

Flying Finn on performance

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FLYING FINN ON PERFORMANCE

Athlete-centred approach is IN! and not a moment too soon. If we ask our athletes what their main goal is from participation in elite sport, it will likely be something about ‘peak performance at my next event’. Therefore, everything we do as sports and exercise medicine clinicians should support peak performance when it counts. One could, justifiably, point out the potential to harm the athlete in the pursuit of peak performance. However, it is possible to promote and engage in practices which safeguard the athlete from potential future harm, without compromising their ability to perform at their peak when it matters the most. What risks do athletes face in trying to achieve peak performance? Should training loads be decreased to minimise this risk? Shared decision making in an athlete-centred approach allows us to balance the athlete’s performance against potential harms. This edition of BJSM explores this topic in various sporting contexts.

FINNISH SPORTS PHYSIOTHERAPY ASSOCIATION CONGRESS 2023, 9 JUNE 2023–10 JUNE 2023: PRIORITISING PERFORMANCE

Our theme for the Finnish Sports Physiotherapy Association (SUFT) Congress 2023 is ‘Prioritising Performance’, also the focus of this BJSM edition, and it will take place on 9 June 2023–10 June 2023 in Helsinki, Finland. The congress will focus on implementing peak performance in sports physical therapy in different contexts throughout the athletes’ career. It will include optimising health for peak performance, implementing injury prevention for peak performance and achieving peak performance during rehabilitation. Our line-up of renowned speakers includes Phil Glasgow to present on peak performance and athletes’

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robustness; Fiona Wilson on pain, safeguarding and performance in youth athletes; Jane Thornton on the team physician’s view of performance; and Stuart Lancaster to present on creating an environment for peak performance in elite rugby. In 2022, we were finally able to meet face to face (again) in Helsinki. In 2023, the SUFT decided on a hybrid format; therefore, sessions will also be streamed live. Live streaming creates opportunities for people to take part in all the sessions, even if they are unable to travel to Helsinki.

THE FLYING FINN INNOVATOR FOR PERFORMANCE

This issue’s cover photo is of Paavo Nurmi, ‘The Flying Finn’ with heel strike, perfect stride, with his torso upright, and arms swinging effortlessly by his side, takes a quick glance at the Helsinki Olympic Stadium, as he coasts to victory in what would have been one of numerous races. This statue immortalises Paavo’s drive to be the best runner in the world and to be the best in every race. He may not have always been the most talented runner, but his commitment to achieving peak running performance was unmatched. He absorbed all the literature on running training he could find, which led to a year around training programme to improve performance.

DOES ‘OPTIMISED’ BIOMECHANICS EQUAL PEAK PERFORMANCE?

Paavo Nurmi was not only famous for running, stopwatch in his hand, to better pace his running but also for practising his running technique—practices that were almost unheard of prior to the 1920s. Paavo focused on improving his performance all year round and peaking when it mattered. This issue’s consensus statement by Mackay *et al* describes a framework for video analysis in netball (see page 441). The diverse expert panel explored physical, technical and contextual aspects of netball performance while integrating it with additional sources such as injury surveillance and microtechnology data. This framework will improve the consistency of language used in supporting performance and inform netball-specific injury prevention strategies.

OPTIMISING PEAK PERFORMANCE IS INJURY PREVENTION

Injury prevention is not a single entity, it needs to be integrated in the coaching plan and support the road to performance. Integrating sport specific warm-ups into training has been shown to reduce injuries but the results are not always conclusive for implementation. In this edition, we present two sport specific warm-up protocols for judo and volleyball, two very contrasting events. The Injury Prevention and Performance Optimization Netherlands protocol was tested in a cluster randomised controlled trial among 269 judokas in the Netherlands (see page 450). The intervention used tried and tested exercises such as flexibility, agility, strength, balance and coordination, and strength and stability over a period of 16–26 weeks. However, even with high adherence 75%–78%, there were no significant differences in mean injury prevalence between intervention and controls. In contrast, Verhagen *et al* (see page 464) observed reduced injury rates in the intervention group compared with controls 1 even though adherence was between 44% and 51%.

EVIDENCE-BASED PEAK PERFORMANCE (N=1)

Among his many numerous accolades in his illustrious career were five Olympic gold medals in Paris in 1924. Paavo Nurmi’s story challenges today’s evidence-based practice focusing with a performance-informed training practice with the n=1 approach. The professionals around him trusted his decisions and supported his choices to achieve his goals, which today

we would call athlete-centred management. Nurmi owned his career from start to finish. Today, how can we make sure that the ownership of the career remains with the athlete as clinicians simultaneously provide the best evidence-based care to support the athlete's goals? It is not performance at all costs but rather to ensure our professional clinical management maximises the potential for peak performance while also protecting the athletes' health and safety.

BJSM-LIVE: BREAKING THE MOLD

SUFT always strives to be innovators and reimagine our congress every year. This year, BJSM-Live have teamed up with the

SUFT congress to create a unique blend of experts and content that should not be missed. Check out the congress pages for latest news and programme updates at <https://suft.fi/suft-congress/>. See you in Helsinki!

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