

TEAM DANMARK

**Building sustainable elite sport  
environments through the voice  
of the athlete**

**Lone Hansen, CEO Team Denmark**



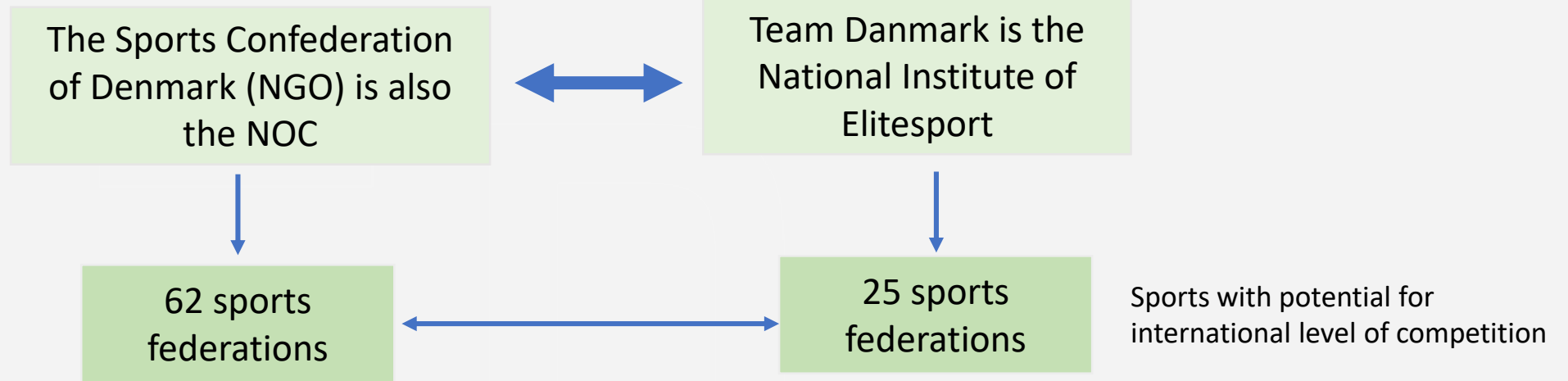
A premise for elitesport



Elite sport is in its nature extreme and as an athlete you must trust your coach and to some extent put your faith in his or her hands if you want to fulfill your ambitions

The voice of the athlete

# Organization of sport in Denmark

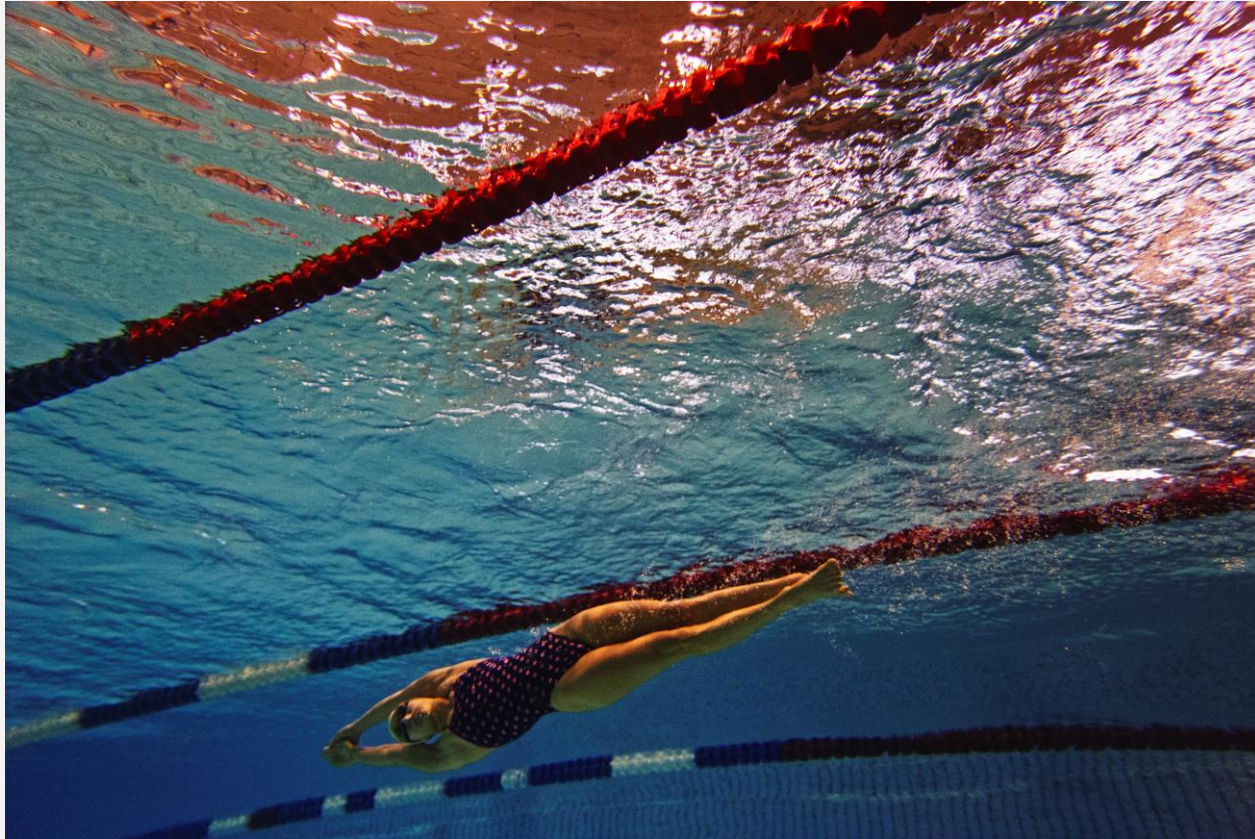


- 1) Umbrella for 62 Danish sports federations
- 2) Support (funding) of the federations
- 3) Responsible for Danish sport and sport for all

- 1) Develop Danish elite sport
- 2) Support (funding) the elite sport strategies for federations of the NGO
- 3) Responsible for Danish elite sport (based upon a healthy culture)

A common focus upon promoting a wholesome sports and physical exercise culture.

# A performance culture with problems

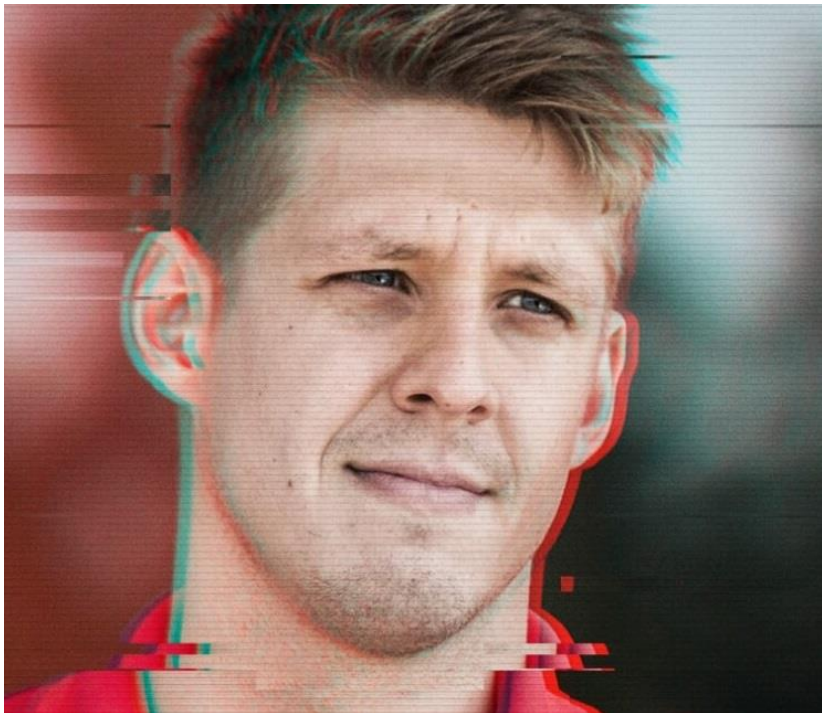


A case story from Danish swimming

# Headlines in Danish media



"It was rotten to the core and unethical"

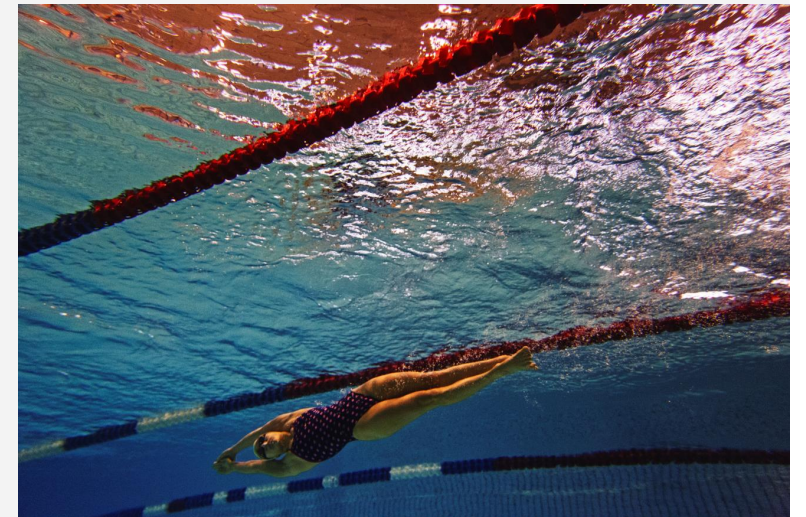


"Cried in pain but the coach refused treatment"

"I thought I was weak and just needed to loose some weight"

# A performance culture with problems

- Danish swimming underwent a dramatic change in performance from around 2003.
- International coaching capacities succeeded but brought a very tough training regime to Denmark.
- Bullying and public weighing led to cases of eating disorder and also caused mental health problems for some athletes.



# Reflections and refocus

# Three key issues

1. **Medals and/or core values:** How can we ensure that high sporting ambitions do not produce unhealthy sporting environments?
2. **Assymmetric relationship:** How can we make it possible for athletes to address issues of concern within the asymmetric relationship between athlete and coach?
3. **The key role of the coaches:** How do we ensure that the coaches have the right understanding of the guiding principles and values?



# The voice of athletes - actions

- Team Denmark will together with athletes and federations focus on the adoption and operationalization of values that support a sustainable elite environment. Core values are accountability and openness.
- We need to empower the athletes through communication – and to ensure that the athletes can raise their concerns without jeopardizing their sporting career.
- We will develop the institutional framework that allows athletes to speak up in confidentiality to actors independent of the coaches.

The aim is to empower and engage the athlete in the development of an environment where performance, mental and physical health is in balance

A respectful and value based environment allows athletes to develop and flourish = better results

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Thank you