

You are kindly invited to the public defense to obtain the degree of

## DOCTOR IN PSYCHOLOGY

of Ms. Nathalie Rosier

Which will take place in a digital way only,  
on the 15<sup>th</sup> of December at 5.30PM

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## **A HOLISTIC PERSPECTIVE INTO THE FACTORS CONTRIBUTING TO THE CONTINUED DEVELOPMENT OF JUNIOR ELITE ATHLETES INTO SENIOR ELITE LEVEL**

### JURY

**INTERN:**

**Prof. dr. Marc Theeboom (Chair) (VUB)**  
**Prof. Dr. Inge Derom (VUB)**  
**Prof. Dr. Bart Roelands (VUB)**

**EXTERN:**

**Prof. dr. Chris Harwood (Loughborough  
University)**  
**Prof. dr. Natalia Stambulova (Halmstad  
University)**

### PROMOTORS

**Prof. dr. Paul Wylleman (VUB)**  
**Prof. dr. Veerle De Bosscher (VUB)**  
**dr. Jolan Kegelars (VUB)**

## SUMMARY

Pursuing the top in an athletic career is a long and complex developmental process during which athletes face transition both in their sport and other spheres of life. The Holistic Athletic Career (HAC) model reflects athletes' transitions from a holistic perspective, including athletes' development at athletic, psychological, psychosocial, academic/vocational, financial, and legal level. The transition in sport from being a junior elite athlete to become a senior elite athlete was suggested to be the most crucial transition for athletes who want to continue onto senior elite level, simultaneously confronting athletes with transitions at different developmental levels. A preliminary analysis of dropout indicated that only 22% of Flemish junior athletes selected as promising athlete between 2009 and 2013 successfully made the junior-senior transition in a period from 2009-2020. However, an overarching systematic holistic understanding of the junior-senior transition is still lacking. Therefore, the general aim of this PhD study was to explore elite athletes' junior-senior transition from a holistic perspective. A mixed methods exploratory sequential design was used. Within this design, the junior-senior transition was holistically explored in a first, qualitative phase. The results of this phase were used to develop a survey, which was used in a second, quantitative phase to generalize the findings of the first phase, to identify the underlying constructs of the measured variables, and to identify the contributing factors to elite athletes' perceived degree of adjustment to senior athletic level. This PhD contributed to a deeper understanding of the junior-senior transition by systematically investigating athletes' development throughout this transition. The findings provide both qualitative and quantitative evidence for the use of a holistic perspective and support the usefulness of the HAC model when considering the junior-senior transition. Moreover, psychological competencies were highlighted as an important resource to cope with the transition. This study provides applied recommendations to assist athletes before, during, and after the junior-senior transition. Examples are creating awareness regarding the junior-senior transition among athletes and all stakeholders involved, providing holistic support, empowering athletes, and educate support providers.

## CURRICULUM VITAE

Nathalie Rosier (°1987) graduated in 2010 as Master in Psychology and in 2011 as Master of Sport and Exercise Psychology (Katholieke Universiteit Leuven). Following her graduation she started as doctoral researcher with the research group Sport Psychology and Mental Support of the Vrije Universiteit Brussel. She conducted research as part of the 'Steunpunt Beleidsrelevant Onderzoek Sport' and for the International Olympic Committee. In her research she focused on the junior-senior transition of elite athletes. Nathalie combined her studies and research with playing rugby in Belgium's first division and in the national rugby 7's team. Since 2016 Nathalie works as clinical psychologist in Asster (psychiatric hospital) with patients which have an addiction and gives, in a multidisciplinary practice (Blom Leuven), therapy to clients with stress-related issues, burn-out, depression, anxiety, and addiction. In 2021 she will graduate as Behavioural Therapist (Katholieke Universiteit Leuven).