

MEDIA LITERACY CURRICULUM FOR ATHLETES (Draft 1)

Project "OLYMP – Fostering Media Literacy and Athlete Empowerment through OLYMPic Values" (Project ID: 101147018), funded by the Citizens, Equality, Rights and Values (CERV) Programme of the European Union.

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1. Introduction to Media Literacy in Sport

The curriculum was developed as part of the international project *OLYMP – Fostering Media Literacy and Athlete Empowerment through OLYMPic Values* (Project ID: 101147018), which brings together sports and cultural institutions in a joint effort to strengthen media literacy. The curriculum is based on the following points:

- 1. **Reading clubs as an appropriate method:** they foster critical thinking, help recognise fake news, and encourage the responsible use of media.
- 2. **Olympic values of excellence, respect, and friendship:** they act as a bridge between sport and responsible citizenship and form the basis of integrity, accountability, and openness to different opinions.
- 3. **Support for European priorities:** the curriculum promotes democratic participation, resilience to disinformation, and trust in common values.
- 4. **The role of athletes as role models:** they can exemplify active and responsible citizenship at the local, national, and European levels.

The National Strategy for the Development of Reading Literacy, approved by the Slovenian government on 19 December 2019, defines reading literacy as a skill and social practice that develops throughout life in different circumstances and areas and permeates all human activities.

Considering the various concepts, the strategy proposes and uses the following basic definition: reading literacy is an individual's constantly developing ability to understand, critically evaluate, and use written information. This ability includes developed reading skills, (critical) comprehension of what has been read, and reading culture (the perception of reading as a value and the motivation to read). It is therefore the foundation of all other literacies and is crucial for developing individuals' abilities and successful social participation. As the foundation of all other literacies — e.g. mathematical, scientific, or digital literacy, and, in the case of this curriculum, media, critical, or information literacy — it refers to an individual's ability to understand and solve problems in written information in a specific field (mathematics, science, digital materials); functional literacy, which emphasises that reading is not an end in itself but is intended to enable individuals to function effectively in the environment in which they live; and information and media literacy, where the ability to acquire and (critically) process information is essential.

We have based the above definition on the starting point of the media (critical) literacy curriculum for student athletes as part of formal education, as there are various definitions of individual literacies in scientific and professional publications. Still, they are too focused on only one aspect. This does not correspond to the purpose of our curriculum, where we want

to present young athlete-students with a comprehensive view of literacy, emphasising critical evaluation and the judicious use of information. The purpose of the curriculum is to raise awareness among the target group of athletes between the ages of 18 and 29 about the importance of different aspects of literacy and, above all, to empower them in the field of information evaluation and the recognition of fake news.

2. Strategic Guidelines and Advocacy

The target group of young people between the ages of 18 and 29 for whom the curriculum has been prepared is young athletes who are at a crossroads in their sporting careers: either transitioning from the youth to the senior category and thus, as a rule, to a professional sporting career, or already firmly established in a professional sporting career. Which path they are on depends not only on their athletic ability, talent, or work ethic, but also on their chosen sport. Regardless of the sporting path they are on, this target group of students can be classified as one of the so-called vulnerable groups of adolescents and young adults who, due to various personal interests and goals, are more susceptible to manipulation, misconceptions, and deception carried out by various actors via social networks. Athletes are driven to achieve both sporting and academic results. Therefore, developing critical thinking and media literacy skills is crucial for their success, both in sport and in academia.

Sports media, social networks, and informal sources of information regularly shape public opinion about athletes, their achievements, personal lives, and even health conditions. Athletes are also often confronted with information about nutritional supplements, doping, rehabilitation, and training methods that are not always scientifically sound. Due to a lack of adequate knowledge about identifying reliable sources, verifying facts, and understanding the basic principles of scientific reasoning, there is an increased risk that athletes will make decisions based on misleading or false information, which can directly jeopardise their health, career, and reputation.

Among the main reasons for including athletes in formal training on the critical evaluation of information, the following stand out, from which we have developed educational guidelines:

- High exposure to misinformation: Sports media and social networks often reproduce sensationalist or unverified content. Athletes can find themselves at the centre of false stories, directly affecting their public image and psychological well-being. They are also frequent targets of aggressive marketing of dietary supplements, "miracle" rehabilitation therapies, or "innovative" training approaches with no scientific basis.
- 2. Lack of training in critical reading and information assessment: Educational workshops for young athletes rarely include media and information literacy-related content. As a result, many athletes do not acquire the skills to identify reliable sources, distinguish facts from opinions, or understand the basics of the scientific method.
- 3. **Responsibility of athletes as opinion leaders:** Athletes often act as influential public figures (influencers), so their understanding of the credibility of information is crucial to preventing the spread of false information into the broader community.

One of the key focuses is to recognise and raise awareness of the existence of fake news. Fake news is false information that is spread even though it has not been verified or is not based on

facts. The purpose of fake news is usually to create confusion, spread false beliefs, or manipulate people's opinions. This news is often shared via social networks and other media platforms, damaging public trust and undermining the truth. To combat fake news effectively, it is necessary to collaborate with various stakeholders, each of whom can contribute to developing media literacy with their knowledge and position. A key role in this regard is played by media experts in sports organisations (e.g., PR departments), who have direct access to communication channels and influence but need the right tools and approaches to connect this work with educational practice. Libraries and other cultural institutions also play an important part as trusted spaces for critical dialogue and the promotion of a reading culture. Such cooperation creates opportunities for institutional networking in both formal and informal settings.

2.1. Strategic Guidelines for Institutional Collaboration

The strategic guidelines for institutional collaboration are linked to the following fundamental principles of collaboration:

- Cross-sector partnership: Links between cultural institutions (e.g. museums, public and university libraries, archives), educational institutions (e.g. schools, faculties, student residences), sports clubs, and sports associations, with clearly defined roles, tasks, and activities through formal collaboration, and contributions from each partner to the implementation of the set programme.
- 2. **Accessibility and inclusion:** Inclusive access for athletes of different ages, disciplines, and backgrounds (e.g. larger urban centres, smaller urban centres, remote areas).
- 3. **Flexibility:** Adaptation of learning programmes to the time and physical accessibility of athletes.
- 4. **Sustainability:** Long-term collaborations extending beyond one-off projects.
- 5. **Practical applicability:** Content directly applicable to the everyday lives of athletes.
- 6. **Responsiveness:** Regular and ongoing evaluation of programme implementation, enabling updates and adaptations based on findings from established evaluation procedures.
- 7. **Measurability:** Defined performance indicators at national and local levels (e.g. number of cultural, educational, and sports institutions involved; measurable progress in knowledge through pre- and post-participation testing; quality of performances by participating athletes in public).

2.1.1 Partnership with Cultural and Educational Institutions

Educational institutions contribute pedagogical approaches and didactic tools that support the systematic development of media literacy. Their role is crucial in shaping learning

objectives, methods, and assessments, ensuring that the curriculum is professionally sound and aligned with existing educational practice.

Cultural institutions enrich the programme with content from literature, media, art, history, and social reflection. Their value lies in offering athletes safe and trustworthy spaces for dialogue, access to quality resources, and opportunities to engage with diverse forms of cultural activity. In this way, they promote a broader understanding of society and build bridges between sport and culture.

Sports clubs and associations provide insight into the real needs of athletes and connect the curriculum with everyday practice. Their logistical and organisational support is indispensable for implementation, as they can provide access to athletes, adjust schedules, and integrate content into existing training processes.

2.1.2. Integration of Sports Clubs and Federations

The specific characteristics of the local and national environment are considered when involving sports clubs and federations. Possible ways of involvement are listed below:

- 1. **Official letters and advocacy:** official letters or e-newsletters are sent to clubs and sports federations, highlighting the key benefits of the curriculum the development of critical thinking, increased media literacy, protection of public reputation, and a better understanding of disinformation.
- 2. **Promotion through association channels:** sports clubs and federations publish the invitation on their websites, social networks, or in internal newsletters, thereby reaching athletes who regularly follow news from their home club.
- 3. **Free introductory events:** a short one-hour introductory event ("taster session") or workshop is organised to present the curriculum and the reading club concept, including a short exercise on recognising fake news. In this way, athletes appreciate the practical value of the programme from the very first meeting.

2.2. Local Policy Advocacy Guidelines

Sports organisations and athletes play an important role in promoting media literacy, as it is through sport that public images, values, and behavioural patterns are formed. With a responsible approach, they can become ambassadors of critical understanding of media and digital content, which can benefit the local environment. It is crucial that sports organisations, in cooperation with local authorities, include media literacy programmes in their activities, whether through training for young athletes, workshops for coaches and parents, or joint events with schools, libraries, universities, and multigenerational centres. Athletes can use

their visibility to highlight the importance of responsible use of social media and act as role models in avoiding misinformation and stereotypes.

For effective advocacy, it is essential to establish dialogue with municipal structures, especially sports and cultural departments, and propose including media and critical literacy in municipal strategies and calls for proposals. Public authorities can support initiatives by providing financial resources, space for workshops, and promotion through local media. Cooperation between sport, culture, and local politics thus has a double benefit: it strengthens the reputation of sports organisations and contributes to a more responsible, critical, and connected local community. In the long term, building partnerships where sport and media literacy are recognised as a shared social value is essential.

Recommendations for successful advocacy can be summarised in five points:

- Clear communication: media literacy should be promoted as a social value at all levels of local politics.
- 2. **Building long-term partnerships**: cooperation with authorities should be sustainable rather than limited to project-based initiatives.
- 3. **Active involvement of athletes**: as prominent public figures, athletes should be actively engaged in activities and the effects should be regularly evaluated (e.g. surveys, participation statistics, media exposure).
- 4. **Inclusion in funding calls**: media literacy content should form an integral part of municipal and regional calls for funding.
- 5. **Spatial and infrastructural support**: local authorities can provide venues for workshops, seminars, lectures, and meetings.

2.2.1. Engagement of Local Authorities

The conditions for the successful operation of sports, cultural, and educational institutions are shaped by local policy. Through its strategies and measures, local policy can have a decisive influence on the implementation of media and critical literacy, as it has the opportunity to incorporate this content segment into various areas of social life (e.g., youth development policy, urban quality of life policy, accessibility policy; lifelong education and learning policy; inclusion policy; healthy lifestyle promotion policy).

Local government support can be present both at the formal level, when media literacy is incorporated into local development strategies or regulations and formally recognized as part of educational and sports programs, and at the implementation level, when, for example, enabling free use of municipal premises, providing financial support, or promoting initiatives, etc. The latter is particularly important for the development of media literacy in the community.

Below are some possibilities for collaboration with local authorities:

- 1. **Municipal tenders**: tenders for non-governmental organisations in the field of sport can include criteria on implementing media literacy activities.
- 2. **Municipal office for culture**: can co-finance joint events such as public readings of sports books or film screenings with discussions on disinformation.
- 3. **Municipal office for youth**: can integrate workshops on critical media understanding for young athletes into its programmes.
- 4. **Municipal library**: in cooperation with sports clubs and the municipal sports federation, can organise monthly reading evenings for athletes and the local community.
- 5. **Municipal office for sport**: in cooperation with other departments, can incorporate media literacy programmes (e.g. reading circles, critical thinking workshops, campaigns against disinformation in sport) into the rules on co-financing the annual sports programme.

2.2.2. Promotion of Media Literacy Policies

The promotion of media literacy policies focuses on three areas:

- 1. Training of coaches and mentors
- Workshops: workshops for coaches, club leaders, and sports educators on the basics of media and critical literacy.
- **Media mentor**: introduction of the role of a media mentor within clubs or federations to provide ongoing support and raise awareness.
- 2. Partnerships with renowned athletes and coaches
- **Ambassadors**: collaboration with one or two well-known sports personalities who publicly support the reading club. Their involvement encourages participation and builds trust among young athletes, who can readily identify with their role models.
- **Short video invitations**: 30-second videos featuring a statement from a well-known athlete or coach explaining why the reading club is useful and engaging. These are distributed on social networks and in internal newsletters to increase reach and motivation.
- 3. Live events at major competitions
- Reading corner: at tournaments or leagues, an information stand is set up with books on sport, media literacy, and Olympic values. Participants are also offered the opportunity to sign up for the reading club immediately.
- **Short presentations during half-time or breaks:** in agreement with the organiser, a five-minute presentation of the reading club is delivered, possibly accompanied by a mini-quiz for spectators and participants. If a screen is available (LED screen, projector, etc.), short "Fake or Fact?" challenges are shown.

3. Educational Content

We have identified the following as problematic areas that may be sources of fake news for young student athletes, and have included them in individual educational content modules, where they complement and build on each other:

- 1. **Sports ethics**: unfair practices, cheating in sport, and the limits of competitive behaviour.
- 2. **Mental health**: the impact of misinformation and social expectations on the psychological well-being of athletes.
- 3. **Physical health**: misinterpretation of data on an athlete's condition and misinformation about recovery and rehabilitation.
- 4. Transgender and non-binary athletes: misconceptions and stereotypes in the media.
- 5. **Young people in sport and abuse**: recognising the risks of emotional or sexual abuse and responding appropriately.
- 6. **Use of prohibited substances**: doping, technological doping, and equipment abuse.
- 7. **Nutrition**: misinformation about diets, nutritional supplements, and so-called "miracle" regimens.
- 8. Match-fixing: the risks of manipulation and the consequences for sporting integrity.
- 9. **Pseudoscientific claims**: recognising unscientific methods and misinterpretations of scientific evidence.

In today's information society, where digital media are the primary source of information, evaluating information critically has become a fundamental skill for every individual. The educational modules' primary focus is empowering individuals to evaluate information critically. As a specific social group, young athletes often find themselves at the intersection of academia, sport, and the media, which makes them particularly vulnerable to misinformation, fake news, and manipulative content. The programme therefore emphasises:

- 1. **Understanding media and its influences**: the role of social networks, journalism, and image manipulation.
- 2. **Critical thinking**: recognising fake news, ideological patterns, and the influence of public opinion.
- 3. **Self-awareness and public image**: responsible communication and reflection on the role of athletes in public life.
- 4. **Culture of expression**: respectful communication, rhetoric, and public speaking.

3.1 General Learning Objectives

The general learning objectives of the curriculum are:

- 1. **Develop an understanding of European democratic values**, with the aim of strengthening awareness of freedom, equality, solidarity, and respect for human rights.
- 2. **Promote active citizenship**, with a view to constructive participation by athletes in public debates and democratic processes.
- 3. Strengthen resilience against hate speech and manipulation, with a view to reducing polarisation and promoting social cohesion.
- 4. **Emphasise the importance of plurality and dialogue**, with the aim of developing a culture of open and respectful debate.
- 5. **Develop the ability to critically evaluate different types of information sources**, in order to distinguish between credible and non-credible information, especially in the context of sport.
- 6. **Develop digital literacy**, in order to understand how modern media, social networks, and information manipulation technologies (e.g. deepfakes, algorithms, filter bubbles) work.
- 7. **Strengthen analytical skills**, in order to recognise fake news, misinterpretations, and harmful practices in sports communication through case studies and simulations from the world of sport.
- 8. **Develop an understanding of the basics of scientific research**, in order to distinguish between empirical and anecdotal evidence, understand concepts such as correlation and causation, and appreciate the importance of the scientific method in obtaining reliable information.
- 9. **Promote the ethical use of information**, with the aim of encouraging responsible communication by athletes as public figures, especially on social media.
- 10. Strengthen participants' metacognitive abilities, to develop awareness of their own cognitive biases, improve judgement, and make informed decisions in an information-saturated environment.

3.2. Educational Guidelines

Based on the general learning objectives, we develop didactic principles that serve as starting points and criteria for implementing the curriculum, ensuring that the objectives are practical, relevant, and value-oriented.

- 1. The principle of linking theory and practice: The content must be based on real-life examples from the world of sport (e.g. doping, manipulation on social media, sensationalist sports headlines). Theory is always linked to practical examples that athletes can understand and relate to.
- 2. **The principle of active learning**: Athletes are involved as active participants through discussions, case studies, exercises, and the creation of their own media content. Learning is based on collaboration, exchange of opinions, and group work.

- 3. **The principle of gradual and spiral learning**: Knowledge is developed gradually: from basic concepts of media literacy to more complex topics, from understanding to independent application in practice. Individual topics are revisited and built upon in different modules.
- 4. The principle of relevance and real-life application: The learning content is linked to current media events, trends, and sports practices that athletes themselves follow. This strengthens motivation and the practical value of the knowledge acquired.
- 5. **The principle of value orientation**: The curriculum imbues Olympic values (excellence, respect, friendship) and European democratic values (freedom, equality, solidarity, human rights). The value framework enables athletes to develop their skills and the attitude of a responsible and ethical citizen.
- 6. **The principle of reflection and self-evaluation**: Athletes are encouraged to reflect regularly on their own thinking, recognise bias, and critically evaluate information. The process also includes self-evaluation of progress and peer feedback.
- 7. **The principle of flexibility and accessibility**: The curriculum is designed to be adaptable to different times, spaces, and organisational conditions in sport. It includes the possibility of hybrid forms, shorter thematic units, and methods suitable for athletes with different commitments.

These principles provide a solid educational foundation from which specific activities are derived, as presented in the following chapter, where the content is divided into modules and learning units.

4. Educational Activities

Educational activities represent operationalising the educational guidelines outlined in the previous chapter. Their purpose is to enable athletes to transition systematically from understanding the basics of media literacy to its independent, ethical, and creative application in sport and the broader social sphere. The curriculum, therefore, combines a multidimensional and applied approach that links theory with the real challenges of everyday sporting life.

The activities are designed to offer participants:

- **Content areas of learning**: from source analysis and digital literacy to ethical judgement and metacognition.
- **Diverse forms of implementation**: workshops, online formats, partner events.
- Adaptations to the needs of athletes: hybrid formats, shorter thematic modules.
- **Methodological approaches** based on active participation, exchange of experiences, and practical testing of knowledge.

This framework ensures that each teaching unit is not purely theoretical. It directly addresses specific situations that athletes encounter, from fake news about doping and manipulation on social media to creating their own media messages.

It also creates the conditions for linking content to athletes' everyday lives, while the methods remain aligned with the objectives of the curriculum.

4.1. Educational Activities in Modules

The activities are organised into four modules, each with clearly defined operational objectives, learning outcomes, and descriptions of individual learning units:

Module 1: Foundations of Media Literacy

- Topic 1: Types of Literacy and Critical Thinking
- <u>Topic 2:</u> Identifying Misinformation
- <u>Topic 3:</u> Understanding Disinformation
- Topic 4: Film Screening and Discussion
- Topic 5: Ethical Dilemmas in Media Literacy

Module 2: Sport as a Platform for Literacy

- Topic 1: Athlete Storytelling: Reading Habits
- Topic 2: Athlete Storytelling: The Role of Misinformation in an Athlete's Career (Part 1)

- Topic 3: Athlete Storytelling: The Role of Misinformation in an Athlete's Career (Part 2)
- Topic 4: Journalist Storytelling: Responsible Media Communication
- Topic 5: Media Literacy Campaigns in Sport: Insights from Professionals

Module 3: Digital Literacy in Practice

- Topic 1: Identifying Fake News, Fact-Checking and Bias Recognition
- Topic 2: Verification Techniques and Use of Digital Tools
- Topic 3: Deepfakes: Understanding and Detection Strategies
- Topic 4: Managing Online Harassment: Proactive Strategies for Athletes
- Topic 5: Media Literacy Campaigns during Sporting Events: Case Study Analysis

Module 4: Application, Reflection, and Action

- Topic 1: Designing a Media Literacy Campaign
- Topic 2: Practical Advocacy Skills Workshop
- Topic 3: Collaborative Project Planning: Partnership Strategy Exercise
- Topic 4: Presentation and Peer Feedback on Campaigns
- Topic 5: Reflection and Evaluation: Measuring Media Literacy Progress

MODULE 1: FOUNDATIONS OF MEDIA LITERACY¹

MODULE INTRODUCTION

Module 1, Foundations of Media Literacy, lays the groundwork for the rest of the curriculum. It starts with international frameworks like UNESCO's Media and Information Literacy framework and the European Commission's DigComp framework, then moves to different types of literacy (media, information, and digital). From the beginning, participants see why critical thinking is an essential survival skill in today's media environment, where information is available everywhere. Just as they take time to choose the right shoes or sports equipment before they buy them, athletes should also pause and think carefully about the information they receive from different sources.

In this module, athletes will explore what can happen when we don't stop to think and verify the facts. They will see how misinformation and disinformation spread and how quickly they can create problems in politics, society, and sport. Through activities like the telephone game in Topic 2, Identifying Misinformation, participants will experience how messages — deliberately or not — change when passed from one person to another. They will also explore the theoretical foundations for identifying and resisting manipulation through group work, video examples, and guided discussions. Participants will examine real examples of misinformation and disinformation seriously affecting athletes, teams, and fans.

In Topic 4, Film Screening and Discussion, the module examines fake science and pseudoscience. Athletes will watch a short documentary and discuss why some claims seem credible even when false. The film also shows how fake science can directly affect athletes, even if they are not in academia. This connects closely to sport as decisions about supplements, recovery, or training often depend on information that isn't always reliable. Believing the wrong message can have real consequences for performance, health, and careers; as shown in the film, the consequences can even be deadly.

The final part of the module deals with ethical dilemmas. Participants will compare how different media present the same story, reflect on how athletes are represented, and think about how clubs, fans, and the media react in Topic 5, Ethical Dilemmas in Media Literacy. They will also be introduced to a practical method, called BRAIN (bias, relevance, authority, intent, newness) & SPORT (sincere, professional, open, resilient, trustworthy). Facilitators can choose to briefly introduce the BRAIN & SPORT method earlier in the module, but participants will put it into practice during this final topic in Module 1.

¹ In preparing the curriculum, we made partial use of ChatGPT (OpenAI) artificial intelligence tools.

Module 1 is not only about theory but also about practice. It gives athletes the tools to navigate today's flood of information, make better decisions, and understand their role as media consumers and public figures. Facilitators should encourage active participation in group work and discussions since the curriculum is built on sharing experiences and learning together.

The aim of Module 1 is to lay the foundations for the rest of the curriculum. Participants will be introduced to key concepts such as different types of literacy, critical thinking, fake news, misinformation, disinformation, and pseudoscience. They will also learn their first critical thinking method, BRAIN & SPORT. Examples will show how easily carelessness can cause misunderstandings and spread misinformation and disinformation in the media.

OVERVIEW OF MODULE OBJECTIVES AND LEARNING OUTCOMES

Foundations of Media Literacy gives athletes a first look at the basic ideas of different literacies, the risks of today's media, and simple strategies to deal with them.

By the end of this module, participants should be able to:

- Know the difference between media, information, and digital literacy, and see why critical thinking is a survival skill in today's media world.
- Spot potential misinformation and disinformation and understand the problems they can cause in sport and beyond.
- Reflect on the content they put out themselves and how they are seen by fans, teammates, clubs, sponsors, and the wider public.
- Recognise the signs of pseudoscience in media and consider how it can influence decisions in sport and everyday life.
- Use the BRAIN & SPORT method to check media content and practise or evaluate possible responses.

This module is the starting point of the curriculum, an introduction meant to empower athletes to safely navigate today's media world — because knowledge is power in sport and life.

DESCRIPTION OF MODULE STRUCTURE

Topic 1: Types of Literacy and Critical Thinking

This first session introduces international frameworks like UNESCO's Media and Information Literacy framework and the European Commission's DigComp framework. Participating athletes will explore different types of literacy (information literacy, media literacy, digital literacy) and the role of critical thinking as a skill. The session includes a lecture on theoretical frameworks, definitions, and examples (from academia to politics and sport) in practice. This session is the foundation for the rest of the curriculum, not only for understanding the theory

but also for making better decisions in today's overflow of information and complex media landscape.

Topic 2: Identifying Misinformation

This session introduces participants to misinformation, fake news, and disinformation. Beginning with a warm-up game ("Telephone"), learners experience how information can change and spread. Through examples, participants explore different types of misinformation and reflect on the potential consequences — particularly for professional athletes — while collaborating in discussions and activities to develop strategies for spotting misinformation. The session concludes with a short quiz and reflection, allowing participants to assess their confidence and skills in recognising misinformation while preparing for deeper exploration in future modules.

Topic 3: Understanding Disinformation

Participants learn to recognise key disinformation techniques and understand their effects on individuals and society. After briefly recapping the concept, learners work in groups to explore various techniques. They examine why each method is dangerous, how to resist disinformation, and provide examples from the sports world. Each group presents its findings in a guided discussion. The session concludes with reflection and feedback, enabling participants to assess their confidence, strengthen their critical thinking, and enhance their media literacy skills in detecting disinformation.

Topic 4: Film Screening and Discussion

The participants watch a documentary that shows how media may spread pseudoscientific claims, making them seem legitimate and genuine. After watching, they reflect on their experiences and discuss (or answer questions individually) why some claims seemed believable, which strategies were used to create credibility, and how these messages can influence decisions, behaviour, and perceptions in sport. They also consider ways athletes can protect themselves from misleading claims and develop strategies to evaluate information critically. The goal of this session isn't to become distrustful of everything, but to become more aware and critical.

Topic 5: Ethical Dilemmas in Media Literacy

In this last session of the first module, participants will apply the BRAIN & SPORT method to real sport examples. The "BRAIN" part evaluates media messages, while the "SPORT" part focuses on reflecting on possible responses. By working through different dilemmas, athletes will evaluate how various media outlets reported on the same event, observe how the different parties involved responded, and discuss how they would react and respond as public figures if faced with a similar situation.

MODULE 1: FOUNDATIONS OF MEDIA LITERACY

TOPIC 1: TYPES OF LITERACY AND CRITICAL THINKING (IN-PERSON/VIRTUAL)

SESSION TITLE: BUILDING BLOCKS OF LITERACY AND CRITICAL THINKING

OBJECTIVES:

- Present international frameworks (UNESCO², EU DigComp³) as theoretical grounding.
- Introduce and distinguish between media, information, and digital literacy.
- Explain the role of critical thinking as a skill.
- Optional: briefly introduce the BRAIN & SPORT method to evaluate media messages and responses.

DURATION: 45-60 min

TOOLS/MATERIALS: PC, projector, PowerPoint slides (frameworks, definitions, different perspectives, examples).

AGENDA:

1. Welcome and warm-up (5–10 min)

Example of a quick question to the group: "How do you usually decide if something you see online is real or fake?"

2. Lecture (30–40 min)

Introduce theoretical frameworks, definitions, and practical examples (e.g. information literacy as checking whether an article about doping comes from a reliable source). Highlight the importance of these concepts, present different perspectives (everyone, sponsors, supporters, athletes as readers, athletes as creators), and outline the risks, drawing on examples from academia (e.g. Rapid Genetic and Developmental Morphological Change Following Extreme Celerity⁴), politics, and sport.

You may briefly mention the BRAIN & SPORT model here, presenting it as a "quick filter" that participants will learn to apply later in Topic 5, Ethical Dilemmas in Media Literacy.

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² https://www.unesco.org/en/media-information-literacy

³ https://publications.jrc.ec.europa.eu/repository/handle/JRC128415

BRAIN – Evaluate the media message

- Bias:

Is the message one-sided, biased, or trying to persuade you? Who benefits? Is it true or misleading?

- Relevance:

Does this information matter to you personally or professionally? Is it necessary? Does it reflect your values or goals?

Authority:

Who created, posted, or shared the content? Can they be trusted? Are they qualified? What are their affiliations?

- Intent:

What is the purpose — informing, entertaining, provoking, selling, misleading, or gaining clicks? Is it constructive or kind?

Newness/Novelty:

Is the content current, corrected, or updated? Does the timing affect credibility or usefulness?

SPORT - Reflect on the response

- Sincere:

Was the athlete's or organisation's response honest, transparent, or overly defensive/manipulative?

- Professional:

Did their tone and behaviour reflect maturity, responsibility, or professionalism?

- Open:

Did they welcome constructive conversation or feedback, or were they dismissive?

- Resilient:

Could their response stand up to public or journalistic scrutiny? Is it grounded in truth?

- Trustworthy:

Did their reaction reinforce or damage public trust in them?

3. Wrap-up reflection (5–10 min)

Ask the participants: "Think about your last social media post – what values did you show? What message did it send?"

FACILITATOR NOTES:

- The session can be carried out either in-person or online.
- Keep the pace this is an introductory lecture, so avoid going too deep into any one concept.
- If time is short, you can skip introducing the BRAIN & SPORT method and use fewer examples.

- If time allows, you may end this session with a short 3–5 question quiz to reinforce key concepts. You can run this orally (hands up) or use a digital tool like Mentimeter/Kahoot. Keep the tone light and fun by using silly wrong answers. For example: "Which of these is part of the EU DigComp framework? (a) Communication & Collaboration (b) Teleportation (c) Perfect Selfie Taking", "What does the A in BRAIN stand for? (a) Authority (b) Avocado (c) Acrobatics".
- The accompanying PowerPoint is only a sample: facilitators are encouraged to adapt it to their audience and replace the illustrative examples with their own relevant or local ones.

MODULE 1: FOUNDATIONS OF MEDIA LITERACY

TOPIC 2: IDENTIFYING MISINFORMATION (IN-PERSON/VIRTUAL)

SESSION TITLE: DON'T BE FOOLED: RECOGNISING TYPES OF MISINFORMATION

OBJECTIVES:

- Define misinformation (vs. fake news vs. disinformation).
- Learn about the different types of misinformation.
- Identify potential misinformation.

DURATION: 30-45 min

TOOLS/MATERIALS: PC, projector, PowerPoint slides (definitions, examples, ...), Google Docs/Slides, whiteboard, chalk, pencils, and paper. Participants are required to bring smartphones.

AGENDA:

1. Warm-up activity (5 min)

Participants play the game *Telephone*⁵ — an example that illustrates misinformation and how it spreads and changes (e.g., a newspaper headline: *Dončić alongside the legends. Incredible what he pulled off this time*).

2. **Introduction** (5 min)

- Explain what fake news, misinformation, and disinformation are. (References: <u>UNICEF</u>
 <u>Quick Guide to Spotting Misinformation</u>⁶; <u>CWU Libraries</u> <u>Misinformation & Fake News</u>⁷)
- As an extra illustration, you may watch the video <u>How False News Spreads</u>⁸ by Noah Tavlin.

3. **Group reflection** (5 min)

- Discussion: What could be the potential consequences of misinformation for professional athletes?
- The lecturer records the ideas as they come up, either on the board or using, for example, <u>Mentimeter</u>.⁹

4. **Lecture with examples (10 min)**

⁵ In the Telephone game, one person – in this case, the lecturer – whispers a message to the next in line, and it continues around the group. The last person says the message out loud, and everyone compares how it has changed from the original.

⁶ https://www.unicef.org/eca/stories/quick-guide-spotting-misinformation

⁷ https://libguides.lib.cwu.edu/c.php?g=625394&p=4360255

⁸ https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cSKGa 7XJkg&t=214s

⁹ https://www.mentimeter.com/

- Present the main types of misinformation and illustrate them with concrete examples, or in a short quiz (2–3 questions for all participants; answers can again be collected using Mentimeter).
- Cover the following categories: satire, false context, imposter content, manipulated content, and fabricated content.
- Reference: <u>APA Mind Over Misinformation¹⁰</u>.

5. **Group work** (optional) (15 min)

- Participants work in pairs or groups to suggest strategies for spotting misinformation.
- Each group records their ideas on the whiteboard or submits them via Mentimeter. Together, the class summarises 4–5 core strategies.
- Lecturer supports the process with insights from the suggested literature and explains that the topic will be explored in more detail in a later module.
- References: <u>UNICEF Quick Guide to Spotting Misinformation</u>⁶; <u>CWU Libraries –</u> Misinformation & Fake News⁷

6. Quiz and feedback (5 min)

- Quiz (optional): How good are you at identifying real information and misinformation?¹⁰
- Reflection:
 - How confident do you feel about recognising misinformation?
 - What are you now able to do that you couldn't do before?
 - What topic or issue would you like to explore further due to this session?

FACILITATOR NOTES:

This session plan is intended as a guideline and can be adapted or supplemented with locally relevant examples. This session is designed primarily for in-person delivery but can also be conducted online if needed. In that case, make sure to prepare a suitable virtual environment (e.g., breakout rooms, shared documents for group work). For the suggested warm-up activity, in the case of online delivery, participants should complete the game Telephone at home in advance and record their observations (e.g., number of participants, how the original message changed, etc.). They will then share their experiences during the online session.

¹⁰ https://digital.apa.org/misinformation-effect/#/lessons/bhscAqxKQY_8fasIYKl2zkIMN1BD-YLF

MODULE 1: FOUNDATIONS OF MEDIA LITERACY

TOPIC 3: UNDERSTANDING DISINFORMATION (IN-PERSON/VIRTUAL)

SESSION TITLE: DISINFORMATION DECODED: TECHNIQUES AND IMPACTS

OBJECTIVES:

- Recognise key disinformation techniques.
- Explain their effects on people and society.
- Detect these techniques in real examples.
- Strengthen critical thinking and media literacy.

DURATION: 45 min

TOOLS/MATERIALS: PC, projector, PowerPoint slides (definitions, examples, ...), Google Docs/Slides, whiteboard, chalk, pencils, and paper. Participants are required to bring smartphones or laptops.

AGENDA:

- 1. **Introduction** (5 min)
 - Recap: What is disinformation?
 - Reference: <u>Die Bundesregierung What is disinformation?</u>¹¹; <u>CWU Libraries –</u> Misinformation & Fake News¹².

2. Group work (35 min)

- Divide the participants into six groups. Each group works on one disinformation technique:
 - 1. Playing on emotions
 - 2. Sowing division (polarisation)
 - 3. Flooding the information space
 - 4. Confirming existing beliefs (taking advantage of the confirmation bias)
 - 5. Presenting things out of context (manipulating context)
 - 6. (Attacking and) silencing critical voices
- Using phones or laptops, groups watch a short film about their assigned disinformation technique (from the *How Disinformation Works* ¹³ video series).
- Groups consult the European Parliament's overview.
- They answer three guiding questions:
 - Why is this disinformation technique dangerous?

¹¹ https://www.bundesregierung.de/breg-de/service/datenschutzhinweis/disinformation-definition-1911048

¹² https://libguides.lib.cwu.edu/c.php?g=625394&p=4360255

¹³ https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLHQxK2YVsFVtlgDH2 lliyTMfPyZ3Q03N

- What are practical steps to resist manipulation?
- Can you provide an example of this disinformation technique from the sports world?
- Each group selects a reporter.
- Presentations.
- The lecturer guides the discussion and records the ideas as they come up, either in real time or using pre-prepared summaries.
- Reference: <u>European Parliament Spotting Disinformation</u> 14

3. Reflection and feedback (5 min)

The session concludes with a joint discussion in which participants reflect on how confident they feel about understanding disinformation. They are invited to consider questions such as: What am I now able to do that I couldn't do before? and What topic or issue would I like to explore further because of this session?

FACILITATOR NOTES:

This session plan is a guideline and can be adapted as needed. This session is designed primarily for in-person delivery, but it can also be conducted online if needed. In that case, make sure to prepare a suitable virtual environment (e.g., breakout rooms, shared documents for group work).

¹⁴ https://www.europarl.europa.eu/topics/en/article/20250227STO27081/spotting-disinformation-six-tacticsused-to-fool-us

MODULE 1: FOUNDATIONS OF MEDIA LITERACY

TOPIC 4: FILM SCREENING AND DISCUSSION (IN-PERSON/VIRTUAL)

SESSION TITLE: THE POWER OF PSEUDOSCIENCE: MEDIA MANIPULATION AND CRITICAL THINKING

OBJECTIVES:

- Understand how media can be used to spread false pseudo-scientific narratives.
- Recognise signs of pseudoscience in media.
- Reflect on the impact of pseudoscience in both sports and broader social contexts.
- Reflect on how misinformation can influence our decisions, health, or professional path –
 particularly in sport.

DURATION: 45-60 min

TOOLS/MATERIALS:

- <u>Documentary</u>¹⁵ on pseudoscience (facilitator must ensure screening rights from the copyright owner if shown publicly)
- Laptop, projector/screen, and speakers (for in-person sessions) or a stable online platform (for online/hybrid sessions)
- Reflection worksheet with guiding questions (optional)
- Whiteboard/flipchart and markers for collecting ideas (optional)

AGENDA:

1. **Introduction** (5–10 minutes)

The facilitator welcomes participants, explains session goals (can be done live, online or via a recorded message):

- Welcome participants.
- Explain that we live in a time when we have more access to information than ever through social media, influencers, websites, and other content that only seems scientific.
- Just like "fake news" in the media, "fake science" also exists and it can be challenging to detect.
- Encourage athletes to think about how information that "sounds scientific" can still be misleading and how that might impact their decisions.

 $^{{}^{15}\,\}underline{https://www.ardmediathek.de/video/dokumentation-und-reportage/exclusiv-im-ersten-fake-science-dieluegenmacher-engl-ut/das-$

 $[\]underline{erste/Y3JpZDovL2Rhc2Vyc3RlLmRlL3JlcG9ydGFnZSBflGRva3VtZW50YXRpb24gaW0gZXJzdGVuL2U10DlzNWJkLWU2MzQtNDExNC05ZjgwLTNIMDQ0YTJmZWExMw}$

Example of facilitator's opening:

Hi everyone, welcome!

Today, we're going to spend a bit of time thinking about the kind of world we live in, especially when it comes to information.

We live in an age of information overload. News articles, expert opinions, fitness trends, health claims, supplements, training methods, podcasts, videos, influencers... A big part of our everyday life now also involves being exposed to messages that sound scientific. ... it never stops. All this come with a challenge. How do we know what is real? Who to believe? For athletes, this is especially relevant. You're often exposed to products and messages promising enhanced performance, faster recovery and better health that are often marketed as being "science-backed." In this short documentary as well as during this whole curriculum you will see why it's important to remember that scientific language or appearance doesn't guarantee scientific validity.

Documentary explores how pseudoscientific claims can spread (can happen even when the people involved have good intentions) and what happens when misinformation goes unchecked.

As you watch, I invite you to reflect on a few key questions:

What made the claims in the film seem believable at first?

How were trust and credibility built and then abused?

Can you think of a time when you saw a product, trend, or technique in sport that seemed credible but later turned out to be misleading?

How does this relate to your own experiences as an athlete making decisions about your body and performance?

2. **Film viewing** (30 minutes – if not done beforehand)

Athletes watch the documentary film "<u>Fake Science – Die Lügenmacher</u>¹⁶" individually or together online.

The documentary explores how false scientific claims can be spread through research that appears credible. Ask athletes to pay attention to what made the film's examples persuasive and how they affected people.

3. Guided evaluation, reflection and group discussion (10–20 minutes)

In this part of the workshop, participants will reflect on their experiences and provide brief feedback on their learning. They can discuss the following questions in a group or respond to them individually in written form (e.g., using a Google Form or Word document).

Participants must reflect on their own experiences and connect the documentary's content to the world of sport they are part of.

¹⁶ https://www.ardmediathek.de/video/dokumentation-und-reportage/exclusiv-im-ersten-fake-science-die-luegenmacher-engl-ut/das-

 $[\]underline{erste/Y3JpZDovL2Rhc2Vyc3RlLmRlL3JlcG9ydGFnZSBflGRva3VtZW50YXRpb24gaW0gZXJzdGVuL2U10DlzNWJkL\underline{WU2MzQtNDExNC05ZjgwLTNIMDQ0YTJmZWExMw}$

Example questions:

- 1. What surprised or shocked you in the documentary?
- 2. What made some of the misleading practices look trustworthy or professional?
- 3. Why do you think even educated people believe such claims?
- 4. What emotions or needs do these "scientific" messages often appeal to (e.g., hope, urgency, fear)?
- 5. Can you think of examples in sport where something looked credible but wasn't? (e.g., sports news, supplements, gear, training methods).
- 6. How do endorsements or "expert" opinions affect how much we believe in a product or method?
- 7. What would help athletes better protect themselves from misleading claims? What support or tools do you think athletes need to make informed decisions about science-related claims?
- 8. What's one thing you learned that you'll take into your daily life or sport?

FACILITATOR NOTES:

This session can be carried out either in person, online, or in a hybrid way. For example, participants can watch the documentary before the session and then attend an in-person group discussion. The goal of this session isn't to become distrustful of everything, but to become more aware and critical. Help participating athletes reflect on developing their personal filter: recognise warning signs, ask the right questions, and make informed decisions. Encourage sharing personal experiences and practical tactics.

MODULE 1: FOUNDATIONS OF MEDIA LITERACY

TOPIC 5: ETHICAL DILEMMAS IN MEDIA LITERACY (IN-PERSON/VIRTUAL)

SESSION TITLE: BRAIN & SPORT – ETHICAL MEDIA LITERACY IN SPORTS

OBJECTIVES:

- Apply the BRAIN & SPORT method to real-world media examples.
- Recognise ethical issues in sport-related media.
- Critically assess athlete representation in the media.
- Reflect on digital responsibility, public perception, and professional image.

DURATION: 60-90 min

TOOLS/MATERIALS:

- Printed handouts of the BRAIN & SPORT framework
- Printed real-world case studies (one per group)
- Markers and flipcharts (optional for group work)
- Projector for opening remarks (optional)

AGENDA:

1. **Introduction** (5–10 min)

Introduction example

Welcome, everyone! Today we're diving into something practical: how to recognise ethical dilemmas in sports media and how to respond to them responsibly. You'll be working in groups, using the BRAIN & SPORT method we mentioned in one of the earlier sessions. Think of it as your ethical compass.

You are not here to judge the athletes or journalists, your task is to evaluate the message and the media using BRAIN & SPORT. Ask yourself:

- Is this message fair?
- Who benefits from it?
- What would be a thoughtful or ethical response?

2. Case study discussions - group work (20–30 min)

Divide participants into small groups (max. four people). Each group receives a real-life case with printed articles. Participants can also use their phones to look for other sources of information. Distribute printed handout with the BRAIN & SPORT model. The facilitator quickly walks participants through each scenario and BRAIN & SPORT element. They make sure that each group understands the scenario.

Participants in the groups discuss ethical dilemmas and issues in their case scenario and apply BRAIN & SPORT.

Cue questions like these below for discussion:

- What's going on in the article?
- What ethical tension do you notice?
- Is there a media bias or agenda?
- What would be a responsible athlete's reaction?

BRAIN - Evaluate the media message

- Bias:

Is the message one-sided, biased, or trying to persuade you? Who benefits? Is it true or misleading?

- Relevance:

Does this information matter to you personally or professionally? Is it necessary? Does it reflect your values or goals?

Authority:

Who created, posted, or shared the content? Can they be trusted? Are they qualified? What are their affiliations?

- Intent:

What is the purpose — informing, entertaining, provoking, selling, misleading, or gaining clicks? Is it constructive or kind?

- Newness/Novelty:

Is the content current, corrected, or updated? Does the timing affect credibility or usefulness?

SPORT – Reflect on the response and what they would do differently or similarly in a comparable situation to that of public figures.

Sincere:

Was the athlete's or organisation's response honest, transparent, or overly defensive/manipulative?

- Professional:

Did their tone and behaviour reflect maturity, responsibility, or professionalism?

- Open:

Did they welcome constructive conversation or feedback, or were they dismissive?

- Resilient:

Could their response stand up to public or journalistic scrutiny? Is it grounded in truth?

- Trustworthy:

Did their reaction reinforce or damage public trust in them?

3. Group presentations (20–30 min)

Each group presents a summary of their case and their BRAIN & SPORT analysis. Encourage active participation.

4. Wrap-up reflection and evaluation (10–20 min)

The facilitator concludes by emphasising using BRAIN for media evaluation and SPORT for personal conduct in public/digital spaces. Invite participants to reflect with questions like "What was your biggest insight today?".

FACILITATOR NOTES:

This session is designed primarily for in-person delivery, but it can also be conducted online if needed. In that case, prepare a suitable virtual environment (e.g., breakout rooms, shared documents for group work). If you have more groups than prepared scenarios, you must prepare additional ones.

ADDITIONAL MATERIAL:

Case Scenarios

Scenario: Naomi Osaka's media boycott and mental health

Sources:

- <a href="https://www.abc.net.au/news/2021-05-31/media-tennis-authorities-ask-wrong-questions-osaka-interview-ban/100178724?utm campaign=abc news web&utm content=link&utm medium=content shared&utm source=abc news web
- https://www.harpersbazaar.com/culture/features/a36687625/naomi-osaka-and-the-cost-of-saying-no/
- https://time.com/6077128/naomi-osaka-essay-tokyo-olympics/
- <u>https://7news.com.au/sport/tennis/osaka-fined-for-french-open-media-boycott-c-</u> 2972626

Background:

In 2021, tennis star Naomi Osaka withdrew from the French Open after refusing to participate in mandatory press conferences, citing mental health concerns. The media backlash was intense. Some accused her of avoiding scrutiny, while others supported her openness about psychological struggles. Her decision sparked a broader conversation about athlete mental health and the media's role.

Ethical Dilemma:

Should athletes be forced to speak to the media regardless of their mental state?

Does refusing press obligations harm the sport's integrity, or does it challenge outdated media practices?

<u>Scenario: Imane Khelif – gender controversy</u>

Sources:

- https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/sports/boxing/imane-khelif-olympic-boxer-faces-gender-controversy-world-boxing-issues-formal-apology-to-algerian-boxing-federation/articleshow/121614663.cms
- https://time.com/7291342/world-boxing-sex-testing-policy-imane-khelif-gender-olympics-controversy/
- https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-13697397/female-boxer-yells-this-is-unjust-and-falls-to-her-knees-in-tears-as-she-quits-fight-against-biologically-male-olympic-opponent-imane-khelif-after-just-46-seconds-following-two-powerful-punches.html
- https://www.skysports.com/boxing/news/12183/13188715/olympics-2024-imane-khelif-who-failed-gender-eligibility-test-at-world-championships-wins-bout-after-opponent-quits

Background:

Algerian boxer Imane Khelif, who qualified for the Paris 2024 Olympics, was barred from participating in a previous international event due to alleged concerns over gender eligibility. Media coverage varied widely. Some outlets reported it as a case of unfair treatment or transphobia, while others amplified unverified claims and medical speculation. Khelif has publicly stated that the controversy caused her emotional distress and reputational damage. The Algerian Boxing Federation filed formal complaints over the way the issue was handled.

Ethical Dilemma:

- How should the media report on sensitive topics like gender eligibility in sport without violating personal dignity or spreading stigma?
- Are journalists raising awareness or reinforcing stereotypes and discrimination?
- What responsibility does the sporting body have in protecting athletes from trial by media?

Scenario: Defective Olympic medals

Sources:

- <u>https://www.the-express.com/sport/other-sport/146707/olympic-fans-rage-paris-2024-medals-fall-apart-problem</u>
- https://www.bbc.com/sport/olympics/articles/cp35nzpe5880
- <u>https://www.telegraph.co.uk/olympics/2024/08/08/quality-olympics-medals-criticised-deterioration-paris-2024/</u>
- https://www.insidethegames.biz/articles/1151376/paris-2024-medal-scandal-rocks-ioc

Background:

At the Paris 2024 Olympics, multiple athletes reported that their Olympic medals began deteriorating within weeks of the event. Complaints ranged from the medals chipping and tarnishing to the embedded Eiffel Tower pieces becoming loose. The International Olympic Committee confirmed the issue and promised to replace the damaged medals. Some media outlets framed the story as an embarrassing failure by the organisers, while others emphasised the IOC's responsiveness and commitment to athlete satisfaction.

Ethical Dilemmas

How should the media report on issues like Olympic medals — focus on outrage, or highlight resolution?

Is it fair to treat a failure (like damaged medals) with the same intensity as an institutional scandal?

Are athletes justified in going public with complaints, or should these issues be resolved privately through official channels?

What responsibility do event organisers have to ensure the quality of the medals?

<u>Scenario: Charlotte Dujardin – suspension</u>

Sources:

- <u>https://www.the-sun.com/sport/12005959/charlotte-dujardins-fiance-speaks-video-whipping-horse/</u>
- https://www.vettimes.com/news/vets/equine/beva-backs-dujardin-whip-ban
- <u>https://theconversation.com/the-paris-olympics-horse-whipping-scandal-shows-the-dangers-of-disneyfication-in-horse-sports-235672</u>
- https://horsenetwork.com/2024/12/charlotte-dujardin-suspended-1-year-for-whipping-scandal/

Background:

In July 2024, a video surfaced showing Olympic dressage champion Charlotte Dujardin repeatedly whipping a horse during a coaching session. A Dutch equine lawyer formally filed a complaint, prompting Dujardin's withdrawal from the Paris Olympics. She acknowledged the incident as an "error of judgment" and was provisionally suspended by the FEI. In December, she was officially banned for one year and fined approximately CHF 10,000.

Ethical Dilemmas:

- How should the equestrian community balance historic prestige with evolving standards of animal welfare?
- What role do passionate, specialist voices (like vets or animal rights groups) play in shaping accountability?

 Does sensational public reaction help or complicate fair evaluation of the athlete's intent and reputation?

<u>Scenario: Mikaela Shiffrin – Media coverage after Olympic disqualification</u> *Sources:*

- https://www.sportsbusinessjournal.com/Daily/Issues/2022/02/09/Olympics/NBC-Shiffrin-1/
- <u>https://www.nbcolympics.com/news/mikaela-shiffrin-puts-haters-and-trolls-blast-defiant-social-media-post</u>
- <u>https://www.espn.com/olympics/story/_/id/33321404/winter-olympics-2022-simone-biles-comes-defense-skier-mikaela-shiffrin-just-remember-how-amazing-are</u>
- <u>https://www.thequardian.com/sport/2022/feb/06/mikaela-shiffrin-beijing-2022-winter-olympics-giant-slalom-disqualified</u>

Background:

At the 2022 Beijing Winter Olympics, alpine skier Mikaela Shiffrin, a two-time Olympic gold medallist, was disqualified early in her slalom event. Media coverage swiftly turned to focus on her emotional reaction. Cameras captured her visibly upset on the slope, and reporters pressed her in an immediate interview. The intensity of this coverage drew widespread criticism for being insensitive, intrusive, and unfair, especially given recent personal losses and her mental health challenges.

Ethical Dilemma:

- Should media respect mental health boundaries even at high-stakes moments?
- How do sudden setbacks interact with public pressure and personal tragedy in coverage?
- What responsibility do media outlets have to avoid sensationalising emotional moments?

BRAIN: Evaluate the media message

Bias:		
Is the message one-sided, biased,		
or trying to persuade you? Who		
benefits? Is it true or misleading?		
Deficitios: 13 it true of misieuding.		
Relevance:		
Does this information matter to		
you personally or professionally?		
Is it necessary? Does it reflect		
your values or goals?		
Authority:		
Who created, posted, or shared		
the content? Can they be trusted?		
Are they qualified? What are their		
affiliations?		
Intent:		
What is the purpose—informing,		
entertaining, provoking, selling,		
misleading, or gaining clicks? Is it		
constructive or kind?		
Newness:		
Is the content current, corrected,		
or updated? Does the timing		
affect credibility or usefulness?		
SPORT: Reflect on the respons	se, on what you would do differently or similarly in a	
comparable situation as public figures.		
Sincere:		
Was the athlete's or		
organisation's response honest,		
transparent, or overly		
defensive/manipulative?		
Professional:		
Did their tone and behaviour		
reflect maturity, responsibility, or		
professionalism?		

Open:	
Did they welcome constructive	
conversation or feedback, or were	
they dismissive?	
Resilient:	
Could their response stand up to	
public or journalistic scrutiny? Is it	
grounded in truth?	
Trustworthy:	
Did their reaction reinforce or	
damage public trust in them?	

Facilitator tips for group work

If a group is struggling, you can help with guiding questions.

Scenario: Naomi Osaka's media boycott and mental health

BRAIN - Evaluate the media message

Bias:

Are articles sympathetic or judgmental?

Do they show both sides?

Relevance:

Is the media focusing on mental health or performance disruption?

Authority:

Who is commenting — sports journalists, medical professionals, other athletes?

Intent

Is the reporting trying to inform the public? Stir controversy? Defend media rights? Shame athlete?

Newness:

Are the reactions evolving with Osaka's later statements over time?

SPORT – Reflect on the response

Sincere:

Was Osaka's explanation transparent or calculated?

Professional:

How did she communicate her concerns — directly, respectfully? Through social media? Formal statement?

Open:

Did she leave room for dialogue, or just issue a statement?

Resilient:

Did her reasoning hold up under scrutiny?

Trustworthy:

Did she maintain public trust?

<u>Scenario: Imane Khelif – Gender controversy</u>

BRAIN – Evaluate the media message

Bias:

Are the articles neutral or do they use emotionally loaded or polarising language? Are both athletes' perspectives presented fairly, or does one narrative dominate? How is the phrase "biologically male" used — informatively or provocatively?

Relevance:

Is the article focusing on legitimate concerns (fairness, safety) or fuelling outrage?

Are private medical details included appropriately, or used for dramatic effect?

Authority:

Who are the main voices quoted — scientists, governing bodies, politicians, athletes? Are these sources credible, or emotionally/politically charged?

Intent:

Is the piece trying to inform, incite anger, gain clicks, or influence public policy? Does the headline match the article's tone and factual content?

Newness:

Are the claims based on recent, verified developments?

Is the reporting updated with current IOC policy and gender eligibility context?

SPORT – Reflect on the response

Sincere:

Did Khelif's or Carini's reactions feel emotionally genuine or media-driven? Was either athlete forced to speak before they were ready?

Professional:

How did each athlete present themselves under public pressure — composed, respectful, defensive?

Did either side show sportsmanship, even amid disagreement?

Open:

Did any of the athletes or federations invite dialogue, or was discussion shut down? Were opposing views acknowledged or dismissed outright?

Resilient:

Did their responses hold up under backlash from the media and public figures? Were their messages consistent and based on personal truth or evidence?

Trustworthy:

Did Khelif's or Carini's words/actions increase public confidence in them as athletes?

How do federations or officials shape the public's trust in fairness and safety?

Scenario: Defective Olympic medals

BRAIN - Evaluate the media message

Bias:

Does the article use dramatic or emotional language (e.g. "rage", "crumbling"), or is it factual and calm?

Relevance:

Is the focus on athlete experience and symbolic value, or sensational headlines?

Authority:

Are quotes from actual athletes or credible officials included, or mainly anonymous critics/fans?

Intent:

Is the piece trying to inform the public and offer context — or to provoke outrage and clicks?

Newness:

Was the coverage published before the official announcements of medal replacement? Is it current and accurate?

SPORT – Reflect on the response or possible response

Sincere:

Are the athlete statements (e.g., Huston, Secchi) honest and grounded, or driven by sensational media reactions?

Professional:

Did athletes or officials respond with calm dignity and constructive feedback, rather than emotional outbursts?

Open:

Did the organisers invite dialogue and transparency, or did the issue blow up on social media first?

Resilient:

Did statements remain consistent under pressure, or fluctuate when new media commentary emerged?

Trustworthy:

Did the institution (IOC, Monnaie de Paris) handle the situation transparently, building trust? Or did sensational reporting undermine credibility?

Scenario: Charlotte Dujardin – Suspension

BRAIN - Evaluate the media message

Bias:

Is the article emotional or neutral in tone? Does it emphasise drama over facts?

Does it present multiple sides or mainly focus on defending or attacking the athlete?

Relevance:

Is the focus on horse welfare and sport ethics — or just on personal downfall, public reactions, or sensational details?

Authority:

Are the quoted voices credible (e.g. veterinary professionals, sports bodies)?

Or are they anonymous, personal, or emotionally involved (e.g. family members)?

Intent:

What seems to be the article's purpose: to inform, to criticise, to defend, to entertain? How does the headline reflect that intent?

Newness:

Was the information published early in the scandal? Was it updated with disciplinary outcomes?

Does it reflect evolving context or frozen outrage?

SPORT - Reflect on the response or best practices

Sincere:

Does the athlete's response feel honest, or performative? Is it shaped by public pressure or personal reflection?

Professional:

Was the communication respectful and appropriate, especially under scrutiny?

Open:

Were the institutions or the athlete willing to engage in public dialogue or answer criticism constructively?

Resilient:

Did the response hold up after the media cycle continued — or did it unravel?

Trustworthy:

Who built or lost trust here? Athlete? Federation? Media? What kind of response would rebuild public confidence?

Scenario: Mikaela Shiffrin - Media coverage after Olympic disqualification

BRAIN - Evaluate the media message

Bias:

Does the coverage focus more on Shiffrin's emotional reaction than her athletic performance or context?

Is the tone compassionate, neutral, or overly judgmental?

Relevance:

Is the media attention justified based on the news value of her performance, or does it veer into personal territory?

Was the emotional reaction central to the sporting moment, or a distraction from it?

Authority:

Are the voices quoted in the coverage credible — Shiffrin herself, experts, other athletes — or mostly anonymous public reactions?

Are mental health perspectives included, or missing?

Intent:

Is the article or interview aiming to inform, highlight athlete pressure, or provoke emotional response and public reaction?

Does the format (e.g. camera angles, timing, social media framing) feel respectful or intrusive?

Newness:

Was the coverage updated as more context emerged (e.g. her personal losses, public responses)?

Does it offer a fresh perspective or just repeat emotional footage?

SPORT – Reflect on the response

Sincere:

Did Shiffrin's social media response seem honest and vulnerable, or shaped by external pressure?

How did the tone of her response influence public perception?

Professional:

Was her communication respectful and clear, even under emotional strain? Did she maintain composure while addressing backlash?

Open:

Did Shiffrin or her team invite broader discussion about mental health in elite sport? Was her communication defensive or did it open a space for reflection?

Resilient:

How did she hold up under scrutiny and repeated public reaction? Did her response show personal strength and consistency?

Trustworthy:

Did her statements and tone help reinforce trust with the public and sporting community?

How did the reactions from fellow athletes (e.g. Simone Biles) affect perceptions of fairness or solidarity?

Module 2: Sport as a Platform for Literacy

MODULE INTRODUCTION

While Module 1 focused on the specifics of different types of literacy, recognising misinformation, and understanding the role and importance of critical thinking when dealing with media content, Module 2 focuses on sport as a platform that can, on the one hand, help shape reading habits and, on the other hand, improve the media literacy of young athletes. It introduces them to the concept of reading habits, the benefits of reading for athletes, and the Athlete Storytelling method, which uses the experiences of well-known top athletes to encourage them to think about the consequences that disinformation can have on their sporting careers and lives in general. It introduces them to the basic principles of modern media work and the dangers lurking for athletes. It also offers them basic knowledge and skills for designing media campaigns. It empowers them to critically reflect on the role, limitations, and reasons for athletes' participation in them, which they will build on by designing their own campaign in Module 4.

The activities in Module 2 introduce athletes to the development and importance of reading habits, different types of literature, and encourage them to develop a positive attitude towards reading as one of the essential accompanying activities in their physically demanding schedules, which can benefit them professionally in their sport careers, in their personal and intellectual growth, and, finally, in their relaxation. It also offers them tools and strategies for acquiring information about quality reading.

In the central part, it attempts to draw their attention to the pitfalls involved in reading processes, especially when reading fast-paced and unedited information on social media and the Internet. It introduces them to the concept of disinformation and, through various activities, tries to emphasise an understanding of why disinformation arises and the intentions of its creators.

Next, athletes learn about the methods and circumstances of working with the media and communicating with journalists and other media actors. It offers them food for thought on when and how to accept journalists' initiatives, how to formulate media statements, and how to understand, on the one hand, the importance of their own media image and, on the other, the potential that they, as athletes and bearers of positive values, have in the media and broader community.

Reflection on selected media campaigns also guides them in taking their first steps in designing or participating in their own media campaigns. It encourages them to think about the scope and orientation of media campaigns and their own important decisions when participating or

not participating. It helps them to make sense of the time devoted to campaigns, which needs to be fitted in among their many other commitments. It helps them to understand that a good campaign can benefit sport communities, young athletes at the beginning of their sport careers, and themselves, but that not every campaign is well designed or well intentioned.

Module 2 seeks to encourage young athletes to read first and foremost, to empower them to assess situations related to reading and information gathering critically, and to operate in a media environment. At the same time, it seeks to encourage them to engage in activities that can, on the one hand, relieve stress and, on the other, increase their influence in their environment and thus enrich their sport careers.

OVERVIEW OF MODULE OBJECTIVES AND LEARNING OUTCOMES

The module encourages athletes to read and develop critical reading and thinking skills, improves their ability to find verified information, provides a basic foundation for communicating in the modern media world, and gives them basic knowledge about media campaigns in sport.

Upon completion of Module 2: Sport as a Platform for Literacy, athletes will:

- Recognise different genres of literature and learn to find quality reading material that suits them.
- Develop reading habits in line with their interests and abilities.
- Recognise the mechanisms and reasons for creating misinformation and learn to find reliable sources of information.
- Master the basics of communicating with the media and drafting media statements, and understand the importance of their own cooperation with the media.
- Understand the basics of designing media campaigns and develop the ability to assess their role in them critically.

The objectives of the module and the skills that athletes will acquire during its course are logically linked to the objectives of the project as a whole and contribute to the development of young athletes into critical, thoughtful, and engaged readers, responsible and confident individuals in the media world, and co-creators of sport-related media appearances.

DESCRIPTION OF MODULE STRUCTURE

Topic 1: Athlete Storytelling: Reading Habits

In this section, participants will learn about reading as a fundamental intellectual and cognitive activity through a presentation by the facilitator and their own reflection. They will learn about different types of reading and reflect on their reading experiences to date. They will also be introduced to specific examples of literature that may be of interest to them and will reflect together on the role and potential of reading in the life of an athlete.

Topic 2: Athlete Storytelling: Role of Misinformation in an Athlete's Career (Part 1)

In this part, young athletes will learn about misinformation and the ways and reasons for its creation. With the help of a guest athlete, they will learn about the concrete experience of the impact of misinformation on an athlete's career and the consequences that can result from not recognising or spreading misinformation. They will hear first-hand accounts of how athletes have dealt with this and what they have learned. They will also learn about the role and importance of reading in the lives and careers of the guest athletes. The focus will be on the visit by a guest athlete.

Topic 3: Athlete Storytelling: Role of Misinformation in an Athlete's Career (Part 2)

Based on a conversation with a guest athlete and their experiences with misinformation and activities in the media world, young athletes will evaluate their own encounters with misinformation and uncritical absorption of media content. They will compare their experiences with those of the guest athlete and with each other. This will provide them with helpful knowledge about the critical assessment of information and guidance for engaging with the media world.

Topic 4: Journalist Storytelling: Responsible Media Communication

In this part, athletes will first gather and share their experiences of encounters with journalists and evaluate them as pleasant/unpleasant, important/unimportant, or stressful/non-stressful. They will discuss the concept of media pressure and ways of coping with stressful situations. A guest sports journalist will present their perspective in the second part of the session. The journalist will explain their motives, working methods, and limitations to the athletes. A workshop on drafting media statements will follow. The focus of this session will be on the visit by the sports journalist and the workshop for athletes.

Topic 5: Media Literacy Campaigns in Sport: Insights from Professionals

Module 2 concludes with a session that introduces the creation of media campaigns, which will be developed further in the final module of the project. A moderated discussion and group work with examples of media campaigns will be enriched by a guest visit from a media expert, who will analyse several sports media campaigns together with the young athletes. The session concludes with selecting a campaign theme, which the participants will design themselves at the very end, as a relaxation activity, and present as a role-play exercise.

MODULE 2: SPORT AS A PLATFORM FOR LITERACY

TOPIC 1: ATHLETE STORYTELLING: READING HABITS (IN-PERSON/VIRTUAL)

SESSION TITLE: READING HABITS AND TYPES OF READING

OBJECTIVES:

- Understand the concept of reading habits.
- Distinguish between different types of reading and literature.
- Recognise the importance of reading in athletes' activities.
- Identify sources of information about quality reading.

DURATION: 45 min

TOOLS/MATERIALS: laptop, projector and screen, whiteboard and markers, notepad, printed text excerpts for each type of reading (e.g., online meeting notes in a digital document).

AGENDA:

- 1. Introduction to reading as one of the fundamental intellectual and cognitive activities of human beings; presentation of the importance of reading and the types and methods of reading (5-10 min).
 - Reading for obtaining information (basic characteristics)
 - Reading for acquiring knowledge and insight (basic characteristics)
 - Reading for entertainment and relaxation (basic characteristics)
 - Ways of reading: superficial/in-depth, active/passive¹⁷ (basic characteristics)
 - Reading habits, their importance and development¹⁸
- 2. Discussion of young athletes' reading experiences; each participant presents their own reading experience (20 min).
 - When do they read?
 - Where do they read?
 - On what medium do they read (physical materials/screens)?
 - What do they read?
 - Why do they read?
- 3. Presentation of concrete examples of literature and its importance in the life of an athlete (10–15 min).
 - Professional literature as support in training and performance (presentation of several specific examples and their use)

¹⁷ https://cambrilearn.com/blog/types-of-reading-skills

¹⁸ https://independentbookreview.com/2021/12/03/how-do-you-develop-a-reading-habit-at-home/

- Literature as a basis for intellectual and personal growth (presentation of several specific examples and their use)
- Literature for light reading (presentation of several specific examples and their use)
- 4. Sources of information for quality reading (5 min).
 - Online sources providing relevant information on quality reading for young athletes; example from Slovenia: reading recommendations from the #Športajmo in berimo ("Let's Play Sports and Read") project on the Slovenian Olympic Committee (OKS) website¹⁹. Future mentors of reading clubs should identify a comparable website in their own country.
- 5. Testing acquired knowledge recognising types of literature and their characteristics (5–10 min).
 - Young athletes are given three printed texts and must identify the type of literature, outline its basic characteristics, state its purpose, and describe its usefulness in the life of an athlete.

FACILITATOR NOTES:

- The session may be delivered either in person or online.
- Young athletes should be encouraged to talk as much as possible about their reading experiences so that the moderator can gain insight into their reading habits. This also enables participants to compare their experiences with one another.
- Adapt the examples of literature to the type of athletes in the group and to your national context.
- Use a projector to display the basic concepts and their main characteristics, without going into unnecessary detail.
- Emphasise specific examples that demonstrate how the material can be applied in practice.
- Highlight the importance of critical and in-depth reading.
- Conclude with a short test using printed texts of your choice. If the session has been successful, the young athletes should be able to identify the purpose of each text and describe its basic characteristics.

¹⁹ https://www.olympic.si/sportniki/olimpijski-karierni-center/izobrazevanje-in-dvojna-kariera-/sportajmo-in-berimo/ta-mesec-priporocamo

MODULE 2: SPORT AS A PLATFORM FOR LITERACY

TOPIC 2: ATHLETE STORYTELLING: THE ROLE OF MISINFORMATION IN AN ATHLETE'S CAREER (PART 1) (IN-PERSON/VIRTUAL)

SESSION TITLE: THE ROLE OF MISINFORMATION IN AN ATHLETE'S CAREER (PART 1)

OBJECTIVES:

- Understand what disinformation is.
- Recognise the purposes behind the spread of disinformation.
- Know how to verify information.
- Know what to do when confronted with disinformation.

DURATION: 45 min

INVITED GUESTS: top athlete

TOOLS/MATERIALS: laptop, projector, screen, whiteboard, markers, notepad, pen.

AGENDA:

- Introduction to misinformation definition, characteristics, purpose, and consequences²⁰
 (10 minutes)
 - Definition of misinformation
 - Causes of misinformation
 - How misinformation spreads
 - Consequences of misinformation
 - Recognising misinformation
 - Strategies for dealing with misinformation
- 2. Conversation with an athlete about experiences of misinformation (30 minutes)
 - How and where did they encounter it?
 - Did they recognise it at the time?
 - What were the consequences?
 - How did it affect their sporting and personal life?
 - Where did they first learn about it?
 - How do they check for misinformation today?
 - How do they deal with it and how do they respond to it?
 - What insights can they share and what advice would they give to young athletes?
 - The role of reading in their career (what they read, why, where, how much, and when)

²⁰ This note offers a brief recap of the content from Module 1 on this topic. In addition to the recommended links included there, we add one further source here: <a href="https://www.apa.org/topics/journalism-facts/misinformation-disinformatio

- 3. Questions and summary (5 minutes)
 - Opportunity for young athletes to ask the athlete directly about this topic
 - Summary of the key insights from the moderated discussion

FACILITATOR NOTES:

- The session should be conducted in person, as direct contact with a top athlete, serving as a unique authority figure, is highly valuable. Hearing first-hand how a respected athlete has dealt with misinformation is especially instructive.
- Invite a top athlete who is well-known, communicative, and capable of clearly presenting their experiences and reflections (not all athletes have these qualities).
- In this meeting, young athletes are primarily in the role of listeners and therefore more passive. This is intentional, as the session serves as preparation for the second meeting, where they will present their own experiences with misinformation. They should be informed of this expectation so that they can prepare in advance.
- Although more passive during this session, they are not entirely so. At the end, they have the opportunity to ask questions directly to a prominent athlete, which is a rare and valuable experience.

MODULE 2: SPORT AS A PLATFORM FOR LITERACY

TOPIC 3: ATHLETE STORYTELLING: THE ROLE OF MISINFORMATION IN AN ATHLETE'S CAREER (PART 2) (IN-PERSON/VIRTUAL)

SESSION TITLE: THE ROLE OF MISINFORMATION IN AN ATHLETE'S CAREER (PART 2)

OBJECTIVES:

- Understand what disinformation is.
- Recognise the purposes behind the spread of disinformation.
- Know how to verify information.
- Know what to do when confronted with disinformation.

DURATION: 45 min

TOOLS/MATERIALS: laptop, projector, screen, whiteboard, markers, notepad, pen.

AGENDA:

- 1. Brief summary of what disinformation is, what its characteristics are, what its purpose is, and what its consequences are (5 min)²¹.
 - Definition of disinformation
 - Causes of disinformation
 - Spread of disinformation
 - Consequences of disinformation
 - Recognising disinformation
 - Dealing with disinformation
- 2. Presentation of young athletes' experiences with disinformation based on their own experiences; how they recognised it (if they did) and how they dealt with it. Each participant presents their experience (25 min).
 - How did they encounter it?
 - Did they recognise it?
 - How did they respond?
 - Did they turn to anyone, and if so, who?
 - Did they receive appropriate help and useful advice from the person(s) they turned to?
 - What were the consequences of any inappropriate responses?
 - How do they feel now?

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²¹ This unit is linked to the previous session – The Role of Misinformation in an Athlete's Career (Part 1) – with which it forms a whole.

- 3. Guided discussion about their own experiences with disinformation, comparison with the experiences of guest top athletes, and mutual comparison of the experiences of young athletes (10 min).
- 4. Summary of key insights on dealing with disinformation²² and basic guidelines on how to respond to it (5 min).

FACILITATOR NOTES:

- The session can be carried out either in person or online.
- This unit is linked to the previous session The Role of Misinformation in an Athlete's Career (Part 1) with which it forms a whole.
- The main purpose is to compare the experiences of established top athletes with those of young athletes with misinformation, led by a moderator.
- The emphasis should be on specific examples (especially those that are similar for top athletes and young athletes) that young athletes have encountered and that show patterns of how misinformation works, its dangers, and its pitfalls.
- The fundamental purpose is to present appropriate and effective ways of responding to misinformation based on the insights of the top athlete they met, their own experiences, and the knowledge they already have or have acquired at the meeting.

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²² https://azbuki.bg/wp-content/uploads/2021/08/Strategies_4S_21_Petko-Dimov.pdf

MODULE 2: SPORT AS A PLATFORM FOR LITERACY

TOPIC 4: JOURNALIST STORYTELLING: RESPONSIBLE MEDIA COMMUNICATION (IN-PERSON/VIRTUAL)

SESSION TITLE: HANDLING MEDIA INTERACTIONS EFFECTIVELY

OBJECTIVES:

After completing this topic, participants will be able to:

- Assess situations involving cooperation with journalists.
- Handle situations involving journalists.
- Understand the role and limits of their own media image.
- Formulate a concise media statement.

DURATION: 45 min

INVITED GUESTS: sports journalist

TOOLS/MATERIALS: notepad, pen, projector, board, markers.

AGENDA:

- 1. Discussion about experiences with journalists participants briefly present their positive and negative experiences (10 min).
 - What are their experiences?
 - What did they find most difficult?
 - Did anyone teach them how to operate in the media world?
 - Do they read and follow their image in the media?
 - Reactions and comments on their media appearances
- 2. Presentation by a selected sports journalist on their motives, working methods, agendas, and limitations when preparing reports on sporting events (17 min).
 - Working methods and their characteristics (reports, commentaries, broadcasts, interviews)
 - Limitations and difficulties in preparing reports
 - Attitude towards athletes: empathy or impersonality, friendship or professionalism
 - Ethics (what to disclose and what not to disclose, athletes' privacy)
 - Advice for young athletes when dealing with the media; most common mistakes
- 3. Short guided discussion with a sports journalist and young athletes on the following topics (10 min).
 - How to draft and deliver a statement to the media
 - How to decline
 - How to balance it with other commitments

- What not to talk about publicly
- The importance of a positive attitude
- Coping with the pressure of media expectations
- Is an athlete's media image important? Why or why not
- Is an athlete's privacy part of their media image?
- 4. Group exercise with short media statements to a guest journalist (8 min).
 - Simulation of statements after a sporting event
 - Journalist's immediate comments on the strengths and weaknesses

FACILITATOR NOTES:

- The session should be conducted in person, as direct contact with a media expert who has first-hand knowledge of sports journalism and the specifics of reporting on sport is extremely valuable for young athletes.
- Invite a reputable and experienced sports journalist who can clearly present the field of sports journalism and provide practical advice to young athletes.

MODULE 2: SPORT AS A PLATFORM FOR LITERACY

TOPIC 5: MEDIA LITERACY CAMPAIGNS IN SPORT: INSIGHTS FROM PROFESSIONALS (IN-PERSON/VIRTUAL)

SESSION TITLE: ATHLETES IN MEDIA CAMPAIGNS: BUILDING A POSITIVE PUBLIC IMAGE

OBJECTIVES:

- Understand the reach of media campaigns.
- Recognise the role of a positive media image in campaigns.
- Assess the significance and pitfalls of participation and decide for or against involvement.
- Design the basic features of a simple media campaign.

DURATION: 45 min

INVITED GUESTS: media expert

TOOLS/MATERIALS: pens, whiteboard, laptop, projector, screen, internet connection.

AGENDA:

- 1. Brief presentation of a selected media campaign in the field of sport and its basic characteristics (e.g. based on UEFA's Take Care campaign²³ or a similar international or national campaign) (5–10 min).
 - What is a media campaign?
 - What is its purpose (what values does it promote)?
 - How can it be implemented?
- 2. Moderated discussion about media campaigns involving athletes that young athletes remember; discussion about how they were implemented, how they affected them, the positive and negative aspects of these campaigns in their eyes, and what they would change about them (10 min).
- 3. Presentation by a media expert topic: what are the elements of an effective campaign and what are the pitfalls that can lead to campaign failure (18–20 min).
- 4. Moderated group work with a moderator and media expert on the basic steps of designing a simple media campaign (17–20 min).
 - How to choose a campaign theme: what values should it promote?
 - What activities should it include in relation to the theme?
 - Suggestions for communication channels through which the campaign can run
 - Planning and implementation of the campaign
 - The role of athletes in the campaign: why are athletes good communicators of values?

²³ https://www.uefa.com/takecare/

- How to avoid potential abuse and how to recognise it?
- Are campaigns and media appearances merely an obligation for athletes?
- 5. Summary of the meeting (important aspects of media campaigns in the field of sport) and announcement that they will design their own campaign in Module 4; until then, they should think about the topic, activities, and media channels they would use (5–10 min).

FACILITATOR NOTES:

- The session should be conducted in person, as direct contact with a media expert who has first-hand knowledge of the media landscape is extremely valuable for young athletes, since media engagement is not only part of sport but also one of the key aspects of athletes' lives.
- If young athletes are not familiar with any sports campaigns in their area, this part can be omitted.
- Invite a reputable media expert who can clearly present the media landscape in sport, its characteristics, trends, and common pitfalls.
- By reflecting on how to design a media campaign, young athletes prepare for Module 4, where they will create their own campaign.

Module 3: Digital Literacy in Practice²⁴

MODULE INTRODUCTION

In Module 2, athletes explore how misinformation can shape a career. This module takes things further with practical skills for fact-checking, including the use of reverse image search to identify the origin or first posting of an image online, and for spotting fake news by applying verification techniques through activities such as quizzes and games. Participants also learn how to identify and avoid filter bubbles on social media.

Sessions in this module emphasise the risks athletes face and how they can protect themselves, their reputation, and their well-being. With technology constantly evolving, new tools can both improve our lives and create risks when used with harmful intent. This module prepares athletes to face both sides with confidence. As in earlier modules, facilitators should encourage participants to take an active role in discussions and group work.

One of the topics in this module is deepfakes: the risks that manipulated media can pose to athletes and practical ways to detect them. With evolving technology, we are given tools and resources that enhance our lives, but at the same time, these can be misused with harmful intent. Participants work with fictional athlete scenarios, discussing in groups how to respond and what their first steps should be. By completing this session, athletes will be able to navigate new and emerging media content more easily and with greater confidence.

The online world is no different from the real world, which is why this module also addresses online harassment. Athletes, as public figures, can easily become targets. In this session, they develop practical response techniques and simple "dos and don'ts" for handling harassment, while also reflecting on the role of teammates, clubs, and sponsors in providing support.

The module concludes with a card-based game designed to simulate real-life decisions under media pressure during a major sporting event. In this activity, participants practise their response skills and strategic thinking in high-pressure situations. The focus is on learning to think before acting on emotions — a skill that is crucial not only for media decisions, but also in everyday life, whether reacting to online rumours, resisting impulsive purchases, or creating and sharing content as an athlete or public figure.

The overall aim of this module is to help athletes feel more comfortable engaging with media content, both as consumers and as creators or subjects, when they themselves are the focus of the content or narrative. This includes assessing whether media content is

²⁴ In preparing the curriculum, we made partial use of ChatGPT (OpenAI) artificial intelligence tools.

reliable or misleading and responding with greater confidence, whether in a calm setting or under pressure, for example during major competitions.

OVERVIEW OF MODULE OBJECTIVES AND LEARNING OUTCOMES

Digital Literacy in Practice deals with the most hands-on side of media literacy. This module includes websites, tools, and strategies for detecting fake news and shielding athletes from media manipulation.

By successfully finishing this module, participants should be able to:

- Recognise fake news, deepfakes, posts, and images.
- Use fact-checking sites (like Snopes) and digital tools such as reverse image search to verify content.
- Reflect on both media's positive and harmful applications and evolving technologies.
- Identify different types of online harassment and recognise the risks for athletes.
- Develop response strategies ("dos and don'ts") to protect their well-being, reputation, and career.
- Practise making calm and responsible decisions under media pressure.
- Reflect on ethical and responsible media use as both consumers and content creators.

DESCRIPTION OF MODULE STRUCTURE

Topic 1: Identifying Fake News, Fact-Checking and Bias Recognition

The first session of Module 3 introduces key concepts that will be built on in later sessions. The lecture starts with a short recap about fake news introduced in Module 1, Topic 2. This topic focuses on fake news recognition and presents some methods the facilitator may choose to introduce. Fact-checking is also introduced, with examples of both local and international fact-checking websites. Finally, the topic covers bias recognition and methods to avoid filter bubbles on social media. The session ends with a board game that consolidates the topics covered.

Topic 2: Verification Techniques and Use of Digital Tools

The session continues the previous topic and focuses on practical examples of fact-checking methods. Verification techniques and digital tools that allow facts to be checked quickly are presented. The main part of the session is the Athlete Media Literacy Workshop, which encourages participants to use verification techniques and tools presented earlier through practical cases. The topic ends with a reflection by participants, focusing on their confidence in using fact-checking methods, while the facilitator collects input via Mentimeter.

Topic 3: Deepfakes: Understanding and Detection Strategies

The focus of this topic is understanding deepfakes, a form of manipulated media that can pose risks to athletes, and the practical strategies for detecting them. A short lecture provides

definitions, risks, and detection strategies, followed by group work with fictional athlete scenarios. Participants read their assigned persona and situation and imagine themselves in the athlete's place. In groups, they discuss what the first steps should be in the critical first hours, how to balance calm communication with the responsibilities to sponsors and their team, and what evidence should be collected. Each group selects one spokesperson to present their response plan. The session emphasises practical decision-making, critical awareness, and reflection on how athletes can protect themselves in a rapidly evolving digital environment.

Topic 4: Managing Online Harassment: Proactive Strategies for Athletes

This session focuses on managing online harassment, its potential impact, and how athletes can proactively address it. Participating in this workshop will help athletes recognise different forms of online harassment, understand the risks and dangers, and explore response techniques. They also examine the role of sponsors, teammates, and clubs in supporting athletes. Participants develop practical response techniques, such as a brief list of "dos and don'ts," through group discussions. The session emphasises critical awareness, self-defence, and constructive problem-solving.

Topic 5: Media Literacy Campaigns during Sporting Events: Case Study Analysis

This session is designed as a card game to simulate real-life athlete decisions under media pressure, identify risks and rewards during sporting events, practise strategic thinking through a peer-based game format, and reflect on ethical and responsible media use. Players navigate a made-up media environment during a major sporting event, responding to realistic media-related scenarios using communication strategies. The game's focus in this session is thinking before acting on emotions and impulse. The goal is to make informed, reputation-protecting choices as a modern athlete in a complex media world.

MODULE 3: DIGITAL LITERACY IN PRACTICE

TOPIC 1: IDENTIFYING FAKE NEWS, FACT-CHECKING AND BIAS RECOGNITION (IN-PERSON/VIRTUAL)

SESSION TITLE: ESCAPING FAKE NEWS AND FILTER BUBBLES

OBJECTIVES:

- Learn how to recognise fake news.
- Learn about fact-checking sites.
- Explore ways to avoid bias.

DURATION: 60 –75 min

TOOLS/MATERIALS: PC, PowerPoint slides (definition, infographics ...), projector, speakers, participants' smartphones/laptops with internet access, printed game board, instruction cards (on red, green and blue paper), figurines for each player and dice (one set for each group).

AGENDA:

Introduction example

Welcome!

Today, we will discuss identifying fake news and how we can avoid it as much as possible.

1. Fake news (20 min)

a) Short recap

The facilitator reminds participants of the definition of fake news (presented in M1, T2) and asks them what they know about it to make the recap more dynamic. After the recap, the facilitator can present some of the following methods with related graphics or videos. Fake news is made-up news with no verifiable facts, sources or quotes. Modern technology, such as the widespread use of social media, bots, and AI (artificial intelligence), enables fake news stories to spread quickly and easily. (Source 25: University of Michigan Library).

b) Recognising fake news

What can we do to stop spreading fake news?

- Think critically when using the strategies to evaluate the likely accuracy of information. Be curious and actively investigate what you read and hear.
- Use "care before sharing" news content with others on social media. Think twice and reflect on news and information that arouses strong emotions, positive or negative. If you have any doubt, do NOT share the information.

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²⁵ https://guides.lib.umich.edu/fakenews

- Use news sources accountable for their content and following journalistic ethics and standards.
- Learn to recognise your own biases and compensate for them.

c) Presented methods

Strategies to identify fake news:

➤ BRAIN & SPORT model from Module 1, Topic 5 (will be presented in more detail in Module 3, Topic 3).

BRAIN – Evaluate the media message.

- Bias: Is the message one-sided, biased, or trying to persuade you? Who benefits? Is it true or misleading?
- Relevance: Does this information matter to you personally or professionally? Is it necessary? Does it reflect your values or goals?
- Authority: Who created, posted, or shared the content? Can they be trusted? Are they qualified? What are their affiliations?
- Intent: What is the purpose informing, entertaining, provoking, selling, misleading, or gaining clicks? Is it constructive or kind?
- Newness/Novelty: Is the content current, corrected, or updated? Does the timing affect credibility or usefulness?

SPORT – Reflect on the response, on what they would do differently or similarly in a comparable situation as public figures.

- Sincere: Was the athlete's or organisation's response honest, transparent, or overly defensive/manipulative?
- Professional: Did their tone and behaviour reflect maturity, responsibility, or professionalism?
- Open: Did they welcome constructive conversation or feedback, or were they dismissive?
- Resilient: Could their response stand up to public or journalistic scrutiny? Is it grounded in truth?
- Trustworthy: Did their reaction reinforce or damage public trust in them?

- Fake News Checklist (Source²⁶: Cornell University Library):
- **Consider the Source** Click away from the story to investigate the site, its mission and its contact info.
- Read Beyond Headlines can be outrageous in an effort to get clicks. What's the whole story?
- **Check the Author** Do a quick search on the author. Are they credible? Are they real?
- **Supporting Sources?** Click on those links. Determine if the info given actually supports the story.
- Check the Date Reposting old news stories doesn't mean they're relevant to current events.
- **Is it a Joke?** If it is too outlandish, it might be satire. Research the site and author to be sure.

HOW TO SPOT FAKE NEWS

IS IT A JOKE?

CONSIDER THE SOURCE

CHECK THE AUTHOR

•

CHECK THE DATE

- Check your Biases Consider if your own beliefs could affect your judgement.
- Ask the Experts Ask a librarian or consult a fact-checking site.
- ➤ How to spot fake news video. (Source²⁷: CSI Library)
- ➤ SIFT method (stop, investigate the source, find better coverage trace claims, quotes and media to the original context) for evaluating the source (Source ²⁸: Horn Library)
- CRAAP test (currency, relevancy, authority, accuracy, purpose) for evaluating websites
 video (<u>Source</u>²⁹: CSI Library)
- ➤ RADAR method (rationale, authority, date, accuracy, relevance) for evaluating the source (Sources: table 30 William H. Hannon Library; video 31 CSI Library)

2. Fact-checking (15 min)

First, the facilitator briefly presents fact-checking, then continues with examples of fact-checking websites, which can be chosen from the following examples or found elsewhere. The facilitator can also encourage participants to look for news about their sports interests on one of the fact-checking websites. Phones are required for the activity. After reading, they can talk about whether they were surprised by the news and share their opinions.

a) A brief explanation

²⁶ https://guides.library.cornell.edu/evaluate news/infographic

²⁷ https://library.csi.cuny.edu/misinformation/spot-fake-news-video

²⁸ https://libguides.babson.edu/evaluatingsources/techniques

²⁹ https://library.csi.cuny.edu/misinformation/evaluate-websites-video

³⁰ https://libguides.lmu.edu/aboutRADAR

³¹ https://library.csi.cuny.edu/misinformation/evaluate-websites-video

"Fact-checking is a crucial pillar of the EU's approach to information manipulation and foreign interference." (Source³²: European Commission)

b) Examples

The European Digital Media Observatory (EDMO) project supports the independent community working to combat disinformation. One of the EDMO hubs is ADMO (Adria Digital Media Observatory), covering Croatia and Slovenia (Source 33: Adria Digital Media Observatory).

Other EDMO hubs:

- <u>BECID</u>³⁴ Baltic Engagement Centre for Combating Information Disorders (covering Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania)
- <u>BROD</u>³⁵ Bulgarian-Romanian Observatory of Digital Media
- GADMO³⁶ German-Austrian Digital Media Observatory
- LAKMUSZ³⁷ EDMO Hungarian hub against disinformation
- MedDMO³⁸ Mediterranean Digital Media Observatory (covering Greece, Malta and Cyprus)

Here are some examples of websites for Fact-Checking (<u>Source</u>³⁹: CSI Library), that can be used for the activity described above:

- Snopes https://www.snopes.com/
- Media Bias/Fact Check (MBFC) https://mediabiasfactcheck.com/
- PolitiFact https://www.politifact.com/
- Duke Reporters' Lab is a map of fact-checking sites around the World https://reporterslab.org/fact-checking/

3. Bias recognition (10 min)

a) Short recap

The facilitator recaps the bias recognition theme. He can ask participants what bias means for them to make the recap more dynamic. The facilitator can also choose a video about defining confirmation bias or about filter bubbles.

Bias is "the action of supporting or opposing a particular person or thing in an unfair way, because of allowing personal opinions to influence your judgement" (Source 40: Cambridge English Dictionary).

35 https://brodhub.eu/en/

³² https://commission.europa.eu/topics/countering-information-manipulation/cooperating-fact-checkers-civil-society-media-and-academia en

³³ https://admohub.eu/en/

³⁴ https://becid.eu/

³⁶ https://gadmo.eu/

³⁷ https://www.hdmo.eu/

³⁸ https://meddmo.eu/

³⁹ https://library.csi.cuny.edu/misinformation/fact-checking-websites

⁴⁰ <u>https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/bias</u>

- View video 41 Defining Confirmation Bias.
- View video 42 Beware Online "Filter Bubbles".

b) Method to avoid filter bubbles

How to avoid the filter bubble on social media (Source 43: Mashable):

- 1. Don't unfriend people based on their beliefs.
- 2. Don't delete comments you don't like.
- 3. Engage with those you disagree with.
- 4. Read the comments on your friends' posts.
- 5. Follow media outlets you disagree with.
- 6. Read before you share.
- 7. Flag fake news.

4. GAMIFICATION: Sprint & Quiz (15 –20 min)

The facilitator divides participants into groups of 3–6 players. Each group plays the board game Sprint & Quiz (see Additional Material) to summarise new knowledge through the game.

FACILITATOR NOTES:

Sources of definitions and videos are just examples that the facilitator can use during the presentation. The facilitator may choose only some of the presented examples or find others that are more appropriate for the audience and local environment.

ADDITIONAL MATERIAL:

Sprint & Quiz – game rules:

Each participant chooses one figurine. They start the game at the starting point and move by rolling the dice. Play proceeds clockwise. There are three coloured squares on the playing field (blue, red, and green). When a player reaches one of these squares, the next player draws a card of that colour and reads the instructions for the player whose turn it is.

Blue cards contain questions for the player whose turn it is, along with the correct answers and instructions on where to move after answering.

Red cards contain penalties and instructions on which path to take.

Green cards contain rewards and instructions on which path to take.

⁴¹ https://www.facinghistory.org/resource-library/defining-confirmation-bias

⁴² https://www.ted.com/talks/eli pariser beware online filter bubbles

⁴³ https://mashable.com/article/avoid-facebook-filter-bubble

The player who reaches FINISH first wins.



Image: Board game example



Image: Blue cards example

You shared a library post on your social media about an upcoming workshop on recognizing fake news. As a successful and well-known athlete, many of your supporters attended the event, so the library would like to thank you for your help in promoting it.

Follow the path PROMOTION (brown path).

You created a short video explaining how to verify sports news using reliable sources. It went viral on TikTok and was praised by teachers who started using it in media literacy classes.

Follow the path LECTURE (orange path).

Image: Green cards example

After losing the boxing match, you angrily said that "everything was rigged" and that "the gang is pulling the strings."

The recording became the source of a false theory about corruption in boxing associations. You later stated that it was just an emotional outburst without any evidence.

A public APOLOGY is required (black path).

As a coach, you accidentally posted a draft congratulatory message with the name of the wrong winner before the end of the football season. False information about the winner could have spread before the end of the match.

The post must be DELETED (gray path).

Image: Red cards example

MODULE 3: DIGITAL LITERACY IN PRACTICE

TOPIC 2: VERIFICATION TECHNIQUES AND USE OF DIGITAL TOOLS (IN-PERSON/VIRTUAL)

SESSION TITLE: FAST CHECKS FOR ATHLETES

OBJECTIVES:

- Apply quick, reliable verification steps to posts, images, and videos.
- Learn to use websites and tools such as reverse image search and fact-checking portals.
- Decide whether a statement is true, false, or misleading and justify the verdict with sources.

DURATION: 30–45 minutes

TOOLS/MATERIALS: PC, PowerPoint slides, projector, participants' smartphones/laptops with internet access, printed worksheets with cue questions for a "How We Checked" mini-report (1 page), printed case cards (see below) — one or two per group, timer, Mentimeter or similar tool.

AGENDA:

Introduction example

Welcome! Today is pure hands-on: you will verify viral sports posts using a few simple tools. Some were introduced in the previous course, and some you will learn to use today.

1. Quick demonstration of tools (10 min)

The facilitator briefly demonstrates the tools with examples.

✓ Google reverse image search with Google Images - <u>images.google.com</u>

Example:



An explanation of the picture can be found, for example, at <u>Fact Check</u>⁴⁴.

Key points for participants:

- **When to use:** To quickly check if a suspicious photo, meme, or quote card has appeared elsewhere online, who is publishing it, and whether it appears on trusted news sites or only on social media.
- **How to use:** Right-click the image → Search image with Google (or upload the file).

⁴⁴ https://factcheck.afp.com/doc.afp.com.69VD6G3

- **Pros:** Super fast; effective for reused images. **Cons:** Cropped/edited or brand-new Algenerated images may evade matches.
 - Privacy note: Do not upload private or sensitive images you do not own.
- ✓ Fact-checking portals: Razkrinkavanje⁴⁵ (for Slovenia), Snopes⁴⁶, AFP Fact Check⁴⁷, PolitiFact⁴⁸, Lead Stories⁴⁹ (similar sites were presented in the previous topic M3, T1). Use the same example as above to demonstrate how to check a claim.

Key points for participants:

- When to use: To check a claim that is already viral.
- How to use: Search the person or claim + keywords "fact check," then read the verdict and sources.
- **Pros:** Credible, quick confirmations. **Cons:** Not every claim is covered immediately.

✓ TinEye - tineye.com

Example:



Key points for participants:

- When to use: To check where and when an image first appeared online, especially to trace its earliest use and confirm if it comes from a reliable source or from satire, tabloids, or fact-checking sites.
- **How to use:** Upload or paste the URL → sort by Oldest → open earliest hits.
- **Pros:** Strong historical index. **Cons:** Smaller coverage than Google in some niches.

2. Athlete Media Literacy Workshop (20–35 min)

Timeline: Group discussion (10–15min) – group presentations (2 –3min per group) - reflection (3–5min).

Divide participants into groups of 3–4. Each group receives one case card with a statement and/or a picture of the news., along with a worksheet containing cue questions. Using the worksheet, participants discuss their case and decide whether the news is True, False, or Misleading (T/F/M). They must use at least two verification tools to check the reliability of the source and record the steps they took (search terms, links).

Case cards:

⁴⁵ https://www.ostro.si/si/razkrinkavanje

⁴⁶ https://www.snopes.com/

⁴⁷ https://factcheck.afp.com/

⁴⁸ https://www.politifact.com/

⁴⁹ https://leadstories.com/



1. Statement:

"Lionel Messi was officially featured on a commemorative banknote issued by the Central Bank of Argentina after winning the 2022 FIFA World Cup."

False.

Source⁵⁰, (Debunked by AFP Fact Check, December 2022)

2. Statement:

"Basketball player Shaquille O'Neal earned a doctoral degree."

True.

Source⁵¹, (Shaq earned his doctoral degree from Barry University in 2012)



Cavs point guard Kyrie Irving believes the Earth is flat



3. Statement:

"NBA star Kyrie Irving publicly stated that he believed the Earth was not round."

True.

Source⁵², (Kyrie made these statements publicly in 2017, though

later apologised.); Source⁵³ of picture.

4. Statement:

"Usain Bolt lost an Olympic medal due to doping allegations."

Misleading.

Source⁵⁴, (Bolt himself never failed a doping test.)



CAS Ruling in Olympic Doping Case Takes Usain Bolt's 9th Medal /

⁵⁰ https://factcheck.afp.com/doc.afp.com.33664AA

⁵¹ https://my.barry.edu/news/article.html?id=21082

 $[\]frac{52}{\text{https://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/americas/kyrie-irving-flat-earth-theory-basketball-nba-boston-celtics-conspiracy-theories-a8564476.html}$

 $[\]frac{53}{https://www.foxsports.com.au/basketball/nba/cavs-point-guard-kyrie-irving-believes-the-earth-is-flat/news-story/f21ca6d60a51aed36062cb3028ac547e$

⁵⁴ https://www.independent.co.uk/sport/olympics/athletics/usain-bolt-stripped-of-2008-olympic-medal-after-antidoping-rule-violation-a7545636.html?utm_source=chatgpt.com

Cue questions (on the wall or on worksheets):

- What's the claim? Who posted it first?
- Can you find a credible source reporting the same?
- Does reverse image/video search show reuse or wrong context?
- Is there a reputable fact-check?
- If it's a screenshot, can archives confirm it existed?

Group presentations:

After the group discussions, each group presents a "How We Checked" mini-report: Tools used \rightarrow Earliest credible source \rightarrow Verdict (T/F/M).

The facilitator highlights effective verification moves (e.g. finding the oldest hit, using archives, or tracing to an official statement).

Reflection:

Use Mentimeter or a similar tool to collect feedback about the task. If needed (based on responses to Example Question 1), choose different statements for the next workshop.

Example for questions:

- 1. Have you heard about the news item you worked on before?
- Yes, I knew it was T/F/M.
- Yes, but I didn't know it was T/F/M.
- No, I heard about it for the first time.
- 2. Have you changed your personal opinion about the statement after checking sources?
- Yes
- No
- 3. Evaluate statements. (1 = Strongly disagree, 5 = Strongly agree)
- It was challenging to decide which tool to use.
- The first tool we used was not useful for our scenario.
- By the end of the task, I was confident our verdict was correct.
- 4. How did you feel while performing the task? (Word cloud)
- 5. How did you feel at the end of the session? (Word cloud)

FACILITATOR NOTES:

This session is designed primarily for in-person delivery, but if needed it can also be conducted online. In that case, make sure to prepare a suitable virtual environment (e.g., breakout rooms). The presented case cards are just an example. We recommend that the facilitator look for current examples of statements that are interesting for participants. If the session needs to be shortened to 30 minutes, demonstrate two tools (Google Image and a fact-checking portal) and conduct one case round.

If the session lasts 45 minutes, add a second case round after the reflection (the first experience may differ from the second).

MODULE 3: DIGITAL LITERACY IN PRACTICE

TOPIC 3: DEEPFAKES: UNDERSTANDING AND DETECTION STRATEGIES (<u>IN-PERSON</u>/VIRTUAL)

SESSION TITLE: RECOGNISING AND RESPONDING TO DEEPFAKES

OBJECTIVES:

- Understand what deepfakes are and how they differ from other manipulated media.
- Identify risks deepfakes pose for athletes.
- Recognise practical strategies for detecting deepfakes.
- Reflect on both positive and harmful applications of the technology.
- Practise first-response decision-making through realistic scenarios.

DURATION: 90–130 min

TOOLS/MATERIALS:

- PC, projector, PowerPoint slides (definitions, types, examples, ...).
- Handouts with fictional athlete scenarios (Nadia, Lukas, Marko, Ana, Tom).
- Optional: flipchart/whiteboard for feedback.

AGENDA:

1. **Introduction** (5–10 min)

The facilitator engages participants with a short discussion on manipulated media in sport.

2. **Lecture** (30–40 min)

Overview of definitions, types, everyday and sporting examples, risks, recognition strategies, and positive applications.

3. **Group work** (20–30 min)

Participants analyse fictional athlete scenarios and develop first-response strategies.

4. **Presentations** (30–40 min)

Groups briefly present their assigned scenario and chosen response.

5. Wrap-up reflection and evaluation (5–10 min)

The facilitator summarises key lessons (act fast, stay calm, save evidence, communicate clearly, involve sponsors/club) and invites participants to reflect on how they would apply these strategies in their own sporting lives.

FACILITATOR NOTES:

This session is designed primarily for in-person delivery, but it can also be conducted online. In that case, make sure to prepare a suitable virtual environment (e.g., breakout rooms, shared documents for group work).

The accompanying PowerPoint is only an example; facilitators are encouraged to adapt it to their audience.

Organise participants into small groups (max. four people) for group activity. A set of sample scenarios is provided below. Facilitators may use them as written, adapt them or create new ones. If there are more groups than prepared scenarios, prepare additional scenarios in advance so each group has its own case.

Keep in mind that with more groups, the session will take longer, as presentations and discussions may extend the planned time.

ADDITIONAL MATERIAL:

Scenarios

Participants will form groups of about four people. Each group will receive a scenario along with a short persona description of the athlete involved. These cases are completely fictional. Any similarity to real events or real people is coincidental.

They will have about 20 minutes to:

- Read their scenario and persona carefully.
- Put themselves in the athlete's shoes and think about their personals personality, how active they are on social media, their sponsors, and their personal style.
- Discuss as a group: what would this person realistically do in the first hour if this happened to them?
- Create a quick response plan who to alert, what to do, what to avoid, and what kind of public statement (if any) they would make.
- At the end, each group will pick one person to share back: introduce the persona, summarise the scenario, and explain the path their group chose.

SCENARIO 1

⑥ Volleyball — Nadia and the "miracle supplement"

<u>Meet Nadia</u>: Nadia Karim is 30, the star of the Istanbul Falcons volleyball team. She's calm, thoughtful, and down to earth. On Instagram she has about 550,000 followers, plus a small YouTube channel with workout and rehab tips. She averages three to four Instagram posts a week and usually one YouTube upload every two weeks. Her posts are mostly about training, recovery, and team life.

Her main sponsors are:

- Adidas
- Coca-Cola
- Gatorade she is currently the face of their "Fuel Your Recovery" wellness campaign across Europe.

<u>The situation</u>: Nadia is finally returning from an ankle injury. Tomorrow she's scheduled to appear at the league's official media day, where she'll be featured as a comeback story and also promoting her sponsor's recovery campaign.

But the night before, a short video begins spreading on TikTok and X. It looks almost identical to one of her podcast episodes (same outfit, same background) but in this clip "Nadia" says: "Thanks to FlexiStrong (supplement) my ankle healed in record time. I can't believe how quickly I was back on my feet."

The video feels slightly off: her voice sounds flat and unnatural, and the background hum shifts halfway through. Still, a popular fitness influencer reposts it with a purchase link. Fans are tagging Nadia, asking if she really uses it.

The problem

Nadia has always avoided giving medical advice because she is not a doctor. Since she is the face of Gatorade's recovery campaign, this fake endorsement also directly conflicts with her sponsor's message.

With media day less than 24 hours away, Nadia must decide quickly: what's the right first response?

SCENARIO 2



Skiing — Lukas and the "dangerous course" voicemail

<u>Meet Lukas:</u> Lukas Steiner is 23, an Austrian alpine skier who competes in World Cup slalom. He's talented but very reserved. He prefers training to talking. On Instagram he has about 120,000 followers, TikTok 35,000, and he posts around two to three times per week. His content is mostly training drills, race clips, and occasional sponsor shout-outs. He rarely uses X.

His main sponsors are:

- Toyota
- Under Armour
- Red Bull he features in their Fearless Lines youth campaign.

<u>The situation:</u> The night before a World Cup slalom race, a regional TV station airs a story titled "Course Concerns?". They play what they claim is a leaked voicemail from Lukas, where he calls the slope "dangerous" and says "the course setters favoured the Swiss again."

The voice sounds like him, but the breathing is clipped, and the background noise cuts in and out. A Telegram channel (created just yesterday) posts the "full audio", and the story begins to circulate online overnight.

On race morning, Lukas's coach sees a news alert about the clip. He decides not to tell Lukas before the run, to avoid breaking his focus. After the race, Lukas finally checks his phone and

finds a DM from a journalist: "Can you confirm this recording?" This is the first time he realises what's going on — but by now, the story has been spreading for nearly 24 hours.

The problem

Lukas has a reputation for professionalism and never criticises organisers publicly. If the fake is left unchecked, it could harm his image, cause fines from his federation, and upset his sponsors, who expect him to stay above controversy. Now he has to figure out how to respond late, but still urgently.

SCENARIO 3



Cycling — Marko and the nightclub video

Meet Marko: Marko Novak is 26, a rider for Team RoadRunner Slovenia, competing at the highest level of professional road cycling. He's disciplined and fairly private. On Instagram, he has about 220,000 followers, and his Strava profile is public, where fans track his rides. He posts two to three times a week, mostly training shots, race-day pictures, and occasional sponsor shout-outs. He isn't active on TikTok and rarely uses X.

His main sponsors are:

- Nissan
- Skiny
- Adidas.

The situation: One week before the Giro d'Italia (one of cycling's three biggest races) a 17second video starts circulating online. It shows a man in a nightclub during a late-night argument, but the man's face has been digitally swapped with Marko's face using deepfake technology.

At first glance, it looks convincing: the lighting is dark, the clip is shaky, and it spreads quickly on TikTok with the caption: "Marko Novak out at 1 AM fight before Giro!"

A popular cycling gossip page reposts it. By the next morning, a tabloid has already published an article: "Scandal Before Giro: Novak Caught in Nightclub Brawl" — without waiting for comment from Marko or his team. Fans begin commenting on forums and social media as well as flooding the team's social channels with angry comments.

The problem

Like most pro cycling teams, Team RoadRunner enforces a strict curfew during race week: riders must be back in the hotel by 11pm to rest and recover.

Breaking curfew is taken very seriously. In big stage races like the Giro, management can decide to remove a rider from the line-up if they believe he has broken discipline rules even if he is one of the strongest riders. This is done to protect the team's sporting focus and sponsor reputation.

Even though the video is fake, the damage is already happening: some fans believe the story, others are sceptical. Nissan and Adidas are already contacting the team, asking if the article is true. If the team cannot contain the story quickly, Marko could lose both his Giro start and his good reputation.

SCENARIO 4



Water Polo — Ana and the "match-fixing confession"

Meet Ana: Ana Kovač is 28, the goalkeeper for Water Polo Club Jadran Split in Croatia. She's experienced, respected, and fairly private online. She has about 95,000 Instagram followers, where she posts once or twice a week. Usually family pictures, seaside dives, and short match recaps. She isn't very active on TikTok or X.

Her sponsors are:

- Nike
- Nestlé
- Swarovski

The situation: Last weekend, Ana's team lost an important league match against a major rival. A few days later, an 18-second audio clip begins circulating on Telegram. It sounds like Ana, saying: "I let in those goals on purpose — the betting money was worth it."

The audio seems off: the breathing is unnatural, and the background café noise loops in a strange way. But the timing (right after a painful loss) makes it feel more believable to fans and media.

Within hours, Ana gets an anonymous email: "Pay us or we'll release more recordings." Meanwhile, a popular betting blog hints at "suspicious behaviour" from Ana, and fans on social media start asking if she threw the match.

The problem

Ana has never been involved in betting, but the combination of a real loss and a fake audio confession is damaging.

Fans are already suspicious because of the recent loss.

Her sponsors are calling the club for clarification.

Ana is horrified and worried: how can she prove quickly that the audio is fake?

SCENARIO 5



Football — Tom and the fake transfer announcement

<u>Meet Tom:</u> Tom Smith is 28, a striker for Northbridge United Football Club in the United Kingdom. He's known for being outgoing, funny, and very active online. He loves interacting with fans and has about 12.4 million Instagram followers, plus millions more on TikTok and X. He posts daily — training clips, match highlights, banter with teammates, and lifestyle content like cars, fashion, and family moments.

His sponsors are:

- Nike
- Coca-Cola
- Nissan.

<u>The situation</u>: Just days before a huge derby match, a slick 22-second video appears on X and TikTok. It shows Tom wearing the kit of his team's biggest rival and smiling as an AI-generated voice says: "I can't wait to join. This is a dream come true."

The video is a deepfake: the rival club's badge was digitally pasted over footage from an old documentary, and Tom's voice was cloned. But to fans scrolling quickly, it looks convincing. A fake "transfer insider" account posts it first, and it explodes within hours: Northbridge United's own online shop receives refund requests from panicked supporters. Journalists are calling his agent asking if the transfer is real.

The problem

- Tom is actually in the middle of delicate contract negotiations with Northbridge United.
- If he says nothing, fans might think he's leaving.
- If he reacts too aggressively, he could damage talks with his club management.
- Sponsors are calling, worried about being dragged into a controversial transfer saga.
- Tom needs to decide how to respond in the first hours before the story grows further.

Facilitator tips:

If a group is struggling, you can help with hints and guiding questions without giving away the answers:

Scenario 1: Nadia

Guiding questions:

- Who should Nadia contact first in the first hour?
- How should she balance sponsor pressure with fans asking questions online?
- What risks could come from posting too quickly?
- What evidence should Nadia's team save before reacting?
- If denying it once isn't enough, what could be her longer-term plan?
- How should her response match her personality (calm, careful, professional)?

Possible solution:

- <u>First steps:</u> She should call her agent or the club's press officer straight away and let her sponsor know what's going on. At the same time, save screenshots and links so they have proof.
- What to say: Nadia's style is calm and careful, so her message should be steady, not dramatic. Something like: "A video is going around that looks like me promoting a product. It isn't real. Please rely only on what I share through my official accounts."
- Where to say it: Best to post on her Instagram first (where most of her fans follow her), then the club and sponsor can share her message too.

<u>After that:</u> Keep an eye on how far the fake spreads. Don't keep posting about it. Just stick to one clear message. If it doesn't stop, her PR and legal team can push for takedowns.

Do

- Contact your team → agent, club press officer, and sponsor right away.
- Save evidence → screenshots, links, timestamps of the fake and reposts.
- Let PR handle journalists → forward all requests to your official contact.
- Post one calm statement on her verified account (e.g., Instagram).
- Keep sponsors in the loop → share the draft before posting.

X Don't

- Don't reply directly to fans or in DMs →it fuels the spread.
- Don't argue with journalists yourself → always redirect to PR.
- Don't name or tag the fake product → it gives them more visibility.
- Don't post repeatedly → one consistent message is stronger than many.
- Don't stay silent too long → sponsors and fans might assume it's real.

Scenario 2: Lucas

Guiding questions:

- What changes because Lukas only learns about it after the race?
- Should the coach or PR team have told him earlier, or was shielding him the right choice?
- Who should he contact first now that the clip has been circulating for almost a day?
- How can Lukas correct the story without making it even bigger?
- How should his shy, professional style shape the way he responds?

Possible solution:

- <u>First steps:</u> Lukas should call his coach and the Austrian Ski Federation's press officer right away. Together they can collect screenshots and links from the TV report, the Telegram post, and any media mentions. He also needs to let his sponsors know that this is the first he's hearing about it.

- What to say: Because Lukas is quiet and professional, his message should be clear and steady. Something like: "I only just found out about an audio clip that claims to be me. It's fake. I respect the race organisers and I've never made these comments. Please rely only on updates from my verified accounts or from the federation."
- Where to say it: Lukas doesn't post often, but in this case, he should put the statement on his Instagram (where most of his followers are) and let the Austrian Ski Federation and his sponsors share it further.

<u>After that:</u> He shouldn't argue online or repeat the denial over and over. One clear, calm message is enough. The federation and sponsors can help spread it. He then gets back to focusing on racing.

✓ Do

- Contact his coach, the Austrian Ski Federation's press officer, and his sponsors right away after finding out.
- Save all available evidence of the fake.
- Issue one short, calm statement that explains the delay.
- Let PR handle journalists directly.
- Share his message through federation and sponsors for wider reach.

X Don't

- Don't apologise for something he didn't do.
- Don't reply directly to DMs or argue with fans.
- Don't stay silent, explain quickly once he becomes aware.
- Don't repost or link the fake audio.
- Don't over-explain, keep it factual and steady.

Scenario 3: Marko

Guiding questions:

- Who should Marko and the team contact first team manager, press officer, or sponsors?
- How should the team handle the fact that the tabloid already published the story?
- What kind of message fits Marko's low-profile online style?
- How can they reassure sponsors while also calming fans?
- What risks come with posting too quickly or saying too much?
- What if some fans keep believing it even after a denial?

Possible solution:

- <u>First steps:</u> Marko should call his team manager and the team's press officer right away. They should collect the fake video, screenshots of the tabloid article, and fan comments as evidence. Sponsors should be informed immediately so they aren't blindsided.

- What to say: Since Marko isn't very active online, his message should be short and steady: "A video is circulating that falsely shows me in a nightclub. It's a fake. I was with Team RoadRunner following our curfew. Please rely only on my official accounts and the team for updates."
- Where to say it: Marko should post on Instagram (his main audience), and the team account should also release a statement. The team could provide simple proof of his whereabouts (e.g., schedule, hotel check-in photo). Sponsors can repost the correction to help amplify it.

After that: Avoid replying to angry fan comments or gossip pages. Stick to one clear message. The team's PR/legal team can contact the tabloid demanding a correction and push for the fake video to be taken down.

✓ Do

- Alert the team manager, press officer, and sponsors immediately.
- Save the fake video, screenshots of the article, and fan comments.
- Post one calm denial on Instagram and let the team amplify it.
- Provide sponsors with the same message so they can back him up.
- Use team evidence (schedule, hotel location) if needed.

X Don't

- Don't argue with fans or tabloids online.
- Don't repost the fake video.
- Don't joke about curfew → the team treats it seriously.
- Don't delay too long → silence may appear suspicious.
- Don't issue multiple statements. One consistent message is strongest.

Scenario 4: Ana

Guiding questions:

- Who should Ana contact first and why?
- What role should the coach and club PR play here?
- How can Ana deny the clip without amplifying it?
- What kind of message fits her quieter, family-oriented online style?
- What evidence (e.g., audio analysis, media forensics) could help prove it's fake?
- How can the club keep sponsors calm while the league investigates?

Possible solution:

- <u>First steps:</u> Ana should immediately call her coach. Together, they inform the club manager and PR officer. The PR team saves the audio, screenshots of the betting blog, and the blackmail email as evidence. Sponsors are updated quickly so they aren't blindsided.

- What to say: Ana doesn't post often, so her message should be clear, calm, and serious: "An audio clip is circulating that claims to be me. It is fake. I have never been involved in betting. Please rely only on my official accounts and the club for updates."
- <u>Where to say it:</u> Ana posts on Instagram (her main platform). The club account shares the same statement. Sponsors can amplify the correction.

<u>After that:</u> She should avoid direct responses to fans or blogs. The club's PR and lawyers can contact the betting blog and request takedowns. If the blackmail continues, the club refers it to the police.

✓ Do

- Call her coach immediately and involve the club manager/PR.
- Save the audio, screenshots, and threatening email.
- Issue one calm denial on Instagram.
- Let the club account and sponsors amplify her statement.
- Allow the club to escalate to the league integrity unit and authorities.

X Don't

- Don't reply to angry fans or trolls.
- Don't negotiate or pay the anonymous sender.
- Don't repost the audio.
- Don't stay silent → it may appear as guilt.
- Don't give multiple conflicting statements, stay consistent.

Scenario 5: Tom

Guiding questions:

- How should Tom balance his usual extroverted online style with the seriousness of this situation?
- Who should he or his agent contact first club management, sponsors, or journalists?
- What are the risks if Tom "jokes" about the fake video?
- Should the denial come from Tom personally, the club, or both?
- What if fans keep chanting or making memes about it, even after he denies it?

Possible solution:

- <u>First steps:</u> Tom should call his agent and club press officer immediately. They can save the video, screenshots, and refund complaints as evidence. Sponsors should be informed so they aren't blindsided.
- What to say: Because Tom is extroverted and always posts directly to fans, it makes sense
 that he would speak for himself but in a serious, professional tone: "There's a fake video
 going around saying I'm joining another club. It's not real. I'm focused on Northbridge
 United and our next match."

- Where to say it: Tom should post it on Instagram, TikTok, and X, on the same platforms where his fans saw the fake. The club account should repost his statement.

<u>After that:</u> Keep it consistent — one message only. Avoid jokes or sarcasm. His agent and club should handle media and sponsor questions.

Do

- Inform agent, club management, and sponsors immediately.
- Save the video and screenshots of fan reactions and refund requests.
- Post a clear denial himself on Instagram, TikTok, and X.
- Keep the tone serious, not playful.
- Let the club amplify his message and handle press.

- Don't joke about the transfer (even though it's his usual style).
- Don't repost the fake video.
- Don't stay silent → silence may fuel panic.
- Don't give multiple different versions of the story.
- Don't lash out at fans. Keep it calm and professional.

MODULE 3: DIGITAL LITERACY IN PRACTICE

TOPIC 4: MANAGING ONLINE HARASSMENT: PROACTIVE STRATEGIES FOR ATHLETES (IN-PERSON/VIRTUAL)

SESSION TITLE: ONLINE HARASSMENT: IDENTIFY AND RESPOND

OBJECTIVES:

- Identify the types of harassment (criticism, hate speech, threats, rumours).
- Recognise the risks harassment poses (emotional, reputational, career-related, safety).
- Look into different strategies for handling harassment (ignore, report, block, respond calmly, involve club/support team).

DURATION: 85-100 min

TOOLS/MATERIALS:

- PC, projector, PowerPoint slides (definitions and examples of harassment).
- Handouts with five fictional harassment scenarios (Missed penalty, Not fit enough, Post-game critique, Transfer backlash, Injured and finished).
- Optional: flipchart/whiteboard for listing group dos and don'ts.

AGENDA:

1. **Introduction** (5 min)

Example questions for the participants: "Have you ever seen an athlete being attacked online? Maybe after a bad game or a controversial moment? How did it make you feel?"

2. Lecture (30-40 min)

Overview of harassment types (criticism, hate speech, threats, rumours), online harassment vs fair criticism, consequences and risks (mental health impact, reputation damage, career consequences, safety concerns), basic response strategies (dos and don'ts, importance of involving club/coach).

3. **Group Work** (15–20 min)

Participants analyse harassment scenarios.

4. **Presentations** (30 min)

Groups briefly present their scenario, their recommended strategies and reflect on whether they've seen something similar happen in real life or in the media.

5. Wrap-up reflection and evaluation (5 min)

The facilitator summarises the main lessons.

FACILITATOR NOTES:

This session is designed primarily for in-person delivery, but if needed it can also be conducted online. In that case, make sure to prepare a suitable virtual environment (e.g., breakout rooms, shared documents for group work).

The accompanying PowerPoint is only an example. Facilitators are encouraged to adapt it to their audience. For the harassment examples in the presentation, use one anchor case to present thoroughly (include context, what happened, consequences, response, and reflection questions). The other examples should still be given their own slide but explained more concisely (2–3 key bullets + 1 discussion question).

Organise participants into small groups (max. 4 people) for the group activity. A set of sample scenarios is provided; facilitators may use them as written, adapt them, or create new ones that reflect the audience's experiences and context. If there are more groups than prepared scenarios, ensure each group has its own case.

Keep in mind that with more groups, the session will take longer, as presentations and discussions may extend the planned time.

ADDITIONAL MATERIAL:

Scenarios

Participants will form small groups. Each group will receive one harassment scenario and analyse it together.

Groups should answer these questions:

- What type of harassment is happening?
- What risks does it pose?
- Which strategies could the athlete use?

Make a short list of dos and don'ts.

At the end, all groups present their scenario and answers.

These cases are completely fictional — any similarity to real events or people is coincidental.

Scenario 1: The missed penalty

Name: David, 22, football (soccer) player. David is a young forward playing in the national cup semifinal. In the decisive moment, he misses a penalty, and his team is eliminated. Within hours, his social media fills with hostile messages. Some fans accuse him of "betraying the club," while others use racial slurs. A few even send private messages with violent threats.

Scenario 2: Not fit enough

Name: Maria, 20, track sprinter. Maria is an up-and-coming sprinter who recently returned from injury. She posts training photos on Instagram, showing her progress. A sport blog reposts one of her pictures with the headline "Is she out of shape?". Soon after, her account is flooded with mocking comments about her body, with strangers calling her "lazy" and "a joke."

Scenario 3: The post-game critique

Name: Peter, 19, basketball player. After a close league match, Peter criticises a referee's call in a post-game interview. Rival fans quickly attack him online, calling him a "crybaby" and a "cheater." A meme spreads on X, showing a manipulated video that makes it look like he elbowed another player.

Scenario 4 – Transfer backlash

Name: Elena, 25, volleyball player. Elena has been a fan favourite at her club for seven years. She decides to transfer to a rival team to pursue new opportunities. As soon as the news breaks, her old club's fans flood her social media with insults, calling her "disloyal" and "money-hungry." Some send private messages accusing her of betraying the community.

Scenario 5 – Injured and "finished"

Name: Lucas, 27, tennis player. Lucas withdraws from a major tournament because of a recurring shoulder injury. Social media immediately fills with speculation that he is "faking it for attention" or "finished as a player." Sensational headlines appear in some tabloids claiming his career is over. Fans start tagging him in cruel memes.

Facilitator tips for group work

If a group is struggling, you can offer hints and guiding questions without giving the full answers right away.

For type: Does this sound like a performance critique, or does it go further — perhaps into an identity-based attack or safety issue?

For risks: How might this impact their safety, reputation, or confidence?

For strategies: Consider short-term actions (like blocking/reporting) and long-term ones (like involving the club or coach).

One example of an analysis might be shared, such as: "In this case, reporting threats to the club was important." This can then be followed by the question: "What else could work here?"

Scenario 1: The missed penalty

Name: David, 22, football (soccer) player.

Group analysis example:

Type: criticism, hate speech, threats.

Risks: emotional trauma, damaged confidence, career reputation, and physical safety.

Strategies: report threats to police or the platform, involve club officials, avoid direct replies,

issue a calm statement or remain silent, seek support from family or teammates.

Do

- Save evidence of threats and report to authorities/platform.
- Involve club or coach in communication.
- Seek emotional support from trusted people.

X Don't

- Don't respond impulsively to abuse.
- Don't minimise threats to safety.
- Don't isolate yourself from teammates/supporters.

Scenario 2: "Not fit enough"

Name: Maria, 20, track sprinter.

Group analysis example:

Type: body shaming, online bullying.

Risks: emotional harm, potential eating disorder triggers, reputational damage, and loss of sponsor confidence.

Strategies: block or mute abusive users, avoid defensive replies, seek support from the federation, and share a positive message about health and performance.

Do

- Block/mute abusive accounts.
- Share a positive message about health and training, if comfortable.
- Ask the federation or club to provide public support.

- Don't let online comments dictate training or diet.
- Don't argue with trolls.
- Don't remain silent if the abuse escalates into bullying.

% Scenario 3: The post-game critique

Name: Peter, 19, basketball player.

Group analysis example:

Type: criticism, false accusations, manipulated media.

Risks: loss of credibility, negative media coverage, potential sanctions, and mental stress.

Strategies: avoid escalating conflict, share unedited match footage, allow the club's press

officer to respond, and report fake content.

Do

- Clarify facts through official club channels.
- Report manipulated content to platforms.
- Focus on performance and avoid further escalation.

X Don't

- Don't fuel arguments online.
- Don't share or repost fake memes, even to "defend" yourself.
- Don't attack referees or rival fans again.

Scenario 4 – Transfer backlash

Name: Elena, 25, volleyball player

Group analysis example:

Type: criticism, online harassment.

Risks: loss of fan support, reputational harm, and stress affecting performance.

Strategies: avoid reading comments, disable replies temporarily, post a professional

statement thanking her old club, and rely on her new club for public communication.

Do

- Post a professional thank-you message to the old club and fans.
- Disable comments temporarily if needed.
- Lean on the new club's communications team for support.

- Don't respond emotionally to insults.
- Don't apologize for a professional career choice.
- Don't read every comment or message.

Scenario 5: Injured and "finished"

Name: Lucas, 27, tennis player.

Group analysis example:

Type: criticism, humiliation, rumours.

Risks: mental health strain, pressure to return too soon, sponsor concerns, reputational harm. **Strategies**: issue a brief medical update, let the coach or doctor communicate publicly, avoid engaging trolls, focus on recovery and direct communication with supporters.

Do

- Share a short, factual medical update.
- Let the coach or doctor handle detailed public statements.
- Focus on rehabilitation and private support network.

- Don't deny or argue with every rumour online.
- Don't rush return to play just to "prove" critics wrong.
- Don't engage directly with people posting cruel memes.

MODULE 3: DIGITAL LITERACY IN PRACTICE

TOPIC 5: MEDIA LITERACY CAMPAIGNS DURING SPORTING EVENTS (IN-PERSON/VIRTUAL)

SESSION TITLE: GAME ON: THE MEDIA MINEFIELD

OBJECTIVES:

- Simulate real-life athlete decisions under media pressure.
- Identify risks and rewards in digital behaviour during sports events.
- Practice strategic thinking with a peer-based game format.
- Reflect on ethical and responsible media use.

DURATION: 45 min

TOOLS/MATERIALS: event cards (printable deck), strategy cards (printable deck).

AGENDA:

1. **Introduction** (5 min)

Example: "Welcome to our final workshop in this module! Today we'll be testing everything you've learned by playing a game. Imagine you're competing at a major event. Every post, reaction, and share matters. You'll face challenges pulled straight from real athlete experiences. But you'll also have strategy cards — tools to help you act responsibly online. Ready to play The Media Minefield?"

2. Introduce the rules of the game (5 min)

Game objective: Players navigate a simulated media environment during a major sporting event. On each turn, they respond to realistic media-related scenarios using communication strategies. The goal is to make informed choices that protect their reputation as modern athletes in a complex media world.

Rules

- 1. Shuffle both decks (Event + Strategy).
- 2. Each player draws one event card and one strategy card per round.
- 3. Read both cards aloud. If a strategy card clearly doesn't fit the situation (e.g., using humour to respond to violence or drug allegations), the participant briefly explains why, returns the card to the bottom of the pile, and draws a new one.
- 4. The group decides whether the strategy was helpful, neutral, or risky.
- 5. Discuss alternative strategies if needed.
- 6. No scorekeeping is needed; the focus is on critical thinking and discussion.

3. **Gameplay** (30 min)

4. Wrap-up reflection and evaluation (5 min)

The facilitator summarises the key lessons.

FACILITATOR NOTES:

This session is designed primarily for in-person delivery.

Prepare printable "event cards" (media-related incidents athletes may face) and "strategy cards" (possible first-response options). Facilitators may use the prepared card decks as written, adapt them to local contexts, or create new scenarios/cards relevant to the participants' sport environment.

ADDITIONAL MATERIAL

Sample "event cards" (print and cut)

- Card 1: A sponsor asks you to post mid-tournament despite a major loss.
- Card 2: Your old controversial post resurfaces.
- Card 3: A fake quote of you is trending on X.
- Card 4: A media outlet uses your image (without mentioning you directly) in an article about aggression in sport.
- Card 5: A private team video is leaked via an anonymous account.
- Card 6: A journalist tags you in a post about doping rumours in your sport.
- Card 7: Someone uses AI to recreate your voice for a fake interview.
- Card 8: Your image is negatively portrayed in a popular meme.
- Card 9: During a live Q&A, a journalist asks you to comment on a controversial topic.
- Card 10: A fan shares a deepfake video of you mocking another team.
- Card 11: Your post-game interview is misquoted by the media.
- Card 12: Your training video is edited to show a fall and goes viral as a "fail meme".
- Card 13: A fan account spreads a rumour that you're leaving your team.
- Card 14: A political group reposts your photo without your permission to support their campaign.
- Card 15: An ex-teammate criticises you publicly in a long social media rant.
- Card 16: A fake charity claims you are endorsing their fundraiser.
- Card 17: A parent complains online that you were disrespectful to their child at an event.
- Card 18: You are asked to recommend a product with dubious claims.
- Card 19: Your teammate is attacked online.
- Card 20: You receive a hateful DM after missing a penalty.

Sample "strategy cards" (print and cut)

- Card 1: Post a clarification video.
- Card 2: Give a statement to a trusted journalist.
- Card 3: Stay silent. Let the news cycle pass.
- Card 4: Report and document the post privately.
- Card 5: Publicly support your teammate.

- Card 6: Use humour to defuse the situation.
- Card 7: Before sharing, double-check the source.
- Card 8: Before responding, consult your coach or media advisor.
- Card 9: Reframe the situation with a positive message.
- Card 10: Temporarily deactivate your account to avoid escalation.
- Card 11: Repost the full original video to give proper context.
- Card 12: Talk it out privately with your teammate before responding online.
- Card 13: Share a post promoting digital safety awareness.
- Card 14: Issue a brief, polite correction backed up by verified sources.
- Card 15: Temporarily restrict comments on your posts.
- Card 16: Express gratitude to your fans and supporters while avoiding direct conflict.
- Card 17: Use your story to educate others about misinformation.
- Card 18: Reach out to your club's media team for help.
- Card 19: Release an official statement clarifying the truth.
- Card 20: Do not respond immediately: reflect and plan with intention.

MODULE INTRODUCTION

Building on the foundations of Module 1 (core concepts of media literacy), Module 2 (sport as a platform for literacy), and Module 3 (practical digital skills), Module 4 shifts the focus from knowledge to action. Athletes are now invited to apply what they have learned by designing media content and campaigns, engaging in advocacy practice, and critically reflecting on their experiences.

This module connects directly to the earlier learning journey: after exploring media literacy basics, examining sport and messaging, and practising digital communication, participants are ready to act. Module 4 is about empowerment – enabling athletes to use their voices and media platforms confidently, creatively, and responsibly.

Through campaign planning, content creation, and advocacy exercises, athletes will learn by doing. They may, for example, design a campaign on a chosen issue (such as healthy lifestyles, anti-discrimination, or community support), practise giving interviews or public statements, and reflect on feedback. Guided questions will help them focus: What story do I want to tell? What change do I want to champion? How can I use media tools to amplify my message?

The module highlights that athletes can act as leaders and role models in the public sphere – locally, nationally, and internationally. Being media literate means taking responsibility to communicate authentically, advocate ethically, and make messages resonate with impact.

In summary, Module 4 brings together application, reflection, and action. Athletes will create and deliver media and advocacy campaigns, reflect on their influence as communicators and role models, and take purposeful action in their communities.

The aim is to empower athletes as confident media advocates, capable of crafting impactful messages, driving positive change, and applying their competencies well beyond this curriculum.

Overview of Module Objectives and Learning Outcomes

This module consolidates prior learning and translates it into practical action. By the end of Module 4: Application, Reflection, and Action, participants will be able to:

- Design and plan a media literacy campaign addressing a relevant issue in sport or their community, demonstrating creative application of media literacy concepts.
- Employ practical advocacy skills (e.g. public speaking, storytelling, stakeholder engagement) to promote media literacy and counter misinformation within their sphere of influence.

- Collaborate effectively with peers and community stakeholders to develop and refine a project, reflecting real-life teamwork in advocacy initiatives.
- Present media literacy projects and give/receive constructive peer feedback, demonstrating the ability to critically evaluate media messages and campaign strategies.
- Reflect on their learning journey and evaluate their progress in media literacy, using both self-assessment and feedback to identify growth in critical thinking and media skills.
- Connect knowledge to action by demonstrating how improved media literacy can lead to tangible positive outcomes (e.g. more informed decision-making, healthier online behaviour, or greater community awareness).

These objectives align with the overall curriculum goals of empowering athletes as informed media consumers and proactive communicators. The learning outcomes emphasise not just knowledge, but also skills and attitudes, ensuring participants leave the module confident in applying media literacy to real life and motivated to continue advocating for truthful, ethical media in sport.

DESCRIPTION OF MODULE STRUCTURE

Topic 1: Designing a Media Literacy Campaign

Participants begin by brainstorming and selecting an issue or message related to media literacy in sport that they are passionate about. They learn how to define clear campaign goals and target audiences. This session emphasises creativity and planning, where participants draft a campaign concept (e.g. a social media awareness campaign, a workshop for younger athletes, a poster series for their club) using structured templates. By the end of Session 1, each individual or team has a campaign idea and a rough plan outlined, setting the foundation for the rest of the module.

Topic 2: Practical Advocacy Skills Workshop

Participants engage in activities to practice advocacy and communication techniques. This might include role-playing interviews or press conferences, crafting persuasive messages, learning how to tailor their message to different audiences, and handling challenging questions. The session links strongly to Module 2's theme of storytelling, as athletes refine the narrative of their campaign: why their cause matters and how to inspire others. By the end of Session 3, participants have honed their messaging and delivery skills and have prepared key campaign materials (such as a short pitch or a sample social media post) through hands-on practice.

Topic 3: Collaborative Project Planning: Partnership Strategy Exercise

Participants identify stakeholders and potential partners who can support or amplify their media literacy campaigns. In a workshop format, they might create a stakeholder map to pinpoint allies (e.g. coaches, schools, local media, sponsors, teammates) and plan how to

engage them. They also work out logistics for their projects: setting a timeline, assigning team roles (if working in groups), and determining resource needs (materials, venues, online platforms). This session emphasises teamwork and project management, allowing athletes to experience coordinating a project much like they would coordinate a team effort in sports. By the conclusion of Session 3, campaign plans are fleshed out with concrete steps: who will do what, and when, and what support is needed.

Topic 4: Presentation and Peer Feedback on Campaigns

In Session 4, participants take on the role of presenters and critics. Each individual or team delivers a presentation of their campaign plan or a prototype of their campaign materials to the group. For example, they might show a sample poster, simulate a mini-workshop, or walk through their social media hashtag strategy. Fellow participants and facilitators then provide structured peer feedback. Utilising a feedback form or set criteria, the group discusses the strengths of each campaign and suggestions for improvement. This not only helps improve each project (through peer insights) but also further develops everyone's critical analysis skills as they evaluate how messages might be received by different audiences. This is a key media literacy exercise. The atmosphere is kept supportive and constructive and focuses on how to make each campaign more effective. By the end of Session 4, participants have refined their campaigns based on feedback and are ready to finalise their action plans.

Topic 5: Reflection and Evaluation: Measuring Media Literacy Progress

The final session is devoted to reflection, evaluation, and looking forward. Participants step back to evaluate their own learning and the outcomes of their projects. They might revisit the module's objectives and assess the extent to which they feel they have achieved them. Activities could include a guided reflective discussion about challenges overcome and skills gained.

TOPIC 1: DESIGNING A MEDIA LITERACY CAMPAIGN (IN PERSON/VIRTUAL)

SESSION TITLE: KICK-OFF: FROM IDEAS TO CAMPAIGNS

OBJECTIVES:

- Introduce the concept of media literacy campaigns.
- Support participants in choosing relevant themes and target audiences.
- Facilitate basic planning for their campaign ideas.

DURATION: 45 min

TOOLS/MATERIALS: Zoom/MS Teams, collaborative whiteboard (e.g., Miro or Jamboard), shared Google Docs/Slides.

AGENDA:

- Welcome and framing (5 min) Briefly recap the previous modules and introduce the concept of a media literacy campaign. For a focused overview of how such campaigns are structured and delivered, facilitators may consult <u>Media Literacy – European Parliament</u>⁵⁵.
 - a. What is a Media Literacy Campaign?
 A media literacy campaign is a planned initiative designed to raise awareness and strengthen citizens' ability to access, critically evaluate, and responsibly use media.
 Its aim is to empower people to recognise misinformation and to make informed decisions in the digital environment (European Parliamentary Research Service, 2025).
- 2. **Short input** (7 min) Present 1–2 real-life examples of successful athlete-led campaigns with short visuals or infographics.

Suggested examples:

- Marcus Rashford #EndChildFoodPoverty (UK): Used verified data and public storytelling to combat child hunger. More info⁵⁶
- Marcus Rashford Book Club Campaign: Promoted children's literacy through reading advocacy and positive media sharing. More info⁵⁷
- Naomi Osaka Mental Health & Media Narratives: Challenged media sensationalism, encouraging respectful journalism and critical reading. Widely covered by the press.

⁵⁵ https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/BRIE/2025/772886/EPRS BRI(2025)772886 EN.pdf

⁵⁶ https://foodfoundation.org.uk/initiatives/endchildfoodpoverty-campaign

⁵⁷ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Marcus Rashford

- 3. **Brainstorming session** (10 min) Prompt participants to propose their campaign idea (topic, audience, format). Use prompts like: "What misinformation issue do you care about most?" or "Who do you want to reach?"
- 4. **Group breakout** (15 min) Participants form two small virtual groups (4 athletes per group) and fill in a basic campaign canvas. Provide the following digital template:

Basic campaign canvas template:

- Campaign goal What do you want to achieve with your campaign?
- Key message What core message should your audience remember?
- **Method** How will you communicate your message (e.g. social media, posters, events)?
- **Expected impact** What change do you expect and who will be affected?
- 5. **Wrap-up and homework briefing** (8 min) Each group is tasked with refining their campaign idea before Topic 2 using the provided template.

FACILITATOR NOTES:

Aim for 8 athletes per cohort, divided into two groups of 4. Ensure each group has access to the collaborative documents before the session. Have example campaigns preloaded for screen sharing. Facilitators should gently encourage quieter groups to contribute.

TOPIC 2: PRACTICAL ADVOCACY SKILLS WORKSHOP (IN-PERSON/VIRTUAL)

SESSION TITLE: SPEAKING UP: ADVOCACY IN ACTION

OBJECTIVES:

- Equip participants with practical advocacy skills to promote their media literacy campaign.
- Practise persuasive communication tailored to stakeholders (e.g., school principals, federation heads).

DURATION: 60 min

TOOLS/MATERIALS: Flipcharts and markers, sample policy briefs, printed role-play scenarios, advocacy checklists.

AGENDA:

- 1. **Introduction and goals** (5 min) Explain how advocacy links to campaign implementation. Reiterate key audiences (local authorities, media, sports bodies).
- 2. **Mini-lecture** (10 min) Present 3 advocacy principles: clarity of message, understanding your audience, and using personal stories. Share a successful example. Distribute the sample policy brief to participants and walk them through its structure to illustrate how a concise and evidence-based advocacy document supports these principles.

Sample - Policy brief (1 page):

"Title: Strengthening Youth Athletes' Media Resilience«

- Target: Local Sports Federation
- Message: Equip youth athletes with media literacy
- Background: Fake news harms athlete wellbeing
- Evidence: 72% of surveyed athletes affected
- Call to Action: Fund a 6-month pilot programme.
- Contact: olymp@medialiteracy.si
- 3. **Role-play exercise** (25 min) In pairs or small groups, participants simulate short advocacy meetings using provided role scenarios (e.g., persuading a local council member to fund their campaign).
- 4. **Debrief and feedback** (10 min) Participants reflect on how confident they felt and what techniques were effective.

Sample – Role-play scenario:

"Convince a school principal to support a book club"

- Context: Principal is sceptical and busy.
- Objective: Secure space for weekly sessions.
- Strategy: Use athlete story + clarify time commitment.

5.	Wrap-up (10 min) – Distribute advocacy checklists and encourage participants to identify					
	one real stakeholder they will approach after the course. Emphasise using the checklist to					
	review and refine their advocacy message.					
	Sample – Advocacy checklist:					
	\square I opened with a personal story or relevant example.					
	\square I clearly stated the main goal of my campaign.					
	\square I identified who my audience is and what matters to them.					
	☐ I presented 2–3 concise, persuasive messages.					
	\square I made a specific request or recommendation.					
	☐ I concluded with a plan to follow up or next steps.					

FACILITATOR NOTES:

Ensure role-play cards reflect realistic sport and civic advocacy contexts. Coach each group to stay concise and use evidence from their campaign work. Use a timer or bell to rotate roles.

TOPIC 3: COLLABORATIVE PROJECT PLANNING: PARTNERSHIP STRATEGY EXERCISE (IN PERSON/VIRTUAL)

SESSION TITLE: STRATEGIC PLANNING FOR IMPACTFUL CAMPAIGNS

OBJECTIVES:

- Facilitate teamwork to refine campaign concepts.
- Support strategic thinking and implementation planning.

DURATION: 45 min

TOOLS/MATERIALS: Online collaborative workspace (Google Docs, Padlet)

AGENDA:

- 1. **Welcome and recap** (5 min) Reiterate campaign goals and highlight themes emerging from Topic 1.
- 2. **Guided planning session** (20 min) Each of the two groups continues refining their project planning template. Provide the following template:

Project Planning Template:

- **Timeline** Key milestones and deadlines from preparation to campaign completion.
- Roles Who is responsible for each role (e.g. coordinator, communicator, designer, spokesperson)?
- **Resources** What materials, tools, funding, or support will you need?
- Communication Strategy How will the campaign reach and engage the target audience (e.g. channels, message style, frequency of updates)?
- 3. Peer support exchange (15 min) Groups briefly present their drafts to each other and provide constructive feedback using a structured checklist.
 Sample Peer feedback checklist
 The campaign goal is clear and realistic.
 The timeline includes key milestones and achievable deadlines.
 Roles are well defined, assigned, and balanced.
 Resources are realistic and sufficient.
 The target audience and communication channels are appropriate.

☐ Messages are clear, consistent, and relevant.					
\square The overall plan is coherent, feasible, and impactful.					
Open comments					
One strength:					
One suggestion:					

4. **Wrap-up** (5 min) – Each group shares one challenge they foresee and one strength of their campaign.

FACILITATOR NOTES:

Confirm each group is progressing through the shared templates. Use the feedback checklist to promote useful peer interaction. Actively support groups to stay on track.

TOPIC 4: PRESENTATION AND PEER FEEDBACK ON CAMPAIGNS (IN-PERSON/VIRTUAL)

SESSION TITLE: SHOWCASE AND PEER REVIEW

OBJECTIVES:

- Enable participants to present campaign projects.
- Foster constructive peer review.

DURATION: 40 min

TOOLS/MATERIALS: Projector, campaign presentation checklist, feedback sheets, timer

AGENDA:

- 1. **Opening and expectations** (5 min) Explain the feedback process and criteria (clarity, creativity, feasibility).
- 2. **Campaign presentations** (20 min) Two groups present for 10 minutes each (7 min presentation, 3 min Q&A).
- 3. **Structured peer feedback** (10 min) Participants complete a written feedback form for the other group.

Sample – Peer feedback sheet (based on the same checklist criteria):

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☐ The target audience and communication strategy were well defined.

 \square The team presented 2–3 strong, persuasive messages.

 \Box The campaign addressed a relevant issue in a creative or impactful way.

 \square The call to action was specific and feasible.

Open-ended questions:

"What I appreciated most about this campaign was ..."

"One thing I'd suggest improving is ..."

"How I would support or adapt this idea in my context ..."

4. **Wrap-up and group discussion** (5 min) – Each group shares one thing they learned from the other team's presentation.

FACILITATOR NOTES:

Group size of four athletes ensures full participation and presentation clarity. Time each presentation segment and encourage all group members to speak. Collect feedback forms for group review. Where feasible, campaign presentations may be delivered to a real-world audience, such as a local council member, policymaker, or stakeholder in sport or education. This would provide an authentic advocacy experience and increase the visibility of athletes'

voices. In such cases, facilitators should anticipate that the session may need to be extended to 60 minutes to allow sufficient time for introductions, external stakeholder feedback, and a moderated discussion.

TOPIC 5: REFLECTION AND EVALUATION: MEASURING MEDIA LITERACY PROGRESS (IN-PERSON/VIRTUAL)

SESSION TITLE: LOOKING BACK, MOVING FORWARD

OBJECTIVES:

- Reflect on learning achievements and campaign journey.
- Collect feedback to improve future sessions and the overall programme.

DURATION: 45 min

TOOLS/MATERIALS: Google Forms (or similar), shared whiteboard or Padlet for collective reflection.

AGENDA:

- 1. **Opening reflection** (8 min) Prompt: "What surprised you most in this programme?" Participants post one word or phrase on the shared whiteboard.
- 2. **Evaluation survey** (10 min) Participants complete a structured feedback form.

Sample – Structured feedback form:

- On a scale from 1 (not at all) to 5 (extremely), how useful did you find Module 4 Application, Reflection, and Action?
- On a scale from 1 to 5, how impactful were the Module 4 topics on your understanding or skills (e.g., critical thinking, misinformation recognition, campaign planning, advocacy, collaboration)?
- On a scale from 1 to 5, how much did your confidence grow in engaging with media or advocacy topics as a result of Module 4?
- On a scale from 1 to 5, how prepared do you feel to apply what you learned in Module 4 in your own environment?
- Do you have any suggestions for improving the format or content?
- Would you recommend this training to your peers?
- 3. **Self-assessment activity** (15 min) Participants complete an individual self-assessment form focused on their own growth and learning process. This is distinct from the earlier feedback form, which gathers input about the programme as a whole.

Sample – Self-assessment form:

Formative self-reflection (process-focused):

- What skill or awareness did I gain during the campaign planning process?
- How did I contribute to my team's work and learning?
- Which moment helped me grow as a critical thinker?

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Summative self-reflection (outcome-focused):

- What am I now able to do that I couldn't before?
- How confident am I in applying what I learned beyond this programme?
- What topic or issue would I like to explore further as a result of this training?

Facilitators may invite volunteers to share a personal takeaway via chat or brief oral reflection, focusing on internal learning rather than programme design.

4. **Closing circle** (12 min) – Return to plenary, invite final remarks from facilitator and voluntary closing thoughts from participants.

FACILITATOR NOTES:

Encourage participants to be honest while highlighting positive aspects. Use examples from the session to highlight group achievements.

4.2. ACCOMPANYING ACTIVITIES

In addition to formal workshops and structured learning units, implementers can enrich the programme with accompanying activities. The purpose of these activities is to increase motivation, expand learning opportunities, and enable athletes to encounter media literacy in informal contexts as well. Such activities do not require complex preparation, but they can significantly reinforce key content.

1. Digital and social media

Consider preparing short interactive tasks for social networks, such as "Fake or Fact?" columns, polls on current rumours, or mini quizzes. This is an easy way for athletes to reinforce the material outside of workshops and share the results with the group.

2. Public events and ambassadorship

Take advantage of opportunities at major sporting events or tournaments to give short presentations about a reading club. If possible, invite well-known athletes or coaches to serve as ambassadors, who can motivate participants and the wider community with their presence and a short speech.

3. Creative forms of learning

Add elements of gamification: prepare small simulations, quizzes, or even an "escape room" on the topic of fake news in sport. Such methods bring dynamism and appeal to athletes through play and competition.

4. Weekly reading challenges

Suggest a weekly challenge to athletes: a short text, article, or post, which can then be critically evaluated together. This can be part of an online group or a discussion at the next meeting. It is a quick way to maintain continuity between formal meetings.

5. Connection with athletes' personal development

Offer participants informal exercises related to their public appearances and digital image (e.g., how to create a good social media profile, how to respond to provocative questions from journalists). Such short activities have high practical value and a direct impact on athletes' careers.

Recommendation for Practitioners

Accompanying activities are intended as a supplement, not as an obligation. They can be incorporated depending on the time available, the specific needs of the group, or the context in which you are working. Even small contributions — a five-minute challenge, a short post, a conversation after a game — can effectively stimulate discussion and reinforce the messages of the formal curriculum.

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