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Northumbria academic supports global success in elite sport.

An academic and sports nutritionist at Northumbria University is the lead performance nutritionist for the Turkish Olympic team competing in Paris, this summer.

[Dr Ozcan Esen](#), an Assistant Professor in Sport and Exercise Nutrition, is Nutrition Lead and Consultant for the Turkish Olympic Committee and TeamTurkiye for the Paris Olympic Games, 2024.

While Dr Esen provides nutritional education and services to the entire Turkish Olympic team, he has been working more closely with athletes competing in archery, gymnastics, boxing and modern pentathlon events at the Games in Paris.

Within these events, he has already worked with a number of Olympic champions and medallists, including the Tokyo Olympic, World and European champion in archery, the Tokyo bronze medallist as well as world and two-times European champion in gymnastics, and in boxing, the Olympic champion and silver medallist in Tokyo.

Dr Esen's role is to consult with these elite athletes to help them develop optimal eating habits for their performance enhancement. He designs day-by-day and meal-by-meal nutrition plan, recommends vitamins and supplements, and provides nutritional advice for athletes.

His research, which focusses on the effect of nutritional interventions and dietary supplements on muscle function, human performance, recovery and health, plays a pivotal role in the work Dr Esen carries out with athletes, before, during and after major sports championships.

"I have led research into the benefits of beetroot juice supplementation and caffeine, both in athletes' performance and recovery," said Dr Esen. "As a result, nearly all the athletes I look after in the Turkish Olympic team use these supplements.

"Concentrated beetroot juice is rich in nitrate (it facilitates nitric oxide production) in the body is important for several processes that influence exercise performance, including increase blood flow and muscle contractility.

"A key effect of dietary nitrate is that it reduces the oxygen demand of exercise, meaning the muscles need less oxygen to maintain a given work rate, thereby improving exercise efficiency, fatigue resistance and exercise performance."

Beside his academic and practitioner experience, Dr Esen has been a Turkish national athlete in swimming and under water sports for 15 years and competed in both European and World championships. In 2015, he won a silver medal in the 'Finswimming' category at the first Mediterranean Beach

Games - equivalent to the Commonwealth Games.

Additionally, he has worked as a head coach of the Turkish Junior National Team at the Turkish Underwater Sports Federation in both 2014 European and the World Junior Championships in 2015.

“I have competed as an athlete at five world championships, and I have been a national team coach for many years, so I have a very strong sense of what these athletes are going through at major competitions, not just physically but mentally as well,” added Dr Esen.

“For me, as a sports nutritionist, having this evidence-based approach to my research is crucial. Not only is the work I’m carrying out backed by science, but it is further enhanced by my wealth of experience in the field.

“It’s never a one-size-fits-all approach when it comes to working with elite athletes and their nutritional needs - that is why we need more than just science-based approach. It’s about examining and regularly talking to each athlete and their support team on a case-by-case basis and adapting how, when and what they consume, so that they can perform at the highest level. This ‘personalisation’ and ‘periodisation’ approach, where you tailor your work to the individual athletes and their sport, is what I teach our students who are studying exercise and sports nutrition here at the University.”

According to the Turkish Olympic Committee, Dr Esen’s research at Northumbria has significantly enriched the team’s training and competition strategies, including carbohydrate intake, caffeine and beetroot juice supplementation, and hydration strategies.

Nese Gundogan, Secretary General of the Turkish Olympic Committee, said: “Dr Esen’s contributions have been invaluable to the Turkish Olympic Committee, significantly enhancing the nutritional strategies and overall performance of our athletes.

“His dedication, expertise and evidence-based approach have established him as a vital asset to our team and a key factor in our ongoing success.”

Dr Esen lectured at the University of Chester and Manchester Metropolitan University before arriving at Northumbria in 2022, where he is now Assistant

Professor within the University's [Sport, Exercise and Rehabilitation department](#). He is also International Olympic Committee certified and a registered sports nutritionist (SEnr).

[The Optimising Sports Performance \(OSP\) group](#) at Northumbria University conducts research aiming to improve our understanding of how humans adapt and respond to exercise, and has a proven record of high-quality research, and even higher quality impact.

Academics have established relationships with elite sporting partners, including the UK Sports Institute, British Cycling, British Sailing, British Gymnastics, The FA, Washington Spirit FC, Newcastle United FC, Sunderland AFC, and Queens Park Rangers FC; all of which have resulted in tangible, ongoing impact on sport performance and practice.

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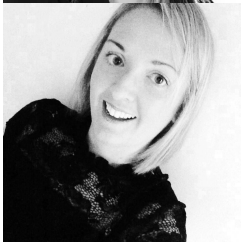
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