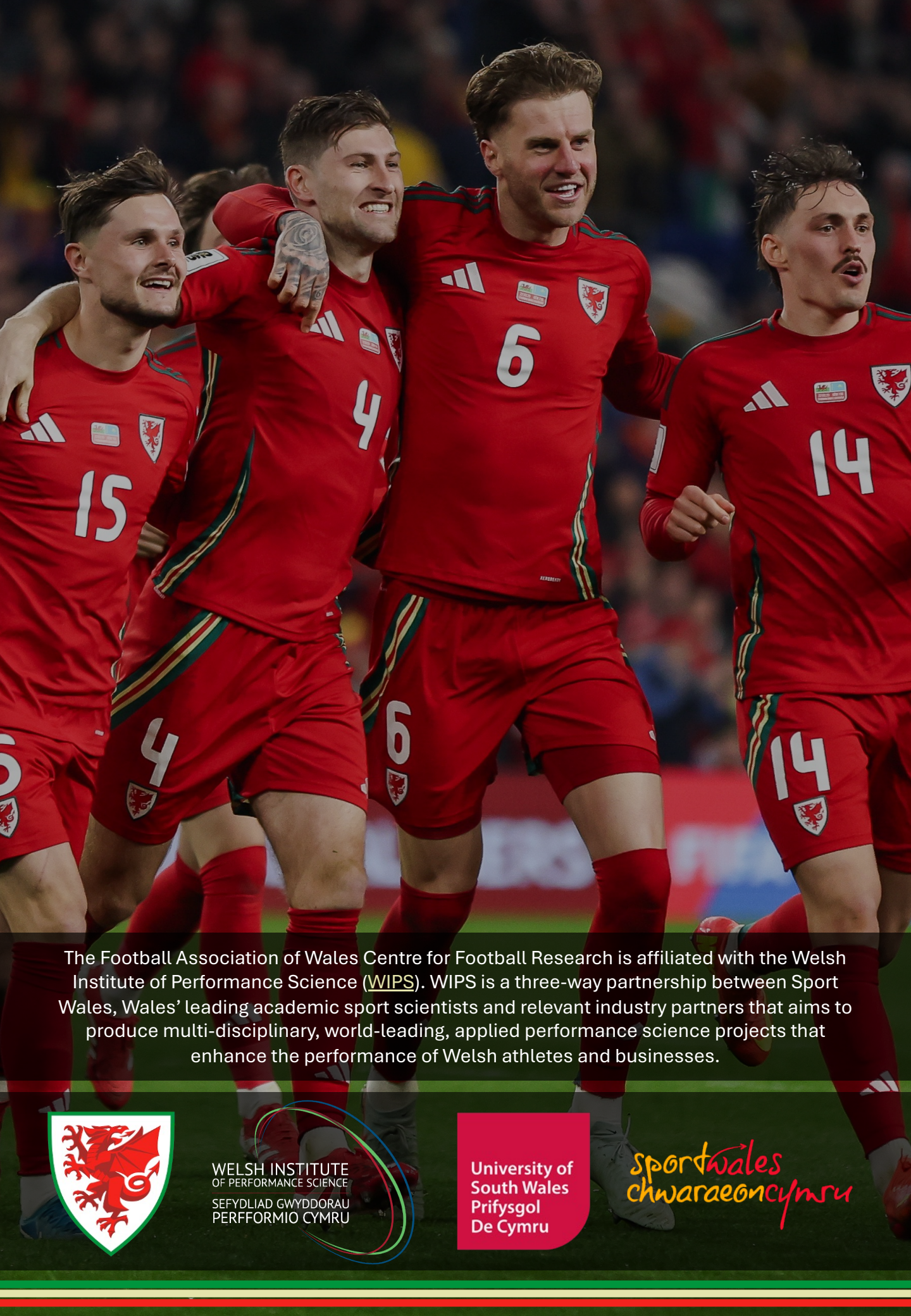




**FOOTBALL ASSOCIATION OF WALES
CENTRE FOR FOOTBALL RESEARCH**

ANNUAL REPORT
2024 / 2025



The Football Association of Wales Centre for Football Research is affiliated with the Welsh Institute of Performance Science ([WIPS](#)). WIPS is a three-way partnership between Sport Wales, Wales' leading academic sport scientists and relevant industry partners that aims to produce multi-disciplinary, world-leading, applied performance science projects that enhance the performance of Welsh athletes and businesses.



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South Wales
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chwaraeoncymsu



We launched the FAW High Performance Strategy in May 2021 at our annual National Coaches Conference. The strategy comprises of 4 pillars that drive key components of the performance of our Men's and Women's national teams and aim to **evolve our legacy**:

- ① **Talent Identification & Retention**
- ② **Person Centred Support Services**
- ③ **Effective Pathways for Progression**
- ④ **The Coaching System**

As part of the implementation of our strategy we have committed to drive insight-led decision making as the conduit to enable continuous progress through our Centre for Football Research. In the past three years, we have made significant progress in widening our research portfolio by instigating collaborative partnerships across all Welsh universities and through affiliation with the Welsh Institute of Performance Science (WIPS).

Alongside our Head of the Centre For Football Research, Professor Brendan Cropley, the FAW have resourced a full-time Senior Research Assistant to support our internal high performance leadership teams to better understand and further enhance our knowledge to drive high performance.

Indeed, building the Centre's research capacity and external network has been vital in demonstrating and disseminating our research findings, which has subsequently supported translational impact across our Men's and Women's national teams and strategic priorities.

In 2024 into 2025, we have focused on many important projects designed to drive high performance and insights. One such project focused on return to play protocols for ACL injuries in female athletes. This was a strategic priority with a significant increase in our national teams' female players suffering ACL injuries. This project has provided clear guidelines to support effective return to play. Further, over the last 3 years the Centre for Football Research has published 10 articles aligned to our 4 high performance pillars.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank all researchers and practitioners who have contributed to our Centre for Football Research and look forward to supporting the continuation of our world-leading research in the coming year.

Diolch,

Dr David Adams

Chief Football Officer
Football Association of Wales

FAW CENTRE FOR FOOTBALL RESEARCH: ABOUT



CENTRE AIMS

- ① To facilitate cooperation between the FAW, WIPS, and all universities in Wales to enhance the breadth and scope of research driven insights in sport.
- ② To engage in high quality, innovative research across a range of fields, including: coaching, talent identification and development, sports science, performance, player and community health, management and leadership, officials, and the growth of the game.
- ③ To identify and foster the means by which the Centre can meet emerging research opportunities with the goal of generating funding for research activities.
- ④ To disseminate the knowledge generated by the Centre via seminars, conferences, publications, electronic media, and through the WIPS Research Steering Group.

CENTRE MISSION

The FAW Centre for Football Research is affiliated with the Welsh Institute of Performance Sciences (WIPS) and is a collaborative partnership between the University of South Wales (Sport and Exercise Research and Innovation Group) and the FAW.

The mission of the Centre is to engage in high quality research and innovation, generate research funding, and to develop research collaboration that supports the FAW in the achievement of its High Performance Strategy. In doing so, the Centre aims to provide research driven solutions that facilitate the development and performance of players, coaches, and performance staff across Wales and internationally. Further, the multidisciplinary research conducted by the Centre seeks to inform best practice in player welfare, coach education, participation, and health-related factors.

THE YEAR IN REVIEW

The last 12 months has provided the FAW Centre for Football Research with a variety of opportunities to undertake industry-led programmes of research. Indeed, as the need for evidence informed solutions to performance-related issues continues to grow, we have found the work of the Centre, combined with that of our affiliated partner, WIPS, has become increasingly sought and valued.

The projects supported by the Centre this year have been multi-faceted, ranging from *comparing biomechanical performance markers between sprinters and footballers across UEFA National Associations* to *improving understanding of physical loading and associated injury risk factors for female youth football players during maturation*.

In affiliation with the WIPS' Research Steering Group, the Centre has continued to facilitate collaborations between the FAW and world-leading experts in their respective subject areas to ensure that research insights are rigorous, robust, and ultimately have a positive impact. These collaborations have been vital to the work of the Centre and over the past year it has been an honour to witness firsthand the considerable efforts of all those who have offered their expertise to support the achievement of our strategic objectives.

In accord with the mission and aims of the Centre, research findings have been disseminated through peer-review journal publications and presented at national and international conferences. Through the Centre's Senior Research Assistant, findings have also been shared with WIPS and other organisations as a way of raising the Centre's reputation.

To create a sustainable and longitudinal approach to addressing a series of performance driven problems, the Centre has continued to support a healthy number of postgraduate research students. These individuals are driving significant innovation through their research projects that will help to shape all areas of the FAW's High Performance strategy in the near future.

The progress we have made over the past 12 months has been pleasing and, as such, the future for the Centre looks bright. Consequently, I look forward to widening our collaborative partnerships and supporting research that helps drive the FAW's High Performance strategy in the coming year.

Professor Brendan Cropley

Head of the FAW Centre for Football Research
University of South Wales



2024/2025 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- **10 research projects** supported
- Collaborations with **8 UK Universities**
- **7 PhD programmes of research** supported
- Commitment gained for a **Senior Research Assistant** post – extended to January 2026
- Grant applications submitted British and European funders to support ongoing activity
- WIPS collaboration has provided access to an expert **Research Steering Group**
- **3 peer-review publications; 7 national/international conference presentations; and 1 research grant award** (UEFA Research Grant Programme) achieved to fund Centre research activity.

EXAMPLE PROJECTS COMPLETED OR SUPPORTED:

2024/2025

PROJECT TITLE	CONTRIBUTORS	AIMS	DISCIPLINES / UNIVERSITIES INVOLVED	PROJECT STATUS
Investigating the effect that heading the ball has on brain function in football	Dr Chris Marley; Sean Connelly	<div><div>1.</div><div>To what extent does a history of heading the ball in football effect cognition?</div><div>2.</div><div>To what extent does an acute bout of heading a football affect cognition?</div><div>3.</div><div>What are the underlying mechanisms that may explain these changes in cognition?</div></div>	Sport Science University of South Wales	Ongoing
The effects of a 10-week hamstring training intervention on ACL injury risk and performance in youth female football players	Megan Rowland; Dr Adeline Miles; Dr John Radnor	<div><div>1.</div><div>Investigate muscle activation patterns in lower limbs during sprinting movements</div><div>2.</div><div>Understand the differences in muscle activation in different movement activities</div><div>3.</div><div>Identify the link between strength, sprint performance, and injury occurrence</div></div>	Physiology; Sport Therapy; Injury Prevention and Rehabilitation Cardiff Metropolitan University	Completed
‘What does a world-class coach educator look like?’ Exploring effective coach education within a European football context: A multi-national study	Dr Alan McKay; Prof Brendan Cropley; James Rowberry; Dr David Adams	<div><div>1.</div><div>Explore what the process of effective coach education looks like</div><div>2.</div><div>Examine the roles and responsibilities of coach educators (i.e., mentor, educator, assessor)</div><div>3.</div><div>Identify the characteristics of effective coach educators</div><div>4.</div><div>Consider the barriers that prevent the delivery of effective coach education</div></div>	Sport Coaching University of South Wales	Complete
The growth of the ‘coach-analyst’: Exploring perceptions of the changing role of the performance analyst within international football	Vinny North; Dr Alan McKay; Prof Brendan Cropley; Esther Wills	<div><div>1.</div><div>Examine coaches’ perceptions of, and knowledge about, the PA role (i.e., what does a PA’s day-to-day practice look like?)</div><div>2.</div><div>Examine PAs perceptions of their role (i.e., do they feel valued? What’s their perceived impact?)</div><div>3.</div><div>Explore the integration of PA into player development in international football</div></div>	Performance Analysis University of Portsmouth; University of South Wales	Ongoing

EXAMPLE PROJECTS COMPLETED OR SUPPORTED:

2024/2025

PROJECT TITLE	CONTRIBUTORS	AIMS	DISCIPLINES / UNIVERSITIES INVOLVED	PROJECT STATUS
Effective load and overload monitoring practices to aid injury prevention for youth female footballers during maturation: A literature review	Dr Alan McKay; Prof Jon Oliver; Dr Dan Cunningham; Prof Brendan Cropley; Sean Connelly	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Inform the creation of workshops and digital resources that FAW medical staff can utilise to educate female youth football coaches on how to structure training schedules to better manage player load2. Aid the development of interventions to proactively manage potential loading-based issues rather than having to reactively cope with preventable growth-related injuries	Physiology; Injury Rehabilitation; Strength and Conditioning University of South Wales; Cardiff Metropolitan University; Swansea University	Ongoing
An exploration of injury risk factors related to hamstring, adductor and abductor strength and asymmetries	Dr Ian Bezodis; Gareth Walton; Dr David Brunn; Dr Alan McKay; Prof Brendan Cropley	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Can injury risk factors such as intra-limb and inter-limb asymmetries in the hamstrings and quadriceps be identified?2. Can leg dominance affect adductor/abductor strength and intra-limb / inter-limb asymmetries ratio?3. How growth spurt (PHV) period influence asymmetries and level of strength?	Strength and Conditioning; Player Development Cardiff Metropolitan University; University of South Wales; Slovakian Football Association	Ongoing
Understanding sports performers' mental well-being and performance: The role of reflective practice in facilitating hedonic and eudaimonic factors through needs satisfaction and self-regulation	Prof Brendan Cropley; Dr Lee Baldock; Dr Alan McKay; Prof David Shearer; Dr Hannah Wixcey; Dr Andy Miles; Prof Zoe Knowles	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Examine the reflective practice profiles (e.g., level and amount of engagement) of sport performers2. Investigate whether there is a relationship between higher engagement and more meaningful, critical reflective practice and the experience of higher levels of mental well-being3. Explore factors that may influence the relationship between reflective practice and mental well-being	Psychology; Performance University of South Wales; Cardiff Metropolitan University; Liverpool John Moores University	Ongoing

EXAMPLE PROJECTS COMPLETED OR SUPPORTED:

2024/2025

PROJECT TITLE	CONTRIBUTORS	AIMS	DISCIPLINES / UNIVERSITIES INVOLVED	PROJECT STATUS
The impact of coach personality on experiences of stress and well-being	Dr Lee Baldock; Prof Brendan Cropley; Prof Stephen Mellalieu; Prof Rich Neil; Dr Alan McKay; Dr David Adams; Prof Sheldon Hanton	1. To explore how personality profiles influence the stress perceptions and mental well-being of UEFA FAW A-Licence qualified football coaches	Sport Coaching; Sport Psychology University of South Wales; Cardiff Metropolitan University	Ongoing
Exploring the impact of hardiness on coping effectiveness, mental ill-being, and mental well-being: A longitudinal examination with elite football coaches	Dr Lee Baldock; Prof Brendan Cropley; Prof Stephen Mellalieu; Prof Rich Neil; Dr Alan McKay; Dr David Adams; Prof Sheldon Hanton	1. To explore whether hardiness levels predict how effectively elite football coaches cope with role-related stress over a season 2. To explore whether hardiness levels predict burnout in elite football coaches over a season 3. To explore whether hardiness levels predict mental well-being in elite football coaches over a season	Sport Coaching; Sport Psychology University of South Wales; Cardiff Metropolitan University	Ongoing



EXAMPLE CENTRE SUPPORTED PHD PROJECTS

PHD TITLE	STUDENT	AIMS	DISCIPLINES / UNIVERSITIES INVOLVED
An exploration of international game demands, focusing on intensity and further contextualisation	Daniel Nisbet	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Explore the peaks of game demands during international matches2. Explore the impact of these game demands on shaping the FAW' training regimen3. Explore the impact of wider contextual elements (e.g., team dynamics, gendered player pathways) on peak game demands	Physiology; Strength & Conditioning Cardiff Metropolitan University
The role of multi-disciplinary teams and operational frameworks in creating a sustainable competitive advantage underpinned by effective business strategy and decisions (FAW)	Daniel Williams	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Evaluate current processes and definition of high performance within the FAW2. Identify high performance factors associated with multi-disciplinary teams3. Comparatively analyse high performance strategies in various sports and industries4. Develop and validate a high-performance operating framework for the FAW5. Evaluate the impact of the high performance framework on the FAW National Teams, including the development of a decision making model supported by advanced data analytics	Coaching; Multi-Disciplinary Team Dynamics; High Performance Cardiff Metropolitan University
Exploring change of direction in international footballers	Stuart Britton	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Explore influence of strength measures on change of direction (COD) deficits2. Explore factors that determine effective COD3. Explore the COD strength and power gap between senior and youth international footballers4. Transfer COD assessments into a 'live' scenario5. Design and implement an intervention to improve COD coaching	Strength and Conditioning; Biomechanics University of South Wales
An evaluation of talent identification and development in Wales	Gus Williams	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Review the area of talent identification and development (TID) in Wales compared to other European countries2. Establish good TID practice that's fit for purpose at the FAW	Talent ID University of Birmingham
Applying machine learning to detect integrated football performance indicators	Sejin Yoo	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Construct a machine learning model to automatically categorise high intensity running into tactical-physical actions2. Examine the reliability and validity of the ML model and subsequently adapt the model to ensure accuracy and efficiency.3. Explore the value of the model for analysing HIR and tactical actions in men's and women's international football4. Research the effect of pitch shape modification during small-sided games on contextualised HIR to explore training optimisation	Performance Analysis University of South Wales

EXAMPLE CENTRE SUPPORTED PHD PROJECTS

PHD TITLE	STUDENT	AIMS	DISCIPLINES / UNIVERSITIES INVOLVED
Talent identification of international youth female football players and the influence of growth and maturation	Amy Farrow	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. To conduct a comprehensive systematic review of current literature related to talent identification in elite youth female football2. To establish the reliability and validity of a physical performance testing battery for evaluating future predictors of talent in youth female football players3. To examine the relationship between physical performance, age, and maturity status in youth female players to inform future talent development strategies	Physiology; Strength & Conditioning; Talent ID Manchester Metropolitan University
Talent identification of international youth male football players: Influence of growth and maturation	Daniel Evans	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. What is the current scientific evidence around growth and maturation in youth male soccer players?2. Understand the contribution of growth and maturity status to soccer-specific skills (e.g., technical; tactical; psychological)3. Create a valid and reliable multi-disciplinary testing battery for evaluating future predictors of talent in youth international male soccer players4. Longitudinally track changes in multi-disciplinary skills associated with growth and maturation in youth male international soccer players	Physiology; Strength & Conditioning; Talent ID Manchester Metropolitan University



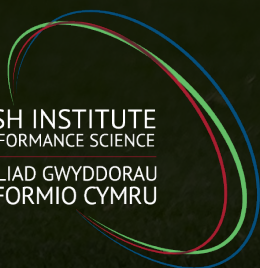
SPOTLIGHT ON PROJECTS

“ ”

WHEN THE WORLDS OF SCIENCE AND FOOTBALL COLLIDE, BREAKTHROUGHS HAPPEN. RESEARCH IS THE PLAYBOOK FOR UNDERSTANDING THE CHALLENGES FACED BY ALL ACTORS OF THE GAME
UEFA, 2024



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AIMS

The aim of this project was to provide a rigorous examination of current UEFA Level 4 (A Licence) and 5 (Pro Licence) coach education programme delivery with a focus on understanding what effective coach education looks like across different UEFA National Associations. Specifically, this study sought to: (a) identify and examine principles of effective education, particularly the role of adult learning principles in this process; (b) better understand the nature, role, and characteristics (e.g., competencies; personal attributes) of the coach educator; and (c) critically examine the barriers impeding optimal learning experiences.

'WHAT DOES A WORLD-CLASS COACH EDUCATOR LOOK LIKE?' EXPLORING EFFECTIVE COACH EDUCATION WITHIN A EUROPEAN CONTEXT

PROJECT CONTRIBUTORS

Prof Brendan Cropley; Dr Alan McKay; James Rowberry; and Dr David Adams

PROJECT FUNDED BY THE UEFA RESEARCH GRANT PROGRAMME

INSIGHTS AND OUTCOMES

UEFA National Associations need to prioritise building coach education programmes around **andragogical principles** of learning. This means shifting away from purely pedagogical approaches towards adult-centred learning where **coach educators work collaboratively with coaches**. Thus, at Levels 4 and 5, coach educators need to adopt a **flattened hierarchy**, working with learners to co-construct individual development plans, context-relevant learning tasks, and provide support through mentoring. This highlights the importance of **personalised learning experiences** tailored to the individual needs and objectives of each coach. The focus of coach education should, therefore, move beyond solely qualification outcomes to a **process-oriented approach**.

Effective Level 4 and 5 coach education should focus on the **holistic development of coaches**, encompassing both their professional and personal competencies. Indeed, through their Level 4 and 5 coach education programmes, UEFA National Associations should emphasise experiential / craft knowledge, critical reflection, and self-awareness.

Effective Level 4 and 5 coach education aims to **create lasting and meaningful behavioural change** in coaches, enhancing their ability to positively impact players and learning environments, as well as improving the longevity of their coaching careers. Thus, coach educators play **crucial roles as educators and developers**.

Individual's transition into the coach educator role must be carefully considered to ensure that they are appropriately equipped philosophically, physically, and cognitively to be able to integrate principles of coach development (e.g., facilitating holistic growth; ongoing mentoring; facilitating the transfer of learning) into formal education programmes.

A photograph of two men standing on a grassy football field. The man on the left is younger, with dark hair, wearing a black football kit with white stripes on the sleeves and a red crest. He has his arms crossed and is looking towards the camera. The man on the right is older, with white hair and glasses, also wearing a black football kit. He is looking towards the younger man. In the background, there is a large wind turbine and some trees. The overall image has a semi-transparent dark overlay.

SPOTLIGHT ON PROJECTS: 'WHAT DOES A WORLD-CLASS COACH EDUCATOR LOOK LIKE?' EXPLORING EFFECTIVE COACH EDUCATION WITHIN A EUROPEAN CONTEXT

PROJECT IMPACT

This project will shortly be fed back to UEFA, where it will be advised that UEFA National Associations consider their coach education offering based on the findings of this report, which highlight that effective coach education at Levels 4 and 5 is centre around personalised, immersive and reflective learning, grounded in peer interaction and real-world coaching scenarios.

It is anticipated findings will be used to: (a) support the creation of more focused coach educator training programmes to facilitate the development of an expert coach education workforce able to support effective learning and development; (b) profile existing coach educators to identify strengths and areas for development; (c) provide a frame to support coach educators' reflective practices as a way of focusing ongoing learning and development; and (d) facilitate the integration of andragogy into programme content and delivery.

THE EFFECTS OF A 10-WEEK HAMSTRING TRAINING INTERVENTION ON ACL INJURY RISK AND PERFORMANCE IN YOUTH FEMALE FOOTBALL PLAYERS

PROJECT CONTRIBUTORS

Megan Rowland; Dr Adeline Miles; Dr John Radnor; and Sean Connelly

AIMS

The primary aim of this research was to assess the impact of a specific hamstring training intervention on ACL injury risk, and performance in youth female football players. The intervention, which targeted hamstring strength, was expected to enhance the hamstring's power, speed, and muscle architecture, and reduce the risk of injury over time.

INSIGHTS AND OUTCOMES

The 10-week hamstring strengthening programme led to **improvements in eccentric hamstring strength**, measured using Nordic curls. While peak eccentric force remained unchanged in the right leg, the left leg showed a post-intervention increase. This imbalance may be attributed to pre-existing asymmetries as 96.5% of participants reported right-foot dominance.

Isometric hamstring strength was assessed using the isometric pull test on the NordBoard. No significant improvements were found in the control group (CG), whereas the **intervention group (IG) demonstrated a notable increase in peak isometric hamstring strength**. This enhancement is likely due to the inclusion of isometric strengthening exercises in a long-lever position throughout the 10-week intervention.

Both groups showed a **significant interaction effect in single-leg bridge (SLB) performance**. The SLB task involves multiple factors, including hamstring strength, hip and core stability, and endurance. Research suggests that hamstring fatigue alters landing biomechanics, increasing ACL loading and, consequently, injury risk. Enhancing control under fatigued conditions can help reduce injuries in young female athletes. The hamstrings play a vital role in limiting knee extension and maintaining dynamic knee stability in the frontal plane, thereby reducing excessive ACL strain and lowering injury risk.



Therefore, improving SLB performance may help mitigate fatigue-induced loss of control and knee stability, thus reducing injury risk.

The hamstring strengthening programme produced **positive architectural changes in the IG**, particularly with an increase in pennation angle. Similarly, an increase was noted on the left-hand side in the IG in fascicle length. However, no significant change in fascicle length was observed on the right-hand side pre- and post-intervention. The IG showed improvements due to the training programme centring on isometric exercises.

No significant changes were observed in sprint performance in either group from pre- to post-intervention.



SPOTLIGHT ON PROJECTS: THE EFFECTS OF A 10-WEEK HAMSTRING TRAINING INTERVENTION ON ACL INJURY RISK AND PERFORMANCE IN YOUTH FEMALE FOOTBALL PLAYERS

PROJECT IMPACT

The 10-week hamstring training programme could lead to reduced injury rates, improved performance, and greater overall resilience for the team. The improvements in eccentric hamstring strength help to lower the risk of hamstring and ACL injuries, particularly in youth players prone to imbalances.

While sprint performance remained unchanged, gains in isometric strength and muscle architecture could enhance overall strength, power, and stability. Better Single-Leg Bridge scores suggest improved control under fatigue, which is essential for maintaining stability during high-intensity football actions and preventing late-game injuries.

These findings highlight the importance of integrating hamstring strength and stability training into regular youth female player conditioning to enhance both injury prevention and performance.

AN EXPLORATION OF THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN SLEEP DURATION AND SLEEP QUALITY ON YOUTH FOOTBALL PLAYERS' MENTAL WELL-BEING

PROJECT CONTRIBUTORS

Prof Brendan Cropley; Dr Alan McKay; Dr Lee Baldock; Dr Hannah Wixcey; Sean Connelly; Dr Rhodri Martin; and Joshua Sinclair

AIMS

The aim of this research was to examine the relationship between sleep duration, sleep quality, and mental well-being among male youth footballers. Data were collected by FAW medical staff from 12 Welsh National Academi clubs (U13s to U19s) over the last 3-years (2022-2023 n = 581; 2023-2024 n = 331; 2024-2025 n = 340). Given the importance of sleep for adolescent mental and physical health, it was hoped that exploring this relationship would provide greater insight into an important personal factor that could impact players' developmental and performance experiences, as well as their wider personal and social growth.

INSIGHTS AND OUTCOMES

Data analyses (MANOVA) indicated that sleep duration, sleep quality, and mental well-being were consistent regardless of the year of data collection (i.e., players sampled in 2022-2023 indicated no differences in the variables measured to those sampled in 2023-2024 and 2024-2025). However, when considering the sample as a whole, **significant age group differences were found for sleep duration and sleep quality**. Specifically, those participants in the U17-U19 age group had a significant lower average number of sleep hours (M = 7.7 hours) compared to all other groups (U13; U14; U15; U16; M = 8.2-8.9 hours). Similarly, while there were no statistically significant differences for mental well-being between age groups, **the U17-U19 age group demonstrated lower mental well-being (53.8) than all other age groups**, with the U14 age group demonstrating the highest mental well-being scores (58.6). Importantly, **all age groups across all years reported higher levels of mental well-being than the general Welsh population**.

We also explored whether sleep duration and sleep quality can predict levels of mental well-being (multiple regression).



The results showed that **players who sleep more hours and report better sleep quality tend to have higher mental well-being**. In particular, **sleep quality had a stronger impact than sleep duration**, with each additional hour of sleep accounting for a one-point increase in mental well-being, while each one-point increase in sleep quality corresponded to a 4.33-point increase in mental well-being.

Overall, these results highlight the importance of promoting good sleep habits among male youth footballers. Further, age group-specific interventions focusing on improving sleep quality (e.g., sleep comfort and feeling refreshed, rested, and energized after waking up) should be considered to enhance overall mental well-being in this cohort.



SPOTLIGHT ON PROJECTS: AN EXPLORATION OF THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN SLEEP DURATION AND SLEEP QUALITY ON YOUTH FOOTBALL PLAYERS' MENTAL WELL-BEING

PROJECT IMPACT

The results of this project demonstrate the important role both sleep duration and sleep quality play in facilitating male youth footballers' ability to maintain high levels of mental well-being. Further, given that players' sleep duration and overall sleep quality appeared to fluctuate with age, it would appear prudent to utilise these findings to inform the creation of age-specific interventions designed to educate youth footballers on the importance of getting an appropriate amount of sleep, as well as providing them with strategies to improve the quality of their sleep so that they are better able to wake-up feeling refreshed, rested, and energized.

The findings of this study will be fed back to the FAW and utilised to develop online educational resources (e.g., videos, workshops, presentations) to support players, coaches, and parents regarding the importance of sleep in maintaining high levels of well-being.

PUBLICATIONS, PRESENTATIONS AND AWARDS

PUBLICATIONS

- Baldock, L., Cropley, B., Mellalieu, S. D., & Neil, R. (2024). Understanding coach stress and mental well-being in the world of elite soccer: Key findings and practical implications for coaches and sport organizations. [Association for Applied Sport Psychology Newsletter](#), May 2024.
- Jenkins, D., Shearer, D., Williams, K., & Cropley, B. (conditional acceptance). Physiotherapists' understanding of patient rehabilitation adherence and its improvement: A self-determination theory perspective. *Physiotherapy Theory and Practice*.
- Smothers, N., Davies, L., Hanton, S., Dolan, G., & Cropley, B. (conditional acceptance). Exploring high-performing, effective leaders, and the high-performance environments they create: Constructing a framework to improve leadership in Further Education. *International Journal of Leadership in Education*.

CONFERENCE PRESENTATIONS

- Baldock, L., Cropley, B., Mellalieu, S. D., Neil, R. (2024). Developing a stress and mental ill/well-being coach education intervention: Supporting elite football coaches with an evidence-based and contextually informed intervention. Research presented at the European Federation of Sport Psychology (FEPSAC) Congress, Innsbruck, Austria.
- Cropley, B., McKay, A., & Wixcey, H. (2024). Meaningful reflective practice as a mechanism to facilitate researcher development: Bringing reflective practice to life. Research presented at the WGSSS PAN-Wales Postgraduate Conference in Sport and Exercise Sciences, Bangor University, Bangor, UK.
- Cropley, B., Knowles, Z., Miles, A., Huntley, E., & Shearer, D. (2024). Facilitating practitioner well-being, performance, and service provision effectiveness: Contemporary insights into the impact of reflective practice in applied sport psychology. Research presented at the FEPSAC Congress, Innsbruck, Austria.
- McKay, A., Cropley, B., Shearer, D., & Hanton, S. (2024). What can you see? What can you hear? Implementing a behaviour-based mental toughness framework within international youth football. Research presented at the FEPSAC Congress, Innsbruck, Austria.
- Baldock, L., Cropley, B., Mellalieu, S. D., Neil, R. (2025). Well-being, thriving, and performance. Stress and mental ill/well-being of elite football coaches: From problem to impact. Research presented at the University of South Wales Research and Innovation Group Conference. Pontypridd, Wales.
- Cropley, B., Baldock, L., McKay, A., & Shearer, D. (2025). Supporting Soccer Coach Thriving: An Applied Well-Being and Performance Intervention for Elite Coaches. Research to be presented at Association for Applied Sport Psychology (AASP) Annual Conference, Montreal, Canada.
- McKay, A., Shearer, D., Hanton, S., & Cropley, B. (2025). The Implementation of a Behaviour-Based Mental Toughness Framework within International Youth Football. Research to be presented at Association for Applied Sport Psychology (AASP) Annual Conference, Montreal, Canada.

AWARDS

- Cropley, B., McKay, A., Rowberry, J., & Adams, D. (2024). 'What Does a World-Class Coach Educator Look Like?' Exploring Effective Coach Education Within a European Context. €15,000 awarded for research by the Union of European Football Associations (UEFA) Research Grant Programme.

ACCESS TO PREVIOUS PROJECTS

PROJECTS

WOMEN AND GIRLS' TALENT DEVELOPMENT
PATHWAY: EVALUATING THE GIRLS' ACADEMY
PROGRAMME

RETURN TO PLAY GUIDELINES FOR FEMALE
ATHLETES FOLLOWING INJURY (ANTERIOR
CRUCIATE LIGAMENT): FULL REPORT

RETURN TO PLAY GUIDELINES FOR FEMALE
ATHLETES FOLLOWING INJURY (ANTERIOR
CRUCIATE LIGAMENT): EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

SCAN ME



FAW CENTRE FOR FOOTBALL RESEARCH



Thank you to all of those who have contributed to the FAW Centre for Football Research this year and to the WIPS Research Steering Group who have supported our research projects. Finally, a huge thank you to Dr Alan McKay, Senior Research Assistant, who has been at the heart of much of the Centre's activity.

If you are interested in connecting with the Centre to find out more about our research, or if you would like to get involved, please do not hesitate to contact us.

Head of Centre

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FAW Chief of Football

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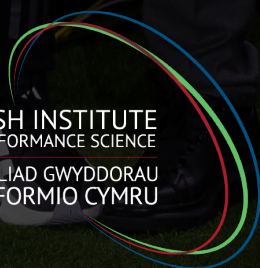
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Research and WIPS SRA

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Prifysgol
De Cymru

sportwales
chwaraeon cymru