

The communication and integration of support was identified as something that as positive for this case. However, it was perceived by some members of the entourage that further support would be beneficial to maximise the support athletes received. As one individual explained, “I would say there is a massive challenge, it’s just having constant open lines of communication really the biggest, the hardest thing is making sure that we are on top of knowing when things are.” This was reiterated by the school who explained, “I think it would have been nice to have met with representatives from [club] or someone who works with him on a regular basis as well, I would have liked to have received more frequent sort of updates in terms of how he is progressing and how the school can support.”

2) Options for education

Additionally, while it was understood that opportunities for education needed to be limited to help facilitate the football career, some individuals indicated that additional options might be beneficial. For example, one parent explained, “I’ve looked into it and it looks okay but the teachers at his school are saying he can do a lot better and they were just a bit worried about letting him down that way, or is [club] letting him down I don’t know?” Similarly, an individual from the school said, “We have had numerous discussions over the year, I was very keen on Brody’s work plan balance at [club] where Brody might be able to continue his A’ level studies at the current school in [club] for somebody who could and should cope with A’ levels and if it wasn’t for his football Brody would be pursuing a full A’ level programme with us.” Such additional options were viewed as important to prevent, “the boredom factor, which is kind of a challenge, not having the standards of the more academically minded ones.”

Case 5: Elite Canoeing Programme

Case description

This case focuses upon an elite canoeing programme. Specifically, this case examined the transition of elite canoeists from school to university. The athletes of focus, Taylor and Kim, are both in their first year in university, having completed their school commitments in the previous year. Both athletes have moved to attend universities near high performance training venues. The athletes have been selected for the elite canoeing programme because they have been identified as possessing the potential to win an Olympic medal within eight years. Given their potential, the

athletes are provided with high-level sport science support, including a performance lifestyle advisor, strength and conditioning coaches, sport psychologists, and individual technical coaches. The athletes on this programme receive funding to support their athletic endeavours. During the year athletes will take part in selection races and from these races they will be chosen to travel with the national team to varying competitions. In addition to their athletic endeavours, athletes in this programme are also supported and encouraged to continue their education or engage in vocational work. If they attend university, athletes are able to take any course that they are interested in (as long as they achieved the entry requirements) and usually complete their degree within the usual timeframe. However, some athletes might choose to complete their degree through part-time study, reducing four-year degrees to three years (e.g., choose not to complete placement years or additional masters years), or temporarily suspend studies during major competition years (e.g., Olympics).

Taylor's dual-career progression

Taylor, an 18 year-old international canoeist, began canoeing approximately 11 years ago. He spent the first five years training and competing at the club level, along with his older brothers. Once he started to participate in canoeing he gradually improved and became a member of the national squad around the age of 14. He has been on the elite programme since making the national squad. Since being selected for the national squad he has travelled extensively to European and world competitions. He is currently transitioning from junior to the under 23-age group. Throughout his time canoeing, Taylor has engaged in traditional schooling, completing four A' Levels before starting university. Although he has generally managed to maintain his education alongside his training and competition schedule, he did prioritise his education at certain crunch points. For example, he chose to reduce his engagement in training around his A' level exams. Obtaining the necessary grades to be accepted into university was very important for Taylor because it ensured he got onto the course he wanted to complete and allowed him to get into a university located near a high performance training venue. Taylor has never considered stopping his education to pursue canoeing. Taylor views education as essential given the risks associated with engagement in professional sport. Taylor listed his family, coach, and sport psychologist as key entourage members within his dual career.

Stacey's dual career progression

Stacey began competing in canoeing when she was nine. Canoeing is part of her family and she grew up watching it. Stacey joined the national development programme around the age of 13 and has developed since then. While she was at school, it was arranged that Stacey would take one day off a week for training and that was arranged directly with the school. Initially, Stacey could only take one day off a fortnight because the school was not supportive or did not understand the need for this commitment. However, it quickly developed to once a week. Initially, Stacey prioritised her canoeing over her education, but since transitioning to university she has become more motivated to achieve academically. She is currently in a transition year having moved away from home, started university, and changed from junior to Under 23 racing. Stacey is the first person in her family to move into tertiary education. Stacey identified her coach, performance lifestyle advisor, family, and university tutor as key individuals supporting her dual career at this stage.

Experience of maintaining a dual career

Both Stacey and Taylor indicated that, although there were some challenges associated with the maintenance of a dual career, it had not been too difficult. Further, both the athletes (and their entourage) recognised that there were many benefits associated with maintaining a dual career. As Stacey explained, "I feel it's, it's good to have like the education like actually get to there, and like manage to balance it through like GCSEs and stuff so, I think if I wasn't doing something else then I would get extremely bored and not know what to do with myself, so I think it's good that I'm finding something else to do." Taylor shared a similar view, explaining, "I quite enjoy learning, like I think if I was sat at home doing nothing I'd just feel a bit crap, like I quite like being smart or trying to be smart." Taylor also discussed further benefits of a dual career, explaining, "[It] sort of gives you something outside of it [canoeing], so you're not just going home and sat watching a TV series or something, sort of keeps you active, keeps you busy. Probably sort of like a group of friends outside of canoeing as well, so it's sort of broadens your sort of group that you can fall back on."

When difficulties have arisen the athletes recognised that sometimes these were a result of their own behaviors. For example, for Stacey, some challenges had occurred because she did not manage her time appropriately, which was something she wanted to improve. For Taylor, challenges could arise because he was extremely motivated to achieve highly in academia and had high expectations for himself. Consequently, he dedicated a large amount of time to his studies, which could have an impact on his canoeing performance. Taylor explained, "Euros [European Championships] didn't go quite amazingly, but I think that was more because I sort of had my last year of A-levels, because I was doing four subjects as well, which were all pretty intense. I basically didn't do that much training going into the Euros, because t literally we flew out three days after my last exam, so I didn't really get much training into there." To overcome the challenges of a dual career, Taylor explained, "I guess just sort of managing your time like appropriately, so you can sort of be efficient in both training and like revision or studying or whatever. So like when we were over in [location] it was three weeks just before exams, so I was pretty much off the water into my books pretty much every day." Stacey shared these views, explaining, "Finding the time to do the work and also organising my training around my lectures."

When discussing the transition to university, and their perceptions of this relative to their dual career, both athletes indicated that it had not been too challenging. When talking about his course, Taylor indicated, "It's quite full on, because of the subject I'm doing, that's 20 hours a week rather than I guess like quite a few people end up doing sport courses and stuff where they're in like probably eight hours or whatever, but then there's also coursework every week and planning labs and stuff, so it's quite a bit outside of it, but I guess it's just sort of managing my time sort of knowing when to just sit down and hack a load of work out." Stacey had a similar view, as she said, "It's not as bad as I thought it would be. They've actually gone pretty easy on us. We've only had like one full written assignment at the minute."

The role of the entourage in supporting the dual career

For Taylor and Stacey, the transition to university was associated with a change in their access to sport support and training. Nevertheless, their entourage appeared to take a very active role in support their dual career, through the six mechanisms outlined below.

1) Recognise the need to continue education and the benefits of a dual career

When discussing the dual career with the athletes and their entourage, it was apparent that there was a consistent belief in the need for athletes to continue their education. For example, Stacey's grandfather said, "Apart from having qualifications at the end for future employment chance, it [education] gives a structure to your life." Taylor's coach said, "I was fulltime and, you know, I recognised very much, you know, that you need dimensional identity stuff and I experienced a bit of that myself and my self-perception was influenced by how successful or not I was in a canoe." Similarly, Stacey explained, "Well [coach] was saying how it would be really good if I did go to uni to like experience stuff. My grandparents were saying the same. My parents wanted me to go. So, everyone pretty much wanted me to go to uni, which is good because I wanted to go too so." Such a consistent approach to valuing education ensured that athletes felt supported and encouraged in their endeavours to maintain their education.

Moreover, because the entourage valued education, they also took extra steps to reassure athletes and facilitate the engagement in academic pursuits. For example, Stacey's tutor explained that he thought maintaining a dual career is important because, "It gets them [athletes] outside the athlete bubble." Subsequently, discussing his initial meeting with Stacey, he went on to explain, "I was able to reassure Stacey that she would be able to fit her training and competition around her degree certainly at first year level, and she would have support to be able to do that." Similarly, when talking about Taylor's coach, the performance lifestyle advisor explained, "His coach is very proactive with his athletes, so he'll invest a lot of time checking that everything is ok...he understands, he has a really good appreciation for the athlete as a whole." While Stacey's coach said, "The vision of our programme, full stop, that we had done with coaches is for us to develop the person and the athlete. So it's definitely a rounded approach to the management of their life and their commitments as well as their sport. We don't overtly push one above the other at all. At different times there will be different priorities probably in reality. It's my job there to just assist with the planning process and try and empower them with the thinking skills and the decision making skills to plan out their time." In concluding on the support he received from those around him, Taylor summarised, "I guess it's sort of they're more understanding of the situation you're in."

2) Facilitate independence and ownership

As the athletes progressed with both their education and their training, the athletes' entourage facilitated independence and worked to ensure that athletes took ownership over their education and their training. For example, talking about his son's decision to continue to university, Taylor's dad said, "To be fair Taylor is very independent, to a point where we don't need to sort of push too hard, because he already knows what he wants to do and he knows he will do enough." Such independence was seen to be very important because it demonstrated self-motivation and ensured the athletes were committed to their education. Further, as the performance lifestyle advisor said, "You are trying to foster that independence in

an athlete and I think having university as part of their life means that they have to learn to juggle stuff, they have to be able to live independently and they are just general life skills that will be acquired, they'll either be forced or it's happen or something that you know they will gain something from it." Such independence was valued because, as Taylor's coach said, "I do say to the athletes that I work with that your success and failure lies with you and your decisions, you know, I can guide and I can impress upon you, but at the end of the day your operations and what you choose to do or not do lies with you, I'm not going to force you to do anything and I take the same angle in this situation." Such ownership and independence seemed to be valuable because it was seen as a necessary component for future success. As one of the coaches said, "It's more about becoming an adult in terms of behaviour."

It was also recognised that athletes needed to keep coaches informed so that coaches could make appropriate changes to training schedules and demands. Stacey's coach explained, "We always rely on proactivity in the athletes, if they are facing heavier workloads or challenges." Further, the coach went on to explain how he facilitates independence, "Yeah, little projects and work that we do to empower them to I guess understand the consequences of their actions. So if every athlete has got a clear goal and if their goal is challenging enough then we've defined what, or they've defined what behaviours and attitudes and character is needed to stretch to that goal and then if they're not achieving it you just remind them of their goal and how is this behavior or this attitude or character working towards that?" By encouraging athletes in this manner, it helped to provide them with the skills to succeed in their dual career and particularly their potential to achieve within sport.

3) Flexible to demands of education and transitions, compromise where necessary

For athletes to be able to maintain their dual career and particularly manage their transition to university it was apparent that the athletes needed their entourage to be flexible in response to the demands they were facing. For example, discussing his A' level exams, Taylor said, "I sort of prioritised my A' levels over training even leading up to the Euros, like my coach, I don't know, he understood but he was sort of not best pleased when I said over the next six week I'm only going to be going canoeing six times, but I guess he sort of understood that obviously I needed to get my A-levels so I could come to [venue] to go to university and train at the same time." Taylor's coach talked about the same situation, explained, "Taylor went to the European Championships, that was identified as a less important event for him...he was trying to get his place at uni and therefore we sort of recognised that maybe there needed to be a priority shift in the interim period between the worlds and the Europeans and consequently his attention shifted to trying to pass his A-levels and getting the grades he needed and his investment in canoeing definitely depleted." Such flexibility ensured athletes were able to make the commitments they deemed necessary to their schooling at certain times. For Stacey this was when she had deadlines for college work, as she said, "I had to sacrifice some of the senior world cups because I had to be in college because of certain things....So I was like [coach] I can't train. But he understood that, but then, it's a bit gutting that I had to give up on those spaced because I had to be in college....but it's a good way, I think, it's like making sacrifices. Everyone has to make sacrifices when you're an athlete."

To help athletes and coaches manage specific demands and transition points, it appeared that communication was key. The performance lifestyle advisor said, "It

was just making sure now that he started uni had he planned what his induction week was going to look like?, had he spoken to [coach]? Just to kind of say ‘look, you know, this is going to be a bit of a busier time, have you just measured your expectations with your coach around what your demands are going to be?’” Further, given the demands that athletes encountered and the times they were required to be at university, the entourage (particularly coaches) also had to compromise in their expectations and plans for the athletes. This was apparent with both of the coaches scheduling their training around their athletes’ university timetables. Stacey’s coach explained his views on this, “I guess if you were to say to me as coach in an ideal world how would I set the training, then yes, they [training and lectures] probably would clash every day...but we don’t live in that ideal world so I deal with the uni programme first and then I plan around the uni programme.”

In addition to adapting to the university timetable, the coaches also demonstrated an understanding of the overall transitions athletes experienced and altered their expectations in line with this. Taylor’s coach explained, “Now you’ve also got the issue that he’s living away from home, you know, so he’s got to cook for himself and feed himself, tidy up and keep things around him in order, do his washing, all those sort of challenges as well, so he’s been burdened with, you know, a fairly intensive group of other activities, which previously he didn’t have to deal with and that inevitably is I think going to create some level of challenges we’ll adapt to.” Such flexibility was viewed positively by the athletes, as Taylor said when evaluating how he managed his transition to university, “I guess sort of the flexibility from the coach, sort of knowing when I need to put in a bit of training, where I need to put in a bit of revision, sort of having that flexibility to work around everything to make it sort of tailored, so it’ll be the most conducive environment I guess then also sort of [performance lifestyle advisor] coming into it saying or like helping me be on top of things, that’s good.”

4) Provide opportunities to access appropriate support

Given the level of these athletes it was desirable that they could access to a large amount of support, including coaches, sport scientists, and performance lifestyle advisors. Access to such support was enhanced due to the athletes moving to universities located near to high performance training centres. This move was deemed to be important in helping athletes to maintain their dual career and achieve at the highest levels in sport. As Taylor’s coach said, “What we do recognise is that being in sort of a high performance centre environment where there are other athletes training alongside these athletes at a high level of performance, high level of commitment and a support structure around them means it is significant for their development and yeah an exposure to the wide world, which obviously from a slalom canoeing perspective is critical. So yes it is a major step forward.” While the structured sport support increased around athletes, parental involvement was seen to decrease. Taylor’s dad explained, “I think now we’re there purely to give him emotional support, encouragement, education, and I can’t really give him much support because educationally he’s working at a far higher degree level than I ever did. Sports, he’s at a far higher level, so really it’s just giving him that emotional support that we’re here, we’re there for him all the time, you know.” Although parents described a shift in the types of support they provided, athletes desired and appreciated their enduring emotional support.

The increased access to sport support was viewed very positively by the athletes and was highlighted as a key contributor in allowing athletes to continue with their education and manage the demands of a dual career. For example, talking about working with a sport psychologist, Taylor explained, "Obviously when you're getting deep into work and stuff and you try and do sport as well you start to sort of like get stuck in a bit of a hole so if you've never got any time or anything and then the psychologist sort of helps you dig yourself out a bit, sort of helps you try and stay on top of it and stay happy and that kind of stuff." One of the main benefits of the support that was available to athletes was that it was aimed at supporting not only their sporting success, but also their education. By having access to a broad range of support, it ensured that athletes could focus their attentions upon their university and training demands without having to worry about other things. The performance lifestyle advisor was deemed to be particularly important in reducing athletes' worries. Further, she also freed up individuals to be able to attend to their specific tasks, as Stacey's coach said, "Our lifestyle advisor, she links very closely to the uni's so it's a pretty smooth pathway for a coach, don't have to get too involved."

However, the provision of support alone did not appear to be sufficient because some athletes would not access it. Therefore the entourage actively encouraged athletes used the support appropriately. As the performance lifestyle advisor said, "I mean the whole support network is there, it's then making sure that he accesses that appropriately, it's just give and take really a lot of the time, yeah." Moreover, it was important that all aspects of the athletes' support network knew what was required and available. Stacey's coach explained, "The big thing for us, is educating the uni's on what we do. Because if it was football, like an academy, it's obviously, they'll be pretty flexible around what we do. I guess we have to educate people about what level Stacey's performing to. "By ensuring the athletes accessed support and all members of the network knew what other individuals were doing, it ensured that athletes received the full benefit of the support and could more easily maintain their dual career.

5) Open and frequent communication between entourage members

To ensure all members of the entourage, along with the athletes, were pulling in the same direction and to maximise the available support, open and frequent communication seemed critical. For example, talking about Stacey, the performance lifestyle advisor said, "I now am just checking with her every time that she's back in [venue] and I've also got really good contacts with the uni, so if there's anything not going right I will definitely hear from them and the sport's good at that." Such links between the university and the sport were deemed to be particularly important, as the performance lifestyle advisor said, "The contacts with them was quite useful because it meant we could just keep track of it [her progress] and they were both supportive and then from there we've just made sure that she's in contact with the sports department, so that they can sort her out with kind of time off and things like that and she's in the best position."

Further, when summarising how they supported their athletes, Stacey's coach said, "Teamwork, communication, teamwork and realizing that we need to be accountable." Talking about the things that facilitated his dual career, Taylor also explained, "I would say like [performance lifestyle advisor] and uni. I sent them an email introduction, so they sort of communicated a bit." He further explained, that

establishing such communication channels between himself, his university, and the performance lifestyle advisor was important for limiting future conflict and helping to manage demands when, “selection time comes or going off abroad for trips and then like I guess these three can interact on a day-to-day basis.” Stacey reiterated the value of communication within her support network, explaining, “Keeping that communication going and not letting some people know out of the blue or not knowing what’s going on. So probably just me keeping them updated, giving information on what’s going on. I think that’s it.”

6) Prepare for future career demands and understand priorities

Finally, the focus of the entourage throughout the athletes’ transition to university has been upon helping them to prepare for their future career. For example, while receiving support it was ensured that athletes were focused on and aware of specific goals. Such awareness was necessary to ensure that appropriate steps could be taken to ensure that athletes’ opportunities to achieve these goals were maximised. The performance lifestyle advisor explained, “Based on where they are in the Olympic cycle, whether they have a Rio or a Tokyo profile, what their degree course requirements are with every athlete, what does it follow, what does the coach say and developmentally they need to go, do they need to relocate to London, do they need to, you know, train fulltime for this or whatever, so yea, completely individual.” Further, when talking about Stacey, the performance lifestyle advisor said, “If she was going to be up for selection then I think it would be more strategies around how can we get her to selection without being too stressed about stuff.” Such a proactive approach to preparing for future demands appeared beneficial because it ensured that everything was planned for and that any issues that might arise in either their education or sport could be anticipated and dealt with.

In helping athletes understand what they were trying to achieve and preparing for this, athletes could also identify their priorities and put themselves in the best place for success. For example, Taylor explained that he had initially wanted to complete a medical degree. However, following conversations with other athletes and members of the National Governing Body, he re-evaluated his goals and adjusted his focus. As he said, “It was just like in a workshop where everyone was sort of planning out the next ten years of your life or whatever and I sort of put that [complete a medical degree] down but I talked to the coaches and stuff on the course and it sort of put things in perspective.” Similarly, when talking about why Stacey was maintaining education, Stacey’s coach said, “I guess there’s an understanding from her end, I guess a vision from her end, do we support that or don’t we? We do.” By understanding athletes’ visions the coaches and other members of the entourage were aware of what was required from them to help the athletes achieve. Thus, appropriate support could be provided to facilitate success.

Further support required to facilitate a dual career

The support the athletes received to maintain their dual career was deemed to be very useful. Further, it effectively covered all elements of the athletes’ careers. However, two additional aspects were identified that were thought might be beneficial in further facilitating athletes’ dual careers.

1) Financial assistance

The parents indicated that the financial cost of canoeing had been particularly challenging and thus financial assistance throughout the programme would have been beneficial. Taylor's dad said, "Oh an untold pot of money that would take me to every event, you know to go!" Similarly, Stacey's grandfather shared, "She's [Stacey] no longer got the money to fund things like new boats. That's becoming a problem." Such additional financial assistance was deemed to be particularly valuable when the athletes moved to university near training venues because, as the performance lifestyle advisor explained, "[It's the] cost of housing near venue." By receiving additional funding, it seemed that participants felt athletes would be more likely to succeed in their dual careers.

2) Further communication and integration

One of the main strengths of this programme appeared to be the strong links and communication between the different members of the athletes' support network and particularly the communication that exists between the sport and university. Maintenance and improvement of these links was perceived as something that would further benefit the athletes. As the performance lifestyle advisor said, "I think retaining that support with the university, that's going to be quite key." Stacey's coach further explained, "A university sport liaison individual, so they're like sort of interface between, you know, the governing body and the athlete and the university, so that, you know, when there are conflicts and things like that there is somebody who's clearly there to try to sort of help marry the two projects as such would be good." Stacey's coach also explained how their programme could help to increase the communication and integrated support. He said, "I think on the flip side, and interesting one, we could perhaps step up in inviting the institutions in tour our centres...it would be good to get the head of whatever department to come and see what we do, have a tour from Stacey, see her train. As open pathways of communication so we understand each other."

Cross-Case Analysis and Conclusions

Following the within case analysis, a cross-case analysis was conducted from which conclusions regarding the role of the entourage in supporting dual careers could be made. An overview of this analysis is provided in Table 2 (entourage support) and 3 (further support desired). Overall, the cross-case analysis demonstrated that despite the differences between the structures and the athletes within each of these five cases there are many more similarities than differences in athletes' experiences, the support provided by the entourage, and the additional support desired for the entourage. An overview of the consistent ideas that emerged across the cases is presented below.

Experiences of dual careers

With regards to the experiences of maintaining the dual career, it seemed that the athletes were consistent in their belief that a dual career was beneficial. The benefits ranged from a desire to learn and develop as an individual, to understanding the need for a back-up plan to sport, and desiring balancing within their lives. The athletes, and their entourage, demonstrated a consistent understanding that the life of a professional athlete is challenging and that the potential for athletes to succeed is very small. Thus, having their education to fall back on was deemed to be very important. Additionally, some of the athletes and their entourage highlighted the sport and education performance benefits that could result from maintaining a dual career. For example, the organisation, discipline, and time management skills that were required to successfully negotiate a dual career were perceived as beneficial to athletes' personal, sporting, and schooling development. This recognition of the benefits of the dual career seemed to help the athletes overcome any challenges that could arise in their dual career and also helped to maintain their motivation to continue with their education.

The athletes and their entourage across the different cases also discussed similar challenges related to maintaining a dual career. The main challenges were associated with the time demands that arise from attempting to maintain both activities, which consequently lead to tiredness or fatigue. Additional challenges were experienced at key times within the sport and academic calendars. For example, exam times were noted as a particularly important time for the athletes and one that could result in additional pressures. Similarly, when athletes were undergoing large periods of travel abroad or engaged in critical competition periods this could also increase the challenges they faced. Despite such challenges, the athletes indicated that with the support they received from their entourage they had generally been able to negotiate these challenges. Moreover, it appeared that the benefits of maintaining a dual career outweighed the challenges.

Support from the entourage

The entourage that surrounded athletes varied depending upon the structure in which they were located and also the culture of their sport. However, despite these differences, there were a number of similarities in the types of support that the entourage provided to facilitate athletes' dual careers. Consistent across all cases was the need for the entourage members to demonstrate an understanding of the demands of engaging in a dual career. This understanding was apparent in the entourage members' explanations of athletes' experiences and also in the

behaviours they displayed. The entourage members described numerous ways in which they adapted the demands they placed on the athletes from reducing the requirements to complete chores at home, to providing flexible school timetables and opportunities for extra study, and changing training timetables to facilitate school demands. By being aware of the demands the athletes were encountering, particularly around certain times such as exams and large periods of travel abroad, the entourage ensured that athletes were able to manage the pressures of the two careers and fulfill all their demands to their highest level. Moreover, this understanding and flexibility appeared to demonstrate an appreciation and recognition of what the athletes were trying to achieve, which helped athletes to maintain their motivation and enjoyment of engaging in both pursuits.

In addition to their understanding of the demands of the dual career, there was a consistent demonstration of the importance of education and the value of maintaining a dual career. The manner in which this was demonstrated varied across different cases, with some cases prioritising education and others prioritising sport. Nevertheless, there was a consistent belief that athletes should continue with their education and that there was not only a need to continue with education but that it was beneficial for athletes to do this. This value placed on education by the entourage was consistent with athletes own desires to complete and achieve in an educational setting. Thus there was consistency in the goals that everyone was trying to achieve. Such a shared goal and consistent approach to the dual career ensured that athletes were not conflicted as they strove to complete their schoolwork or their training commitments. Further, it ensured that everyone involved with the athletes were aware of the expectations placed upon the athletes, which again eased any tension within the entourage. In some of the cases, the value on education extended to entourage members specifically monitoring athletes' engagement in their academic work and holding athletes accountable for their attainment in this field. Athletes viewed such monitoring positively because it helped them to remain focused and made sure they stayed on top of work. Athletes who were tempted to prioritise their sport or who spent a lot of time away from their educational establishment or training venue particularly desired such monitoring. In other cases this desire or requirement for such monitoring was not apparent. When this was monitoring was not present it was usually because the athletes were very dedicated to their academic work or because they were completing their academic work through a traditional educational system, which had such academic monitoring built into it.

The provision of equal (but different) support and encouragement for athletes sporting and academic pursuits was also apparent across the different cases. Again, the specific manner in which athletes received such support appeared to differ depending on their sport and educational structure they were engaged in. However, the fundamental requirement for athletes to be able to engage in a dual career was having the necessary opportunities to complete their education and their training requirements. If athletes did not have access to these opportunities they would not have been able to maintain a dual career. For such opportunities to be present, the athletes were dependent upon their education establishments facilitating their engagement in sport and their sporting communities to support and enable their academic engagement. If the support structure in either component of the career was not supportive of the other it was unlikely that athletes would have achieved in

the manner they did. Such support therefore required athletes to have access to a specific support network, containing key individuals who would support different components of their career. In some of the structures, the different components of the career were supported by specific individuals who oversaw one specific area alone, while in other structures the support was more integrated with all individuals either formally or informally attending to the dual career. Whether it was through individual roles or a more integrated approach, communication between all members of the entourage appeared pertinent. Such communication again varied between formal and informal methods, but it was present and was necessary to ensure everyone was aware of what was expected and occurring. In some instances the athletes and their parents facilitated such communication, while in others it was guided by specific points of contact in the educational establishment or the sporting environment. When a specific point of contact for communication was available this was generally perceived extremely positively, because it reduced the burden on both the athlete and their parents.

In helping athletes to succeed in their sporting careers and their academic endeavours, some of the cases provided specific education on these areas. That is, in some cases workshops or sessions were provided for athletes and their parents to illustrate the demands of the dual career and their future sporting career. In providing these workshop, the sports sought to help prepare the athletes for the demands they would encounter and provide them with the necessary skills to maintain their dual careers. The manner in which this education occurred varied from formal national workshops to informal chats, and individual communication. It appeared that such education was valuable in teaching athletes specific skills, such as time management, that might be beneficial in supporting their dual career. In other cases such explicit education was less apparent, but similar ideas might be discussed through day-to-day conversations. Educating athletes and providing them with an opportunity to develop skills to better manage the demands of a dual career was seen as beneficial by the sports because it helped athletes to perform at their best even when they were experiencing busy academic periods. Similarly, the educational establishments realised that such education helped to reduce the impact sporting commitments had upon academic work. Additionally, by educating athletes, the clubs were helping athletes to prepare for their future sporting careers, when they might not have access to such a supportive or understanding network around them.

Finally, there appeared to be a consistent belief across the cases that athletes needed to have some control over their education and sport decisions. In some cases such control was demonstrated by entourage members trusting athletes to guide their own development, while in other cases it was through the active development of independence in athletes. The need to provide athletes with an opportunity to guide their own development was perceived to be very important because everyone involved realised that only athletes were aware of all the demands and challenges they were experiencing across different domains. In general, the athletes interviewed were very committed to both their education and their sport, which likely made it easier to provide them with ownership over their careers. The benefits of trusting athletes to guide their development included athletes feeling that they were listened to and understood, and feeling that they were making decisions they believed in. Similar benefits were noted in the cases where athletes were actively encouraged to develop independence. When encouraging

independence and trusting athletes to guide their development, the entourage did ensure that they provided advice as required and also that athletes were making informed decisions. Beyond this, however, the athletes made their own choices and thus did not feel pressured to do something that they were uncomfortable doing.

Some specific examples of support within different cases also emerged, such as anticipating and planning for problems within the tennis academy and being proactive in planning for educational and swimming commitments in swimming. Such planning was necessary due to the extensive demands these athletes experienced within their sport and demonstrated a desire from the entourage to reduce some of the unexpected challenges or pressures the athletes might encounter. Further, given the frequent clashes between key education and key sport competitions it appeared that planning and anticipating blocks of time where education or sport participation might have to be prioritised was beneficial. Such planning was not discussed in all cases and if it is not present it might be useful to integrate in the future.

Additionally, the extent to which the educational establishments and the clubs or coaches engaged in direct communication appeared to vary quite considerably across the cases. In some cases there were well-established protocols and structures to facilitate communication, while in others the communication was left almost entirely to the athlete or their parents. In the cases that had established communication channels, there was unanimous agreement that this was beneficial because it ensured that the educational establishments understood the level at which the athlete was competing and the time commitments they encountered. Similarly, for the clubs, it provided an opportunity to monitor academic commitments and ensure that athletes were achieving in this domain. Overall, these established communication structures were beneficial in allowing all members of the entourage to make changes to the demands they were placing on athletes to ease pressures and facilitate success. Given the benefits of these established communication channels, this is something that might be beneficial to introduce across all sports.

Support provided	Case
Belief in value of education and benefits of a dual career/ Know what athlete wants to achieve	Tennis academy National field hockey squad High performance swimming squad
Monitor engagement in education endeavours/ Demonstrate importance of education and hold athletes' accountable	Tennis Academy Football academy
Understand the demands of a dual career and be flexible in requirements/ Flexible to demands of education and transitions and compromise where necessary	Tennis academy National field hockey squad High performance swimming squad Football academy Elite canoeing programme
Integrated support/ Provide opportunities to access support	Tennis academy High performance swimming squad Elite canoeing programme
Anticipate and plan for problems/ Be proactive in planning for education and sporting commitments	Tennis academy High performance swimming squad
Trust the athlete to communicate & guide	Tennis academy

their development/ Facilitate independence and ownership	National field hockey squad High performance swimming squad Elite canoeing programme
Encourage and support athletes' sporting and academic achievements	National field hockey squad Football academy
Educate athletes regarding time management and future expectations	National field hockey squad
Individual roles to account for all aspects of development, facilitated by good communication	Football academy
Open and constant communication	High performance swimming squad Elite canoeing programme
Prepare for future career demands and understand priorities	Elite canoeing programme

Table 2. Support provided by the entourage

Further support required

The cases were chosen for this study because they had been successful in supporting athletes' dual careers. Thus, it is not surprising that the athletes and the members of their entourage were very positive about the support they provided and received. Nevertheless there were some suggestions regarding further support that could be beneficial to maximise the support the athletes received. One of the main suggestions or comments across the cases was regarding the financial support that was available. Often raised by parents, it was apparent that the maintenance of a dual career was costly and something that could place large financial demands upon the family. As such, some of the athletes' education choices appeared to have been influenced by the financial costs of training and competing. Thus, there was a general consensus that additional financial support would be beneficial.

Similarly, there was consistency across a number of the cases regarding the need for continued or further communication and integrated support among the entourage members. Although it was generally perceived that individuals within the athletes' support networks communicated well, there were some instances, particularly between clubs and educational establishments, where it was perceived that more structured approaches to communication and integration would be beneficial. The cases in which sport-school communication was successful often had a specific point of contact in the club and in the school who engaged in frequent communication. However, even if this communication was successful, some athletes still experienced issues if information was not fully disseminated within educational establishments or across the rest of their entourage. Thus, a more joined up approach among the entourage was often highlighted as something that would help to facilitate the dual career.

Some more specific desires for additional support were also identified within certain cases. Such support appeared to be associated with the culture of different sports. That is, some sports have a culture of maintaining education and keeping adolescents in traditional school structures, while others do not. The accepted norms regarding maintaining education and the avenue through which this occurred was deemed to influence what support was available to the athletes and consequently what additional support was desired. Similarly, the expectations or culture of specific

clubs regarding continuing education and particularly higher-level qualifications and tertiary degrees also appeared to influence the support that was needed to maintain a dual career. That is, those sports in which it is expected and accepted that athletes remain in and continue with their education appeared to identify fewer areas for additional support compared to those in which there were restrictions on the maintenance of education.

Further support required	Case
More opportunities to engage in integrated training and education/ Options for education	Tennis academy Football academy
More structure and support for education when travelling	Tennis academy
Support and information for the parents	Tennis academy
Develop/ Facilitate a culture for dual careers	Tennis academy
Greater/ Further communication and integration throughout the entourage	Tennis academy Football academy National field hockey squad High performance swimming squad Elite canoeing programme
More recognition from the school	National field hockey squad
Access financial assistance	National field hockey squad High performance swimming squad Elite canoeing programme

Table 3. Further support desired from and for entourage

Conclusion

The purpose of this study was to identify the role of the entourage in supporting elite adolescent athletes' engagement in education and sport. Taken together, the findings of this study highlight the active and purposeful engagement of entourage members in ensuring that athletes were able to maintain a dual career. All members of the entourage demonstrated an understanding of the value of education and the benefits of maintaining a dual career. Consequently, individual entourage members sought to actively engage in behaviours that would help athletes to manage their dual career and to success in all of their pursuits. In addition to the behaviours of individual entourage members, specific structures were in place to support athletes' dual career. Although these structures and support mechanisms varied across different sports, there was consistency in the attempts to ensure that simultaneous achievement in sport and education was possible. Overall, this study points to the need for National Governing Bodies, clubs, coaches, schools, universities, educational establishments, teachers, parents, and athletes to work together to actively seek to facilitate athletes' dual careers.

Recommendations

Based on the cases examined, the following recommendations are provided to enhance the support the athletic entourage can provide to facilitate youth athletes' simultaneous achievement in academic and sporting pursuits:

General recommendations for all entourage members:

- 1) Ensure the athletes' entourage includes sufficient individuals to attend to athletes' sporting and educational needs.
- 2) Identify specific roles for entourage members to support athletes' dual careers but encourage support to be provided in an integrated manner.
- 3) When creating a support network for athletes, make sure it comprises individuals who value education and understand the need for athletes to continue their education for future success.
- 4) Ensure all entourage members are aware of the personal and sporting benefits associated with maintaining education and engaging in a dual career.
- 5) Examine the physical, cognitive, and emotional demands of the sport in which athletes are involved so that challenges to maintaining a dual career can be anticipated. Adapt educational or sport requirements to help athletes manage these demands.
- 6) Identify particular times when training, competition, or academic demands are likely to increase or clash. Plan for these times and be flexible regarding commitments during these times.
- 7) Educate athletes regarding how to succeed in their sport and education. Then trust athletes to know what they need to do at different points to enhance opportunities for success in their dual career.
- 8) Identify particular points of contact in the two domains of athletes' lives (e.g., sport and education) and ensure regular contact is maintained between these individuals.
- 9) All entourage members should engage in frequent, planned communication regarding athletes' commitments. Through such communication plan for the athletes' commitments and monitor athletes' engagement in sport and education.
- 10) Encourage athletes to communicate with all members of their entourage regarding their demands and commitments.

National Governing Body recommendations:

- 1) Foster a culture whereby continuing education is accepted and supported within the sport.
- 2) Develop club and sport cultures that support the identification and development of individual or team support networks that comprise sufficient individuals to

support athletes' sporting and academic pursuits.

- 3) Develop and integrate performance lifestyle or welfare advisor positions within sports. These advisors should have a specific responsibility for supporting adolescent athletes' dual careers and working to facilitate communication between the sport and education domains.
- 4) Work with coaches to educate them about the performance benefits athletes gain from their involvement in education and work with educational establishments to provide them with insights into the benefits sporting engagement has for young people.
- 5) Create workshops and materials that can be shared with athletes and their parents regarding the demands of maintaining a dual career. Encourage educational establishments and sports to work with athletes to develop the skills required to manage and succeed in their dual career.
- 6) Encourage clubs and coaches to develop appropriate support structures to monitor and support athletes' sporting and academic achievements. Help clubs and coaches to develop specific roles that will be responsible for communicating with educational establishments.
- 7) Support educational establishments in developing communication channels with clubs. Provide educators with information regarding athletes' dual careers and the benefits of engaging in frequent and structured communication with clubs and coaches.
- 8) Work with coaches, clubs, educational establishments, and parents to help educate athletes regarding the consequences of different decisions they make regarding their education and sporting commitments. Encourage the entourage to provide opportunities for athletes to develop their independence.
- 9) Provide coaches and clubs with examples of different educational and sport structures that are in place and examples of best practice.
- 10) Provide athletes and parents with the means to facilitate communication between different members of the entourage.

Educational establishment recommendations:

- 1) Develop specific sport liaisons that can work with local and national clubs and coaches to facilitate athletes' dual careers.
- 2) Work with athletes, parents, and coaches to understand the demands athletes are encountering and develop strategies to help athletes manage these demands throughout the year.
- 3) Plan and prepare for busy/important times within the school year, when athletes might be under additional stress. If possible, provide additional support to athletes during this time.

- 4) Acknowledge the achievements of athletes and share in their successes.
- 5) Seek guidance from NGBs, coaches, parents, and particularly athletes regarding how to best support individual athletes' dual careers.

Club/Coach recommendations:

- 1) Value education and understand the benefits athletes gain from maintaining their dual career. Particularly, appreciate the benefits to athletes' sports performance that can be gained from maintaining a dual career.
- 2) Take an interest in athletes' education and, when necessary and appropriate, help athletes to prioritise their education over sport (e.g., around exam times).
- 3) Educate teachers and other individuals within the athletes' education network regarding the demands athletes are encountering. Work with schools to provide alternative opportunities to ease the pressure athletes might be encountering.
- 4) Identify and plan for times when important competitions and academic commitments might clash. Work with educational establishments to prepare for these situations and be flexible regarding training demands at these time points.
- 5) Develop a specific educational liaison who is responsible for communicating with athletes, parents, and the athletes' educational establishment and teachers or lecturers.

Parent recommendations:

- 1) Create a support network around the athlete comprising people who share the same educational and sporting goals.
- 2) Engage in constant communication with members of the entourage regarding long-term academic and sporting goals. Ensure all individuals share the same expectations and know what the athlete wants to achieve.
- 3) Support athletes' decisions regarding their education but ensure athletes have pertinent information to understand the consequences of different decisions.
- 4) Encourage athletes to take ownership over their development and utilise the support that is available to them.
- 5) Take an interest in athletes' academic work and provide emotional and tangible support to help them achieve in this domain.
- 6) Provide athletes' with the necessary emotional, tangible, and informational support to achieve in the sporting domain.
- 7) Seek out support and information to ensure that appropriate guidance can be provided to help athletes maintain their dual career.
- 8) Understand the demands that athletes are encountering and, where possible, limit placing further demands on athletes.**

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