



ADOLESCENCE TO ADULTHOOD, MANAGING THE KEY TRANSITIONS IN DEVELOPING CYCLIST'S SPORTING CAREERS: THE ATHLETE'S PERSPECTIVE

PRESENTATION OVERVIEW

Background of the research



Methodology



Findings



Recommendations



BACKGROUND OF RESEARCH

WHAT IS A TRANSITION IN SPORT?

Normative = predictable and **anticipated** change event in one's sporting career.

Non-normative = a change that was **not foreseen**.

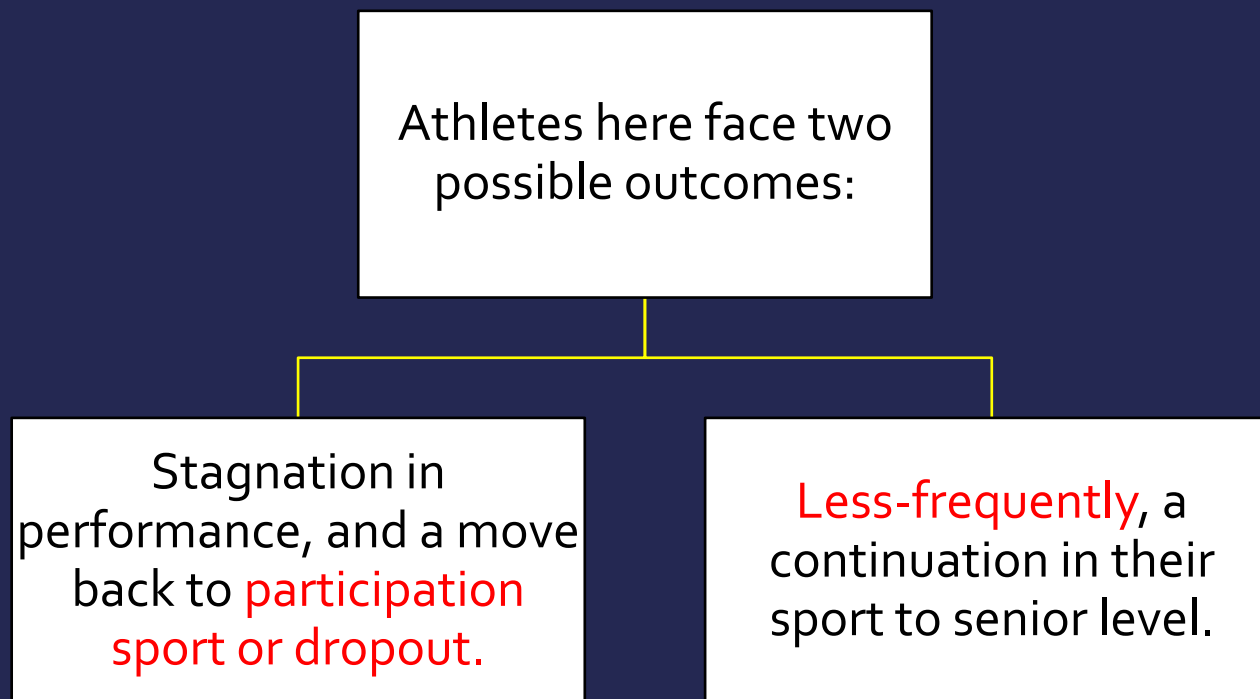
A majority of research in this area has looked at **end-of-career**, normative and non-normative transitions.

(Schlosberg & Goodman, 2005; Wylleman & Lavelle, 2004)



HOWEVER....

The move from youth to senior competition has been shown to be one of the most difficult transitions in an athlete's sporting career.



(Stambulova, 2009).

RESEARCH WITHIN CYCLING

Managing the **U-19 to U-23 transition** is extremely important to future performance (Cesanelli et al. 2021; Gallo et al. 2022).

"Future non-performers experience decreased success when transitioning to a higher age category." (Mostaert et al. 2021)

Research based on the direct experiences of athletes in this transition period is lacking.

THE AIM OF THE RESEARCH

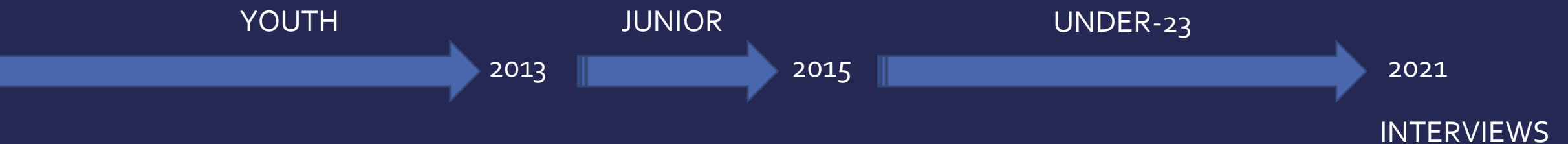
Explore U-23 male cyclist's retrospective views of their developmental experiences.



1. What are the specific **hurdles encountered** by athletes at this transition point?
2. What recommendations can be made to ensure future development pathways **retain, safeguard, and facilitate** performance of athletes moving through this transition?

RESEARCH SETTING

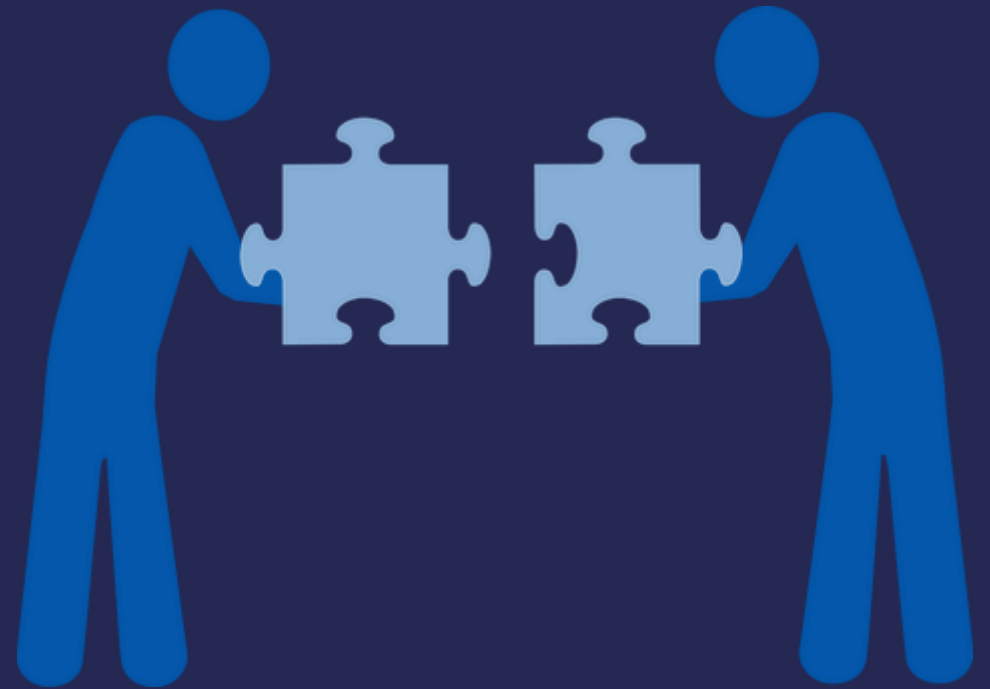
- Timeline of perspectives ranges from U-23 experiences (2015-2021), junior (2013-2015), youth (<2013).
- Based on experiences of riders of a National Governing Body (NGB) for cycling, Provincial and Club Structures along with their own unique experiences.



OUR SAMPLE


- N=10
- Mean Age=23.1, SD=0.94
- Mean Training Age=7.9, SD=2.12
- 3 still competing domestically, 2 continental level, & 5 dropped-out.

Convenience sample was used whereby athletes were contacted via email, informed of the research design and aims and asked to be involved.



Semi-structured interview

History & recall of sporting experiences, youth through to U-23



The support network & environment



Rationale and discussion around dropout (*if applicable*)



Experiences of development pathways in the NGB



RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FUTURE TALENT DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMMES.

AGE	10	15	20	25	30	35	
Athletic level	Initiation		Development		Mastery		Discontinuation
Psychological level	Childhood		Puberty Adolescence		Young adulthood		Adulthood
Psychosocial level	Parents Siblings Peers		Peers Coach Parents		Partner Coach Support staff Teammates Students		Family (Coach) Peers
Academic/ Vocational level	Primary education		Secondary education		(Semi-) professional athlete		Post-athletic career
			Higher education	(Semi-) professional athlete			
Financial level	Family		Family Sport governing body		Sport governing body Government/NOC Sponsor		Family Employer

DATA ANALYSIS

- Analysis using QDA Software (*NVivo*), where key themes were coded and centred around larger dimensions.
- Data was analysed by author 1 & 2 who have extensive experience within cycling both in coaching, development and competition. Author 3 & 4 cross-referenced this analysis to check for bias.





WHAT WERE THE FINDINGS?

PRESSURE TO PERFORM

“You had that **constant pressure** of trying to perform in races in order to keep your name out there, because **you are presuming** that was what they (NGB) were basing the national selection off, so you just had to **keep pushing throughout the season**”



SELECTION CRITERIA

- *"It was more so a selection criteria of.... right... who's getting the results now we'll bring them.... and that's how the teams were selected **but initial contact, I made that myself**". – Athlete at Junior Level.*
- *I remember the year of the Youth Olympics **they had a few selection races lined out for that year** where you'd have to perform well in these to be in contention, which is certainly the way to do it, **that was the only time I ever saw something like that**"*



NGB SUPPORT & COMMUNICATION

Athletes craved objective performance criteria to base their seasons around and vie for international selection....

There was no communication "about future races or anything like that, *you just presumed* from years previously that this is what's going to happen. And that had a *snowball effect* as the years progressed".

NGB SUPPORT & COMMUNICATION

Athletes expressed annoyance at not being contacted or reviewed after major championships...

I: So, you finished up with the worlds, that would have been your last race as a junior, after that was there ever contact to you saying this is what you need to do to get on the under 23 national team or this is the criteria, we need you to meet?

P: "No"

NGB SUPPORT & COMMUNICATION

Athletes tended to want simple feedback and open communication channels...

*"I think it'd be good for the coaches and the staff to reach out just say, keep training away, keep the head. You know, **simple things like that make a huge difference**".*

EDUCATION – NO ACCESS TO ADVICE

- “Self-sought” advice was a common theme:

*“There’s **no one** that a youth rider can go to in (NGB) to say, I need some help on my training or I just need some advice”*

*“Lots of youths seek out **private coaches** or professional coaches whatever you want to call them, and then because endurance coaching is so unregulated, **you don't know what advice they're being given or are getting**”*



COACHING

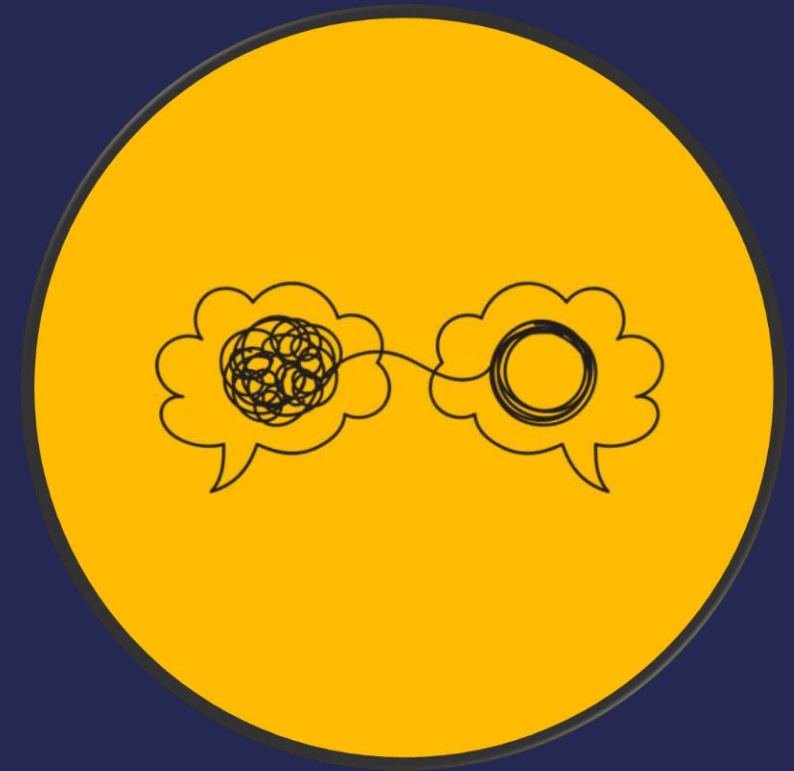
Athletes had personal coaches who generally were positive influences....

"I came to the sport a little bit later in the junior ranks so tactically, I wasn't great, it was nice to be able to chat to a coach"

Yet personal coaches also negatively effected athletes....

"I could tell him that I point blank disagree with something and he'd be pissed off at me for two or three weeks"

"It was that year I got a podium place in the (Race Name) and obviously that's a long race and it was boiling hot, I was absolutely exhausted at the end, and he told me to go out and do five hours the next day without food"



EDUCATION – MAKE OR BREAK?



“I **had to make that decision** as to whether I was going to go full time on the bike or whether I was going to go to college”

“I probably **would have liked** to keep it up through college, but it was only going to be for fun anyway....”

EDUCATION – SUPPORT



“I was given a lot of support, and I was able to stretch out my final year over two years. It just gave me more time so that was extremely helpful”

“The later part of that competitive span (while in college) was probably my best because of eating more food, applying those basic principles that I’d learned in University”



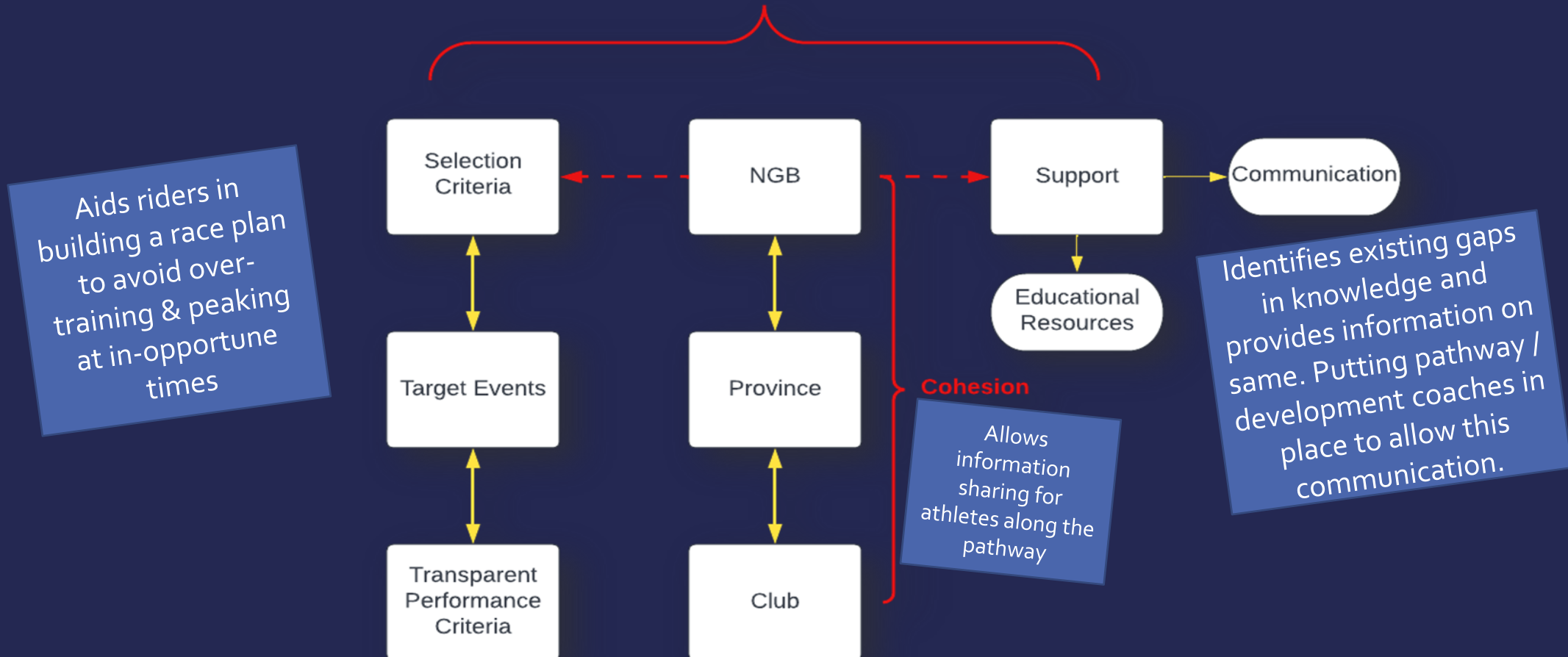
WHAT DOES THIS MEAN FOR US AS PRACTITIONERS?

WHAT HAS BEEN DONE SINCE THIS RESEARCH?

- Toward the end of the relevant period for this piece a new initiative devised by NGB and National Service Provider has seemed to address a couple of these issues at junior level, namely:
 - Coaching support ?
 - Educational resources ✓
 - Communication through the year ?
- Selection criteria for major championships easily accessible via website.

WHAT CAN BE DONE?

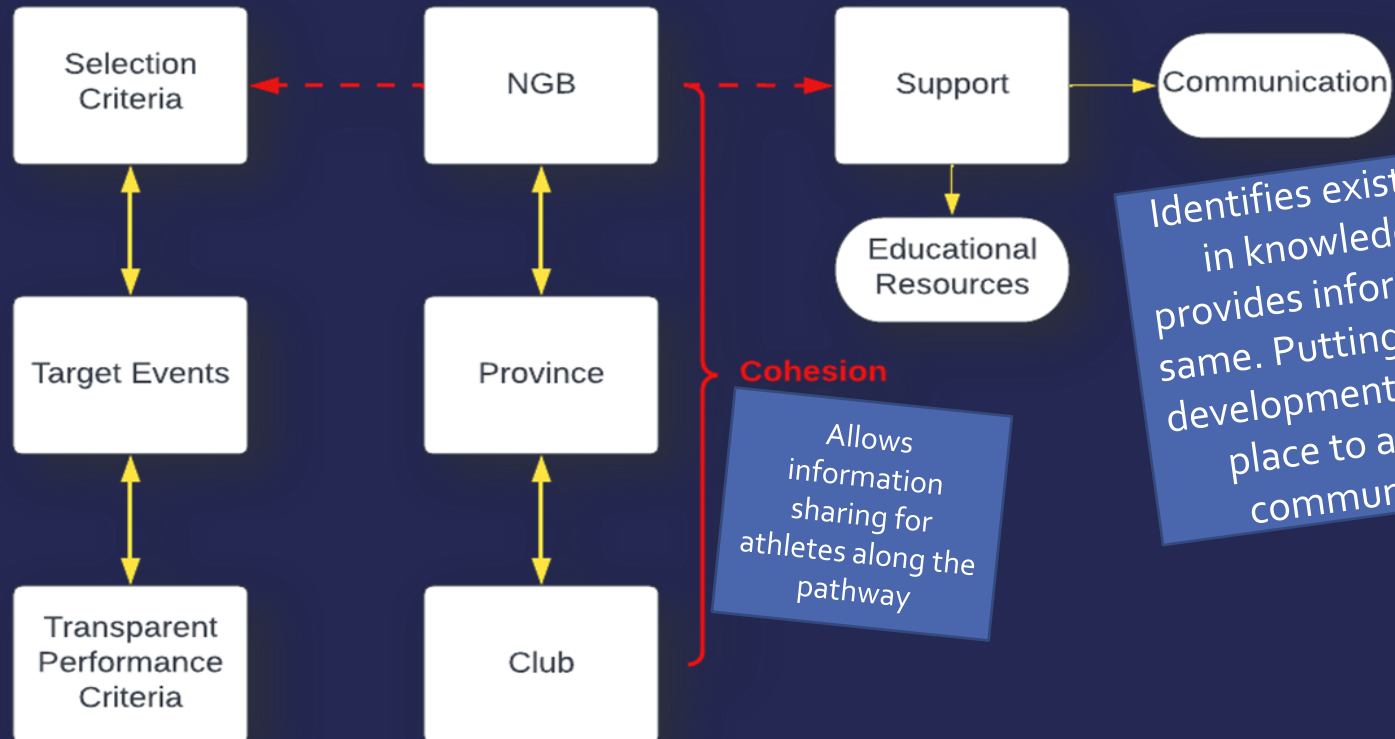
Ensuring Performance and/or Continued Participation



WHAT CAN BE DONE?

Ensuring Performance and/or Continued Participation

Aids riders in building a race plan to avoid over-training & peaking at inopportune times



Cohesion
Allows information sharing for athletes along the pathway

Identifies existing gaps in knowledge and provides information on same. Putting pathway / development coaches in place to allow this communication.

FUTURE RESEARCH?

- An examination of coaching & governance structures within NGBs that allow issues like these to present themselves.
- Investigation of the female specific athletic developmental experiences.
- An in-depth look at the psychosocial elements surrounding performance, e.g., coach-athlete-parent relationships, support structures etc.



QUESTIONS

Jamie Blanchfield – jamie.blanchfield@postgrad.wit.ie - @jamieblanch_

¹ Department of Sport & Exercise Science, Southeast Technological University, Waterford, Ireland.

² Sport and Exercise Sciences Research Institute, Ulster University; Belfast, UK

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