Money in – brains out?  
Institutional logics affecting athletes’ preparation for alternative careers

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Abstract: Competitive sport encourages athletes to put all their effort into excelling in their sport despite the fact that sport careers are short and can be abruptly terminated. This study addresses the issue of dual career preparation among team sport athletes in a sample comprising Norwegian full-professional male soccer players and semi-professional soccer and handball players. Professional athletes hardly spend more time on their sport than do semi-professional top players, but while the latter group of athletes combine sports careers and higher education (or work), professional players tend to spend their leisure time more with family and friends. A competing institutional logics approach is utilised to analyse the data and reflect on social influences on athletes’ choice of career preparation.

Keywords: Higher education; dual careers; institutional logics; soccer; handball

At the elite end of professional sport, illustrious celebrity athletes make astronomical sums of money that, if well managed, can secure their future. At the other end, millions of young people focus their attention and physical labour on perfecting their skills in the hope that they will one day succeed in their sport. For most of them this dream will never come true, and it is asserted that large numbers of these athletes face redundancy unprepared because they never cultivated their academic aptitude, which is increasingly demanded in modern working life (McGillivray, Fearn & McIntosh, 2005). For this reason there is also a growing political concern that young athletes should be protected from commercial and other pressures that may erode their access to vocational or educational development and integration into working life (Aquilina & Henry, 2010).

In modern society, career preparation is an individual responsibility although individual choice is impacted by social influences relating to class, family, gender, etc. and logics intrinsic in activities like sport. European sport carries many meanings, not the least in Scandinavia (Andersson & Carlsson, 2009) from which this study derives. Sport is seen as an autotelic activity, as a professional job, and as providing ideals about health, education and nationhood. These meanings do not always translate into practice, however, and professional sports clubs might give low priority to education (Hickey & Kelly, 2008; McGillivray et al., 2005).

Empirical studies on European elite athletes’ propensity to take higher education (HE) are limited. In this paper we contribute to closing this gap by providing...
data on how Norwegian full-professional male soccer players prepare for alternative careers, compared with semi-professional soccer and handball players of both sexes. In explaining the results we tentatively employ the construct of institutional logic. In so doing we assume that the players in their choice of careers and career preparation are influenced by competing institutional logics in sport. In this way we also contribute to the growing literature on competing institutional logics in organisational fields (e.g. Greenwood, Díaz, Li & Lorente, 2010; Kraatz & Block, 2008; Reay & Hinings, 2009).

The paper proceeds as follows: In the next section we review the research literature on sport careers and education in Europe. In the third section we develop the idea of institutional logics and outline how we measure the constructs that is developed. Fourth, we present the project and the methodology. In the fifth section we present and analyse the data before in the final section we wrap up and discuss what we can learn from the study.

**Research on sport careers and higher education (HE)**

The relationship between elite sport and athlete education has not attracted a great deal of academic attention in Europe. This contrasts with the treatment of the issue in North-American sport sociology, deriving much from the apparent absorption of elite sport in HE institutions and the passions and problems of college athletics. In particular, much sociological focus has been on colleges who frequently accept athletic students who lack the academic standards of the other students, and that the academic performances of these athletes are often poor. Since the proportion of college athletes that move into the professional sports leagues range from 1 (in women’s basketball) to 4.1 percent (in men’s ice-hockey) and with baseball as an outlier (10.5 percent) (Coakley, 2007), the academic performance of the college athletes becomes a major issue. Whilst aggregate measurement about academic performance seems to be wanting, graduation rates show that about two thirds of athletes in US colleges graduate within the time span of six years, and among those that have earned their degrees a very high proportion seem to end up with a full-time job (Nixon, 2008). Despite doubts about the quality of athletes’ academic performance, the US system broadly exposes young athletes to HE and also expects them to graduate although these expectations frequently seem to be weakened by coaches and administrators whose status and compensation depend on how well the athletes – and the college – is doing in sport (Nixon, 2008).

In Europe the path to professional sport goes outside HE institutions. Professional soccer clubs frequently cooperate with primary and secondary schools to safeguard basic education for talented athletes, and efforts at cooperation between secondary education and elite sport is not unheard of (i.e. Borggreffe & Cachay, 2012). However, institutionalised cooperation with universities or university colleges is
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rare. Hence the institutional pressure on talented athletes to combine sport and HE is dramatically reduced as they reach their twenties.

Two strands of research address the challenges that European elite athletes face in this field. One is psychological in its approach and focuses on diverse transitional challenges, including career termination, which individual athletes meet during their careers (cf. De Knop, P., Wylleman, P., Van Hoecke, J. & Bollaert, L., 1999; Wylleman, Alfermann & Lavallee, 2004; Wylleman & Reints, 2010). Empirical studies in this tradition have dealt more with individual sports than with team sports, in contrasts to the other strand, which is sociological. This literature is more relevant in our case as it is much based on studies in soccer and how the club context shapes the players’ careers. McGillivray et al. (2005) for instance, studied second career preparation among full-time players in Scottish professional soccer, and revealed a pattern of footballers overwhelmingly recruited from working-class communities being guided from an early age towards soccer careers where further education is devalued. Against the backdrop of close to 500 players being released from their Scottish clubs in the summer of 2002, and the calculation that only a quarter of the soccer apprentices in English football actually go into professional soccer, the researchers conclude that the boys are being deceived with optimism and “discarded bereft of the exchangeable, readily transferable skills necessary for a future in an alternative employment field” (McGillivray et al. 2005, 120).

In an in-depth study in two clubs in the Scottish professional league McGillivray and McIntosh (2006) sought to frame soccer players’ social practices with respect to their engagement or lack thereof of educational discourses. The authors concluded that despite a growing awareness among established players that they must engage in formal education, their engagement was at best driven by fear caused by the recent financial insecurity in the game. They also lack realistic alternatives and trust their employer to take care of them in the case of career-threatening injury, something that rests on a culture of dependency and anti-intellectualism being reproduced in the structure of the professional game.

McGillivray and colleagues (McGillivray et al. 2005; McGillivray & McIntosh, 2006) used Bourdieu’s theoretical constructs of habitus, capital and field to analyse how the identities of young players are dynamically formed or formulated in institutional contexts. They maintain that even though habitus in one sense is seen as a durable, unconscious, and unthinking disposition that the individual is, embroiled in specific sociocultural contexts the individual still actively works with or against these contexts. In the football field the individual employs the capital that is in highest demand, which is basically physical (skill, speed, strength etc.). However, fields are not insulated from other fields, and these authors point out that when the Scottish football field is influenced by globalisation and increased player migration the physical capital of the stock of national footballers are less tradable. Simultaneously their lack of intellectual capital leaves them redundant in other fields.
In his thorough sociological analysis of professional soccer as work, Roderick (2006) employs an interactionist understanding of career, seeing “objective” and “subjective” approaches of careers as distinct yet inseparable levels of occupational life and hence the necessity of linking players’ thinking and feeling about their work to issues of control and power in the workplace. Roderick notes how uncertainty is imprinted in the professional career. Players, and especially young players are disciplined into a system where their identity as footballers constantly is at stake. There is a cultural expectation that the players and their families should focus entirely on the game; otherwise the players’ motivation could be questioned.

In a Danish context, Christensen and Sørensen (2009) highlight how semi-professional young soccer players balance contradictory demands and expectations between what the authors identify as educational and football cultures. The young footballers tended to “perceive school as a necessary evil or, at best, as a second and time-consuming priority” (Christensen and Sørensen, 2009, 123) but they could not run away from the advocates of the education culture, which often were their own parents.

Parker (2001) mapped out the construction of masculine identities and workplace relation in a youth academy in an English soccer club and found that trainees increasingly – as they enhanced in confidence and monetary freedom during their two-year apprenticeship – took up lifestyles which emulated their professional peers; sexual endeavour, conspicuous consumption, and excessive socializing. Brown and Potrac (2009), informed by concepts of athletic identity (e.g. Sparkes, 2000) and dramatic self-change (Athens, 1995), adds to this depiction by showing how young English academy footballers, having built one-dimensional identities based on their soccer lives, end up with a lack of alternative roles, activities, interests, and identities when they are de-selected as full-time players. The educational component of their scholarship was attached little value by the clubs and themselves alike, and the authors argue that with a failure rate of 85 percent among elite youth players competing for senior contracts (cf. Hoey, 2003), educational and support programmes should be developed to aid the transition of these young players out of full-time soccer.

Kelly (2008), in a study of soccer management in English and Irish clubs, casts further light on the soccer culture on the British Isles. Drawing on Weber’s (1964) work on authority and types of domination, Kelly found that the role of the manager has been largely insulated from the processes of professionalisation and bureaucratisation of football clubs, and it continues to be based on traditional forms of authoritarianism. Among managers and players the assumption was widespread that previous playing experience is sufficient for entry into soccer management. Moreover, managers only half-heartedly embraced the recent course based UEFA coaching qualification requirements.
A detour to Australian Rules football and a study by Hickey and Kelly (2008) supports the conception of a contradictory relationship between professional sport identities and education. Here player development programmes with the aim of preparing athletes for life after their professional career have been in place since the 1993. In a sport so physically demanding that the average professional career is only 2.9 years, the players’ incentives should be evident. Despite reports that 80 percent of them study full- or part-time the authors point to the contested nature of their professional identity. They note that their participation in study programmes frequently mimics compliance more than engagement, their engagement being reserved for the game.

In theorizing athletes’ careers, Hickey and Kelly (2008) understand processes of athlete professionalisation in terms of Foucault’s work. Foucault (i.e. 1986; 1991) explored the ways in which individuals develop a sense of Self and how Others seek to impose on the Self ideas about specific characteristics the Self should exhibit. Hickey and Kelly see the identity formation of the professional athletes as the development of a particular relationship about what oneself and others consider to being professional. Employing Dean’s (1995) distinction between practices of governmental self-formation and practices of ethical self-formation, they focus their attention on the ways stakeholders (authorities, clubs, coaches, sponsors, peers etc.), on the one hand, attempt to encourage the athletes to be more professional by regulating their dispositions, attitudes, and conducts. On the other they focus on the individual processes of self-understanding in which the athletes negotiate and make sense of their own and others’ expectations about what being a professional athlete means.

Without theorising their findings, Nielsen, Nielsen, Christensen and Storm (2002) compared Danish professional, semi-professional, and amateur soccer and handball players and found that with the increasing professionalisation of sport decreasing numbers of athletes combined sport careers with HE. Storm and Almlund (2006) more specifically confirmed this development among elite handball players in Denmark.

**Athletes and sport clubs facing institutional logics**

Previous studies on the identity formulation and career formation of team sport athletes have emphasised how players develop their self and their careers interactively with the surrounding world and significant others (Brown & Potrac, 2009; Christensen & Sørensen, 2009; Hickey & Kelly, 2008; McGillivray et al., 2005; McGillivray & McIntosh, 2006; Roderick, 2006). While we acknowledge this interactionist understanding of identity and career formation, one pertinent question is what constitutes the surroundings of the individual athlete and in particular the extent to which these are contested. Inquiries into football in Great Britain tend to depict the football field as largely uniform, insulated, and sacrificing intellectual capital on the altar of
physical aptitude which the players endlessly must cultivate (Brown & Potrac, 2009; McGillivray et al., 2005; McGillivray & McIntosh, 2006) to battle with the insecurity that is instilled in the professional career (Roderick, 2006). Hickey and Kelly (2008) and Christensen and Sørensen (2009), in contrast, describe more contested professional identity processes in settings where education programs directed towards the athletes seem to clash with the demand to engage fully in the game itself. Borggrefe and Cachay (2012), studying the German Verbundsysteme, see elite sport and school as completely self-referential sub-systems that operate autonomously on their own logic of action within their specific environments. While sub-systems such as elite sport and school need to be structurally related to exchange services and functions, they maintain that couplings between sub-systems that endanger their internal logic or core operations are very unlikely. It follows that effective cooperation across elite sport and school is very difficult and that athletes pursuing dual careers find themselves in contested terrains.

While this Luhmanian way of perceiving actors as responding to the logics of different sub-systems resonates much with our own institution perspective (see below), we have issues with the idea that elite sport constitutes a completely self-referential sub-system that is unlikely to interact with other sub-systems unless these exchanges have little impact. In our own study elite sport encompasses both professional and semi-professional team sport and our aim is to understand differences as much as similarities across these diverse expressions of elite sport. Hence we are not sure it is adequate to conceive elite sport as an integrated sub-system. In contrast, we think it is important to acknowledge that elite sport is frequently pluralist in the sense that there are several stakeholders (Senaux, 2008) that impose different logics on the clubs and athletes (Gammelsæter, 2010), and that the formation of athletes’ professional identities should be studied accordingly. In so doing we employ the perspective of institutional sociology that views individuals and organisations as embedded in a community that is meaningfully constituted through multiple supra-organisational institutions, such as the state, the market, the family, and religion, which each constitutes a core logic that constrains the cognition, measures and aims of social action (Friedland & Alford, 1991). Moreover, institutions are seen as simultaneously interdependent and contradictory. For instance, democratic states depend on democratic values and rules as their institutional logic to legitimate their decisions, yet bureaucracies will restrict the extension of democratic procedures into its own province of competence because it would undermine the bureaucratic logic of rationalizing decision-making. Given this dependency-contradiction relationship, Friedland and Alford (1991) maintain that some important disputes in organisations are over institutional logics; which activities and categories of persons they should regulate, and how. Thus, in the interstices “between” institutions and institutional logics there is space for actors to create, define, and translate constructs, norms and rules.
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Departing from Friedland and Alford’s (1991) seminal essay, Thornton and Ocasio (2008) define institutional logics as “the socially constructed, historical patterns of material practices, assumptions, values, beliefs and rules by which individuals produce and reproduce their material subsistence, organise time and space, and provide meaning to their social reality” (Thornton & Ocasio, 2008, 101). Institutional logics provide a link between the cognition and actions of individuals and their belonging to institutional structures and rules at organisation and community levels. While this could mean that athletes in their values and norms reflect logics found in sport they can at the same time be influenced by other logics, depending on the extent to which constituencies in institutions such as the market, the state etc. define the organisation and its activities and symbols. All logics and orders are in principle available to organisations and individuals to elaborate to their own advantage (Friedland & Alford, 1991). Actors in this situation participate in multiple discourses, address multiple institutional categories, and possess identities that are conferred on them by different parts of their environment (Kraatz & Block, 2008).

Recently the concept of institutional logic has been applied to understand change in such diverse organisational contexts as markets (e.g. Greenwood et al. 2010; Thornton, 2001), public administration (e.g. Bjerregaard, 2011; Meyer & Hammerschmid, 2006), health care (e.g. Reay & Hinings, 2009; Rundall, Shortell & Alexander, 2004; Scott, Rueff, Mendel & Caronna, 2000; Sonpar, Handelman & Dastmalchian, 2009), and artistic presumption (Chen, 2011). In sport it has been used to study changes in rugby (O’Brien & Slack, 2004), European soccer (e.g. Gammelsæter, 2010; Meier, 2008; Senaux, 2011; Skirstad & Chelladurai, 2011), national sport organisations (Danisman, Hinings & Slack, 2006), North American major league professional sport (Cousens & Slack, 2005), and tournament broadcasts in NCAA Division I men’s basketball (Southall, Nagel, Amis & Southall, 2008). Gammelsæter (2010) has recently proposed a tentative typology of institutional logics carried by different constituencies engaged in European “commercialized” team sports. In keeping with Thornton and Ocasio (2008), he conceives the actor as subjected to the identity of institutionalised movements, organisations, or communities which bring upon it possibly contested understandings of its meaning and how to fulfil it. It is asserted that constituents of sport clubs, such as founders, communities, fans, players, entrepreneurs, salaried managers, sport regulators, civil servants, and elected politicians, carry different logics which simultaneously stretch into (and from) social contexts yet they frequently entangle. It follows that athletes may be exposed to competing logics simultaneously.

In Norway (and Scandinavia) professional team sport has a relatively short history (Gammelsæter, 2009) and therefore the issue of sport careers displacing education in the lives of athletes is a recent problem. The most professionalised sport, soccer, has been described as a “fusion of welfare policy and the market” (Andersson...
With a particular end to foster democratic, social and moral virtues the state has supported and promoted a historic construction where voluntary grassroots sport and professional sport reside under the same umbrella (Andersson & Carlsson, 2009). However, this apparent “fusion” does not preclude that diverse logics are played out against each other that affect the choices athletes make in their careers.

Following this reasoning, we suggest to apply three logics (cf. table 1) to explain the propensity of athletes to engage in HE during their sport career. Below these are substantiated as belonging to the sphere of sport understanding in Scandinavia and much of Europe. We maintain that a competitive sport logic endorses the idea that competition at peak levels implicates athletes that immerse themselves in the sport, at best for the profound love of it, at worst for the depersonalising obsession with winning, reserving all their engagement and concentration for training, restitution, and the competition (Jackson, 1996; Walsh & Giulianotti, 2007). In this logic intellectual endeavours such as education need to be subordinated to activities that improve the athletic and bodily skills (e.g. McGillivray et al., 2005), but the same is true for temptations following high earnings and celebrity. The primary carriers of this logic are presumably the athletes themselves and their coaches.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Logics</th>
<th>End</th>
<th>Means</th>
<th>Measurement criteria</th>
<th>Approach to higher education</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Professional</td>
<td>Vocational</td>
<td>Professional sport</td>
<td>Salary</td>
<td>Personal responsibility</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Educational</td>
<td>Active citizens, democracy</td>
<td>Sport practice and social participation</td>
<td>Bodily and/or social involution</td>
<td>Association responsibility</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Competition sport</td>
<td>Sporting excellence, autotelic</td>
<td>Focussed training and competing</td>
<td>Sporting performance</td>
<td>Conflictual</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In the educational logic practicing sport is understood as a means to developing active and democratically oriented citizens (e.g. Andersson & Carlsson, 2009; Hare, 2003). This understanding of sport is reflected in the European Union White Paper on Sport which states that “Participation in a team, principles such as fair-play, compliance with the rules of the game, respect for others, solidarity and discipline as well as the organisation of amateur sport based on non-profit clubs and volunteering reinforce active citizenship” (EU, 2007, paragraph 2.4). The European Commission advocates “dual career” training for athletes “to ensure the reintegration of professional sportspersons into the labour market at the end of their sporting careers” (EU, 2007, paragraph 2.1). Accordingly, competitive sport is seen as a temporary career that might discourage the athlete from combining it with HE, and in order to take educational responsibility for athletes, civil authorities and federations support pro-
grammes for individual athletes to make it easier to accomplish post-sport career preparation (Hickey & Kelly, 2008; Monk & Olson, 2007). The wide application of this reasoning is reflected in its uptake in elite sport systems in Europe (cf. Aquilina & Henry, 2010; De Bosscher, De Knop, & van Bottenburg, 2009). In the education logic then sport is seen as enhancing intellectual capital, whilst professional sport is seen as possibly detrimental to this aim. Therefore, sport should cater for the athletes’ second career as well as their current sporting performance.

The professionalism logic denotes sport as a capitalist industry in which the athletes are conceived of as salaried employees that have been able to cultivate their athletic gift to the extent that they can turn it into a vocation offered them by commercial sport corporations. According to this logic the professional players and their managers and owners understand the relationship between the club and the athlete as a relationship between an employer and its employees. In contrast to the earlier reciprocal loyalty between club and player this logic, accelerated by the Bosman ruling in the European Court of Justice in 1995, has weakened the emotional ties and responsibilities between clubs and players (Walsh & Giulianotti, 2007). This relationship is also brought to light for instance by the fact that athletes in professional team sports increasingly unionise and cooperate worldwide, like in FIFPro (founded in 1965), the world footballers union. And as more and more European professional soccer leagues have broken away from the national associations or obtained semi-autonomous status, the formation in 2005 of the European Professional Football Leagues (EPFL) as a representative of the national leagues and clubs (Gammelsæter & Senaux, 2011) can be seen as manifestation of the increasing institutionalisation of employer interests. The professionalism logic resonates with Marxist approaches to understanding commercial sport (cf. Giulianotti, 2005) and with sport economics conceptions of player labour markets and professional sport as a business (i.e. Sandy, Sloane & Rosentraub, 2004).

In keeping with the understanding that actors are embedded in pluralistic contexts in which logics frequently entangle it is important to note that we do not assume actors to subscribe to only one of the above logics. On the contrary, when Roderick (2006), to exemplify, subtitles his book on the work of professional football “A labour of love?”, he nicely captures the idea that professional sport simultaneously can be experienced as a mix of professionalism and profound dedication. Notwithstanding this recognition of entangled logics, given the comparatively short career of sport athletes it is of interest to see the extent to which their thinking and actions reflects some logics more than others and how logics possibly combine depending on the context in which they perform their sport.

For the purpose of this study we defined full-professional sports as sports in which at least 75 per cent of the players have full-professional contracts and salaries that largely exempt them from having other jobs. Semi-professional sports were
defined as sports in which more than 75 per cent cannot make a living from their salaries only. As can be seen in table 2, Norwegian male soccer qualifies according to this (arguably somewhat arbitrary) definition to be categorised as full-professional whereas female soccer and handball are all semi-professional.

When most players in the club are paid the relationship between them and the club is one of employers and employee: employees play for the ones that pay them best; employers hire the ones that yield most. If the professionalism logic predomi- nates in professional clubs, employers have no incentive to encourage players to prepare for life after the sport career, and certainly not to pay for it. The same holds true for the players since their incentive is to exploit their professional career to the fullest. And given the demand for playing time, better salaries, and status, this logic encourages players to maximise their short-term earnings. In semi-professional clubs the professionalism logic is expected to be less saturating and the awareness that careers are fragile, short and less profitable is more pronounced. It follows that we expect:

1. the professionalism logic to have a significantly stronger impact on full-professionals than semi-professionals.

Although in the course of time the glory of being a professional athlete may turn pale (Roderick, 2006); players and coaches entered the business from an early age because they learned to enjoy playing and winning and to master the craft. Although athletes may have extrinsic reasons for engaging in sport, their principal motivation are intrinsic and autotelic. Its value arises in the participation of the sport itself (Walsh & Giulianotti, 2007). Hence the extent to which players see themselves as employees working primarily for extrinsic values is not given. This is basically the reason for our second proposition, that the competitive sport logic influences full-professionals and semi-professionals alike. If practicing sport at the top level is profoundly based on intrinsic motivations then there is perhaps no big difference between full- and semi-professional athletes. This means that in both groups athletes will have a focus on what is required of them to be in the top of the sport. If they do not, they will not be. Accordingly we expect:

2. the competitive sport logic to have equal impact on full-professionals and semi-professionals.

According to the third proposition the educational logic will be more constitutive in semi-professional than full-professional sports. This is substantiated in the fact that the career of the athlete is relatively short compared to civil careers. It is vulnerable to injuries that can lead to setbacks or sport careers that must be given up earlier than was planned. In full-professional sport the pecuniary rewards the athletes achieve can be seen as compensating for these risks and disadvantages. In semi-professional sports where there is simply not enough money for pecuniary compensation, it is likely that the clubs or associations will aid and perhaps encourage the athlete to combine sport and education (or work). We therefore suggest that:
3. The educational logic is significantly more constitutive in semi-professional than full-professional sports.

How do these expectations translate into more measurable terms? We expect the professional logic to be reflected in the propensity of full-professionals to see themselves as employees, to unionise, to postpone education, to project their future vocation in the sport, and value salary motives highly when signing contracts; all this to a larger extent than do semi-professionals. In seeing themselves as employees we furthermore assume that professionals do not expect the club to put pressure on them to take HE or to facilitate studies in the same extent semi-professionals do. We also expect full-professionals to regard the possibilities to combine their sport career with a job or education as less important than semi-professionals. These presumptions were articulated in the questionnaire that was sent to the respondents. Its items are reproduced in table 2.

The study

Data for this study were collected among Norwegian professional and semi-professional players in Norway’s dominating team sports, soccer and handball, comprising both sexes. Men’s soccer is the only team sport that is professionalised on a broad scale, and at present the premier league includes 16 teams that are fully professionalised. A professional license is required also for teams in the men’s second division (16 teams) and the women’s premier league (12 teams), but here many players are amateur or semi-professional. It is notable that in contrast to male soccer the Norwegian soccer women have won trophies in international competitions (World champion in 1995, Olympic champion in 2000). Moreover, whilst the men’s national handball team lacks international trophies, the Norwegian women’s handball team has won 19 medals in international championships since 1986 (World champion in 1999, Olympic champion in 2008). The women and men’s top handball leagues each contains 12 teams.

Norwegian sport clubs do not run their own academies, but many top clubs enjoy a collaborative relationship with upper secondary schools (high schools) where young athletes spend an extra year taking their grades to combine education and sport. The dropout rate from upper secondary education among Norwegian top soccer and handball players appears to be very low and substantially lower than for non-athletes (Solenes, Gammelsæter, & Herskedal, 2008). This means that most Norwegian athletes are eligible for university matriculation.

The collection of data took place in two phases. Initially data were obtained during the spring 2007 among male soccer and female handball players based on the reasoning that these groups constituted, respectively, the most professionalised and the most internationally merited athletes in Norwegian team sports. Based on the somewhat surprisingly finding that the amateur female athletes were largely hard
working students yet spent almost the same amount of time on their sport as did the professional footballers (Solenes et al., 2008), a follow-up study was launched in the spring 2009 to measure the extent to which this pattern was gender based rather than highlighting differences between professional and semi-professional sports (Bøe & Eide, 2009). Accordingly, this last study was directed towards male amateur handball players and female footballers, hence comparable data sets comprising both sexes were created for both sports. The lapse of time between the studies was not ideal but the follow-up study was necessary to determine the impact of gender on HE. Having said this, we have not noticed any public incidences between the two studies that caused increased media exposure of the issue. What might have had an impact was the financial crisis in Norwegian professional soccer, which came to light in 2008. If the first study had been done in 2009 the gap between the groups might have been narrower because of the increased pressure on the soccer clubs’ finances and the possible influence on players’ career preparation. Now the data selection took place in “normal” times in both cases.

In both studies athletes were emailed a questionnaire comprising 28 questions directed towards the respondents’ sport career and their relations to their club, their intentions and possibilities in taking HE (courses or degrees at university level), the actual allocation of time, and background variables such as gender, contract, and education level of parent/superior (cf. table 2). The questionnaire contained open questions and questions with closed options, a number of them employing five point Likert scales. In 2007 data were collected upon reception of emailed questionnaires from respondents and then transferred manually into SPSS. In 2009 data were collected on-line, using Quest-back, and imported electronically into SPSS for statistical analysis. Chi-square test was used for testing significance.

Data collection procedures varied slightly between the group of male footballers and the rest. Based on the 2005-6 final tables, the soccer teams from the two top tiers were divided into three groups - top, middle, and bottom – among which five teams per group were selected for participation. In cases where cooperation with teams was difficult a new team was selected from the same group. This selection procedure secured responses from top and bottom of the professional leagues, thereby also including teams and players with lower salaries. The study omitted foreign players since these in most cases could not be expected to be eligible to HE in the country. For handball (both sexes) and women’s soccer questionnaires were sent to all Norwegian players in the rosters of the teams playing in the respective premier divisions.

The study addressed altogether 653 athletes. 342 responses were submitted, giving a total response rate of 52 percent. Moreover, the response rate was 48 percent (71 out of 148) for female handball players and 50 percent (72 out of 144) for male handball players, whilst among footballers 68 percent (137 out of 201) of the female players and 39 percent (62 out of 160) of the male players answered the question-
naire. Since male soccer is by far the most commercialised among the sports included in the survey, one might speculate that this in part explains the lower response rate for male footballers. Based on later surveys done by the player association NISO (2010) and a media network (Bergli, 2010) we observe that our sample perhaps was slightly skewed in the direction of overestimating the proportion of professional players with HE and hence possibly underestimating the differences between professional and non-professional athletes. Our inclusion of soccer teams in the bottom of the 2nd tier (which tends to be semi-professional) is a plausible explanation for this possible bias.

Results

Table 2: Key characteristics describing full-professional and semi-professional players (percentages of respondents that agree with respective assertions)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Full-professional</th>
<th>Semi-professional</th>
<th>Chi-Square</th>
<th>p-value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I have a full-time contract</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>0.000*</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My superior during adolescence has higher education</td>
<td>66</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>0.360</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>It is necessary to have a job beside my sport for economic reasons</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>0.000*</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I regard myself an employee and the club as my employer</td>
<td>66</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>0.000*</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I am a member of the player association</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>0.000*</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Salary motives were important when signing last contract</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>0.000*</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I am willing to postpone education to achieve sporting excellence</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>0.000*</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I want to work within sport</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>0.000*</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Training facilities were important when signing last contract</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>74</td>
<td>0.067</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prospects for playing time were important when signing last contract</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>67</td>
<td>0.224</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sporting level of club was important when signing last contract</td>
<td>87</td>
<td>84</td>
<td>0.590</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I have a university degree/am taking university studies now</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>68</td>
<td>0.000*</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Combining sport and job/education was important when signing last contract</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>0.000*</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My sport career has reduced my opportunities for higher education</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>0.000*</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The club helps me combine sport and education</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>0.094</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-students: I would study if more players in my club did the same</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>0.132</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-students: I would study if the head coach encouraged me to</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>0.127</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I have planned my post-athlete career</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>0.007*</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

While table 2 lists characteristics and experiences of full-professional versus semi-professional players the data have also been tested for gender differences, which was one of the motivations for conducting the follow-up study, and age, which yielded no significant differences. The gender test was conducted on the semi-professional sports only (to keep type of professionalism constant) and, with one exception (con-
tract type) it revealed no significant statistical differences (using Pearson's Chi square at the 0.05 level) for the same variables that is reported in table 2. The same result was obtained when testing against the educational background of all the players’ parents/superiors (as a proxy for class), whereas differences in contract type reveals the same pattern as differences between types of professionalism (cf. appendix A).

The results reported in table 2 indicate that athletes that do sport in a full-professional environment also possess a higher propensity to see themselves as employees, experience less pressing need for extra jobs or HE, and are more likely to unionise than semi-professional players. Compared to the latter, male soccer players are also on average more willing to postpone further education to achieve short-term sporting excellence, and accordingly they were, on average, less concerned about possibilities for combining sport and HE when signing their last contract than were semi-professional players.

Whereas we think these results largely support our contention that full-professionals to a much larger extent than semi-professionals are influenced by the professionalism logic, we also notify that sporting issues such as training facilities, the potential for playing time and the sporting level of the club are as important for them as they are for semi-professional players. These responses apparently support our proposition that top athletes are highly motivated by intrinsic rewards related to excelling in sport irrespective of the kind of contract they enjoy, but we cannot rule out that these data also express a professional logic among athletes since training facilities, playing time, and sporting level presumably impacts on athletes’ prospects of increasing their monetary return of their sporting career.

Since 75 percent of the semi-professionals experience a need to work besides practicing sport it is not surprising that 68 percent of them take or have a university degree. Although the statistical difference between the groups are significant, when seen in light of the referred British studies on soccer players it is perhaps surprising that as much as 39 percent of the professional footballers go to university and that 30 percent were concerned about the combination of sport and studies when signing their last contract. Here, it is noteworthy that there is no significant difference between the groups in terms of parent/superior education. Given the high proportion of university degrees among their superiors, family is probably an important carrier of the education logic in sport, which has an impact also on professional athletes although the professional logic is more influential. This assumption is supported by the statistically significant difference between parent/superior education level and own studies (cf. appendix A), and resonates with Christensen and Sørensen’s (2009) findings. These results also signify that professional soccer in Norway is not a working class sport, reflecting a Scandinavian society with low class tensions and consciousness (Yu-An, 1996). Despite this, because 39 to 43 percent of the non-student professionals respond that encouragement from peers or coaches would help them to take
up studies the data indicate that the clubs are not animated by an educational logic that makes them take responsibility for the players’ post-sport career.

Because there is no statistically significant variance between the groups concerning club support to players’ combination of sport and education our third proposition about the educational logic and its expected pre-eminence in semi-professional sports is left unsupported. However, there might be different reasons for these responses. It might be, for instance, that assistance from the club is less needed and less expected in semi-professional sport since it is more common that peers go to university. And conversely, in professional teams where combining sport and education is less common the need for someone to facilitate off-the-job education is more essential. The difference then lies in the sheer number of peers that (do not) constitute a milieu in which academic education is seen as immediately (un)important. What we see is probably not an education logic emanating from the club itself but which saturates the sport i.e. that preparing for a second career is widely seen as compatible with excelling in sport.

One might be tempted here to argue that the higher propensity to take HE in semi-professional sport compared to professional sport is based on rational calculus, hence that both groups act rationally because it is more rational for young male footballers than it is for handball players or female footballers to drop or postpone HE. However, this implies that one assumes that the athletes have accurate information about the risks involved in postponing HE. While it is obvious that male football outperforms female football and handball as commercial industries, to our knowledge there is no exact information about the supply of talent into these sports (although we would assume that it is much higher in male football, globalised as it is). We would argue therefore that neither we, nor the actors in the sports could accurately calculate the chances young athletes in these sports have in obtaining a professional career. It follows that their choices are heavily impacted by beliefs, or institutional logics.

The proportion of players that has planned their post-sport career is significantly higher among semi-professionals than full-professionals. Since the labour market in semi-professional sports is restricted it makes sense that semi-professionals plan to work outside the sport. Interestingly, this could mean that semi-professional athletes qualify for professional jobs outside sport; hence it can be seen as promoting the ideas contained in the educational logic that sport enriches society through education. It is also noteworthy that work within sport is significantly more attractive among full-professionals than among their semi-professional peers. One might speculate if this means that un-academic full-professionals are recycled into the domain of professional sport and if this prevents the creation of academic cultures in professional sport. Since we are here dealing with athletes this reasoning is perhaps most relevant for the sport department in clubs. Indeed, Kelly (2008), in the English and Irish professional clubs he studied, noticed a bifurcation between team management, which
still lean on traditional forms of authoritarianism, and club management, which increasingly utilise modern rational bureaucratic techniques. If this is the case it might for instance help to explain the widespread volatility among managers in professional soccer (Bridgewater, 2010; Gammelsæter, 2010).

Table 3: Time spent on sport and other activities by full-professional and semi-professional players in Norwegian male and female top soccer and top handball

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Hours used per week on:</th>
<th>Full-professional</th>
<th>Semi-professional</th>
<th>t-test</th>
<th>p-value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sport (training, competition, and transport inclusive)</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>0.099</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>0.000</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Job (besides sport)</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>0.000</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family and friends</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>0.006</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The results displayed in table 3 provide some support for the conception that the overall large gap between the groups is better explained by differences in logics than by differences in time spent on sport activities. The variance in time spent on the sport is three hours per week, which is not statistically significant. This contrasts with the differences in athletes’ priorities outside sport, and it indicates that the professional logic breeds athletes that see themselves as reaching a point where they can settle vocationally and establish and spend time with their families instead of pursuing an alternative career. Even though they have almost as much time after sport at their disposal as the semi-professionals they do not, largely, use this time for second career preparation. On average only 5 hours per week are used on education, compared to 15 hours for the semi-professional players that also use a substantial part of their time at work. Readers might remark that the professional soccer players in the sample play more league matches than the handball players and female footballers and thus they spend more time on the sport over the entire year. This is a relevant point, but such calculations should also take into account the time spent with the national teams which presumably is higher for the semi-professional players. It should be noted, for instance that the Norwegian men’s national soccer team, in contrast to the women’s team and the national handball teams have not on a regular basis qualified to the finals in international championships. Further research is needed to substantiate the amount of time different groups of elite athletes use on sport.

We think table 3 gives some credence to the proposition that the competitive sport logic have equal impact on full-professionals and semi-professionals. These results support the idea that the conditions encompassing them and the related logics in which they are embedded largely explain the lower engagement of professional players in HE.
Concluding remarks
The present study has provided data about second career preparation among Norwegian team sport athletes. Its findings might not be shocking in the face of anecdotal information about some top professional athletes, but since few studies have addressed this issue we do in fact know little about the situation on a broader European scale. Given the welfare element in the tradition of Scandinavian sport it is unlikely that the figures presented in this study are representative for team sports in Europe, but as welfare ideology is now incorporated into the EU policy on sport, more studies on the situation in diverse European countries would be very welcome. Besides mapping the proficiency among athletes to combine sport and HE, research should also aim to assess the extent to which the professionalisation of sport in the European setting represents a social problem, both for young athletes that fail to establish themselves as professional players at an early age and for established players that experience career termination.

In this paper we have applied institutional logic as a key explanatory concept and traced three logics in sport that apparently have a bearing on the choice athletes make when preparing their careers. The finding that professionalisation in sport seems to deter professional athletes from combining sport and HE witnesses that the education logic is decreasing its power in sport as more athletes can make a living from it, thus combining the logics of competitive sport and professionalism. Critics would perhaps say that this reduces the problem to a subsistence issue, and whether athletes take education is simply a matter of personal needs and not one of institutional logics. We disagree with such a contention and would rather point to the benefit of analysing the topic from a competing logics perspective. In reference to our own study it is noteworthy, for instance, that the issue of education among professional footballers features recurrently in the Norwegian sport media (e.g. Bergli, 2010; Nilsen, 2012) and concurrently the national men’s team assistant coach has blogged about it encouraging players to take HE (By Rise, 2010). Furthermore, the Norwegian player association has recently claimed that the clubs facilitate HE for elite players (e.g. Aas, 2011), and the education logic is also echoed in the recent sport policy development in the EU (Platts & Smith, 2009). This is witness that although the professional and competitive sport logics might dominate at the level of the professional athlete, the field of sport incorporates other logics as well.

How competing logics can prevail in a field is an interesting theoretical issue (cf. Reay & Hinings, 2009), and sport might be a suitable context in which to study such problems. We might suggest, for example, that the educational logic circulate more strongly on the political and association levels of sport than at the club and individual levels, and that competing logics can co-exist in a field because levels are largely detached from each other. Moreover, our data indicate that parents might be powerful carriers of institutional logics and that athletes’ relationship to career prepa-
ration might reflect the athletes’ class backgrounds. However, we do acknowledge that the statistical data presented here represent merely an introduction to understanding how European team sport athletes engage with HE as part of their second career preparation, and, furthermore, to how the diverse logics translate into action (or inaction) by the powerful actors in sport. Statistical studies of the nature presented here have its limitations when it comes to exploring how actors substantiate and justify their actions. Consequently, to further explore how athletes deal with HE and second career preparation we recommend that surveys such as the one presented here be complemented by qualitative research designs. Such designs are better equipped to explore individual, family or peer deliberations and the policies, programs and actions of clubs, sport associations and political authorities.

References


Senaux, B. (2011). Playing by the rules ... but which ones? *Sport, Business and Management, 1*, 252-266.


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## Appendix A: Key characteristics of players according to gender, contract type, and education level of parent/superior (Percentages of respondents that agree, with respective assertions)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gender (semi-professionals only)</th>
<th>Contract</th>
<th>Parent/superior with higher education</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Male (n=69-73)</td>
<td>Female (n=185-207)</td>
<td>Full-time (n=77-98)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I have a full-time contract</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>It is necessary to have a job beside my sport for economic reasons</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I regard myself an employee and the club as my employer</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I am a member of the player association</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Salary motives were important when signing last contract</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I am willing to postpone education to achieve sporting excellence</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I want to work within sport</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Training facilities was important when signing last contract</td>
<td>72</td>
<td>74</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prospects for playing time were important when signing last contract</td>
<td>69</td>
<td>67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sporting level for the club was important when signing last contract</td>
<td>81</td>
<td>85</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I have a university degree/am taking university studies now</td>
<td>68</td>
<td>69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My superior during adolescence has higher education</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Combining sport and job/education was important when signing last contract</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>62</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My sport career has reduced my opportunities for higher education</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The club helps me combine sport and education</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-students: I would study if more players in my club did the same</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-students: I would study if the head coach encouraged me to</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I have planned my post-athlete career</td>
<td>66</td>
<td>54</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>