

Title: Pressures to Perform: An Interview Study of Australian High Performance School-Age Athletes' Perceptions of Balancing their School and Sporting Lives

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Keywords: School-age athlete; High performance sport; Perceptions; Pressures; Dual life; Australian

Sport: Mixed

Main theme: Fatigue

Secondary theme(s): School-aged dual career

Aims: This study focuses on the views of Australian school-aged athletes in dealing with the demands to perform in their two careers: sport and education.

Method: The study interviewed 9 current school aged athletes and 10 former school aged athletes. Specifically, the interview questions focused on the individual's views of how they combine their dual careers. The participants were from a variety of sports including rugby, swimming, surfing and gymnastics.

Results and practical implications: The results of this study showed that dual career individuals identified a number of issues related to combining their two careers, such as: the need to overcome ongoing tiredness or soreness. Therefore, it is important for athletes to monitor their symptoms of fatigue and ensure they get sufficient recovery time so that fatigue does not impact their sport, school or social lives and to avoid overtraining and overuse injuries. However, the athletes often resented recovery time or "down time" and described it as "time wasting". Therefore, coaches and lifestyle advisors must encourage dual career athletes to see recovery time as equally important as time spend on either of their pursuits rather than wasted time. There was also recognition amongst athletes for a need to maintain a healthy diet to aid this recovery. The participants in this study often

talked about sacrificing socialising as they didn't have time between school and sport. Plus, many of the female participants talked about dealing with bullying at their school. When talking specifically about their education the dual career athletes often described missing class time and therefore, experiencing difficulties in learning and requiring mentoring or additional tutoring. This article also relates the responses of the dual career athletes to schooling systems that could be "athlete friendly". Namely, the study suggests a four-way communication network between student-athlete, parents, teachers and school administration (including sport administrators). This four-way communication network can support the individual in developing a personalised study plan. This network should also be made aware of some of the issues identified in this study such as: tiredness, bullying, guilt in time wasting and social sacrifice.

TASS have produced this lay summary. The full article is available (permissions may apply):

<https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S221126691300025X>