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Northumbria University scientists provide expertise to world-leading human performance lab

Scientists at Northumbria University, Newcastle, are working with one of the world's largest consumer healthcare companies to test the performance of elite athletes such as Olympic diver Tom Daley. One of these projects is examining the use of protein in exercise recovery and the other is aimed at improving our understanding of the brain's influence in decision making.

[Dr Glyn Howatson](#), a Sport and Exercise Physiologist from Northumbria, was appointed by Dr Ken van Someren – R&D Director at the GSK Human

Performance Lab, a visiting professor at Northumbria and former head of science and medicine for the English Institute of Sport - to work in collaboration with the research team at GlaxoSmithKline's (GSK) world-leading Human Performance Lab in London.



The Lab is focused on applied and discovery research, combining GSK science expertise, external advisors and cutting edge technology. It works with some of the world's top athletes – from extreme environment athletes to current Olympic champions – enabling them to break through the limits of human performance.

GSK HPL and Northumbria have so far collaborated on two postgraduate studies to look at key research projects which include the use of protein in exercise recovery and improving our understanding of the brain's influence in decision making. Lee Eddens and Sarah Browne, who are both doctoral researchers at Northumbria, are now involved with the scientific support of athletes at the very top of their sport, including Tom Daley, F1 driver Jenson Button and golfer Rory McIlroy.

Dr Howatson said: "We are delighted to be working in partnership with the GSK Human Performance Lab on these exciting projects that will impact on elite sport. The PhD candidates (Lee and Sarah) have a rare opportunity to conduct their research in state of the art research facilities at the lab and Northumbria whilst also providing sport science support for elite athletes.

"The PhDs themselves are focussed on understanding the limits of human performance, but interestingly this innovative science has the potential to be translated to the wellbeing of many wider populations to develop applications that enable people to do more, feel better and live longer."

Lee, whose research interests are the growth and increase of the size of skeletal muscle, said working at the GSK Human Performance Lab has given him new techniques that will improve the quality of his post graduate research.

He said: “The studentship at the GSK Human Performance Lab has afforded me ample opportunities to help provide cutting-edge diagnostic support to elite athletes, while aiding my professional development from a practical perspective.

“Being able to work with and learn from the HPL the science team has been invaluable in understanding the requirements of working as a scientist in a world-leading organisation and the quality that is demanded. The dynamic environment of the Human Performance Lab has helped to stretch my skill set and accrue new techniques that can be incorporated into my PhD research.”

Sarah added: “Conducting my PhD with the GSK Human Performance Lab has provided me with a unique opportunity to gain applied sports science experience in a world-class facility while I complete my postgraduate studies.

“Providing in-depth sport science support to elite athletes has complemented my academic work while accelerating my professional development. Working within a multidisciplinary team has enabled me to learn from colleagues with a range of experience while also learning new techniques within and surrounding my research area. This has enhanced my development as a well-rounded sports science practitioner.”

The impact of almost two-thirds of Northumbria University’s Business and Management research has been rated as world-leading or internationally excellent. The University’s Corporate Executive Development Centre also works with more than 700 business leaders and managers offering learning experiences that enable significant and sustainable change.

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Contacts



Rik Kendall

Press Contact

PR and Media Manager

Business and Law / Arts, Design & Social Sciences

rik.kendall@northumbria.ac.uk

07923 382339



Andrea Slowey

Press Contact

PR and Media Manager

Engineering and Environment / Health and Life Sciences

andrea.slowey@northumbria.ac.uk

07708 509436



Rachael Barwick

Press Contact

PR and Media Manager

rachael.barwick@northumbria.ac.uk

07377422415



James Fox

Press Contact

Student Communications Manager

james2.fox@northumbria.ac.uk



Kelly Elliott

Press Contact

PR and Media Officer

kelly2.elliott@northumbria.ac.uk



Gemma Brown

Press Contact

PR and Media Officer

gemma6.brown@northumbria.ac.uk