

# CPSS

Centre for  
Child Protection  
& Safeguarding  
in Sport

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NACIONAL DA VIOLÊNCIA  
CONTRA ATLETAS

 Child Abuse in Sport  
European Statistics

 **SAFE SPORT**  
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# The Portuguese National Observatory on Violence Against Athletes (ObNVA)

For those who aren't aware, CPSS is very pleased to introduce ObNVA. The observatory was launched on the 22<sup>nd</sup> of September 2020 as an initiative of ISMAI (University of Maia)/Maiêutica) in collaboration with Plano i Association. ObNVA partners with: The Portuguese Olympic Committee, The Portuguese Institute for Sport and Youth, The Authority to Prevent and Combat Violence in Sport, the Order of the Portuguese Psychologists, Coaching Portugal, and the Gender Studies Research Centre.



The ObNVA includes two former Olympic athletes: João Rodrigues (sailing) and Diana Gomes (swimming). ObNVA is a platform for anonymous and confidential reporting of violence against athletes. It is also possible to request support for a complaint. This platform is based on the Observatory website: <https://obnva.ismai.pt>. The main objectives are:

- i) Collect situations of violence against athletes,
- ii) Characterise situations of violence against athletes, in order to better understand their typologies, dynamics, consequences and implications,
- iii) Direct people who request it to the competent authorities (e.g., police agencies, victim care).
- iv) Contribute to the development of scientific studies,
- v) Contribute to the optimisation of poli-



Dr Claudia Pinheiro

cies and measures to prevent violence against athletes.

The ObNVA team is:

- **Claudia Pinheiro:** ObNVA Coordinator; Assistant Professor at University of Maia (ISMAI), Portugal (mpinheiro@ismai.pt)
- **Teresa Figueiras:** Assistant Professor at University of Maia (ISMAI)
- **Sofia Neves:** Ass't Professor at University of Maia (ISMAI); President of the Plano i Association
- **Janete Borges:** Assistant Professor at University of Maia (ISMAI)

The team said:

*"During the first year, 15 reports were received. From these we are sure of the long way we have in front of us and the importance of this Observatory to give voice to all sports agents about this issue. Soon the 1<sup>st</sup> Congress of the Observatory will take place and we hope that this event becomes a space for the unveiling of this phenomenon."*

This work is much needed in Portugal. We wish them well and look forward to their contributions in this field!

## Who are we?

CPSS comprises 10 members from Edge Hill University and two external associate members:

- Professor Mike Hartill (Director)
- Dr Melanie Lang (Assist. Director)
- Nick Ashley
- Leon Fraser
- Sarah Hunt
- Dr Fiona Johnson
- Dr Jimmy O'Gorman
- Dr Laura Purdy
- Paul Rimmer
- Rik Southworth
- Professor Bettina Rulofs (external associate member)
- Associate Professor Jenny McMahon (external associate member)

CPSS members have expertise in a range of areas relating to safeguarding and the welfare of all involved in sport, including but not limited to:

- Abuse education
- Athlete and children's rights
- Athlete transitions
- Child abuse
- Disordered eating
- Duty of Care in sport
- Evaluation of policy, training etc.
- Match official/ referee welfare
- Mental health
- Physical contact/ 'touch' in sport
- Policy development & implementation
- Prevalence of abuse/violence
- Safe recruitment strategies
- Safeguarding disabled people in sport
- Safeguarding athletes in conflict zones
- Sexual violence/ abuse
- Sexual harassment
- Emotional abuse
- Physical abuse
- Lived experience and 'survivor' research

## Welcome!

We are pleased to welcome two new CPSS members: **Associate Professor Jenny McMahon**, University of Tasmania, Australia joins us as an associate member, and **Rik Southworth** comes on board as our latest PhD student.

Jenny is an award-winning researcher, teacher and former elite athlete who's work focuses on athlete wellbeing, education interventions centring on abuse and coach education. Meanwhile, Rik's PhD is exploring care and welfare in elite football academies.

# CPSS Research Seminar Series



Dr Barker-Ruchti

CPSS is pleased to announce the launch of its own online [seminar series](#), beginning autumn 2021. The inaugural CPSS seminar will take place online on **Wednesday 10th November, 1:00-3.00pm GMT**. The event is supported by the Institute for Social Responsibility and will feature two internationally renowned experts speaking on the impact of gender on safeguarding in sport:

- **Dr Natalie Barker-Ruchti** from Örebro University, Sweden, and
- **Professor Leanne Norman** from Leeds Beckett University, UK

This and future seminars aim to facilitate research networking, knowledge exchange, and continuing professional development in a friendly, relaxed environment and will feature talks from researchers, safe sport advocates and 'survivors', and sport and welfare professionals.

Seminars are free to attend and open to everyone so please do join us online!

You can find out more about the topics to be discussed at the inaugural event and register [here](#) or to find out more about future seminars, see [here](#) or contact the convenor Mel Lang on [langm@edgehill.ac.uk](mailto:langm@edgehill.ac.uk)



Prof. Leanne Norman

## Future Seminars—Save The Date!

Other free CPSS seminars scheduled for 2021/22 include:

**Wednesday 15th December 2021, 12-1pm GMT — *Physical and emotional abuse in sport***, Claire Heafford, athlete activist and co-founder of Gymnasts For Change and the #GymnastAlliance movement

**Wednesday 9th February 2022, 1-2pm GMT — *Instagram policies and the online abuse of elite women in strength sports***, Dr Catherine Phipps, Southampton Solent University

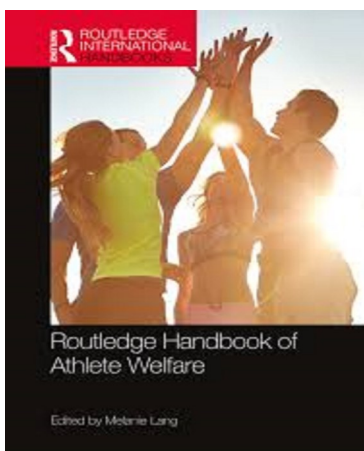
**Wednesday 11th May 2022, 1-2pm GMT — *Exploring the wellbeing of professional academy footballers***, Dr Jimmy O'Gorman, Edge Hill University

Find out more and book [here](#) or



# Athlete Welfare Book Launch

Athlete maltreatment has featured heavily in national and international headlines in recent years. Against this backdrop, CPSS assistant director Dr Melanie Lang hosted a free public event on developing understandings of athlete welfare to celebrate the release of her latest book, *The Routledge Handbook of Athlete Welfare*. The free online event was attended by athletes, researchers, and sport welfare policymakers and professionals from organisations including national governing bodies, Ann Craft Trust, and the International Centre for Ethics in Sport in Belgium. Delegates were drawn from the UK, Belgium, Cyprus, Sweden, and Spain.



The event was supported by Edge Hill's Institute for Social Responsibility (ISR) and was opened by Professor Jo Crotty, Director of the ISR. Three presentations from researchers who contributed to the book followed. In the first, Mel highlighted research that indicates emotional abuse is the most prevalent form of abuse in sport yet the least likely to be reported and called for more resources to be directed towards this and other non-sexual forms of maltreatment in sport. She also provided examples of how sport can empower athletes and better support their human rights.

In the second presentation, Dr Geoff Kohe from the University of Kent and CPSS member Dr Laura Purdy from Edge Hill discussed care ethics in sport. They highlighted how a particular narrow conceptualisation of care has become normalised in sport, arguing this restricts understandings of welfare. Geoff and Laura advocated for a broader understanding of athlete welfare and more nuanced conceptualisations of care that are more responsive to athlete needs.

Finally, Professor Hayley Fitzgerald of Leeds Beckett University and the University of Worcester discussed the welfare of disabled people in sport. Hayley noted that research on safeguarding in sport in relation to disability is rare, and that what little is known has come from studies that investigated welfare issues in the general sport population rather than specifically exploring the experiences of disabled participants. Hayley argued that an embedded approach is needed whereby issues of disability are infused within generic safeguarding approaches rather than disabled athletes being treated as a separate category of concern.

# CASES Prevalence Study

**CASES (Child Abuse in Sport: European Statistics)** is a collaborative partnership, led by Edge Hill, between seven universities, two national sport agencies and one international sport federation. The project is co-funded by the European Union with additional funding from partner Sport England.

The project aimed to provide robust data on the prevalence of harm experienced by children (people under the age of 18) within sport, across different national contexts.

The project began in January 2019. A preliminary report of findings will be published on 26th November and all partners will be staging dissemination events in the second half of November.

**In the UK, Sport England and the CPSS will be holding an online symposium on 24th November to present the key findings from the report.**

Co-funded by the  
Erasmus+ Programme  
of the European Union



Child Abuse in Sport  
European Statistics



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## The CASES Partnership



# Training Coaches & Athletes About Abuse In Sport

CPSS colleagues have been collaborating over the past year on an International Olympic Committee Research Centre-funded project to generate evidence-based training on maltreatment in sport for athletes and coaches. The project was run by CPSS associate member Associate Professor Jenny McMahon from the University of Tasmania in Australia, along with CPSS colleague Dr Mel Lang from Edge Hill, Dr Chris Zehntner from Southern Cross University, Australia, and Professor Kerry McGannon of Laurentian University, Canada.

The abuse education programme was implemented with children through to adults, both athletes and coaches, in three different sports (football, swimming and rowing) as a way of teaching about neglect and psychological (i.e., emotional) and physical abuse, as well as the effects of these forms of maltreatment.



A critical evaluation was then undertaken to identify whether the programme was effective in educating coaches and athletes about these forms of maltreatment, to what extent and why/why not. Identifying the theoretical, pedagogical, and educational considerations that inform the design and delivery of the education, as well as evaluating it to see if it worked demonstrates best practice of abuse education and can be modelled by sporting organisations and child protection agencies worldwide.

The study showed that a 'bottom-up' approach was highly effective as child athletes (8-12 years) were able to identify athlete maltreatment behaviours at the conclusion of the programme. However, the older the participants were (i.e., adult athletes and coaches), and the longer they had been involved in their sport, the more they uncritically accepted maltreatment (i.e., physical, psychological, neglect) in the name of enhanced competitive performance. These findings show how a 'bottom-up' approach to coach and athlete education is very much needed in terms of preventing athlete maltreatment from being normalised in the early years of sport.

As a result of a thorough programme evaluation, the study also outlined the core components needed for an effective evidenced-based abuse education programme (i.e., what works in terms of educational design, content, delivery considerations). It also highlighted an evaluation regime that organisations can undertake to understand the effectiveness of their education programmes. The one-year project was completed in September and the findings from the study are currently under review in academic journals and will be available open access in the next few months.



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## Members' Recent Scientific Publications & Presentations

- Barker-Ruchti, N. & **Purdy, L.** (2021) Education for sustainable development: Teaching deliberation and ethical decision-making in university coach education. *Sports Coaching Review*. DOI: 10.1080/21640629.1899654
- Hartill, M.** (2021) *Delivering athletes protection and safeguarding in sport: notes from a small island to an international setting*. Special symposium: 'Prevention of Abuse and Harassment in Sport. How to Safeguard the Athletes' Mental and Physical Health'. World Congress on Exercise is Medicine®, and World Congress on the Basic Science of Exercise in Regenerative Medicine, 1st-5th June, 2021.
- Harris, C. and **Hartill, M.** (2021) 'Survivor' research in sport. In M. Lang (ed.) *The Routledge Handbook of Athlete Welfare*. London: Routledge.
- Lang, M.** (2020) *Raising the bar?: Advances and omissions in safeguarding and promoting athlete welfare*. Presented at the 'Athlete Z: Where Will We Draw the Line on Athlete Welfare in Sport?' conference, 29<sup>th</sup> October 2020.
- Lang, M.** (2021) *The Routledge Handbook of Athlete Welfare*. London: Routledge.
- Lang, M.** & Papaefstathiou, M. (2021) Barred: Criminal record checks as a tool to prevent child abuse in sport. In M. Lang (ed.) *The Routledge Handbook of Athlete Welfare*. London: Routledge. pp. 365-375.
- Lang, M.** (2021) Developments in international policy on athlete welfare. In M. Lang (ed.) *The Routledge Handbook of Athlete Welfare*. London: Routledge. pp. 15-23.
- Lang M.** (2021) *Criminal history checks as a tool to prevent harassment and abuse in sport: The risks and benefits*. Presented at the Council of Europe Consultative Committee of the European Partial Agreement on Sport (EPAS), June 2021.
- McMahon, J.**, McGannon, K. R. & Palmer, C. (2021) Body shaming and associated practices as abuse: Athlete entourage as perpetrators of abuse. *Sport, Education and Society*. DOI: 10.1080/13573322.2021.1890571
- McVeigh, J. & **Lang, M.** (2021) The politics of safeguarding and child protection in sport: A history of the present. In S. Wagg & A. Pollock (eds.) *The Palgrave Handbook of Sport, Politics and Harm*. London: Palgrave Macmillan.
- O'Gorman, J.**, Partington, M., Nelson, L. & Potrac, P. (2021) Translation, intensification and fabrication: Professional football academy coaches' enactment of the Elite Player Performance Plan. *Sport, Education and Society*. 26, pp. 309-325.
- Purdy, L.**, Kohe, G. & Paulauskas, R. (2021) 'The country is under threat but the game goes on': Examinations of sports workers' welfare in spaces of geopolitical conflict. In M. Lang (ed.) *The Routledge Handbook of Athlete Welfare*. London: Routledge, pp. 242-250.
- Sothorn, N. A. & **O'Gorman, J.** (2021) Exploring the mental health and wellbeing of professional academy footballers in England. *Soccer and Society*. 22 (6), pp. 641-654.



# CPSS Contributions to Public Debate: House of Lords Select Committee

**The CPSS is committed to contributing to public dialogue and debate around safeguarding and child protection in sport. Colleagues contribute to a range of events every year, often beyond traditional academic circles.**

In April, Mike was invited to a House of Lords Select Committee (on a National Plan for Sport and Recreation) as an expert witness on safeguarding in sport. Mike joined Gary Cliffe, ambassador for [The Offside Trust](#), and Kimberley Walsh, Safeguarding Adults in Sport manager at the [Ann Craft Trust](#).

The panel answered questions from the select committee that included: Lord Willis of Knaresborough (The Chair); Baroness Blower; Baroness Brady; The Earl of Devon; Baroness Grey-Thompson; Baroness Morris of Yardley; and Lord Moynihan.

Gary Cliffe, a Detective Constable, was abused as a child in football and has been a prominent voice in public debate in recent years. In one exchange Gary highlighted the important debate around mandatory reporting of child abuse: "I believe that the Government could go further with legislation on mandatory reporting. ... with my abuser, Barry

Bennell, there were numerous opportunities and suspicions that were never pursued, and the enforcement of law might have focused the mind to a greater extent and there would have been a stronger obligation to report those concerns."

Kimberley spoke about developments in safeguarding adults:



"ACT has seen significant progress over the past five to 10 years. That comes mainly from the introduction of the Care Act about six years ago, which set out for the first time adult safeguarding in legislation, also strongly covering well-being within it. For us, that has been a massive step. Even six or seven years ago, safeguarding adults was not really talked about or thought about much in sport."

Further information on the National Plan for Sport & Recreation is available [online](#).

## CPSS contributions to public debate: Council of Europe Webinar on Safe Recruitment in Sport



In summer 2021, Mel was invited to be an expert speaker on safe recruitment and human rights in sport by the Council of Europe—the European body that established the European Court of Human Rights, which enforces the European Convention on Human Rights.

Mel's presentation, entitled '*Criminal history checks as a tool to prevent harassment and abuse in sport*', highlighted the usefulness and limitations of criminal history checks inside and outside sport and

highlighted the current widespread failure in many countries to adopt this simple and effective safe sport tool.

The event, which was hosted as part of the Council of Europe's Enlarged Partial Agreement on Sport (EPAS) Consultative Committee, also featured speakers from the Council of Europe, the European Police Office (EUROPOL) and the International Criminal Police Organisation (INTERPOL).

The Enlarged Partial Agreement on Sport (EPAS) provides a platform for intergovernmental sports co-operation between the public authorities of its member states. It also encourages dialogue between public authorities, sports federations and NGOs. This contributes to better governance, with the aim of making sport safe, more ethical, and more inclusive.

## How Can We Help You?

CPSS members have expertise in a wide range of topics relating to the welfare of all involved in sport. We are available to speak on their areas of expertise at events and to conduct consultancy for organisations hoping to develop or evaluate their safeguarding and athlete welfare provision. Contact us by email through our members' page [here](#) or contact [CPSS@edgehill.ac.uk](mailto:CPSS@edgehill.ac.uk)

# Lived Experience & Safe Sport International Conference

In March, Safe Sport International held an [international conference](#) 'Athlete's Voices Now: Placing the Athlete Experience at the Centre of Sport Safeguarding'.

Mike was pleased to be asked to convene a workshop on the lived experience of abuse in sport. The presenters

Advocate', funded by the Professional Footballers Association and the FA. Ian explained he was "employed to provide a free and confidential service to those impacted by any form of abuse in football. Due to my personal and professional experience I am well placed to help others

## Workshop option 3 : Lived experience and safeguarding in sport: perspectives from the front line Moderated by Mike Hartill, Professor, Edge Hill University

Panel;

Karen Leach, Former Swimmer & Safe Sport Advocate, Ireland

Ian Ackley, Survivor Support Advocate (S.S.A)

Tineke Sonck, Voices n Sport

Kevin Murphy, Safeguarding in Sport Lead, NWG Exploitation Response Unit

were: Karen Leach (Ireland) former national swimmer, who first spoke publicly about her abuse, in a video for the UK charity NSPCC in 2011; Ian Ackley (England) former footballer, who first waived his anonymity and spoke out publicly about his abuse in a TV documentary broadcast in 1996; and Tineke Soncke (Belgium) former gymnast and campaigner on abuse prevention in sport and a founding member of the organisation *Voices in Sport*. In addition, and with the keen support of all presenters, Kev Murphy from the [NWG Exploitation Response Unit](#) kindly agreed to lend his expertise and support, acting as rapporteur for the session.

In his opening remarks, Mike said: "The contributors in this workshop are all individuals who have persistently campaigned for change within the sport sector. As individuals with lived experience of abuse in sport, they are all speaking from the front line of developments in safeguarding and child protection in sport."

The group all gave highly engaging and illuminating presentations. Ian spoke about his new role as 'Survivor Support



Ian Ackley

better understand the likely next steps when they come forward."

Ian's role is currently unique in sport (as far as we are aware) and is part of the process of change taking place within English football. Ian told attendees that in a 1-year pilot, 56 clients had been supported, several survivors were helped to avoid homelessness, several others were helped out of homelessness, with many referrals to therapeutic interventions and support through legal processes.

"The most common feedback is survivors valuing having someone who will listen to them, having someone who understands and just 'gets it' without having to explain themselves or feeling that they might be judged." [continued overleaf]

# Lived Experience & Safe Sport International Conference

Ian was also instrumental in the production of: [Waiving Anonymity: I'm a survivor of sexual abuse in football. Should I waive my anonymity?](#)

Karen Leach has been involved in many initiatives in recent years. Karen gave a critical assessment of the way both the sport sector and the research community had responded to individuals with lived experience of abuse in sport.

"I have been involved in research for the past 10 years, working with many researchers across the world. I have watched how this



Karen Leach

happens, how it is put together. I have seen the content at the beginning, then how ... in the end the original truth is gone, it's lost."

"My question [for the sport sector] is ... will you listen, will you hear, will you do something about it? Or will this be another exercise for an organisation, where it looks great to put us all up for show, get a name for

engaging with athlete's and people with lived experience, never to engage with any of us again. This has happened so many times by organisations across the world ... Many of us speaking out have so much to offer the world of sport in order to enhance safeguarding, yet it is seeming best suited to keep us out. "



Tineke Sonck

Tineke explained how the Voices group in Belgium had engaged with a



range of organisations, including the political level. Funding for their activities, however, remains a challenge.

We finish with the reflections of Kev Murphy: "It was an enlightening



Kev Murphy

conversation Even though I all ready know Ian and Karen, every time I listen to them I learn something new, such is the power of hearing from those with lived experience. It was also good to hear from Tonike so we could gain her

perspective on her experiences in Belgium and the influences that she has had with those in Government. I strongly feel that those who presented at this online event are true pioneers in this field along with their fellow colleagues who have been brave enough to speak out and make a change. They have kept the subject alive which allows sport to continually reflect on past failures which, in turn, should ensure the safety of children in the future."



# New report from CPSS & EPA

Access full report with abridged version [here](#)

Sport England recently identified 'positive experiences for all children and young people' as one of its 'five big issues' within the *Uniting the Movement* strategy (Sport England, 2021).

The delivery of safeguarding education is a critical feature of safeguarding strategy, but there is little evidence on what type of training is most effective.

In January 2020 UK Athletics invited CPSS and EPA (Evaluation & Policy Analysis unit) to undertake a comparative evaluation of their safeguarding training. The project compared *three* delivery modes (below)

1. **Virtual:** a tutor-led online, real-time, interactive classroom with multiple learners
2. **Face-to-Face:** a tutor-led, physical (or actual) classroom with multiple learners
3. **Online:** a pre-configured online training module navigated independently by the learner

The central evaluation question was:

*Which mode of delivery has the largest impact on the confidence of training participants in terms of understanding, recognising, and responding to, safeguarding concerns?*

## Safeguarding Education in Athletics:

*A comparative evaluation of training effect in three modes of entry-level safeguarding training delivered by UK Athletics*

Prof. Mike Hartill, Dr Axel Kaehne, Dr Tom Simcock, Dr Laura Purdy, Dr Fiona Johnson, Dr Michelle Jones, Julie Feather & Dr Melanie Lang

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## Recommendations:

1. Training providers should establish multiple training/learning pathways that provide both tutor-led training and self-guided online training.
2. Training for learners with little or no prior knowledge or experience of safeguarding in sport should include tutor-led training.
3. Training providers should ensure regular assessments of established training programmes to monitor fidelity of programme delivery and compliance with standards of delivery.
4. Future evaluations should explore application of learning to practice, and the extent to which self-efficacy (confidence) translates into improvements in safeguarding behaviour and performance.



## Spotlight on CPSS Members: Dr Fiona Johnson (Research Fellow)

Fiona (Fi) joined Edge Hill and the CPSS as a Research Fellow in January 2021. Fiona brings a wealth of research experience and expertise, as well as a passion for sport. She says: "My academic background is in Health Psychology, specifically eating and exercise behaviours related to cancer risk, so the area of child protection and safeguarding in sport represents a new field of research for me. On a personal level though, it relates closely to my longstanding interest in psychological wellbeing in sport, and my love of playing and coaching football."

Fiona carried out doctoral research on the determinants of eating behaviour in the *Health Behaviour Research Centre* (now Department of Behavioural Science and Health) at UCL, gaining a PhD in 2002. She then worked for five years at the *National Foundation for Educational Research*, before returning to a broad-based research role at UCL, working primarily on projects within the Energy Balance (Diet and Exercise) and Cancer Risk groups.

Over the past 20 years Dr Johnson has worked on a diverse range of projects, many of which have had a strong interdisciplinary element. She says: "I have worked with and published research with biological scientists, social scientists, medics and specialists in the built environment. I am very enthusiastic about how multidisciplinary approaches can bring new creativity to research, and I am particularly interested in how the so-



cio-cultural environment interacts with individual characteristics to influence behaviour; an area with great relevance to recognising, understanding and preventing harmful behaviour towards children in sport."

Within CPSS Fiona has already made significant contributions to ongoing projects. Fi said "It has been an unusual start to a new role: for the first 8 months I didn't meet a single colleague in person, or set foot on campus! It is good to see Edge Hill coming to life with the new intake of students, and I am really looking forward to meeting colleagues and helping to develop the research of the CPSS."

# Special Issues



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## Sexual Exploitation and Abuse in Sport: New Evidence, Perspectives, and Interpretations

### Guest Editors

Prof. Dr. Mike Hartill, Prof. Dr. Bettina Rulofs

### Deadline

28 April 2022

# Special Issue

[mdpi.com/si/85886](https://mdpi.com/si/85886)

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Overview Articles Authors Impact

Mel and colleagues from the UK, Portugal, Belgium, and Canada are editing a special research topic on safeguarding in sports in two leading international journals, *Frontiers in Psychology* and *Frontiers in Sport and Active Living*.

The special issue already has more than 10 submissions and will be published in 2022. Guest editors are Dr Miguel Nery, Professor Peter Smith, Dr Tine Vertommen, and Dr Ashley Stirling. For more information, see [here](#).

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