

Media Literacy Curriculum for Athlets



University of Maribor Press

Teaching
Materials



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September 2026

Title	Media Literacy Curriculum for Athletes
Subtitle	Teaching Materials
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Language editor	Dolores Hunsky
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Cover design	Jan Perša (University of Maribor, University of Maribor Press)
Cover graphic	Group of people running on stadium, photo: Steven Lelham; Green sports court illustration, photo: Timothy Tan; People in swimming pool, photo: Serena Repice Lentini; Man playing tennis, photo: Moises Alex; unsplash.com, 2017-2019
Graphic material	Sources are our own unless otherwise noted. Marinšek, Grašič, Ferlež, Flisar, Prezelj Mlakar, Šnofl, Bedenik, Legat, Fras Popović (authors), 2026

Založnik	University of Maribor
<i>Published by</i>	University of Maribor Press Slomškov trg 15, 2000 Maribor, Slovenia https://press.um.si , zalozba@um.si
Izdajatelj	University of Maribor
<i>Issued by</i>	University of Maribor Library Gospejna ulica 10, 2000 Maribor, Slovenia https://www.ukm.um.si , tajnistvo.ukm@um.si
Edition	First electronic edition
Publication type	E-book
Available at	http://press.um.si/index.php/ump/catalog/book/1159
Place and date of publication	Maribor, September 2026
Project name	OLYMP – Fostering Media Literacy and Athlete Empowerment through OLYMPic Values
Project number	101147018
Funded by	Citizens, Equality, Rights and Values (CERV) Programme of the European Union



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/Univerza v Mariboru, Univerzitetna založba

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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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Co-funded by
the European Union

Funded by the European Union. Views and opinions expressed are however those of the author(s) only and do not necessarily reflect those of the European Union or the European Education and Culture Executive Agency (EACEA). Neither the European Union nor EACEA can be held responsible for them.

Olymp

Katalogni zapis o publikaciji (CIP) pripravili v Narodni in univerzitetni
knjižnici v Ljubljani
COBISS.SI-ID 291216899
ISBN 978-961-299-200-2 (PDF)

ISBN 978-961-299-200-2 (PDF)

DOI <https://doi.org/10.18690/um.ukm.3.2026>

Price Free of charge

For the publisher Prof. Dr. Dean Korošak,
Rector of the University of Maribor

Attribution Marinšek, M., Grašič, J., Ferlež, J., Flisar, N., Prezelj Mlakar, M., Šnofl, M., Bedenik, K., Legat, D., Fras Popović, S. (2026). *Media Literacy Curriculum for Athletes: Teaching Materials*. Univerza v Mariboru, Univerzitetna založba. doi: 10.18690/um.ukm.3.2026

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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:

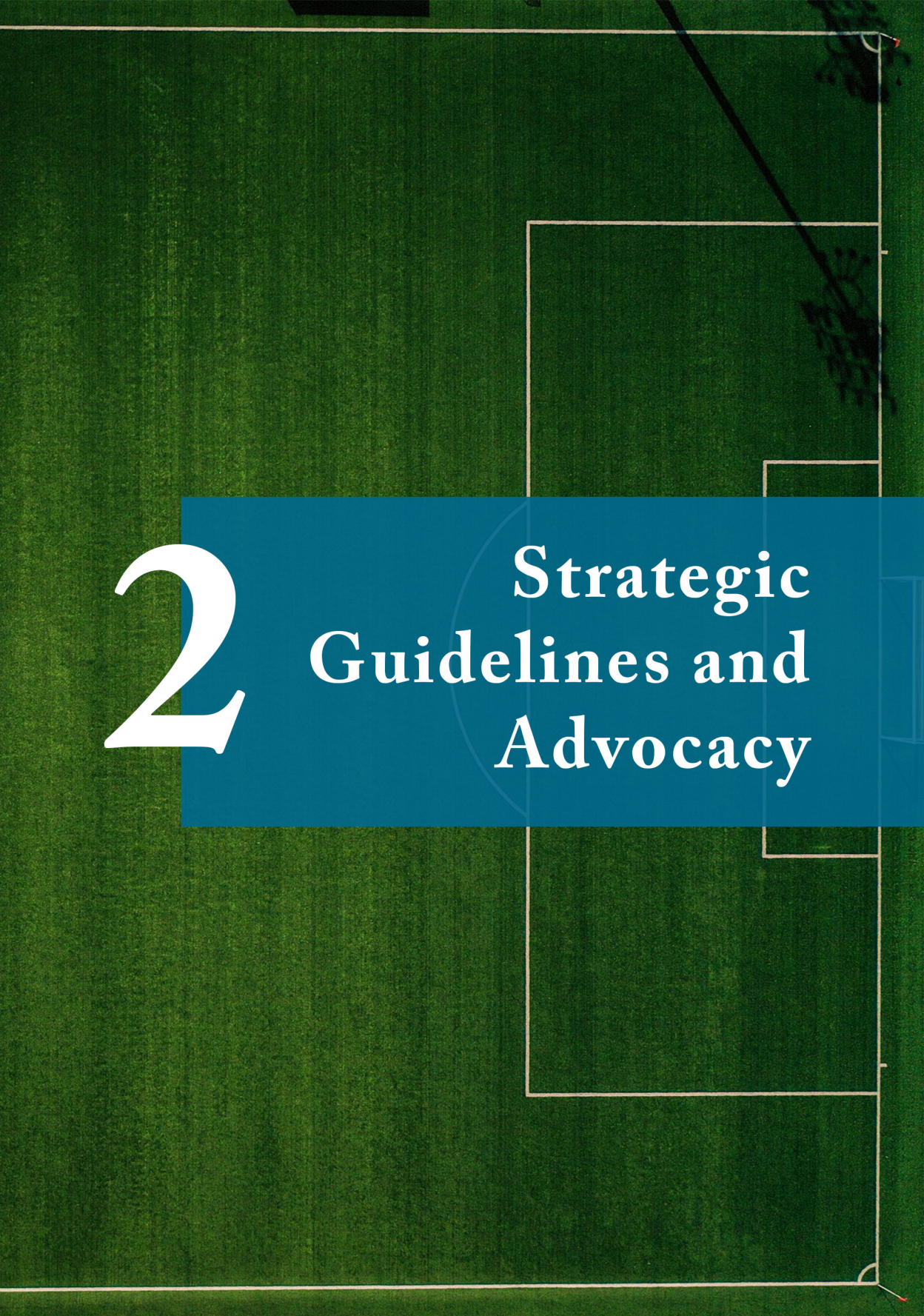
1. **Reading clubs as an appropriate method:** they foster critical thinking, help recognise fake news, and encourage the responsible use of media.
2. **Olympic values of excellence, respect, and friendship:** they act as a bridge between sport and responsible citizenship and form the basis of integrity, 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 the 19th of 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 continuously developing ability to understand, critically evaluate, and use written information. This ability includes well-developed reading skills, (critical) comprehension of what has been read, and a 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 align with the purpose of our curriculum, which aims to present young student-athletes 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 aged 18 to 29 about the importance of different aspects of literacy and, above all, to empower them in information evaluation and the recognition of fake news.



An aerial photograph of a green soccer field with white boundary lines. A large blue rectangular overlay is positioned in the center-right of the image, containing the title text. The number '2' is placed to the left of the text, partially overlapping the blue area.

2

Strategic Guidelines and Advocacy

The curriculum has been prepared for young athletes between the ages of 18 and 29, who find themselves at 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 are already firmly established in a professional sporting career. Which path they take depends not only on their athletic ability, talent, or work ethic but also on their chosen sport. Regardless of the sporting path they pursue, this target group of students can be classified as one of the so-called vulnerable groups of adolescents and young adults who are, due to their personal interests and goals, more susceptible to manipulation, misconceptions, and deception 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 to their success in both sport and 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. A lack of adequate knowledge about identifying reliable sources, verifying facts, and understanding the basic principles of scientific reasoning increases the risk that athletes will make decisions based on misleading or false information, potentially jeopardising their health, career, and reputation.

The educational guidelines were developed based on the main reasons identified for providing athletes with formal training in the critical evaluation of information, as outlined below:

1. **High exposure to misinformation:** Sports media and social networks often circulate 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, and “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 ability to assess the credibility of information is crucial to preventing the spread of false information within the broader community.

One of the key areas of focus is recognising and raising awareness of fake news. Fake news refers to false or misleading information presented as news without being based on verified facts. The purpose of fake news is usually creating confusion, spreading false beliefs, or manipulating people's opinions. It 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 role as trusted spaces for critical dialogue and for promoting 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:

1. **Cross-sector partnership:** Formal 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, and with each partner contributing to the implementation of the 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, trustworthy spaces for dialogue, access to high-quality resources, and opportunities to engage with diverse cultural activities. Essentially, 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 environments are considered when engaging with 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 programme’s practical value from the very first meeting.

2.2 Local Policy Advocacy Guidelines

Sports organisations and athletes play an important role in promoting media literacy, because it is through sport that public images, values, and behavioural patterns are formed. With a responsible approach, they can become ambassadors for a critical understanding of media and digital content, benefiting the local community. 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 social media use and to 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 to propose the inclusion of 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:

1. **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, and 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 recognised 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 developing 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.

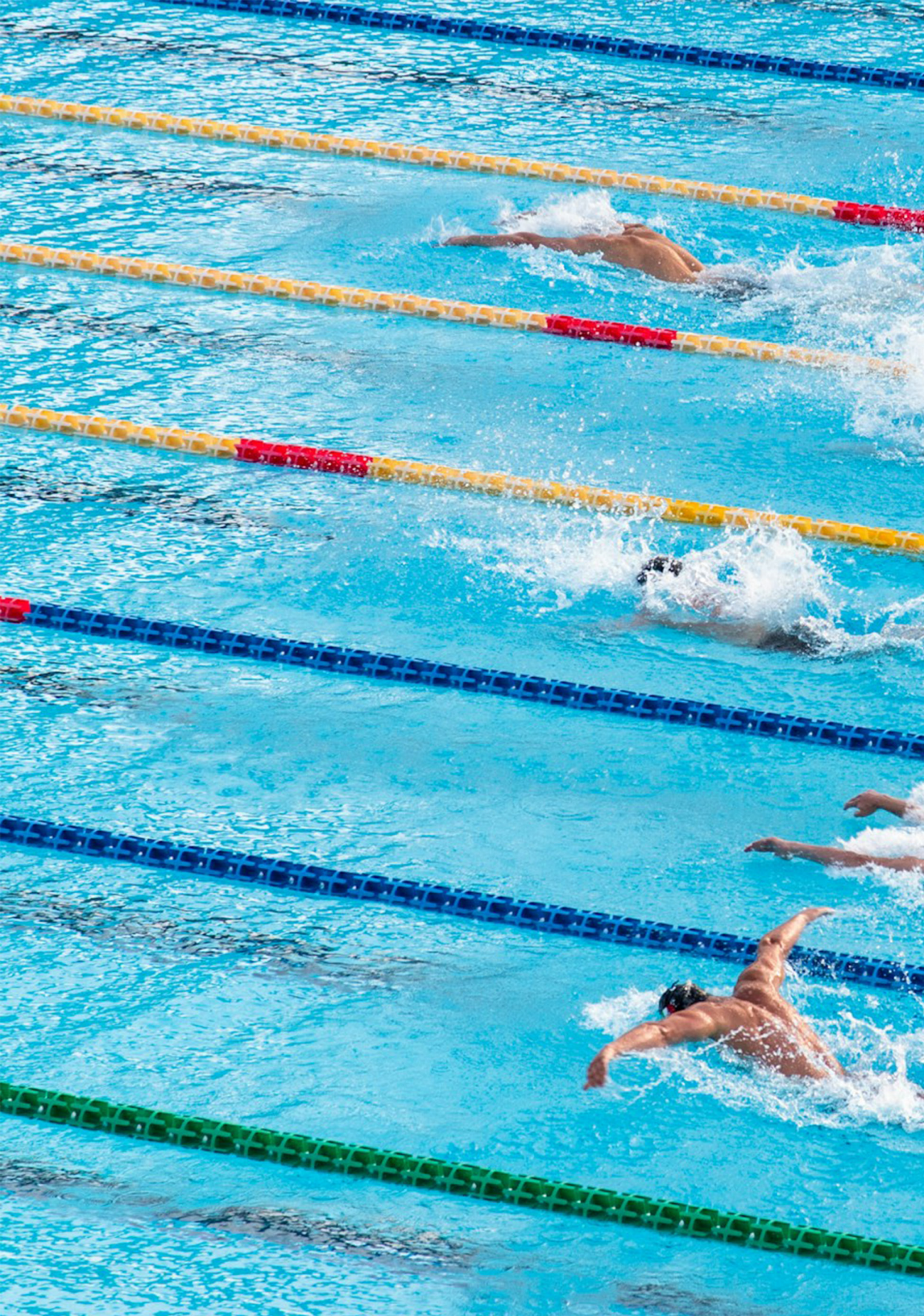
3. **Municipal office for youth affairs:** can integrate workshops on critical media understanding for young athletes into its programmes.
4. **Municipal library:** in cooperation with sports clubs and the municipal sports federation, can organise monthly reading evenings for athletes and the local community.
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 can also 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 short quiz for spectators and participants. If a screen is available (LED screen, projector, etc.), short “Fake or Fact?” challenges are shown.



A photograph of a swimming pool with several lanes. Swimmers are visible in the water, creating splashes. Lane lines in blue, yellow, and red are visible. A dark teal rectangular box is overlaid on the right side of the image, containing the text.

3

Educational Content

The following areas have been identified as problematic due to them being possible sources of fake news for young student-athletes. Therefore, they have been included 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. **Safeguarding young people in sport:** 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 and consequences of manipulation 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. **Communication skills:** 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 an emphasis on athletes' constructive participation in public debate and democratic processes.
3. **Strengthen resilience against hate speech and manipulation**, with the aim of reducing polarisation and promoting social cohesion.
4. **Emphasise the importance of plurality and dialogue**, with the purpose 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**, with the objective 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, didactic principles are developed to serve as starting points and criteria for curriculum implementation, ensuring that the curriculum is practical, relevant, and value-oriented.

1. **The principle of linking theory and practice:** The content should be based on real-life examples from the field 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 acquired knowledge.
5. **The principle of value orientation:** The curriculum promotes Olympic values (excellence, respect, friendship) and European democratic values (freedom, equality, solidarity, human rights). The value framework enables athletes to develop their skills and adopt 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-assessment 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 for the specific activities presented in the following chapter, where the content is divided into modules and learning units.





4

Educational Activities

The educational activities translate the educational guidelines outlined in the previous chapter into practice. 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. Therefore, the curriculum adopts a multidimensional, applied approach that links theory to 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 solely 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 keeping the methods aligned with curriculum's objectives.

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
- **Topic 2:** Identifying Misinformation
- **Topic 3:** 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



A group of cyclists in various colored jerseys (blue, red, green, yellow) are racing on a road. They are wearing helmets and sunglasses. A large white number '1' is overlaid on the right side of the image. A dark blue semi-transparent banner is positioned across the middle of the image, containing the text 'Module 1 Foundations of Media Literacy' in white serif font.

Module 1 Foundations of Media Literacy

Module Introduction¹

Module 1: Foundations of Media Literacy lays the groundwork for the rest of the curriculum. It starts with international frameworks such as UNESCO’s Media and Information Literacy framework and the European Commission’s DigComp framework, then moves on to different types of literacy (media, information, and digital). From the outset, participants see why critical thinking is an essential skill in today’s media environment, where they are constantly exposed to information from a wide range of sources. Just as they take time to choose the right shoes or sports equipment before buying them, athletes should also pause to think carefully about the information they receive from different sources.

In this module, athletes will explore what can happen when one doesn’t stop to check and verify the facts. They will see how misinformation and disinformation spread and how quickly such information can have negative consequences in politics, society, and sport. Through activities like the telephone game (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-world examples of misinformation and disinformation that seriously affect 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 because decisions about supplements, recovery, or training often depend on information that isn’t always reliable. Believing the wrong message can adversely affect performance, health, and careers; as shown in the film, the consequences can even be fatal.

The final part of the module (Topic 5: Ethical Dilemmas in Media Literacy) 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,

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

and the media react. They will also be introduced to a practical method called BRAIN (bias, relevance, authority, intent, novelty) & SPORT (sincere, professional, open, resilient, trustworthy). Facilitators may briefly introduce the BRAIN & SPORT method earlier in the module, but participants will put it into practice during the final topic in Module 1.

Module 1 is not only about theory but also about practice. It provides athletes with the tools to navigate today's complex information environment, make informed decisions, and understand their role as media consumers and public figures. Facilitators should encourage active participation in group work and discussions, as the curriculum is based 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, including 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 posed by today's media, and simple strategies for dealing with them.

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

- Distinguish between media, information, and digital literacy, and understand why critical thinking is a crucial skill in today's media environment.
- Spot potential misinformation and disinformation and understand the problems they can cause in sport and beyond.
- Reflect on the content they create and share, and on how they are perceived 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, such as UNESCO's Media and Information Literacy framework and the European Commission's DigComp framework. Participating athletes will explore different types of literacy (information, media, and digital) and the importance of critical thinking. The session includes a lecture on theoretical frameworks and key definitions, supported by practical examples from academia, politics, and sport. This session provides the foundation for the rest of the curriculum, helping participants not only understand the theory but also make informed decisions as they navigate today's complex and information-rich 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 as it spreads. Through examples, participants explore different types of misinformation and reflect on the potential consequences – particularly for professional athletes – while taking part in discussions and activities designed to develop strategies for identifying misinformation. The session concludes with a short quiz and reflection, allowing participants to assess their confidence and skills in recognising misinformation and preparing them 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 a brief recap of 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 against misleading claims and develop strategies for evaluating 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 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.

Topic 1: Types of Literacy and Critical Thinking (in-person/virtual)

Session title: Building Blocks of Literacy and Critical Thinking

OBJECTIVES

- Present international frameworks as theoretical grounding (UNESCO, 2025; Vuorikari et al., 2022).
- 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 minutes

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 not?”

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. Paris et al., 2017), 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.

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?

- **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 may be delivered either in person or online.

As this is an introductory lecture, maintain an appropriate pace and avoid exploring individual concepts in too much detail. If time is limited, omit the introduction to the BRAIN & SPORT method and use fewer examples. If time allows, conclude the session with a short quiz of three to five questions to reinforce the key concepts. The quiz may be conducted orally, for example by asking participants to raise their hands, or using a digital tool such as Mentimeter or Kahoot. Keep the activity light and engaging by including humorous incorrect answers. For example: “Which of these is part of the EU DigComp framework? (a) Communication & Collaboration, (b) Teleportation, or (c) Perfect Selfie Taking?” and “What does the A in BRAIN stand for? (a) Authority, (b) Avocado, or (c) Acrobatics?”

The accompanying PowerPoint is provided as an example only; facilitators are encouraged to adapt it to their audience and replace the illustrative examples with relevant examples from their own or local context.

References

- Paris, T., Kim, H., Torres, B., Ocampa, K., Janeway, K., & Zimmerman, L. (2017). Rapid genetic and developmental morphological change following extreme celerity. *Austin Journal of Pharmacology and Therapeutics*, 5(3), 1099. https://st3powers.files.wordpress.com/2018/03/fulltext_ajpt-v5-id1099.pdf
- Vuorikari, R., Kluzer, S., & Punie, Y. (2022). *DigComp 2.2, The digital competence framework for citizens: With new examples of knowledge, skills and attitudes*. Publications Office of the European Union. <https://data.europa.eu/doi/10.2760/115376>
- UNESCO. (2025). *Media and information literacy*. <https://www.unesco.org/en/media-information-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 in real-life contexts.

DURATION

30–45 minutes

TOOLS/MATERIALS

PC, projector, presentation slides (definitions, examples ...), board, chalk/markers, pencils, and paper. Participants are required to bring smartphones.

AGENDA

1. Warm-up activity (5 min)

Participants play the game *Telephone*² – an example that illustrates how misinformation spreads and changes (e.g. use a newspaper headline, such as *Dončić Alongside the Legends: Incredible What He Pulled Off This Time*).

² In the Telephone game, one person – in this case, the lecturer – whispers a message to the next person in line, who passes it on to the next, and so on around the group. The last person says the message out loud, and everyone sees how it has changed from the original.

2. **Introduction** (5 min)

- Explain what misinformation, fake news, and disinformation are (UNICEF, 2025; Brown, 2025).
- As an extra illustration, you may watch the video *How False News Spreads* (Tavlin, 2015).

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 an online tool such as Mentimeter.³

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

- 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 (American Psychological Association, n.d.).

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.
- The lecturer supports the discussion with insights from the suggested literature and explains that the topic will be explored in more detail in later modules.

³ Mentimeter is an online audience response tool that allows participants to submit responses in real time (see <https://www.mentimeter.com>).

6. Quiz (optional) and feedback (5 min)

- Participants complete an interactive video quiz to assess their ability distinguish between accurate information and misinformation (American Psychological Association, n.d.).
- The lecturer facilitates a final reflection using the following questions:
 - How confident do you feel about recognising misinformation?
 - What are you able to do now that you couldn't do before?
 - What topic or issue would you like to explore further after this session?

FACILITATOR NOTES

This session plan is intended as a guideline and can be adapted or supplemented with locally relevant examples. The 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 and shared documents for group work). For the suggested warm-up activity, participants attending online should play the Telephone game at home in advance and record their observations (e.g. the number of participants and how the original message changed). They can then share their experiences during the online session.

References

- American Psychological Association. (n.d.). *Mind over misinformation*.
<https://digital.apa.org/misinformation-effect>
- Brown, E. (2025, December 30). *Misinformation & fake news: Getting started*. Central Washington University Libraries. <https://libguides.lib.cwu.edu/c.php?g=625394&p=4360255>
- Tavlin, N. (2015, August 27). *How false news can spread* [Video]. YouTube.
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cSKGa_7XJkg
- UNICEF. (2025, February 10). *A quick guide to spotting misinformation: Tips for fact-checking, staying informed and talking it out*. <https://www.unicef.org/eca/stories/quick-guide-spotting-misinformation>

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 minutes

TOOLS/MATERIALS

PC, projector, presentation slides (definitions, examples ...), board, chalk/markers, pencils, and paper. Participants are required to bring smartphones or laptops.

AGENDA

1. **Introduction** (5 min)

Recap: What is disinformation? (Brown, 2025)

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 to Spot Disinformation: The Tactics Used to Trick You* video series (European Parliament, n.d.).
- Groups consult the European Parliament’s overview.
- They answer three guiding questions:
 - Why is this disinformation technique dangerous?
 - What are practical steps to resist manipulation?
 - Can you provide an example of this disinformation technique from the sports world?
- Groups present their answers.
- The lecturer guides the discussion and records the ideas as they come up, either in real time or using pre-prepared summaries. Where appropriate, they also involve the other participants in the discussion.

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 able to do now 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 intended as a guideline and can be adapted as needed. The 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 and shared documents for group work).

References

- Brown, E. (2025, December 30). *Misinformation & fake news: Getting started*. Central Washington University Libraries. <https://libguides.lib.cwu.edu/c.php?g=625394&p=4360255>
- European Parliament. (n.d.). *How to spot disinformation: The tactics used to trick you* [Video]. YouTube. https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLHQxK2YVsFVtdgDH2_llyTMfPyZ3Q03N

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 sport and broader social contexts.
- Reflect on how misinformation can influence our decisions, health, or professional path – particularly in sport.

DURATION

45–60 minutes

TOOLS/MATERIALS

- Documentary on pseudoscience (e.g. Eckert & Hornung, 2018) (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 and 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 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.

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 comes 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 “scientifically proven”. In this short documentary, as well as during this whole curriculum, you will see why it is 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 *Fake Science – Die Lügenmacher* (Eckert & Hornung, 2018) 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 writing (e.g. using a Google Form or a Word document).

Participants must reflect on their own experiences and consider how the issues raised in the documentary relate to the world of sport.

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 influence how much we trust a product or method?
7. What would help athletes better protect themselves from misleading claims?
8. What support or tools do you think athletes need to make informed decisions about science-related claims?
9. What is one thing you've learnt in this session that you will apply in your daily life or sport?

FACILITATOR NOTES

This session can be delivered in person, online, or in a hybrid format. For example, participants can watch the documentary before the session and then attend an in-person group discussion. The goal of the session is not to encourage distrust of all information, but to help participants become more aware and critical. Encourage athletes to develop their own critical filter by recognising warning signs, asking the right questions, and making informed decisions.

Encourage participants to share personal experiences and practical strategies.

References

- Eckert, S. & Hornung, P. (2018, July 23). *Exclusiv im Ersten: Fake Science – Die Lügenmacher* [Video]. ARD. <https://www.ardmediathek.de/video/dokumentation-und-reportage/exclusiv-im-ersten-fake-science-die-luegenmacher-engl-ut/das-erste/Y3JpZDovL2Rhc2Vyc3RILmRIL3JlcG9ydGFnZSBflGRva3VtZW50YXRpb24gaW0gZXJzdGVuL2U1ODIzNWJkLWU2MzQtNDExNC05ZjgwLTNlMDQ0YTJmZWExMw>

Topic 5: Ethical Dilemmas in Media Literacy (in-person/virtual)

Session title: **BRAIN & SPORT – Ethical Media Literacy in Sport**

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 minutes

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 (maximum 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 handouts 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.

Use questions (such as the following) to encourage discussion:

- *What's going on in the article?*
- *What ethical tension do you notice?*
- *Is there any bias or underlying 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?

– **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 the use of BRAIN for evaluating media content and SPORT for guiding personal conduct in public and digital spaces. Invite participants to reflect by asking questions such as, “*What was your biggest insight today?*”

FACILITATOR NOTES

This session plan is intended as a guideline and can be adapted as needed. The 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 and shared documents for group work). If there are more groups than available scenarios, prepare additional scenarios as needed.

ADDITIONAL MATERIAL

Case Scenarios

Scenario: Naomi Osaka’s Media Boycott and Mental Health

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?

Possible sources

- Bruno, G. (2021, May 30). Naomi Osaka threatened with French Open expulsion over media boycott. 7NEWS. <https://7news.com.au/sport/tennis/osaka-fined-for-french-open-media-boycott-c-2972626>
- Holmes, T. (2021, May 31). Naomi Osaka's French Open media boycott prompts outrage before her withdrawal, but no thought of the pressure she faces. ABC News. <https://www.abc.net.au/news/2021-05-31/media-tennis-authorities-ask-wrong-questions-osaka-interview-ban/100178724>
- Lakshmin, P. (2021, June 11). Naomi Osaka and the cost of saying no. Harper's Bazaar. <https://www.harpersbazaar.com/culture/features/a36687625/naomi-osaka-and-the-cost-of-saying-no/>
- Osaka, N. (2021, July 8). It's O.K. not to be O.K. TIME. <https://time.com/6077128/naomi-osaka-essay-tokyo-olympics/>

Scenario:

Imane Khelif – Gender Controversy

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 damaged her reputation. 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?

Possible sources

- Bhatia, S., & Cotterill, T. (2024, August 1). 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. *Daily Mail*. <https://www.dailymail.com/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>
- de Guzman, C. (2025, June 5). World boxing apologizes to Imane Khelif after announcing new sex-testing policy. *TIME*. <https://time.com/7291342/world-boxing-sex-testing-policy-imane-khelif-gender-olympics-controversy/>
- Imane Khelif who failed gender eligibility test at World Championships wins bout after opponent quits. (2024, August 2). *Key Sports*.

<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>

TOI Sports Desk. (2025, June 4). Imane Khelif, Olympic boxer, faces gender controversy; world boxing issues formal apology to Algerian Boxing Federation. *The Times of India*.
<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>

Scenario:

Defective Olympic Medals

Background

Following the Paris 2024 Olympic Games, multiple athletes reported that their medals had begun to deteriorate. Complaints included chipping and tarnishing of the medals, as well as problems with the pieces of Eiffel Tower embedded in them. The International Olympic Committee acknowledged the issue and offered to replace damaged medals. Some media outlets framed the story as an embarrassing failure by the organisers, while others focused on the response to the complaints and efforts to address the problem.

Ethical Dilemmas

- How should the media report on issues such as problems with Olympic medals – should they emphasise the controversy or focus on how the issue is being addressed?
- How can different ways of framing an issue – such as focusing on the controversy or on efforts to resolve it – influence how audiences perceive the story?
- 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?

Possible sources

- Goodwill, J., & Briggs, S. (2024, August 9). Quality of Paris 2024 Olympic medals criticised after visible deterioration in just one week. *The Telegraph*.
<https://www.telegraph.co.uk/olympics/2024/08/08/quality-olympics-medals-criticised-deterioration-paris-2024/>
- Harper and Huston say Paris 2024 medals have tarnished. (2024, August 9). *BBC*.
<https://www.bbc.com/sport/olympics/articles/cp35nzpe588o>
- Muñana, G. (2025, January 20). Paris 2024 medal scandal rocks IOC. *Inside The Games*.
<https://www.insidethegames.biz/articles/1151376/paris-2024-medal-scandal-rocks-ioc>
- Winstanley, C. (2024, August 23). Olympic fans rage at ‘disgraceful’ IOC as major problem overshadows Paris Games. *Daily Express US*. <https://www.the-express.com/sport/other-sport/146707/olympic-fans-rage-paris-2024-medals-fall-apart-problem>

Scenario:

Charlotte Dujardin – Suspension

Background

In July 2024, a video emerged showing Olympic dressage champion Charlotte Dujardin repeatedly whipping a horse during a coaching session. A lawyer representing an anonymous complainant submitted a formal complaint to the FEI. Dujardin subsequently withdrew from the Paris 2024 Olympic Games and voluntarily accepted a provisional suspension. She described her actions as an “error of judgement”. In December 2024, the FEI imposed a one-year suspension and a fine of CHF 10,000.

Ethical Dilemmas

- How should the equestrian community balance historic prestige with evolving standards of animal welfare?
- How do experts and advocacy groups, such as veterinarians and animal rights organisations, influence media coverage and promote accountability?
- Does sensational public reaction help or complicate fair evaluation of the athlete’s intent and reputation?

Possible sources

- Hopkins, S. (2024, August 8). The Paris Olympics horse-whipping scandal shows the dangers of ‘Disneyfication’ in horse sports. *The Conversation*. <https://theconversation.com/the-paris-olympics-horse-whipping-scandal-shows-the-dangers-of-disneyfication-in-horse-sports-235672>
- McBride, M. (2024, December 6). Charlotte Dujardin suspended 1 year for whipping scandal. *Horse Network*. <https://horsenetwork.com/2024/12/charlotte-dujardin-suspended-1-year-for-whipping-scandal/>
- Rogers, J. (2024, July 24). Banned Team GB Olympian’s fiancé speaks out on how shameful video of her whipping horse got out and was shared. *The US Sun*. <https://www.the-sun.com/sport/12005959/charlotte-dujardins-fiance-speaks-video-whipping-horse/>
- Webb, A. (2024, December 5). BEVA backs Dujardin whip ban. *Vet Times*. <https://www.vettimes.com/news/vets/equine/beva-backs-dujardin-whip-ban>

Scenario:

Mikaela Shiffrin – Media Coverage After Olympic Disqualification

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 the media respect athletes' personal boundaries and mental well-being even during high-stakes moments?
- How can public pressure and personal tragedy influence the way the media portray an athlete's response to a sudden setback?
- What responsibility do media outlets have to avoid sensationalising athletes' emotional moments?

Possible sources

- Goodman, E. (2022, February 17). Mikaela Shiffrin puts haters and trolls on blast in defiant social media post. *NBC Olympics*. <https://www.nbcolympics.com/news/mikaela-shiffrin-puts-haters-and-trolls-blast-defiant-social-media-post>
- Graham, B. A. (2022, February 7). Shiffrin's early exit paves way for Hector to take Olympic giant slalom crown. *The Guardian*. <https://www.theguardian.com/sport/2022/feb/06/mikaela-shiffrin-beijing-2022-winter-olympics-giant-slalom-disqualified>
- Kumar, A. (2022, February 18). Winter Olympics 2022: Simone Biles comes to defense of skier Mikaela Shiffrin -- 'Just remember how AMAZING you are'. *ESPN*.

https://www.espn.com/olympics/story/_/id/33321404/winter-olympics-2022-simone-biles-comes-defense-skier-mikaela-shiffrin-just-remember-how-amazing-are

Shiffrin's on-slope struggles force NBC to change coverage plans. (2022, February 9). *Sports Business Journal*. *<https://www.sportsbusinessjournal.com/Daily/Issues/2022/02/09/Olympics/NBC-Shiffrin-1/>*

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

SPORT: Reflect on the response – how would you respond in a similar situation as a public figure?

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, ask guiding questions to help them move forward.

Scenario: Naomi Osaka's Media Boycott and Mental Health

BRAIN – Evaluate the media message

Bias:

Are articles sympathetic or judgemental?
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?

Novelty:

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?

Scenario: Imane Khelif – Gender Controversy**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 sources quoted: scientists, representatives of governing bodies, politicians, or 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?

Novelty:

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:

Does the coverage focus on athletes’ experiences and the symbolic value of the issue, or does it use sensational headlines to attract attention?

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 provide context, or to provoke outrage and generate clicks?

Novelty:

Was the coverage published before or after the official announcement that damaged medals would be replaced? Is the information 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 calmly and constructively, even when expressing disagreement or frustration?

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 did they change as new media commentary emerged?

Trustworthy:

Did the institutions involved (the IOC and Monnaie de Paris) handle the situation transparently and effectively? How did their response and the subsequent media coverage affect public trust?

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 the article present multiple perspectives, or does it appear to favour a particular interpretation of the athlete's actions?

Relevance:

Does the coverage focus on horse welfare and ethics in sport, or on the consequences for the athlete, public reactions, and other dramatic aspects of the story?

Authority:

Are the quoted sources credible and relevant (e.g. veterinary professionals or representatives of sports governing bodies)? Are other sources anonymous or personally involved in the case (e.g. family members)?

Intent:

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

Novelty:

Was the information published early in the controversy? Was it later updated to include the disciplinary outcomes?

Does the coverage reflect the evolving context, or does it continue to focus primarily on the initial controversy?

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 and respond constructively to criticism?

Resilient:

Did the response remain consistent as media coverage continued, or did it begin to change?

Trustworthy:

Who gained or lost public trust in this situation – the athlete, the federation, or the media?

What kind of response could help 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 on her athletic performance or the broader context?

Is the tone compassionate, neutral, or overly judgemental?

Relevance:

Is the level of media attention justified by the news value of her performance, or does the coverage intrude into her personal life?

Was Shiffrin’s emotional reaction an important part of the sporting moment, or did the coverage give it disproportionate attention?

Authority:

Who is quoted in the coverage – Shiffrin herself, relevant experts, other athletes, or mainly anonymous members of the public – and how credible and relevant are these sources?

Are relevant mental health perspectives included?

Intent:

Is the article or interview aiming to inform, highlight the pressures faced by athletes, or provoke an emotional response or public reaction?

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

Novelty:

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

Does it offer a fresh perspective or just repeat the 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 responding to criticism?

Open:

Did Shiffrin or her team encourage broader discussion about mental health in elite sport?

Was her communication defensive, or did it create space for reflection?

Resilient:

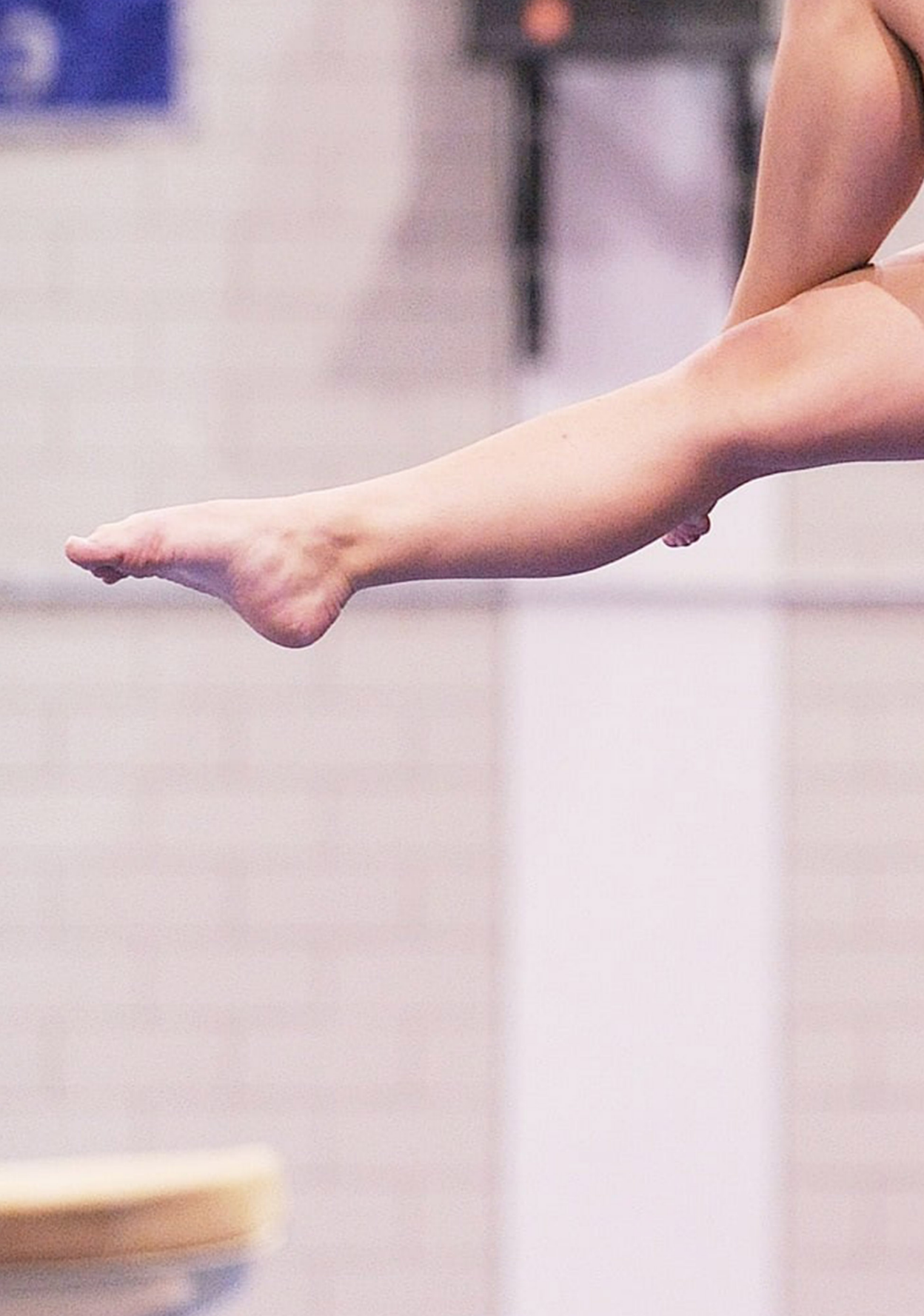
How did she respond to continued public and media scrutiny?

Did her response remain consistent as public and media scrutiny continued?

Trustworthy:

Did her statements and tone help maintain public trust and trust within the sporting community?

How did reactions from fellow athletes (e.g. Simone Biles) influence perceptions of fairness and solidarity?



A person in a black leotard is performing a handstand. The image is split horizontally by a teal-colored text box. The top half shows the person's legs and torso in a handstand position. The bottom half shows the person's head, long dark hair, and one arm with a sparkling sleeve. The text is centered within the teal box.

Module 2

Sport as a Platform for Literacy

Module Introduction

Module 1 focused on different types of literacy, recognising misinformation, and understanding the role and importance of critical thinking when engaging with media content. Module 2, in contrast, focuses on sport as a platform that can both help shape reading habits and improve media literacy among young athletes. Module 2 introduces participants to the concept of reading habits, the benefits of reading for athletes, and the Athlete Storytelling method, which draws on the experiences of well-known athletes to encourage participants to consider the consequences that disinformation can have for their sporting careers and their lives more broadly. It also introduces the basic principles of modern media work and the potential risks athletes may encounter in the media environment. In addition, participants acquire basic knowledge and skills for designing media campaigns and are encouraged to critically reflect on the role of athletes in such campaigns, the reasons for their participation, and the potential limitations involved. They will build on this knowledge and these skills in Module 4 by designing their own media campaign.

The activities in Module 2 introduce athletes to the development and importance of reading habits and to different types of literature. They encourage athletes to develop a positive attitude towards reading as a valuable activity alongside their physically demanding schedules, highlighting the benefits of reading for their sporting careers, personal and intellectual growth, and relaxation. In addition, the module provides athletes with tools and strategies for finding high-quality reading materials.

The central part of the module draws attention to the potential pitfalls associated with quickly reading and interpreting information, particularly unedited content on social media and the Internet. It introduces the concept of disinformation and, through various activities, helps athletes understand how and why disinformation is created and the intentions of those who create it.

Next, athletes learn about the methods and circumstances of working with the media and communicating with journalists and other media professionals. The module encourages them to reflect on when and how to respond to journalists' requests, how to formulate media statements, and how to manage their public image. It also encourages them to recognise the potential they have, as athletes and representatives of positive values, to make a positive contribution through the media and within the wider community.

Reflecting on selected media campaigns also helps athletes take their first steps towards designing or participating in campaigns of their own. It encourages them to consider the scope and purpose of media campaigns and to make informed decisions about whether and how to participate in them. Athletes are also encouraged to consider the time required for campaign activities and how these can be balanced with their many other commitments. Finally, they learn that a well-designed campaign can benefit sports communities, young athletes at the beginning of their sporting careers, and the athletes themselves, while also recognising that not every campaign is well designed or well intentioned.

Module 2 seeks, first and foremost, to encourage young athletes to read. It also aims to empower them to critically assess situations related to reading and information gathering and to navigate the media environment effectively. At the same time, the module encourages them to engage in activities that can both relieve stress and increase their influence within their communities, thereby contributing positively to their sporting careers.

Overview of Module Objectives and Learning Outcomes

The objective is to encourage athletes to read and develop critical reading and thinking skills, improve their ability to find reliable and verified information, develop the skills needed to communicate effectively in today's media environment, and acquire basic knowledge of media campaigns in sport.

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

- Recognise different genres of literature and identify high-quality reading materials suited to their interests and needs.
- Develop reading habits in line with their interests and abilities.
- Recognise the mechanisms and motivations behind the creation of misinformation and identify reliable sources of information.
- Understand the basics of communicating with the media and drafting media statements, as well as the importance of engaging effectively with the media.
- Understand the basic principles of designing media campaigns and critically assess their role in such campaigns.

The objectives of the module and the skills athletes will acquire are closely aligned with the objectives of the project as a whole. They contribute to the development of young athletes as critical, thoughtful, and engaged readers, responsible and confident participants in the media environment, and active contributors to sport-related media content.

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 facilitator-led presentation and individual 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 interest them and will discuss the role and potential of reading in an athlete's life.

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

In this part, young athletes will learn about misinformation, including how and why it is created. With the help of a guest athlete, they will explore the concrete impact misinformation can have on an athlete's career and the consequences of failing to recognise it or of spreading it. They will hear first-hand about how athletes have dealt with misinformation and what they have learned from these experiences. Participants will also explore the role and importance of reading in the lives and careers of athletes. The guest athlete's visit will form the central part of this section.

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

Based on the discussion with the guest athlete and their experiences with misinformation and media engagement, young athletes will reflect critically on their own encounters with misinformation and their uncritical consumption of media content. They will compare their experiences with those of the guest athlete and with one another. This will provide them with useful knowledge and skills for critically evaluating information, as well as guidance on how to engage effectively with the media.

Topic 4: Journalist Storytelling – Responsible Media Communication

In this part, athletes will first share their experiences of interacting with journalists and reflect on whether these encounters were pleasant or unpleasant, important or unimportant, and stressful or non-stressful. They will discuss the concept of media pressure and explore ways of coping with stressful situations. In the second part of the session, a guest sports journalist will present their perspective and explain their motivations, working methods, and professional limitations. This will be followed by a workshop in which athletes will practise drafting media statements. The session will focus primarily on the guest journalist's contribution and the practical workshop.

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

Module 2 concludes with a session introducing the basics of media campaign creation, which will be explored further in the final module of the project. A moderated discussion and group work based on examples of media campaigns will be complemented by a visit from a media expert, who will analyse several sports-related media campaigns together with the young athletes. The session concludes with participants selecting a theme for a campaign that they will develop themselves in the final module. As a concluding, informal activity, they will present their initial campaign ideas through a role-play exercise.

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 minutes

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/passive (basic characteristics) (CambriLearn, 2024)

- Reading habits, their importance and development (Walters, 2021)
- 2. Discussion of young athletes' reading experiences; each participant presents their own reading experience (20 min).
 - When do they read?
 - Where do they read?
 - Do they usually read printed materials or on a screen?
 - 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).
 - Specialist literature for training and performance (specific examples and their practical applications)
 - 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 and recommendations on high-quality reading materials for young athletes; example from Slovenia: reading recommendations from the #ŠportajmoInBerimo (Let's Play Sports and Read) project (Olimpijski komite Slovenije, n.d.). Future reading club mentors should identify similar online sources in their own country.
- 5. Knowledge check – 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 explain how it may be useful to 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, allowing the lecturer to gain insight into their reading habits and participants to compare their experiences with one another. Adapt the examples of literature to the type of athletes in the group and to the national context. Use a projector to present 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, and highlight the importance of critical and in-depth reading. Conclude the session 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.

References

- CambriLearn. (2024, August 19). *Types of reading skills and their purpose*.
<https://cambrilearn.com/blog/types-of-reading-skills>
- Olimpijski komite Slovenije. (n.d.). *Sportajmo in berimo*. <https://www.olympic.si/sportniki/sportajmo-in-berimo>
- Walters, J. (2021, December 3). How do you develop a reading habit at home? *Independent Book Review*.
<https://independentbookreview.com/2021/12/03/how-do-you-develop-a-reading-habit-at-home/>

Topic 2: Athlete Storytelling – the Role of Misinformation in an Athlete’s Career (in-person/virtual)

Session title: **The Role of Misinformation in an Athlete’s Career (part 1)**

OBJECTIVES

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

DURATION

45 minutes

INVITED GUESTS

A successful athlete.

TOOLS/MATERIALS

Laptop, projector, screen, whiteboard, markers, notepad, pen.

AGENDA

1. Introduction to misinformation – definition, characteristics, causes, and consequences⁴ (10 min).
 - Definition of misinformation
 - Causes of misinformation
 - How misinformation spreads
 - Consequences of misinformation
 - Recognising misinformation
 - Strategies for responding to misinformation
2. Conversation with an athlete about experiences with misinformation (30 min).
 - How and where did they encounter misinformation?
 - Did they recognise it as misinformation at the time?
 - What were the consequences?
 - How did it affect their sporting and personal life?
 - Where did they first learn about the misinformation?
 - How do they verify information today?
 - How do they respond when they encounter misinformation?
 - What insights can they share, and what advice would they give to young athletes?
 - What role does reading play in their career (what they read, why, where, how much, and when)?
3. Questions and summary (5 min).
 - Opportunity for young athletes to ask the guest questions directly about the topic
 - Summary of the key insights from the moderated discussion

FACILITATOR NOTES

The session should be conducted in person, as direct contact with a successful athlete who can serve as an authority figure is highly valuable. Hearing first-hand how a respected athlete has dealt with misinformation can be particularly instructive.

⁴ This note provides a brief recap of the content covered in Module 1 on this topic. In addition to the recommended links provided in that module, another source is suggested here: a page on misinformation and disinformation by the American Psychological Association (n.d.).

Invite a successful athlete who is well known, communicative, and able to present their experiences and reflections clearly, bearing in mind that not all athletes will be equally suited to this role. During this meeting, young athletes primarily take on the role of listeners and are therefore less active. This is intentional, as the session serves as preparation for the second meeting, during which they will present their own experiences with misinformation. Inform them of this expectation in advance so that they have time to prepare.

Although participants take a more passive role during most of the session, they should be given the opportunity at the end to ask the invited athlete questions directly, which can provide a rare and valuable experience.

References

American Psychological Association. (n.d.). *Misinformation and disinformation*.
<https://www.apa.org/topics/journalism-facts/misinformation-disinformation>

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 misinformation is.
- Recognise the purposes behind the spread of misinformation.
- Learn how to verify information.
- Learn what to do when confronted with misinformation.

DURATION

45 minutes

TOOLS/MATERIALS

Laptop, projector, screen, whiteboard, markers, notepad, pen.

AGENDA

1. Summary of what is misinformation, what are its characteristics, its causes, and its consequences (5 min)⁵.
 - Definition of misinformation
 - Causes of misinformation
 - How misinformation spreads

⁵ 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.

- Consequences of misinformation
 - Recognising misinformation
 - Strategies for responding to misinformation
2. Presentation of young athletes' experiences with misinformation, including how they recognised it (if they did) and how they responded to it. Each participant shares their experience (25 min).
 - How did they encounter the misinformation?
 - Did they recognise it as misinformation at the time?
 - How did they respond?
 - Did they turn to anyone for help or advice? If so, who?
 - Did they receive appropriate support and useful advice from the person(s) they turned to?
 - What were the consequences of any inappropriate responses?
 - How do they feel about the experience now?
 3. Guided discussion of young athletes' experiences with misinformation, comparing them with those of the guest athlete and with one another (10 min).
 4. Summary of key insights on dealing with misinformation (Dimov, 2021) and basic guidelines for responding to it (5 min).

FACILITATOR NOTES

The session may be delivered either in person or online. This unit is linked to the previous session, *The Role of Misinformation in an Athlete's Career (Part 1)*, and the two sessions form a coherent whole. The main purpose of this session is to compare young athletes' experiences with misinformation with those of established top-level athletes, with the discussion guided by the lecturer. Focus on specific examples, particularly experiences shared by both top-level and young athletes, that illustrate how misinformation works and highlight its potential dangers and pitfalls.

Based on the insights shared by the athlete in the previous session, the young athletes' own experiences, and the knowledge they already have or have acquired during the sessions, present appropriate and effective ways of responding to misinformation.

References

- Dimov, P. (2021). Recognition of fake news in sports. *Strategies for Policy in Science and Education*, 29(4s), 18–27. <https://doi.org/10.53656/str2021-4s-2-fake>

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 interactions with journalists.
- Respond appropriately when interacting with journalists.
- Understand the importance of their public image and the extent to which they can influence it.
- Formulate a concise media statement.

DURATION

45 minutes

INVITED GUESTS

Sports journalist.

TOOLS/MATERIALS

Notepad, pen, projector, board, markers.

AGENDA

1. Discussion of experiences with journalists – participants briefly share their positive and negative experiences (10 min).
 - What experiences have they had with journalists?
 - What did they find most difficult?
 - Has anyone taught them how to interact effectively with the media?
 - Do they follow how they are portrayed in the media?
 - What reactions and comments have they received following 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)
 - Challenges and limitations in sports reporting
 - 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 between the sports journalist and the young athletes on the following topics (10 min).
 - How to draft and deliver a statement for the media
 - How to decline an interview or request for comment
 - How to balance media commitments with other responsibilities
 - What information should not be shared publicly
 - The importance of maintaining a positive attitude
 - How to cope with the pressure of media expectations
 - Is an athlete's public image important? Why or why not?
 - To what extent is an athlete's privacy part of their public image?
4. Group exercise: delivering short media statements to the guest journalist (8 min).
 - Simulation of media statements following a sporting event
 - Immediate feedback from the journalist on the strengths and weaknesses of the statements

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 specific characteristics of reporting on sport can be particularly valuable for young athletes. Invite a reputable and experienced sports journalist who can provide a clear overview of sports journalism and offer practical advice to young athletes.

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 and potential impact of media campaigns.
- Recognise the role of a positive public image in media campaigns.
- Assess the benefits and potential pitfalls of participating in media campaigns and make informed decisions about whether to participate.
- Develop the basic elements of a simple media campaign.

DURATION

45 minutes

INVITED GUESTS

A media expert.

TOOLS/MATERIALS

Pens, whiteboard, laptop, projector, screen, internet connection.

AGENDA

1. Brief presentation of a selected media campaign in sport and its key characteristics (e.g. based on UEFA's *Take Care* campaign 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 a media campaign be implemented?
2. Moderated discussion of media campaigns involving athletes that participants remember, focusing on how the campaigns were implemented, how they affected the participants, their positive and negative aspects, and what participants would change about them (10 min).
3. Presentation by a media expert – key elements of an effective media campaign and potential pitfalls that can lead to failure (18–20 min).
4. Moderated group work with the lecturer and the 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 the campaign include in relation to the theme?
 - Selection of appropriate communication channels for the campaign
 - Planning and implementation of the media campaign
 - The role of athletes in the campaign: Why are athletes effective at communicating values?
 - How to avoid potential abuse and how to recognise it?
 - Are campaigns and media appearances merely an obligation for athletes?
5. Summary of key aspects of media campaigns in sport and preparation for designing a campaign in Module 4 (5–10 min).
 - Participants are encouraged to consider possible topics, activities, and communication channels in advance.

FACILITATOR NOTES

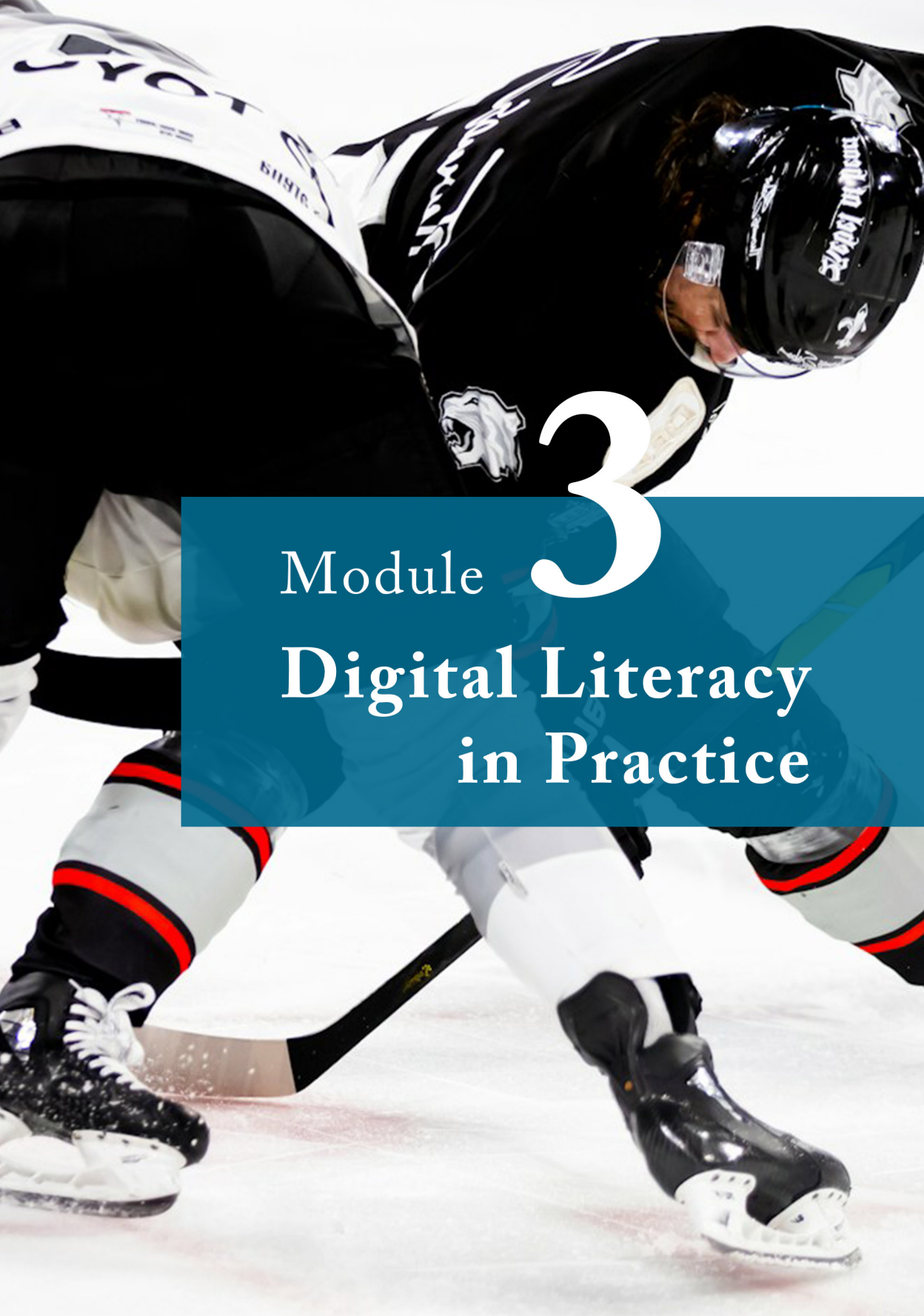
The session should be conducted in person, as direct contact with a media expert who has first-hand knowledge of the media landscape can be particularly valuable for young athletes. Media engagement is not only an integral part of sport but also an important aspect of athletes' lives. If young athletes are not familiar with any sports campaigns in their local area, this part of the session may be omitted. Invite a reputable media expert who can provide a clear overview of the media landscape

in sport, including its key characteristics, current trends, and common pitfalls. By reflecting on how to design a media campaign, young athletes also prepare for Module 4, in which they will create their own campaign.

References

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Module

3

Digital Literacy in Practice

Module Introduction⁶

In Module 2, athletes explore how misinformation can shape their careers. This module takes it a step further by developing practical fact-checking skills, including using reverse image searches to identify the origin or earliest known appearance of an image online. Participants also learn to recognise fake news by applying verification techniques through activities such as quizzes and games. Participants learn to recognise and avoid filter bubbles on social media.

Sessions in this module emphasise the risks that athletes may face and how they can protect themselves, their reputation, and their well-being. With technology constantly evolving, new tools can both improve lives and create risks when used maliciously. This module prepares athletes to navigate both the opportunities and risks associated with these technologies with confidence. As in the 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 this type of manipulated media can pose to athletes and practical ways to detect them. As technology evolves, new tools and resources can enhance our lives, but they can also be exploited for harmful purposes. Participants work with fictional athlete scenarios, discussing in groups how to respond and what their first steps should be. Upon 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 offline one, which is why this module also addresses online harassment. Athletes, as public figures, can easily become targets of such harassment. In this session, they develop practical strategies for responding to online harassment and simple “dos and don’ts” for dealing with it, 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 reacting emotionally – a skill that

⁶ In preparing the curriculum, we made partial use of ChatGPT (OpenAI) artificial intelligence tools.

is crucial not only when making media-related decisions but also in everyday life, whether responding 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 become more confident engaging with media content, both as consumers and as creators and when they themselves become the subject of media coverage. This includes assessing whether media content is 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 addresses the most hands-on aspect of media literacy. This module includes websites, tools, and strategies to detect fake news and shield athletes from media manipulation.

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

- Recognise fake news, deepfakes, and misleading posts and images.
- Use fact-checking websites (like Snopes) and digital tools such as reverse image search to verify content.
- Reflect on the positive and harmful uses of media and emerging technologies.
- Identify different types of online harassment and recognise the risks they pose to 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 the ethical and responsible use of media 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 brief recap of fake news from Module 1, Topic 2, followed by methods for recognising fake news that the facilitator may choose to

introduce. Fact-checking is also covered, with examples of both local and international fact-checking websites. Finally, the session addresses the recognition of bias and ways to avoid filter bubbles on social media. The session ends with a board game that reinforces the key concepts covered.

Topic 2: Verification Techniques and the Use of Digital Tools

The session builds on the previous topic and focuses on practical examples of fact-checking methods. Participants are introduced to verification techniques and digital tools that allow them to quickly fact-check the information. The main part of the session is the Athlete Media Literacy Workshop, which encourages participants to apply the verification techniques and tools introduced earlier to practical cases. The topic concludes with participants reflecting on their confidence in using fact-checking methods, with the facilitator collecting their responses 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 developing practical strategies for detecting them. A short lecture introduces key definitions, potential 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 position. In groups, they discuss what steps should be taken during the critical first hours, how to balance calm communication with their 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 online harassment, its potential impact on athletes, and proactive strategies for addressing it. Participating in this workshop will help athletes recognise different forms of online harassment, understand the associated risks and dangers, and explore appropriate ways to respond. They will also examine the role of sponsors, teammates, and clubs. Through group discussions, participants develop

practical response strategies, such as a brief list of “dos and don’ts.” The session emphasises critical awareness, self-protection, 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 decision-making by athletes under media pressure, help participants 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 fictional media environment during a major sporting event, responding to realistic media-related scenarios by applying appropriate communication strategies. The game focuses on thinking before reacting emotionally or impulsively. The goal is to make informed decisions that protect an athlete’s reputation while navigating today’s complex media environment.

Topic 1: Identifying Fake News, Fact-Checking, and Bias Recognition (in-person/virtual)

Session title: [Escaping Fake News and Filter Bubbles](#)

OBJECTIVES

- Recognise fake news.
- Identify and use fact-checking websites.
- Recognise bias and apply strategies to avoid it.

DURATION

60–75 minutes

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 how to identify fake news and how to avoid being misled by it.

Fake news (20 min)**a) Short recap**

The facilitator reminds participants of the definition of fake news introduced in Module 1, Topic 2, and asks them what they remember about the topic to make the recap more interactive. After the recap, the facilitator can present some of the methods below, supported by relevant graphics or videos.

Fake news is fabricated or deliberately false information presented as news and not based on verifiable facts or reliable sources. Modern technology, including the widespread use of social media, bots, and artificial intelligence (AI), allows fake news to spread quickly and easily (Desai & Oehrli, 2026).

b) Recognising fake news

What can we do to stop spreading fake news?

- Think critically and use appropriate strategies to assess the likely accuracy of information. Be curious and actively investigate what you read and hear.
- Exercise caution before sharing news content on social media. Think twice about news and information that provoke strong emotions, whether positive or negative. If you are in doubt, do NOT share the information.
- Use news sources that are accountable for their content and follow recognised journalistic ethics and standards.
- Learn to recognise your own biases and take steps to 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?
- **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 (IFLA, 2017):**
 - **Consider the Source** – Click away from the story to investigate the website, 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 given information 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 website and the author to be sure.
 - **Check your Biases** – Consider if your own beliefs could affect your judgement.
 - **Ask the Experts** – Ask a librarian or consult a fact-checking website.

- How to spot fake news – videos (College of Staten Island Library, 2026)
- SIFT method (stop, investigate the source, find better coverage trace claims, quotes and media to the original context) for evaluating the source (Babson College, Horn Library, 2026)
- CRAAP test (currency, relevancy, authority, accuracy, purpose) for evaluating websites – video (Polger, 2020)
- RADAR method (rationale, authority, date, accuracy, relevance) for evaluating the source (Loyola Marymount University, William H. Hannon Library, 2024; Brock University Library, 2021)



Figure 1

1. Fact-checking (15 min)

First, the facilitator briefly introduces fact-checking and then present examples of fact-checking websites, selecting from those suggested below or other relevant websites. The facilitator can also encourage participants to use one of these websites to search for fact-checked stories related to sports they are interested in. Participants will need their phones for this activity. After reading the selected stories, they can discuss whether they found any of the information surprising and share their views.

a) A brief explanation

“Fact-checking is a crucial pillar of the EU’s approach to information manipulation and foreign interference” (European Commission, 2026).

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 (Adria Digital Media Observatory, 2026).

Other EDMO hubs:

- **BECID** – Baltic Engagement Centre for Combating Information Disorders (covering Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania) (<https://becid.eu>)
- **BROD** – Bulgarian-Romanian Observatory of Digital Media (<https://brodhub.eu/en>)
- **GADMO** – German-Austrian Digital Media Observatory (<https://gadmo.eu>)
- **LAKMUSZ** – EDMO Hungarian hub against disinformation (<https://www.hdmo.eu>)
- **MedDMO** – Mediterranean Digital Media Observatory (covering Greece, Malta and Cyprus) (<https://meddmo.eu>)

The following fact-checking websites 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 websites around the World (<https://reporterslab.org/fact-checking>)

2. Bias recognition (10 min)

a) Short recap

The facilitator briefly recaps the topic of recognising bias. To make the recap more interactive, the facilitator can ask participants what they understand by bias. The facilitator can also show a video explaining confirmation bias or 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” (Cambridge University Press & Assessment, n.d.).

- View video Defining Confirmation Bias (Facing History & Ourselves, 2016).
- View video Beware Online “Filter Bubbles” by Pariser (2011).

b) Strategies for avoiding filter bubbles

How to avoid filter bubbles on social media:

1. Don’t unfriend people solely because of their beliefs.
2. Don’t delete comments simply because you disagree with them.
3. Engage with people whose views differ from your own.
4. Read the comments on your friends’ posts.
5. Follow media outlets that present perspectives different from your own.
6. Read content carefully before sharing it.
7. Report or flag false or misleading content (Pachal, 2016).

3. 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

The sources of definitions and videos provided are examples only. Facilitators may use some of the suggested examples or select others that are more appropriate for the audience and the local context.

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ADDITIONAL MATERIAL

Sprint & Quiz – game rules

Each participant chooses one playing piece. They place their pieces on the starting square and take turns rolling the die and moving around the board. Play proceeds clockwise. There are three coloured squares on the playing field (blue, red, and green). When a player lands on 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.

The first player to reach FINISH wins.



Figure 2: Image: Board game example



Figure 3: Image: Blue cards example

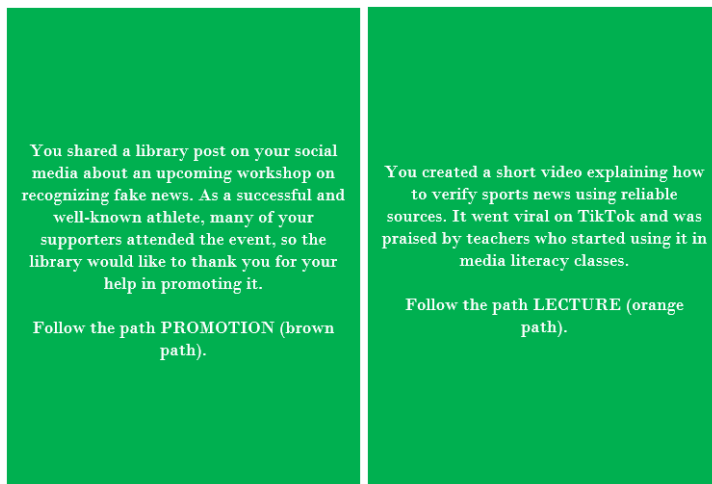


Figure 4: Image: Green cards example

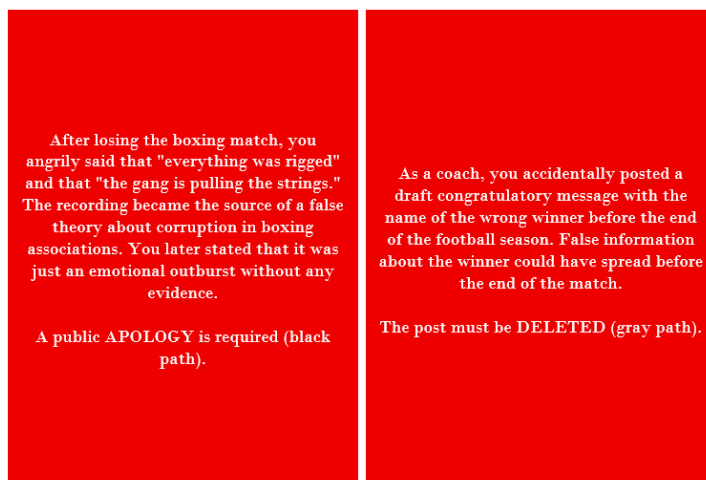


Figure 5: Image: Red cards example

Topic 2: Verification Techniques and Use of Digital Tools (in-person/virtual)

Session title: **Fast Checks for Athletes**

OBJECTIVES

- Apply quick, reliable verification techniques to posts, images, and videos.
- Use fact-checking websites and digital tools, such as reverse image search.
- Determine whether a statement is true, false, or misleading and justify the assessment using reliable 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's session is entirely hands-on: you will verify viral sports posts using a few simple tools. Some of them were introduced in the previous session, while others will be introduced today.

1. Quick demonstration of tools (10 min)

The facilitator demonstrates how the tools work through practical examples.

- ✓ **Google reverse image search with Google Images**
(<https://images.google.com>)

Example: As the White House hosted talks between the United States and Ukraine on a peace deal with Russia, posts circulated with an image mocking Europe's leaders, allegedly showing the French president outside the Oval Office with other officials. However, visual inconsistencies show that the image was AI-generated. An explanation of the falsified image, along with the image itself, can be found, for example, at Fact Check (Goldhamer, 2025).

Key points for participants:

- **When to use:** To quickly check whether a suspicious photo, meme, or quote card has appeared elsewhere online, who has published it, and whether it also appears on trusted news websites or only on social media.
 - **How to use:** Right-click the image → Search image with Google (or upload the file).
 - **Pros:** Fast and effective for reused images. **Cons:** Cropped, edited or brand-new AI-generated images may evade matches.
 - Privacy note: Do not upload private or sensitive images you do not own.
- ✓ **Fact-checking websites:** Razkrinkavanje (for Slovenian news; <https://ostro.si/razkrinkavanje>), Snopes (<https://www.snopes.com>), AFP Fact Check (<https://factcheck.afp.com>), PolitiFact (<https://www.politifact.com>), and Lead Stories (<https://leadstories.com>). Similar websites were presented in the previous topic (Module 3, Topic 1).

Use the same example as above to demonstrate how to verify a claim.

Key points for participants:

- **When to use:** To verify a claim that has already gone viral.
- **How to use:** Search for the person or claim together with keywords such as “fact check”, then review the findings and the sources provided.
- **Pros:** Provides quick access to credible fact-checking and supporting sources.
Cons: Not every claim is covered immediately.

✓ **TinEye** (<https://tineye.com>)

Example: A meme claiming that Taylor Swift wants you to vote for Donald Trump (Tenbarge, 2024).

Key points for participants:

- **When to use:** To check when and where the image appeared online, particularly to identify its earliest known use and determine whether it comes from a reliable source, a satirical or tabloid website, or a fact-checking website.
- **How to use:** Upload the image or paste its URL → sort the results by “Oldest” → open the earliest results.
- **Pros:** Strong index of older images and their previous uses. **Cons:** May have less extensive coverage than Google in some areas.

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 containing a statement and/or an image related to a news story, along with a worksheet containing guiding questions. Using the worksheet, participants discuss their case and decide whether the information is true, false, or misleading (T/F/M). They must use at least two verification tools to assess the reliability of the information and its source and record the steps they took (e.g. search terms and links).

Case cards:

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 (“False Posts About New Argentinian Banknote,” 2022).

2. Statement:

“Basketball player Shaquille O’Neal earned a doctoral degree.”

True. According to Barry University (2012), Shaq successfully earned his doctoral degree in 2012.

3. Statement:

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

True. Kyrie made these statements publicly in 2017, though later apologised (Cockburn, 2018).

4. Statement:

“Usain Bolt lost an Olympic medal due to doping allegations.”

Misleading. Bolt himself never failed a doping test (Austin, 2017).

Guiding questions (on the wall or on worksheets):

- What is the claim? Who posted it first?
- Can you find a credible source reporting the same information?
- Does a reverse image or video search show that the content has been reused or taken out of context?
- Is there a reputable fact-check of the claim?
- If it is a screenshot, can web archives confirm that the original content existed?

Group presentations:

After the group discussions, each group presents a brief “How We Checked” report, covering the following: tools used → earliest credible source found → assessment (T/F/M). The facilitator highlights effective verification strategies (e.g. identifying the earliest available result, using web archives, or tracing the information back to an official statement).

Reflection:

Use Mentimeter or a similar tool to collect participants’ feedback on the activity. If needed (based on responses to Example Question 1), select different statements for the next workshop.

Example questions:

1. Have you heard about the news item you worked on before this activity?
 - Yes, I knew it was T/F/M.
 - Yes, but I did not know it was T/F/M.
 - No, this was the first time I had heard about it.
2. Did your opinion about the statement change after you checked the sources?
 - Yes.
 - No.
3. Rate the following 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 case.
 - By the end of the task, I was confident that our assessment was correct.
4. How did you feel while completing the task? (Word cloud)
5. How did you feel at the end of the session? (Word cloud)

FACILITATOR NOTES

This session plan is intended as a guideline and can be adapted as needed. The 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 and shared documents for group work).

The case cards provided are examples only. Facilitators are encouraged to use current examples of statements that are relevant and engaging for participants.

If the session is shortened to 30 minutes, demonstrate two tools (Google Images and a fact-checking portal) and conduct one case round. For a 45-minute session, add a second case round after the reflection, as participants' responses and experiences may differ between the first and second rounds.

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Topic 3: Deepfakes – Understanding and Detection Strategies (in-person/virtual)

Session title: **Recognising and Responding to Deepfakes**

OBJECTIVES

- Understand what deepfakes are and how they differ from other forms of manipulated media.
- Identify the risks that deepfakes pose to athletes.
- Apply practical strategies for detecting deepfakes.
- Reflect on the positive and harmful uses of deepfake technology.
- Practise making first-response decisions in realistic scenarios.

DURATION

90–130 minutes

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 leads a brief discussion of manipulated media in sport.

2. **Lecture** (30–40 min)

Overview of definitions, types, examples from everyday life and sport, risks, detection strategies, and positive applications.

3. **Group work** (20–30 min)

Participants analyse fictional scenarios involving athletes 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 quickly, stay calm, preserve evidence, communicate clearly, and involve sponsors or the club) and invites participants to reflect on how they would apply these strategies in their own sporting lives.

FACILITATOR NOTES

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

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

Organise participants into small groups (maximum four people) for the 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 available scenarios, prepare additional scenarios in advance so that each group has its own case.

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

ADDITIONAL MATERIAL

Scenarios

Participants will form groups of approximately 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 people is coincidental.

They will have about 20 minutes to:

- Read their scenario and persona carefully.
- Put themselves in the athlete's shoes and consider their persona's personality, level of activity on social media, sponsors, and personal style.
- Discuss as a group what this person would realistically do in the first hour if the situation happened to them.
- Create a brief response plan – who to alert, what to do, what to avoid, and what kind of public statement, if any, to make.
- At the end, each group will select one person to present their response: introducing the persona, summarising the scenario, and explaining the course of action their group chose.

Scenario 1

Volleyball — Nadia and the “Miracle Supplement”

Meet Nadia: Nadia Karim is 30, the star of the Istanbul Falcons volleyball team. She's calm, thoughtful, and down-to-earth. She has about 550,000 followers on Instagram, as well as a small YouTube channel where she shares workout and rehabilitation tips. She posts on Instagram three to four times a week and usually uploads one YouTube video 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

The situation: Nadia is finally returning from an ankle injury. The next day she is scheduled to appear at the league’s official media day, where she’ll be featured in a story about her comeback while also promoting her sponsor’s recovery campaign.

However, the night before, a short video begins circulating on TikTok and X. It looks almost identical to one of her podcast episodes (the same outfit and the same background) but in this clip “Nadia” says: “Thanks to FlexiStrong supplements, 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 begin tagging Nadia, asking whether she really uses the product.

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 existing sponsorship.

With media day less than 24 hours away, Nadia must decide quickly: what should her first response be?

Scenario 2

Skiing — Lukas and the “Dangerous Course” Voicemail

Meet Lukas: 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. He has about 120,000 followers on Instagram and 35,000 on TikTok. He posts around two

to three times a week. His content consists mostly of training drills, race clips, and occasional sponsor shout-outs. He rarely uses X.

His main sponsors are:

- Toyota
- Under Armour
- Red Bull – he is featured in their Fearless Lines youth campaign

The situation: The night before a World Cup slalom race, a regional TV station airs the story titled “Course Concerns?”. The report includes what the station claims is a leaked voicemail from Lukas, in which he calls the slope “dangerous” and says, “The course setters favoured the Swiss again.”

The voice sounds like his, but the breathing is clipped, and the background noise cuts in and out. A Telegram channel created only the day before 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 his 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 then, the story has been circulating for nearly 24 hours.

The problem

Lukas has a reputation for professionalism and never criticises organisers publicly. If the fake recording is left unchallenged, it could harm his reputation, lead to disciplinary action by his federation, and upset his sponsors, who expect him to avoid controversy. He must now decide how to respond – belatedly, but still with urgency.

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. He has about 220,000 followers on Instagram and a public profile on Strava, where fans can follow 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 Grand Tours) a 17-second video starts circulating online. It shows a man in a nightclub during a late-night argument, but his face has been digitally replaced by Marko’s 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 a comment from Marko or his team. Fans begin commenting on forums and social media and flooding the team’s social media accounts with angry comments.

The problem

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

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

Even though the video is fake, it has already had an impact: some fans believe the story, others are sceptical. Two of Marko's sponsors are already contacting the team to ask whether the article is accurate. If the team cannot respond to the story quickly, Marko could lose his place in the Giro line-up and suffer damage to his 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 and posts once or twice a week – usually family pictures, photos of seaside dives, and short match recaps. She isn't very active on TikTok or X.

Her sponsors are:

- Nike
- Nestlé
- Swarovski

The situation: A few days after Ana's team loses an important league match against a major rival, an 18-second audio clip begins circulating on Telegram. It sounds like Ana, and a voice in the recording says: “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 (shortly after a painful loss) makes it seem more believable to fans and the media.

Within hours, Ana receives an anonymous email: “Pay us or we'll release more recordings.” Meanwhile, a popular betting blog hints at “suspicious behaviour” by Ana, and fans on social media start asking whether she deliberately lost the match.

The problem

Ana has never been involved in betting, but the combination of a real loss and a fake audio confession is already affecting her reputation. Fans are suspicious because of the recent loss, and her sponsors are calling the club for clarification.

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

Scenario 5

Football — Tom and the Fake Transfer Announcement

Meet Tom: 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 enjoys interacting with fans and has about 12.4 million followers on Instagram, plus millions more on TikTok and X. He posts daily, sharing training clips, match highlights, banter with teammates, and lifestyle content such as cars, fashion, and family moments.

His sponsors are:

- Nike
- Coca-Cola
- Nissan

The situation: Just days before a huge derby match, a slick 22-second video appears on X and TikTok. It shows Tom wearing his biggest rival’s kit 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 has been digitally added to footage from an old documentary, and Tom’s voice has been cloned. But to fans scrolling quickly, it looks convincing. A fake “transfer insider” account posts it first, and the video spreads rapidly within hours.

Northbridge United’s own online shop begins receiving refund requests from panicked supporters. Journalists begin calling his agent, asking whether the transfer is real.

The problem

Tom is in the middle of delicate contract negotiations with Northbridge United. If he doesn't say something, fans might think he's leaving. If he reacts too aggressively, he risks jeopardising the negotiations with the club's management. Sponsors are calling, worried about being drawn into the transfer controversy.

Tom needs to decide how to respond before the story spreads 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 during the first hour?
- How should she balance the concerns of her sponsor with fans asking questions online?
- What risks could arise from responding too quickly?
- What evidence should Nadia's team preserve before responding?
- If a single denial is not enough, what could her longer-term response strategy be?
- How should her response reflect her personality (calm, careful, professional)?

Possible solution:

- **First steps:** She should contact her agent or the club's press officer straight away and inform her sponsor about the situation. At the same time, she and her team should save relevant screenshots, links, and other evidence.
- **What to say:** Nadia's style is calm and careful, so her message should be clear and measured rather than dramatic. For example: "A video is circulating that appears to show me promoting a product. It isn't real. Please rely only on information I share through my official accounts."

- **Where to say it:** She could post the statement on Instagram first, where she has the largest following. The club and sponsor could then share her message through their own official channels.
- **After that:** Monitor how widely the fake continues to spread but avoid repeatedly posting about it. Maintain one clear and consistent message. If the content continues to circulate, her PR and legal teams could seek its removal from relevant platforms.

Do

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

Don't

- Don't reply directly to fans or respond to individual DMs → this may amplify the story.
- Don't argue with journalists yourself → redirect media enquiries to PR.
- Don't name or tag the fake product → this may give it additional visibility.
- Don't post repeatedly → one clear, consistent message is stronger than many.
- Don't stay silent for too long → sponsors and fans may begin to question whether the content is genuine.

Scenario 2: Lucas

Guiding questions:

- What changes when Lukas learns about the situation only after the race?
- Should the coach or PR team have told him earlier, or was it better to shield him from the situation until after the race?
- Who should he contact first now that the clip has been circulating for almost a day?

- How can Lukas correct the story without drawing even more attention to it?
- How should his reserved, professional style shape the way he responds?

Possible solution:

- **First steps:** Lukas should contact his coach and the Austrian Ski Federation's press officer right away. Together, they can preserve screenshots and links to the TV report, the Telegram post, and any other media coverage. He should also inform his sponsors that he has only just become aware of the situation.
- **What to say:** Because Lukas is reserved and professional, his message should be clear and measured. For example: "I have only just become aware of an audio clip that claims to be me. It's fake. I respect the race organisers and have never made these comments. Please rely only on updates from my verified accounts or the federation."
- **Where to say it:** Lukas doesn't post often, but in this case, he could post the statement on Instagram, where most of his followers are, and the Austrian Ski Federation and his sponsors could then share the statement through their own channels.
- **After that:** He should avoid arguing online or repeatedly denying the claim. Instead, he should maintain one clear and consistent message, supported by the federation and his sponsors. He can then return his attention to racing while his team continues to monitor the situation.

 Do

- Contact his coach, his Federation's press officer, and his sponsors as soon as he becomes aware of the situation.
- Preserve all available evidence of the fake audio and its circulation.
- Issue one short, calm statement that acknowledges and explains the delay.
- Let PR handle media enquiries directly.
- Share his message through the federation and sponsors to reach a wider audience.

 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 – respond promptly once he becomes aware of the situation.
- Don't repost or link to the fake audio.
- Don't over-explain – keep the message factual and measured.

Scenario 3: Marko

Guiding questions:

- Who should Marko and the team contact first – the team manager, the press officer, or the sponsors?
- How should the team respond now that the tabloid has already published the story?
- What kind of message would be consistent with Marko's low-profile online presence?
- How can they reassure sponsors while also addressing fans' concerns?
- What risks could arise from responding too quickly or saying too much?
- What should they do if some fans continue to believe the story even after a denial?

Possible solution:

- **First steps:** Marko should contact his team manager and the team's press officer right away. They should preserve the fake video, screenshots of the tabloid article, relevant fan comments, links, and timestamps as evidence. Sponsors should be informed promptly so that they are aware of the situation before responding to any enquiries.
- **What to say:** Since Marko isn't very active online, his message should be short and measured: "A video is circulating that falsely shows me in a nightclub. The video is fake. I was with Team RoadRunner and complied with the team's curfew. Please rely only on my official accounts and the team for updates."
- **Where to say it:** Marko should post the statement on Instagram, where he has his largest audience, and the team should also release a statement through its official channels. The team could provide appropriate evidence confirming his whereabouts, while taking care not to disclose unnecessary private information. Sponsors can share the correction to help it reach a wider audience.
- **After that:** Marko should avoid replying to angry fan comments or gossip pages and maintain one clear and consistent message. The team's PR and legal teams

can contact the tabloid to request a correction and seek the removal of the fake video.

 Do

- Alert the team manager, press officer, and sponsors as soon as possible.
- Preserve the fake video, screenshots of the article, relevant fan comments, links, and timestamps as evidence.
- Post one calm statement on Instagram and let the team share and reinforce the message through its official channels.
- Provide sponsors with the same message so they can respond consistently.
- Use appropriate team records to confirm his whereabouts (schedule, hotel location) if necessary, without disclosing sensitive information.

 Don't

- Don't argue with fans or tabloids online.
- Don't repost or link to the fake video.
- Don't joke about the curfew – the team treats breaches seriously.
- Don't delay the response unnecessarily – prolonged silence may allow the false story to spread further.
- Don't issue multiple conflicting or unnecessary statements. Maintain one clear and consistent message.

Scenario 4: Ana

Guiding questions:

- Who should Ana contact first and why?
- What role should the coach and club PR team play in the response?
- How can Ana deny that the audio is genuine without amplifying it?
- What kind of message fits her reserved, family-oriented online style?
- What evidence (e.g. audio analysis or digital forensics) could help prove that the record is fake?
- How can the club reassure sponsors while the league investigates?

Possible solution:

- **First steps:** Ana should immediately contact her coach. Together, they should inform the club manager and PR officer. The PR team should preserve the audio recording, screenshots and links to the betting blog, and the blackmail email as evidence. Sponsors should be informed promptly so that they are aware of the situation before responding to any enquiries.
- **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. The recording is fake. I have never been involved in betting. Please rely only on my official accounts and the club for updates."
- **Where to say it:** Ana could post the statement on Instagram, her main platform, and the club could share the same message through its official channels. Sponsors could also share the correction through their channels.
- **After that:** She should avoid responding directly to fans or blogs. The club's PR and legal teams can contact the betting blog to request the removal of the false content. If the blackmail continues, the matter should be reported to the appropriate authorities (the police).

 Do

- Contact her coach immediately and involve the club manager and PR team.
- Preserve the audio, the screenshots, and the threatening email as evidence.
- Issue one calm statement on Instagram.
- Let the club account and sponsors share and reinforce her message through their official channels.
- Allow the club to refer the matter to the relevant league integrity body and appropriate authorities.

 Don't

- Don't reply to angry fans or trolls.
- Don't negotiate or pay the anonymous sender.
- Don't repost or link to the fake audio.
- Don't delay the response unnecessarily – prolonged silence may allow the false allegations to spread further.

- Don't issue multiple conflicting statements – maintain a clear and consistent message.

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 should Tom and the club do if fans keep chanting or creating memes about it, even after he has denied the claim?

Possible solution:

- **First steps:** Tom
- should contact his agent and club press officer immediately. They should preserve the video, screenshots, links, and relevant refund requests as evidence. Sponsors should be informed promptly so that they are aware of the situation before responding to any enquiries.
- **What to say:** Because Tom is extroverted and usually communicates directly with his fans, it makes sense for him to address the situation personally; however, his message should remain serious and professional: "There's a fake video going around claiming that I'm joining another club. It's not real. I'm focused on Northbridge United and our next match."
- **Where to say it:** Tom could post the statement on Instagram, TikTok, and X – the same platforms on which the fake video has been circulating. The club could then share his statement through its official channels.
- **After that:** Maintain a clear and consistent message and avoid jokes or sarcasm that could create further confusion. His agent and club should handle media enquiries and communication with sponsors.

 Do

- Inform the agent, club management, and sponsors immediately.
- Preserve the video, relevant screenshots of fan reactions, and refund requests as evidence.
- Post a clear denial through his official accounts on Instagram, TikTok, and X.
- Keep the tone serious and professional rather than playful.
- Let the club share and reinforce his message and handle media enquiries.

 Don't

- Don't joke about the transfer, even if this would normally fit his online style.
- Don't repost or link to the fake video.
- Don't delay the response unnecessarily – this may allow confusion and speculation to spread further.
- Don't give multiple or conflicting versions of the story.
- Don't lash out at fans – remain calm and professional.

Topic 4: Managing Online Harassment: Proactive Strategies for Athletes (in-person/virtual)

Session title: **Online Harassment – Identify and Respond**

OBJECTIVES

- Identify different forms of online harassment, including criticism, hate speech, threats, and rumours.
- Recognise the potential risks associated with online harassment, including emotional, reputational, career-related, and safety risks.
- Explore and apply different strategies for responding to online harassment, such as ignoring, reporting, or blocking abusive users, responding calmly, and involving the club or support team.

DURATION

85–100 minutes

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 different forms of online harassment (hate speech, threats, and rumours), the distinction between online harassment and legitimate criticism, potential consequences and risks (impact on mental health, reputational damage, career-related consequences, and safety concerns), and basic response strategies (dos and don’ts and the importance of involving the club, the coach, or the support team).

3. Group Work (15–20 min)

Participants analyse harassment scenarios.

4. Presentations (30 min)

Groups briefly present their scenario and recommended response strategies. They reflect on whether they have encountered similar situations in person or read about them in the media.

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

The facilitator summarises the main lessons.

FACILITATOR NOTES

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

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

For the harassment examples in the presentation, select one anchor case and present it in detail, including the context, what happened, the consequences, the response, and reflection questions. Present each of the other examples on a separate slide and discuss them more concisely, using two or three key bullet points and one discussion question.

Organise participants into small groups (maximum four people) for the 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 available scenarios, prepare additional scenarios in advance so that each group has its own case.

Keep in mind that the more groups there are, the longer the session will take, as presentations and discussions may extend beyond 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 to the athlete?
- Which response strategies could the athlete use?

Based on the discussion, each group should prepare a short list of dos and don'ts that they will briefly present at the end, along with the scenario and their answers.

These cases are completely fictional – Any similarity to real people or events is coincidental.

Scenario 1: The Missed Penalty

Name: David, 22, football (soccer) player. David is a young forward playing in a national cup semi-final. At the decisive moment, he misses a penalty, and his team is eliminated. Within hours, his social media feeds are filled with hostile messages. Some fans accuse him of “betraying the club,” while others use racial slurs. A few even send him private messages containing violent threats.

Scenario 2: Not Fit Enough

Name: Maria, 20, track sprinter. Maria is an up-and-coming sprinter who has recently returned from injury. She posts training photos on Instagram to show her progress. A sports 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 decision in a post-game interview. Rival fans quickly attack him online, calling him a “crybaby” and a “cheater.” A meme spreads on X, featuring a manipulated video that makes it appear as though 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, fans of her former club flood her social media accounts with insults, calling her “disloyal” and “money-hungry”. Some send her 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 is “finished as a player.” Some tabloids publish

sensationalist headlines claiming that 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).*

The facilitator may provide an example response, 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 distress, damaged confidence, career reputation, and physical safety.

Strategies: report threats to police or the relevant platform, involve club officials, avoid direct replies, consider issuing a calm statement if appropriate (or remain silent), seek support from family or teammates.

 Do

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

 Don't

- Don't respond impulsively to abuse.
- Don't minimise potential threats to your safety.
- Don't isolate yourself from teammates or other sources of support.

 Scenario 2: "Not Fit Enough"

Name: Maria, 20, track sprinter.

Group analysis example:

Type: body shaming, online bullying.

Risks: emotional harm, negative effects on body image and eating behaviours, reputational damage, and loss of sponsor confidence.

Strategies: block or mute abusive users, avoid defensive replies, seek support from the club or relevant sports organisation, and consider sharing a positive message about health and performance..

 Do

- Block or mute abusive accounts.
- Consider sharing a positive message about health and training, if comfortable.
- Ask the club or relevant sports organisation to provide public support.

✗ Don't

- Don't let online comments influence your training or eating habits.
- Don't argue with trolls.
- Don't ignore escalating or threatening abuse – report it and seek support.

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 disciplinary consequences, and emotional distress.

Strategies: avoid escalating conflict, use original or unedited match footage to clarify what happened, allow the club's press officer to respond, and report manipulated content.

✓ Do

- Clarify the facts through official club channels.
- Report manipulated content to the relevant platforms.
- Focus on the next steps and avoid further escalation.

✗ Don't

- Don't engage in arguments online.
- Don't share or repost manipulated content, even to defend yourself.
- Don't respond to referees or rival fans with further personal attacks or inflammatory comments.

Scenario 4 – Transfer Backlash

Name: Elena, 25, volleyball player

Group analysis example:

Type: criticism, online harassment.

Risks: loss of fan support, reputational harm, and emotional distress that may affect performance.

Strategies: avoid reading comments, temporarily limit or disable comments, post a professional statement thanking her former club, and rely on her new club's communications team for support.

Do

- Post a professional message thanking her former club and its fans.
- Limit or disable comments temporarily if needed.
- Rely on the new club's communications team for support.

Don't

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

Scenario 5: Injured and “Finished”

Name: Lucas, 27, tennis player.

Group analysis example:

Type: criticism, humiliation, rumours.

Risks: emotional distress, pressure to return to competition too soon, sponsor concerns, and reputational harm.

Strategies: consider providing a brief update on the injury or recovery, allow the coach or appropriate medical professional to provide relevant information where appropriate and with the athlete's consent, avoid engaging with trolls, and focus on recovery and direct communication with supporters.

 Do

- Consider sharing a short, factual medical update on the injury or recovery, if appropriate.
- Let the coach or appropriate medical professional provide relevant information, with the athlete's consent.
- Focus on rehabilitation and seek support from trusted people.

 Don't

- Don't respond to every rumour online.
- Don't rush your return to competition just to "prove" critics wrong.
- Don't engage directly with people posting cruel memes.

Topic 5: Media Literacy Campaigns During Sporting Events (in-person/virtual)

Session title: **Game On – The Media Minefield**

OBJECTIVES

- Simulate real-life decision-making by athletes under media pressure.
- Identify the potential risks and benefits of digital behaviour during sporting events.
- Practise strategic decision-making through a peer-based game format.
- Reflect on the ethical and responsible use of media.

DURATION

45 minutes

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 putting everything you’ve learnt into practice by playing a game. Imagine you’re competing at a major sporting event. Every post, reaction, and share matters. You’ll face realistic challenges inspired by situations athletes

may encounter. But you'll also have strategy cards – tools to help you make responsible decisions 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. In each round, they respond to realistic media-related scenarios by applying different communication strategies. The goal is to make informed decisions that help them protect their reputation while navigating today's complex media environment.

Rules

1. Shuffle both decks (Event and Strategy cards).
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 in response to allegations of violence or drug use), the participant briefly explains why, returns the card to the bottom of the deck, 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 during tournament despite a major loss.

Card 2: An old controversial post of yours resurfaces..

Card 3: A fake quote attributed to you is trending on X.

Card 4: A media outlet uses your image without naming you directly in an article about aggression in sport.

Card 5: A private team video is leaked by 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 in a fake interview.

Card 8: You are portrayed negatively 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 in 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 as part of their campaign.

Card 15: An ex-teammate criticises you publicly in a long social media rant.

Card 16: A fake charity claims that you are endorsing its 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 that makes 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 for the moment and monitor the situation.

Card 4: Document and report 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 adviser.

Card 9: Reframe the situation with a positive message.

Card 10: Temporarily deactivate your account to avoid escalation.

Card 11: Share the full original video to provide context.

Card 12: Talk it out privately with your teammate before responding online.

Card 13: Share a post promoting online safety awareness.

Card 14: Issue a brief, polite correction backed 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 experience 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 facts.

Card 20: Do not respond immediately: take time to reflect and plan your response.





Module 4

Application, Reflection and Action

Module Introduction⁷

Building on the foundations established in 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 invited to put what they have learned into practice by designing media content and campaigns, practising advocacy, and critically reflecting on their experiences.

This module connects directly to the learning developed in the previous modules: after exploring the foundations of media literacy, examining the relationship between sport and media communication, and practising digital communication skills, participants are ready to put their knowledge into practice. Module 4 focuses on 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 through practice. They may, for example, design a campaign on a chosen issue (such as healthy lifestyles, anti-discrimination, or community support), practise giving interviews or making public statements, and reflect on the feedback they receive. Guiding questions will help them focus their ideas: 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 for communicating authentically, advocating ethically, and crafting messages that resonate with audiences and have a positive impact.

In summary, Module 4 brings together practical application, reflection, and engagement. 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.

⁷ In preparing the curriculum, we made partial use of ChatGPT (OpenAI) artificial intelligence tools.

The aim is to empower athletes to become confident and responsible advocates who can use media effectively, craft impactful messages, promote positive change, and apply their skills well beyond the 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 the practical and creative application of media literacy concepts.
- Employ practical advocacy skills (e.g. public speaking, storytelling, and 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, gaining practical experience of teamwork in advocacy initiatives.
- Present media literacy projects and give and receive constructive peer feedback, demonstrating the ability to critically evaluate media messages and campaign strategies.
- Reflect on their learning and evaluate their progress in media literacy, using self-assessment and peer feedback to identify developments in critical thinking and media skills.
- Connect knowledge to action by demonstrating how improved media literacy can contribute to 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 only knowledge, but also skills and attitudes, helping participants apply media literacy in real-life contexts and encouraging them to continue promoting truthful and ethical communication in sport.

Description of Module Structure

Topic 1: Designing a Media Literacy Campaign

Participants begin by brainstorming and selecting a media literacy issue or message related to sport that they consider important. They learn how to define clear campaign goals and identify target audiences. This session emphasises creativity and planning. Using structured templates, participants develop an initial campaign concept (e.g. a social media awareness campaign, a workshop for younger athletes, or a poster series for their club). By the end of the session, each individual or team will have developed a campaign idea and outlined an initial plan, laying the foundation for the rest of the module.

Topic 2: Practical Advocacy Skills Workshop

Participants engage in activities to practise advocacy and communication techniques. These may include role-playing interviews or press conferences, crafting persuasive messages, adapting messages for different audiences, and responding to challenging questions. The session builds on the storytelling theme introduced in Module 2, as athletes refine their campaign narrative, focusing on why their chosen issue matters and how they can inspire others to take action. By the end of the session, participants will have strengthened their messaging and delivery skills and developed 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 may create a stakeholder map to identify potential partners (e.g. coaches, schools, local media, sponsors, teammates) and plan how to engage them. They also address the practical aspects of their projects by setting a timeline, assigning team roles (if working in groups), and identifying the resources needed (e.g. 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 sport. By the end of the session, participants will have developed more detailed

campaign plans, including concrete steps, responsibilities, timelines, and support requirements.

Topic 4: Presentation and Peer Feedback on Campaigns

In Session 4, participants take on the role of presenters and peer reviewers. Each individual or team presents their campaign plan or a prototype of their campaign materials to the group. For example, they might show a sample poster, simulate a short workshop, or present their social media and hashtag strategy. Fellow participants and facilitators then provide structured peer feedback. Using a feedback form or predefined criteria, the group discusses the strengths of each campaign and identifies areas for improvement. This not only helps participant refine their projects through peer feedback, but also further develops everyone's critical evaluation skills as they evaluate how messages might be received by different audiences. This process is itself an important media literacy exercise, therefore it should remain supportive and constructive, focusing on how each campaign can be made more effective. By the end of Session 4, participants will have refined their campaigns based on feedback and will be ready to finalise their action plans.

Topic 5: Reflection and Evaluation: Measuring Media Literacy Progress

The final session is devoted to reflection, evaluation, and planning for the future. 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 on the challenges they have overcome and the skills they have developed.

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 identifying relevant campaign themes and target audiences.
- Guide participants in developing an initial plan for their campaign.

DURATION

45 minutes

TOOLS/MATERIALS

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

AGENDA

1. **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 the European Parliament briefing on media literacy (Laaninen, 2025).
 - 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 use media responsibly. Its aim is to empower people to recognise misinformation and to make informed decisions in the digital environment (Laaninen, 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 (The Food Foundation, n.d.).
 - **Marcus Rashford – Book Club Campaign:** Promoted children's literacy through reading advocacy and positive media sharing ("Marcus Rashford," 2026).
 - **Naomi Osaka – Mental Health & Media Narratives:** Challenged media sensationalism, encouraging respectful journalism and critical reading. Widely covered by the press.
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.

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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 campaigns.
- Develop participants' ability to communicate persuasively with different stakeholders (e.g. school principals and sports federation representatives).

DURATION

60 minutes

TOOLS/MATERIALS

Flipcharts and markers, sample policy briefs, printed role-play scenarios, and advocacy checklists.

AGENDA

1. **Introduction and goals** (5 min) – Explain the connection between advocacy and campaign implementation. Reiterate the key target audiences (local authorities, media, sports governing bodies).

2. **Mini-lecture** (10 min) – Present three advocacy principles: clarity of message, understanding the target audience, and using personal stories. Share an example of successful advocacy. Distribute the sample policy brief to participants and guide them through its structure, illustrating how a concise, evidence-based advocacy document can put these principles into practice.

Sample – Policy brief (1 page):

“Title: Strengthening Youth Athletes’ Media Resilience”

- Target: Local Sports Federation
 - Message: Build media literacy among young athletes
 - 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 the provided scenarios (e.g. persuading a local council member to support or fund their campaign).
 4. **Debrief and feedback** (10 min) – Participants reflect on their level of confidence during the exercise and discuss which communication techniques they found most 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 a personal athlete story and clearly explain the time commitment involved.
5. **Wrap-up** (10 min) – Distribute the advocacy checklists and encourage participants to identify one real stakeholder to approach after the course.

Emphasise the importance of using the checklist to review and refine their advocacy message before approaching the stakeholder.

Sample – Advocacy checklist:

- ☐ I opened with a personal story or relevant example.
- ☐ I clearly stated the main goal of my campaign.
- ☐ I identified my target audience and what matters to them.
- ☐ I presented 2–3 concise, persuasive messages.
- ☐ I made a specific request or recommendation.
- ☐ I concluded with clear next steps or a plan for follow-up.

FACILITATOR NOTES

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

Topic 3: Collaborative Project Planning – Partnership Strategy Exercise (in-person/virtual)

Session title: *Strategic Planning for Impactful Campaigns*

OBJECTIVES

- Work collaboratively to develop campaign ideas into concrete projects.
- Apply strategic thinking to develop practical implementation plans.

DURATION

45 minutes

TOOLS/MATERIALS

Online collaborative workspace (Google Docs, Padlet).

AGENDA

1. **Welcome and recap** (5 min) – Reiterate the campaign goals and highlight key themes emerging from Topic 1.
2. **Guided planning session** (20 min) – Each group continues to refine their project plan using the provided template.

Project Planning Template:

- **Timeline** – Key milestones and deadlines from preparation to campaign completion.

- **Roles** – Who will be responsible for each task? (e.g. coordinator, communicator, designer, spokesperson)
 - **Resources** – What materials, tools, funding, or support will the campaign require?
 - **Communication Strategy** – How will the campaign reach and engage its target audience? (e.g. channels, messaging style, frequency of communication)
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 clearly defined and appropriately assigned.
- ☐ The required resources are realistic and available or obtainable.
- ☐ The target audience and communication channels are appropriate.
- ☐ The key messages are clear, consistent, and relevant to the target audience.
- ☐ The overall plan is coherent, feasible, and likely to achieve its intended objectives.

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

- Present and explain campaign projects to peers.
- Give and receive constructive peer feedback.

DURATION

40 minutes

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):

- ☐ The campaign goal was clear and relevant.
- ☐ The target audience and communication strategy were well defined.
- ☐ The team presented 2–3 strong, persuasive messages.
- ☐ The campaign addressed a relevant issue in a creative or impactful way.
- ☐ 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 learnt from the other team’s presentation.

FACILITATOR NOTES

Organise participants into groups of four to ensure full participation and clear presentations. Set a time limit for each presentation and encourage all group members to contribute. Collect feedback forms for group review. Where possible, campaign presentations may be delivered to a real-world audience, such as a local council member, policymaker, or stakeholder in sport or education. This can provide participants with an authentic advocacy experience and increase the visibility of athletes’ voices. In such cases, allow up to 60 minutes for the session to provide sufficient time for introductions, feedback from external stakeholders, 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 the campaign development process.
- Evaluate personal progress and identify opportunities for further development.

DURATION

45 minutes

TOOLS/MATERIALS

Google Forms (or similar), shared whiteboard or Padlet for collective reflection.

AGENDA

1. **Opening reflection** (8 min) – Prompt: “What surprised you most about this programme?” Participants post one word or a short 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, to what extent did the topics covered in Module 4 contribute to the development of your knowledge and skills (e.g. critical thinking, recognizing misinformation, campaign planning, advocacy, collaboration)?
 - On a scale from 1 to 5, to what extent did Module 4 increase your confidence in engaging with media and advocacy?
 - On a scale from 1 to 5, how prepared do you feel to apply what you learnt in Module 4 in your own context?
 - Do you have any suggestions for improving the content or format of Module 4?
 - 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 development and learning process. This is distinct from the preceding feedback form, which gathers feedback on the module and the programme more broadly.

Sample – Self-assessment form:**Formative self-reflection (process-focused):**

- What skills or insights have I gain during the campaign planning process?
- How did I contribute to my team's work and learning?
- Which experience or activity helped me develop as a critical thinker?

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 have learnt beyond this programme?
- What topic or issue would I like to explore further because of this training?

Facilitators may invite volunteers to share a personal takeaway in the chat or through a brief oral reflection, focusing on their own learning rather than on the design of the programme.

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

FACILITATOR NOTES

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

4.2 Complementary Activities

In addition to formal workshops and structured learning units, implementers can enrich the programme with complementary activities. The purpose of these activities is to increase motivation, expand learning opportunities, and enable athletes to engage with media literacy in more informal contexts. Such activities do not require extensive preparation, but can help reinforce key concepts and skills.

1. Digital and social media

Consider preparing short interactive tasks for social media, such as “Fake or Fact?” posts, polls about current rumours, or mini-quizzes. This is an easy way for athletes to reinforce what they have learnt outside the workshops and share their responses with the group.

2. Public events and ambassadorship

Take advantage of opportunities at major sporting events or tournaments to give short presentations about the reading club. If possible, invite well-known athletes or coaches to serve as ambassadors and encourage participants (and the wider community) through their involvement and personal experiences.

3. Creative forms of learning

Incorporate elements of gamification (e.g. short simulations, quizzes, or even an “escape room” activity focusing on misinformation in sport). Such methods can make learning more dynamic and engaging while encouraging participation through play and friendly competition.

4. Weekly reading challenges

Offer athletes a weekly challenge based on a short text, article, or social media post that they can critically evaluate together. This can take place in an online group or as part of a discussion at the next meeting. It is a simple way to maintain continuity between formal sessions.

5. Connection with athletes' personal development

Offer participants informal exercises related to their public appearances and online presence (e.g. how to create an effective and responsible social media profile or respond to challenging 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 a requirement. They can be incorporated depending on the time available, the specific needs of the group, or the context in which the programme is being delivered. Even small activities – a five-minute challenge, a short post, a conversation after a game – can effectively stimulate discussion and reinforce key messages from the formal curriculum.

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MEDIA LITERACY CURRICULUM FOR ATHLETES: TEACHING MATERIALS

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The internet and social media have enabled athletes to establish direct contact with the public, fans, the media, and sponsors; at the same time, however, they have increased athletes' exposure to unverified information, sensationalist stories, manipulated content, and pressure to respond quickly. For athletes, therefore, the issue of media literacy is not an abstract topic: it can be linked to their health, public image, and athletic careers, as well as to decisions informed by information on training, nutrition, rehabilitation, or current events. The OLYMP project—*Fostering Media Literacy and Athlete Empowerment through Olympic Values*—is grounded in the connection among reading, critical thinking, and resilience against disinformation. Its overall goal is to develop and pilot an innovative methodology and curriculum to enhance the media literacy of young athletes and improve their ability to critically evaluate information. The project is funded under the European Union's Citizens, Equality, Rights and Values (CERV) programme (Grant Agreement No. 101147018). The project is coordinated by the Bulgarian Olympic Committee (BOC), with a consortium that includes the University of Maribor, the University of Maribor Library (UKM), the Romanian Olympic and Sports Committee (COSR), and the Lithuanian Olympians Association (LOA). The partnership brings together sports and cultural institutions to bring media literacy closer to athletes in the environments where they train, operate, and communicate.

DOI
[https://doi.org/
10.18690/um.ukm.3.2026](https://doi.org/10.18690/um.ukm.3.2026)

ISBN
978-961-299-200-2

Keywords:
sport,
media literacy,
disinformation,
reading,
olympic values

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