



# SPORT, PERFORMANCE & ADDICTION - “WHEN WINNING COSTS YOU”



**Success does not protect people from addiction.**

*Behind achievement, performance, and pressure, many individuals in sport and high-performance environments struggle silently with:*

- Alcohol misuse
- Substance dependency
- Gambling
- Performance-enhancing substances
- Burnout
- Anxiety and depression
- Emotional exhaustion

## **Why This Happens**

**Sport and performance cultures can sometimes normalise:**

- Drinking culture
- Emotional suppression
- Perfectionism
- Risk-taking behaviours
- “Playing through pain”
- Hiding vulnerability

**Many individuals use substances or addictive behaviours to:**

- Cope with pressure
- Escape stress
- Manage injuries or pain
- Handle failure or criticism
- Maintain performance
- Numb emotional struggles

## **What Healthy Performance Looks Like**

- Rest and recovery
- Psychological safety
- Open mental health conversations
- Support without judgement
- Balanced identity outside performance
- Early intervention and support

## **Myth vs Fact**

**MYTH:** “Successful people don’t struggle with addiction.”

**FACT:** High pressure environments can increase the risk of addictive behaviours and mental health difficulties. Addiction does not discriminate!

## **Key Message**

Winning should never come at the cost of wellbeing.

Real strength is asking for help, prioritising recovery, and understanding that mental health matters just as much as performance.



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