



FACULTY OF PSYCHOLOGY AND EDUCATIONAL SCIENCES

A Coach-Centered Exploration of Resilience Development in Talented and Elite Athletes

Public defense to obtain the degree of
DOCTOR OF PSYCHOLOGY
of

drs. Jolan Kegelaers

which will take place on

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Summary

Resilience, defined as “the role of mental processes and behavior in promoting personal assets and protecting an individual from the potential negative effect of stressors,” has gained significant scientific interest in the field of sport psychology. Despite a growing body of work, there remains however a lack of empirical studies on resilience development in high performance sports. More specifically, coaches can have an important influence on the psychological development of their athletes. The aim of this PhD was, therefore, to explore how coaches of talented and elite athletes can develop, train, or foster resilience, through the day-to-day interactions with their athletes.

This PhD features four empirical studies, including three qualitative and one mixed methods studies. *Study 1* and *Study 2* were aimed at broadly examining resilience development strategies in both individual and team sports. Consequently, *Study 3* and *Study 4* took a more in-depth look at the role of planned disruptions in resilience development.

In general, this PhD provides a significant original contribution to the resilience literature in sports, as it was the first study to explore the role of coaches within high performance sports. More specifically, the coach’s ability to positively influence resilience development can depend on the coach’s interpersonal skills (e.g., ability to establish strong coach-athlete relationship & use individualized approach), the coach’s coaching philosophy (e.g., focus on creating a motivational climate, learning attitudes towards failure, and whole-person development), and the use of specific resilience strengthening strategies (e.g., pressure training through the use of planned disruptions). The results of this PhD can thus inform the design, implementation, and evaluation of novel resilience development programs in high performance sports. Furthermore it provides insights into concrete practical strategies for coaches who want to develop resilience within an applied context.

Curriculum Vitae

Jolan Kegelaers (30/05/1988) graduated as Master in Psychology (option Clinical & Biological Psychology) at the Vrije Universiteit Brussel (VUB) in 2014. Following graduation, he started as doctoral researcher at the research group Sport Psychology and Mental Support of the VUB. His main research interest is focused on the development of psychological resilience within talented and elite athletes. Furthermore, he also coordinated and conducted research on deliberate practice, the psychological aspects of doping use, and coach well-being in elite sports. As a researcher, Jolan contributed to the Vlaamse Leerstoel Topsport Sportpsychologie and collaborated with (inter)national sports organisations such as Sport Vlaanderen, WADA, NADO Vlaanderen, and NOC*NSF. Since September 2018 he is also active as a researcher at the Amsterdam University of Applied Sciences, conducting research on the implementation of innovative training methods within sports, music, and dance.