

Interview Guide 1

1. Athlete background, dispositions and past achievements

Entry into sport & career development

- Can you describe how you entered the sport that you are now training in?
- How did your career progress from that time on?

Requirement profile of the sport and personal achievements

- What would you say is key to be successful in your sport?
- How have these dispositions developed and changed over time?
- What would you say are your greatest athletic achievements so far?

Social networks outside and inside sport

- Can you talk a little bit about your family and your life outside of sport?
- Can you talk about the relationships you have within the sporting community you are in (i.e. coaches, support staff, officials, athlete peers)?

Challenges, coping and career development

- A career is not only made of highlights, can you talk a bit about times that were challenging for you?
- Have you had injuries or other health problems throughout your career?
- If so, how have you handled those and how have they affected your career path?

2. Assumptions, meanings and perceptions regarding sport and Olympic career phase

Motivation for and implications of elite sport career / OGs participation

- Training and competing at an elite level is demanding. What is it that motivates you? Has this changed over time?
- If you were to participate in the 2016 Olympic Games, what would this mean to you and your life?

Training situation prior OG

- Can you describe how your training looks like at the moment?
(where, with whom, team, coach, abroad, types of training)

Expected challenges and resources prior OG

- When you think of the next 12 months leading up to the Olympic Games, what do you expect to be the major challenges you have to overcome?
(training conditions, coaching issues, personal issues, athletic form, money etc.)

What/who will be important for you to handle these challenges?

Qualification process, non-qualification

- Qualification processes are not always straightforward. Do you think you as an athlete can influence your chances to qualify for 2016 OG? How?
- If you were not to qualify, what would this mean for you?
- Can you imagine any other thing that could make you decide not to participate in the OG although you are selected?

Retirement

- What do you think you will do once you decide to retire from sport?

3. Vignettes: values, beliefs and motivations regarding elite sport risk behaviour

The last part of the interview will be a little bit different. I will tell you three storied cases from different sports. The cases are based on real incidences and I would like to hear your thoughts on them. Is this o.k. for you?

Case 1: Competing hurt, normalizing pain

Maybe you have heard that Swedish elite women's gymnasts have been found to train in pain and with injuries. This situation was presented in the report 'Blod, svett och tårar', which was published by Professor Stier in 2012. A main reason that Stier found for this was that coaches and gymnasts think that gymnasts' careers are short and that breaks from training to nurse injuries are not possible. So, for gymnasts to be able to qualify and compete in important competitions, they train 'through' pain and injuries.

- How would you comment this situation in women's artistic gymnastics?
- What about your sport, could there be situations where coaches and athletes train with pain and/or injuries?
- If so, why would they do that? Which role do the coaches have?
- Have you trained with pain or injuries? If so, why and what was that like?

Case 2: Taking medication (pain killers)

In elite handball, top-players have intensive competition schedules. A professional can have up to 100 matches in one year and often there is no or very little time for recovery. This is especially so during major championships. For example, in the World Championship finale 2007 when the German national team was playing against Polen, Stefan Kretzschmar, a celebrated German player said that for him much more important than taping was Volatren: 'This will help you get through the game. I think, about half of the German team has taken pain killers before the match.' (Graf-Baumann, 2014)

- How would you comment the situation in handball?

Supplementary file 2: Interview guides *Paths-to-Rio* study

- Why do you think some athletes take painkillers or medication?
- What about in your sport, could there be similar situations?
- If so, why would athletes use painkillers? Which role do the coaches have?
In which situation do you think, is it all right to take e.g. painkillers and when not?

Case 3: Dieting to win/ problematic weight management

In many sports athletes focus on a specific body weight or attaining a distinct body composition (e.g. high muscle mass to body fat ratio) to optimize performance. One example is the former Swedish jockey/horseracing superstar Inez Karlsson. In an interview in *Aftonbladet* (2009), she described how she, apart from the sport specific training, worked out two times a day, one hour cardio and one hour weight training, combined with a strict diet in order to reduce or maintain her body fat level and uphold muscle mass. Inez referred to these practices as very tough and mentally challenging but altogether a necessity and a lifestyle she had to adhere to in order to be at an international level. Regarding her strict diet and body weight she commented: “If I eat too much I might gain a kilo. That may not sound so much for an average person, but in my sport it is a lot”.

- How would you comment this necessity of strict dieting Inez describes in jockeying?
- What about in your sport, could there be situations where athletes think it is necessary to diet or do cardio?
- If so, why would they do that? Which role do the coaches have?
- Have you been dieting or doing special training? If so, why and what was that like?

Closing

Is there anything else that you want to comment on?

Inform on the web-survey.

Interview Guide 2

1. *Reflection on the last months*

Since our first meeting, quite some time has passed. Can you talk about the time since our first meeting? How has it been going for you?

- What has happened in terms of your training?
- Have you had important competitions during the last months?
- How is it going with the qualification process (team/ individually), your world ranking?
- What were the major challenges for you in the last months (inside/outside sport)? Who/what helped you to overcome them?
- Have there been other things happening that were important for you?

We may pick up on things they told us in the first interview.

2. *Evaluation of the line-charts and elite sport risk behaviour (based on pre-analysis of entries in the web-survey)*

I have here a printout of your answers from the web-survey and also the line chart that you have created through your answers. I will first shortly explain how to 'read' the line chart. On the y-axes you have values 1-5 (5 very good, 3 mediocre, 1 very bad). On the x-axes you have the timeline in weeks corresponding to the sent out date of the web-survey.

➤ First Sheet: Development of Performance

- Looking at this chart, how would you comment it?
- Point out highs and lows and question: What was going on here? What caused this/what affected this?

➤ Second Sheet: Physical health

- Looking at this chart, how would you comment it?
- Point out highs and lows and question: What was going on here? What caused this / what affected this?

➤ Third Sheet: Emotional well-being

- Looking at this chart, how would you comment it?
- Point out highs and lows and question: What was going on here? What caused this / what affected this?

➤ All three sheets together

Where suited, bring in comments the athlete made in the open section.

- Do you see any connections between the charts/lines?
- What does the connection/non-connection relate to?

The following questions are adjusted based on athletes' responses to the web-survey.

Caring for health

- What has helped you to take care of your health through this time?
- What has made it hard to take care of your health? What could have helped you?
- What was specifically difficult (sleep, eating, overtraining, lack of social relations, too high demands?)

Training beyond the daily schedule

- You indicated to go beyond training schedule at period x. What was that related to?
- What does it mean (what kind of training and how much)? How do you feel about it?
- How much is your recommended training? Who is recommending it?

Medication

- During the last months, you indicated to take medication at moment x. What was that related to? What kind of medication?
- Did someone recommended it to you?
- How do you handle this now?

Nutrition and diet

- You indicated that you reduced food-intake at this time x. What was that related to?
- Do you regularly take supplements?
- How did you feel during that time?
- Do you have some professional support for this?
- How do you handle your food intake now? Do you plan to reduce food intake in the coming time as well?

3. *Looking Ahead*

- For the moment, you still do not know whether you/your team will take part in the OG in Rio. Can you talk about the time leading up to the OG?
- What will be the next/major qualification event? How do you feel about it?

Training situation prior OG

- As Rio is getting close, training must be intense and time for life outside sport limited. Can you talk about how this is for you and how you are handling this situation?

Expected challenges and resources prior OG

- When you think of the next 6 months leading up to the Olympic Games, what do you expect to be the major challenges you have to overcome?

Supplementary file 2: Interview guides *Paths-to-Rio* study

- What/who will help you to handle x?

Qualification process, individual influence, de-qualification

- If you were not to qualify, what would this mean for you?

Closing

- Is there anything else that you want to comment on?

Ask how it is going with the web-survey.

Interview Guide 3

1. Review career phase from pre-qualification to post-qualification

Since our last meeting some time has passed. The Olympics / WOC are over and your dream to participate has come true. Congratulation!

- At our last meeting you were not yet qualified. Can you talk about the time leading up to your qualification/non-qualification?
- What would you say was key for your qualification?
- If you could go back in time, would you change anything? And if yes, what?
- What happened after qualification? Can you talk about the time before OG / WOC?
- I imagine that during this time there was both joy but also pressure to stay healthy, keep your weight and perform well. How was this for you?
 - What or who helped you?
- Have there been any other important things (*we may pick up on things they told us in prior interviews and in the survey*)?

2. Review of participation in OG and handling of health

- Can you describe how it was to compete in the OG?
- I imagine being at the Olympics is exciting but also tough.
 - How did this affect you? Did you experience any difficult moments?
 - How did you handle them?
- In the 1st interview we talked about cases of athletes who felt that for some great competitions it is necessary to compete with pain or take pain killers or eat very little. How did you experience this at the OG /WC? (others / yourself)
- Prior to the OG there was some discussion on health risks for athletes e.g. Zika, Dengue Feaver, contaminated water. Did you ever feel afraid of this or took preventive measures?
- How important would you say is your participation in the OG for your athletic/non-athletic career?

3. Evaluation of the line-charts and elite sport risk behaviour (based on pre-analysis of entries in the web-survey

Like section 2 in interview guide 2, but adjusted to the post-Olympic career phase.

4. *Time after OG/WC and plans for the future*

- What happens now, how has participation affected your life?
- Some athletes describe that after a season with OG/WC they fall into a sort of limbo, find it hard to train, ask themselves many questions. How is/was this for you?
- What are your plans for the next months?
- Do you have other, more long-term plans?
 - Athletic career (Tokyo 2020 / WC 2018)?
 - Professional career
 - Private life

5. *Recommendations based on own experience*

- Based on your experience, what would you recommend to younger athletes who have the same dream: participation in the OG/WC?
- Some athletes in our study struggled with injuries or feeling stressed or wiped out, some trained too hard or came back too early from injuries. What would be your recommendation?
- Imagine you were invited by your country's NOC and asked to make suggestions how athletes can best be supported and coached for participation in the OG/WC. What would you suggest?
- A last question with regard to this study and the online questionnaire:
How did you experience participation and the weekly questions?
- Why – what would you change?

Closing

- Is there anything else that you want to comment on?
- Ask: may we contact you again for questions?
- Inform: you can reach us and where you can access study findings.
- Thank you!