

A Warm Welcome to Paul Wylleman

Visiting Professor of Sport Psychology

By Chris Harwood

It is with great pleasure that I introduce you to Professor Paul Wylleman who has been appointed as an NTU International Visiting Professor through our SHAPE visiting academic strategy. Paul joins a steadily growing group of expert academics across our themes in SHAPE, and through which we can continue cement our partnerships.

Paul serves as Professor of Sport Psychology in the Faculty of Physical Education and Physiotherapy and the Faculty of Psychology and Educational Sciences at the Vrije Universiteit Brussel (VUB).



Background:

Over the past 25 years, using a holistic perspective to athlete development, Paul's research has focused on the development of and transitions in the elite sports career, the development of psychological competences in talented and elite athletes, the mental well-being of talented and elite athletes, elite coaches and parents, the dual career of elite athletes, the competences of (sport) psychologists working in elite sport, and high performance management. He has coordinated/led projects for the European Commission through different Erasmus projects (i.e., on dual career development, environments, for football talents and post-retirement careers; on mental health development, support provision), the International Olympic Committee (IOC) (i.e., junior-to-senior transition, dual career support providers, post-athletic career)...

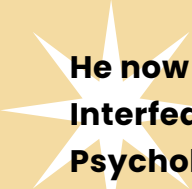


...the World Anti Doping Agency (WADA) (i.e., holistic perspective on athletes' drug-taking behaviours), the International Federation of Professional Players (FIFPro) (i.e., professional players' post-player careers), as well as for the Flemish government (i.e., benchmark elite sport policy, career development of elite athletes, the role of sport psychologists in elite sport schools and in support to talented and elite athletes, the development of elite athletes' psychological competences, mental health development in schools) and the government of Brussels Capital Region governments (i.e., dual career of [young] elite athletes). He was awarded a Chair for research on the use of sport psychology in elite sport by the Flemish government.

Research and Roles:

Paul is currently Head of the Department of Movement and Sport Sciences, the department for 'Topsport and Study', the 'Sport Psychology and Mental Health' research group, and the Brussels Olympic Research and Education Center (BOREC) which links the VUB with the Belgian Olympic and Paralympic Committee (BOPC). His research and knowledge exchange activities in athletic transitions, talent development and (dual) career management has been well-funded through European programmes, and particularly the European Commission Erasmus+ Sport fund. As PI, he has coordinated Sport projects 'Gold in Education and Elite Sport (GEES)', 'Be a Winner In elite Sport and Employment before and after athletic Retirement (B-Wiser)', 'Dual Career for Mental Health (DC4MH)', and 'Promoting Mental health through the ENTourage in high-performance Sport (MENTIS)' and was (administrative) promotor to many other (inter)national projects managing over 5.5 million Euros of grant income. A qualified clinical psychologist (specialization children, adolescents and adults), he is a former President of the European Federation of Sport Psychology (FEPSAC), recipient of the 2017 International Distinguished Scholar Award of the Association of Applied Sport Psychology, the 2025 International Distinguished Sport Psychologist Award from the International Society of Sport Psychology (ISSP) and was this year awarded Honorary Member of the European Federation of Sport Psychology (FEPSAC).

As one of the world's leading scientist-practitioners in sport, Paul served as the Head of Performance Behaviour (i.e. Psychology) within the Netherlands Olympic Committee NOC*NSF from 2013 to 2022 and was the team psychologist to the Dutch Olympic team TeamNL at the 2016 Rio Olympics, and the Tokyo 2021 Olympics.



He now serves as Expert Psychology for the Belgian Olympic and Interfederal Committee (BOIC) and was Welfare Officer and Head Psychologist for Team Belgium at the 2024 Paris Olympic Games. He served as psychologist at World and European Championships in different sports (e.g., archery, athletics, beach volleyball, eventing, fencing, figure ice-skating, field hockey, handball, judo, short track, swimming, volleyball) and for tennis in Davis Cup and at Wimbledon. Paul is working closely with several national Olympic programmes as well as with Japan's High Performance Sport Center and Japan Institute of Sport Sciences, including coach education and development, in readiness for LA and beyond.

Links to NTU and Contributions to the Department and SHAPE:

Paul's ongoing roles in the VUB and the Brussels Olympic Research and Education Centre (BOREC) mirror SHAPE and NTUs strategy around research and knowledge exchange in the Health Innovation sphere. He continues to develop collaborations and applied projects including recently 'Strengthening Mental health And Resilience Through Schools (SMARTS)', the 'European framework for the Promotion of mental Health in elite sport Organisations (EUPHORIA)', and the 'The Good Game project: Promoting mental health in esports'.

Paul is also someone who can not only contribute directly, but facilitate connections with his sport management, sport pedagogy, sport sociology and sport policy colleagues at VUB and his connections into the Dutch, Belgian, Japanese and EU systems.

Paul will aim to make a series of contributions to the Research Centre/Department of Sport Science as he did earlier this year for a week of teaching and presentations. He will be contributing to our MSc sport psychology and also, by invitation, sport management programmes, and will be prospectively engaged in coach development activity for NTU Sport staff and coaches. His appointment will also enable closer links with Sport Psychology colleagues at the VUB, and the identification of collaborative projects. While his academic home lies in sport and clinical psychology, the focus of work straddles into sport policy and high performance management given his experience working within sport organisations and federations, as well as high performance sport science. Hence, please get in touch if you feel he could be useful as a contact or knowledge resource for your work, as well as his network of sport science staff at the VUB. Welcome Paul!