



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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