

PLAN B: HOW TO SIMPLIFY THE TRANSITION FROM A SPORTING CAREER TO A NEW LIFE?

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INDEX

INDEX	1
A. INTRODUCTION.....	1
B. ORGANIZATION OF SPORT.....	3
C. The Career of an Athlete.....	5
I. Life Cycle	5
II. Stages	6
1) Start of a Sport Career	6
2) Development.....	7
3) Mastery in Sport	7
4) The Decline Phase	8
5) Adaptation to a New Life phase	8
III. Retirement in the context of the Life Cycle.....	9
1) Definition and Special Aspects in sport	9
2) Reasons for Retirement	9
3) Doping as a reason for retirement.....	11
4) Where to locate retirement in an athlete's life cycle (Ideal stage)	14
D. THE TRANSITION PROCESS.....	15
I. Psychological Models for Transition in Sport.....	15
1) Gerontology	15
2) Thanatology	16
3) Recent frameworks related to transition.....	17
II. When does transition start?	19

III. Challenges of Transition	20
1) Internal Challenges	21
2) External Challenges	22
E. Examples of Programs to support transition	23
I. UCI Program.....	23
II. IOC Program	24
1) ACP Mission & Vision.....	25
2) Methodology.....	25
III. Other programs	26
IV. FIFA.....	29
F. Best practices of Examined Programs & General Challenges.....	29
G. PLAN B Consultant Program.....	31
I. Objective.....	31
II. Levels of Implementation.....	32
1) Why & Where to implement the program?	32
2) When & How to implement the program?	34
III. Requirements to become a Transition Consultant	36
IV. Curriculum for CP	36
1) Communication Program.....	36
2) Psychology Program.....	39
3) Management Program.....	42
4) Law Program	45
V. Teachers and Time Frame.....	46
VI. Financing the PLAN B CP	47
VII. Role of the Consultant and Advantage for Athletes.....	48

H. CONCLUSION.....52
I. APPENDIX 53
J. REFERENCES 65

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ABSTRACT

OVERVIEW & OBJECTIVE

It is said the best time to end things is when they are their peak.

Thomas Oelsner -a cross country skier and Paralympics winner- faced the challenge of retiring from sport after the Winter Games in Salt Lake City in 2002. He explained his situation during an interview:

‘I am an Olympic athlete, a medal winner. What else could I want from life? Let’s say I would end my sporting career now... what do I do next...? Ah, I know. I will sleep in; go on vacation with my family since I did not get to spend much quality time with them in the last couple of years. I could give interviews, attend a course to learn how to cook Thai food, maybe start learning another language. Yes – sounds great. I always wanted to do those things, but because I dedicated my life to my sports career I have not had time to do it yet. Honestly, being a professional athlete has been a full time job for the last 15 years. I am really looking forward to have some time to rest and think about what I would want to do in the future. The future ...? Hmm... Maybe I should study? No – I am too old for this. Coaching? Yes, why not? Or

commentate on TV for my sport; as a matter of fact sport is what I know best, and there is not much more I know well. So, how would I earn money other than that? I am only 30 years old and I do not have enough savings to retire for good. I will have to make a livingbut I will think about this issue later.

No, I am not ignoring the subject of transition after sport but there will come a better time to think about it. Let’s go and enjoy the success I have right now in sport! ’

Can the athlete be blamed for thinking as shown in the example shown above? Maybe some of us do.

According to a recent survey conducted at the Italian Olympic Committee, only twelve percent of the athletes use the existing transition programs. This is an example of the situation that prevails worldwide and shows the need to close the gap between an active sport career and a successful retirement. Therefore through this project a new program has been developed, called the Plan B Consultant Program.

The objective of the “Plan B Consultant Program is to connect the existing career transition programs with athletes in a better manner. It aims to use the best practises from other programs, while closing the gap between the active athletes and their first step towards participating in those transition programs. A specialised education should be provided for professionals from a tailored background by implementing a certification degree at the National level. Those consultants should guide athletes within a specific region by supporting them just like physicians in their teams during their sporting career. In this way there is a maximum chance to get to know them, use the knowledge learned in the Plan B consultant course and prepare and assist them during transition in order to have a smooth landing from elite sport into normal life.

A consultant would be successful if he identifies the personal skills of the athlete and is able to help the athlete to transfer those into his new job. The athletes have a lot of transferable skills like for example: interpersonal, team related, leadership, self-assurance, ambition, ability to perform under pressure, and adaptability.

METHODOLOGY

This project was done with the help of interviews, research and comparative studies. In order to understand the subject better case studies of athletes who went through certain problems were used. It was most interesting to talk to some of the experts from the administrative side of sport that are aware of the challenges. They were most encouraging about this project. Practical inputs from the active athletes were very beneficial as well. Research and comparative studies were conducted on the existing programmes within the sporting domain. As a consequence of this the PLAN B program was created. It takes the best practices from the examined programs and meets the remaining challenges.

OUTCOME

The project creates a new figure in the sport system. This person will be on the administrative side of the sport team. His task will be to close the gap between the athlete and his first step towards transition. The link will be the PLAN B Consultant Program.

The general aim of this educational program is to provide the potential consultants with adequate comprehension, knowledge and skills to prepare them for transition consulting. The consultant should expand the ability to apply theoretical information, methods, and practical skills. The PLAN B will develop critical and analytical tools in the fields of communication, psychology, law and management in order to provide tailored advice.

One of the important tools that the consultant will use is the local and international network within and outside the sport industry. The consultants will help enhance the development of the professional athletes' interpersonal skills (since they can

not develop a big social relationships' network outside their family, coaches, physicians, and staff).The program will be constantly monitored and also maintain a close network between the active and passive sides of the sport industry. Plan B Consultants should help athletes keep an open mind to other fields, and not only sport so that the athletes' transition from his sporting career to a normal life is simplified. We hope that with the help of this project, many more athletes will be successful in retiring from elite sport and settling back into normal life – just as him.

This is a call out to all the athletes, “You have to know sport but you have to know something else!

TERMINOLOGY

ACP	Athlete Career Program (<i>IOC</i>)
CP	Consulting Program (<i>Plan B</i>)
CSR	Corporate Social Responsibility
FA	Football Association
FAP	Financial Assistance Program (<i>FIFA</i>)
FIFA	Federation Internationale de Football Association
FIFPro	Federation Internationale des Associations de Footballeurs Professionels
IF	International Federation
IOC	International Olympic Committee
NCAA	National College Athletic Association
NF	National Federation
NOC	National Olympic Committee
OCOG	Organization Committee of the Olympic Games
OPEN	Olympic & Paralympic Employment Network
UCI	Union Cyclist Internationale
WADA	World Anti Doping Agency
WOA	World Olimpians Associaton

A. INTRODUCTION

It is said the best time to end things is when they are at their peak.

Thomas Oelsner -a cross country skier and paralympic winner- faced the challenge of retiring from sport after the Winter Games in Salt Lake City in 2002. He explained his situation during an interview:

‘I am an Olympic athlete, a medal winner. What else could I want from life? Let’s say I would end my sporting career now... what do I do next...? Ah, I know. I will sleep in, go on vacation with my family since I did not get to spend much quality time with them in the last couple of years. I could give interviews, attend a course to learn how to cook Thai food, maybe start learning another language. Yes – sounds great. I always wanted to do those things, but because I dedicated my life to my sports career I have not had time to do it yet. Honestly, being a professional athlete has been a full time job for the last 15 years. I am really looking forward to have some time to rest and think about what I would want to do in the future. The future ...? hmm. Maybe I should study? No – I am too old for this. Coaching? Yes, why not? Or commentate on TV for my sport; as a matter of fact sport is what I know best, and there is not much more I know well. So, how would I earn money other than that? I am only 30 years old and I do not have enough savings to retire for good. I will have to make a livingbut I will think about this issue later.

Maybe I can ask my team mates what they are planning to do. Most of them are younger than me, so they probably do not know either. Anyway: today is not a good day to worry about this – I am a successful athlete! Why do I not just keep doing my sport? YES! I should keep practising my sport. I am good. I am well known. I am an elite athlete. I have a good image within sport. I am not rich but happy where I am right now. I think I will try to participate in the next Olympic Games. Just one bigger event like this; and after that I can start being concerned about retiring, this is still four years from now. No, I am not ignoring the subject of transition after sport but there will come a better time to think about it. Let’s go and enjoy the success I have right now in sport! ’

Who can blame an athlete for thinking as shown in the example shown above? Maybe some of us do. From an external perspective it is certainly easier to realise the significance of a challenge such as retiring from elite sport. An onlooker has a much more objective view to the subject than the athlete

who is at the core of the decision and therefore heavily involved in subjective evaluations. Which of us would voluntarily think of changing environment, giving up networks, fame, the satisfaction one feels by working in a job and being successful or even leaving a team, friends, if there was not a threat to do so? If one is comfortable, there is hardly any reason to voluntarily change or end the situation, not even in order to prevent problems that might arise in the future because everything ends sometime and somehow. We are all human and therefore prefer to choose the comfortable path, most of the time.

Does this mean it is irresponsible? Or does it just mean that there is a lack of preparation for the future. This project will aim to prove the latter is true. Going back to the athletes' perspective, would it not be helpful to have somebody they could talk to about this matter? Consider the possibility of a person educated in this field, who is capable of tailored advice while being close to their sport? What if they had somebody to listen to; a person who they could ask about options, challenges, and solutions? Would it not be helpful to have a specialist in the field of transition to retirement following a sport career with the objective to support and guide athletes through the transition process – beginning while they are still active time and ending, once they are settled back into a normal life in society. This does not take the responsibility off the sports persons to face the challenge but it would help them to be prepared by getting external advice in order to leave the subculture of sport and be successful in life. Just like the coach has been helping to prepare the seasons and be successful in sport, a mentor simply for the transition process would also be ideal.

Adjustment has always two sides: the side of the individual and the side of environment. If the athletes takes responsibility for the challenge of transition, and the social environment is prepared to integrate the subculture of retired elite athletes who dedicated their lives to sport. In this way, the challenge can not only be met but create a win - win situation.

A consultant could be the answer to the question. He could help to build a solid bridge between a sporting career and life after sport, helping the athlete to adjust to a new environment as well as the society to better integrate the subculture of elite athletes. Society already takes responsibility for integrating subcultures, such as: ex - prisoners, children, women or disabled people.

As Mr. Jacques Rogge, the current IOC president said: "Athletes are at the core of the Olympic movement. They dedicate their life to sport and it is only right that sport should give them something back at the end of their sporting careers."

This thesis will develop the idea of transition consultants. People who obtained a certificate and are capable of supporting athletes during this important process of their life. This paper will try to develop guidelines for National Olympic Committees to provide a consulting program, which is meant to help

optimising the already existing programs for the transition of athletes after ending their sporting careers.

Firstly the international structure of organised sport will be shown in order to have an overview of this domain. Secondly the main components of an athletes' career will be examined. The tool of a Life Cycle graph will be used to explain the process. This will be followed by examining the role of retirement within this cycle.

Thirdly, the transition process of an athlete will be explained by pointing out the major challenges. In order to do this as best as possible, a short summary of the existing scientific models is done that were developed just to explain this phenomenon. After this, a short analysis of some existing programs in different regions of the world and different sport organisations will be given. They all aim to support the transition process. After summarising the best practises and challenges of those programs, a final proposition will be introduced.

The paper will conclude with an idea of how to implement a certification program for specialists in the field of law, communication, management, sport or psychology, provided by the NOCs. In order to improve the network between the sports domain and other social networks, giving athletes tailored advice during their transition period. Finally, a summary of the main findings and ideas will be given.

B. ORGANIZATION OF SPORT

Sport is organised in a hierarchy of sporting associations, governed by law.

Type of legal entity

Being in accordance with legal requirements is important for sport for two reasons. First of all, sport is competition and therefore needs rules. Furthermore, sport is the subject of economical and social interest.

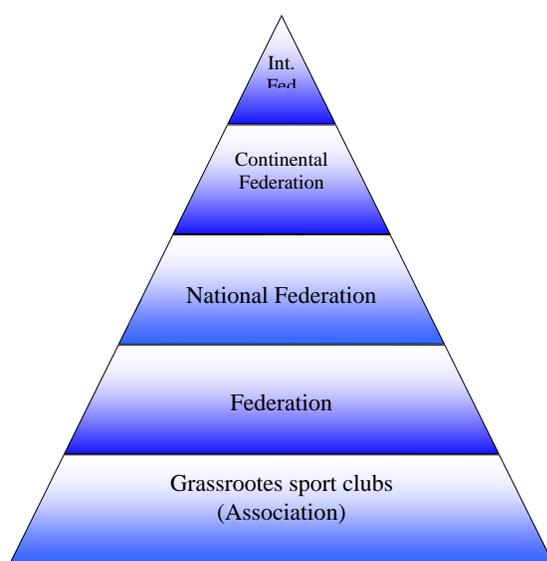
Even though creating a legal entity is not mandatory for people who want to practice sport, it helps to act legally and be recognised as only one legal person. State law usually offers various types of legal entities, if a number of persons would like to create one. Exclusively the objective of the group determines which type of legal entity is to be chosen. Practicing and administrating sport is a non - profit activity. Therefore establishing an association is still the most popular legal form to organise most sports. This guarantees autonomy to the sporting body and keeps it members from being financially liable for receivables.

The term association describes two different sports entities: the association "stricto sensu" and the federation. The association is the fundamental structure of sport organisations and forms the base. Its

members are natural persons. If the basic associations decide to join into an entity that also aims towards a non – profit activity, such as ruling and organising sport on a national level the association is called a federation. Therefore its members are not natural persons but associations, for instance regional ones that want to promote sport on a national level are called National Federation. The same structure is used on an international level, as can be seen by International Federations, such as FIFA, UCI and FIS. Those federations are also associations of associations.

Associations and federations are, internationally as well as nationally, organised in pyramidal structures, please refer to the Figure 1 below. Each local sport club (association) forms the base of this pyramid. At a higher level, regional associations (federations) are established. Those again are members of a national federation. A number of national federations of one sport within different countries are then joined within an international federation. Depending on the sport the federations sometimes decide to have a continental ruling body is formed sport between them and the international federation. This is then called confederation (e.g. in soccer: UEFA for Europe). The Olympic movement is organised according to the same scheme. National Olympic Committees (NOCs) are topped by the International Olympic Committee (IOC). This idea is called “Ein – Platz- Prinzip”¹. This means that there can only be one federation in each sport on one geographical level (international, continental, national, regional and so on).

Figure #1: Pyramid of sporting structure



¹ International FIFA Master 2007 material covered in class: Lecture by J. Guinand, Text by J.P. Dubey

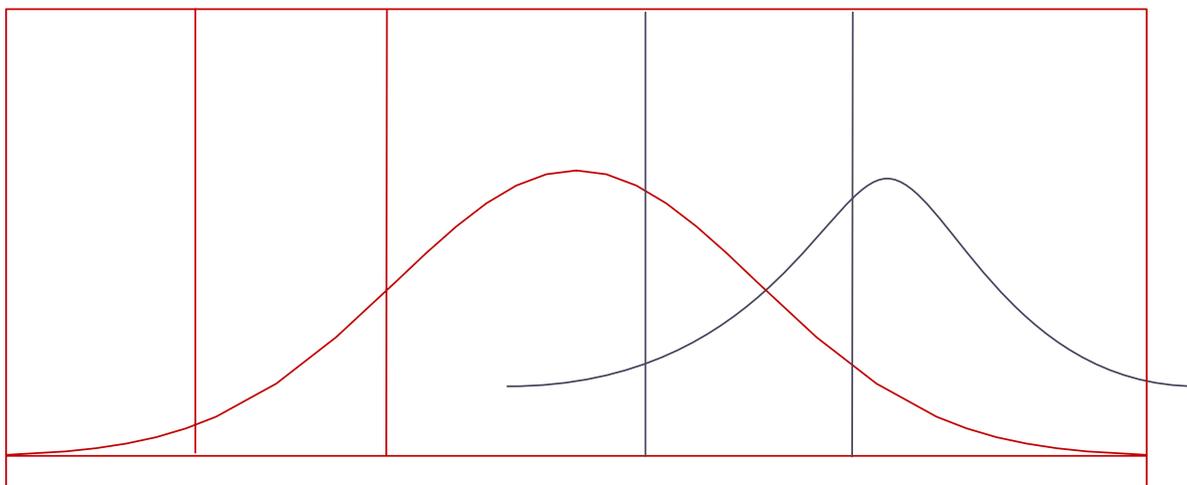
C. THE CAREER OF ATHLETES

The positive image of sport and its aspects of a healthy body, heroism, passion and globalisation lead to one of the most socio – economic phenomena of our age. Sporting performance has become an entertaining industry all over the world. Just like in all other aspects of life, there are two sides of the medal about being a professional athlete. Not only does it offer the opportunity to earn money with passion, but it also brings difficulties once athletes retire. While their career might be exciting, glorious and satisfying by achieving personal goals it can also turn out to be a social breakdown after they end it. The following section will explain the process of an athletes’ career by using the tool of a Life Cycle diagram.

I. Life Cycle

A life-cycle normally shows the stages that each person goes through during the span of time that they are alive. Humans have normal phases of life such as Infancy, Childhood, Adolescence and Adulthood. In this case we have below a generalized form of life-cycle of an athlete, so that we clearly understand the structure and phases that athletes go through and where the key transition points of their life is. It is very important to discuss these elements as they will help us to understand where the maximum help is needed and what this papers objective is.

Figure 2: Life Cycle for an athlete



The athletes start going through transitions at a very young age (around 6 - 8 years old), and they have to change and readapt themselves to new situations. Although an athletic career may seem to develop in a smooth and continuous way from beginning to end, it has been shown that the athletes themselves describe the development of their athletic career in terms of specific moments or situations that occurred or will occur throughout their career².

Young athletes, as mentioned by *David Lavalle and Paul Wylleman*³ are confronted with specific phases and transitional periods throughout their athletic career⁴ in competitive youth sport.

The athletic transitions are numerous such as: transition into organized competitive sport, into an intensive level of training and competitions, into the highest or elite level of competitions, out of competitive sport and adaptation to new life, which is holding a job and settling in a new place. Transition is defined by Schlossberg as an “event or non event, which results in a change in assumptions about oneself and the world and thus requires a corresponding change in one’s behaviour and relationships⁵

It should be noted that there could be a lot more transitions in the life of an athlete and some normative transitions might not occur, thus becoming ‘non-events’.

This paper will only discuss the main five stages.

II. Stages

1) Start of a Sport Career

Each athlete decides to have a career in sport at a certain age. The main decision and transition to a sporting career is made between ages eight and ten. When a child is talented or when the parents decide to concentrate on the sporting aspect of their child’s abilities is when the sporting career of a child is triggered off, it is called the initiation phase. This is the first stage of the athlete’s life-cycle. This phase begins with the evolution of youngsters from their initial contact with organized sport to a level of specialization into one particular sport, speciality or role. This is where the training and the development of the child or the upcoming athlete takes place. The child starts going through vigorous training and has a sporting career to look forward to. At this stage, competition is almost zero or very weak.

² Wylleman & De Knop, 1997 a,b.

³ Career Transitions in Sport: International Perspectives – (2000)

⁴ *ibid*

⁵ Schlossberg, N. K., Waters, E.B. and Goodman J., (1995), *Counselling Adults in Transition: linking Practice with Theory*

It is worth noting that not all athletes that go through this transition go on till the last stage of the sporting career, however as we go on, we will talk about athletes that go through each and every stage of this particular cycle.

Competition emerges as the athlete goes to the next stage which is the development and growth stage.

2) Development

This is the stage where the athlete's skills are enhanced. The athlete starts to experience life as a sports person and clearly understands the pros and cons of his decision. During this stage, he participates in the junior-level tournaments and this is a key stage where in the athlete has to prove his skills in his respective sport in order to make the next transition. During this phase it is important that the athlete continues with his education as there is no guarantee for the next big change i.e. his transition in to the higher level of sport which is normally the athlete's main stage of the career. However, since this stage leads in to the main aspect of a sportsperson's life it is a very important stage. It is a progression towards the next stage which is the expertise of a particular sport. This transition requires young athletes to adapt to the demands of organized sport activities, to follow the rules of the organizations and be flexible to change their way of life such as tournaments during the weekends and training during holidays.

The adaptation takes place at individual and psychological level. It involves improving their sporting abilities and skills, developing friendships (and being able to play in a team) or leadership according to the sport that they have chosen. At this stage, the athletes realize the change from competing for fun to competing to achieve. They also realize that the decision has been made and that they have to maintain their levels of motivation and find satisfaction from playing the sport that they have chosen. The main aspect of this stage is that the young athletes start seeing their main goal of becoming high-level athletes more realistically. The frequency of training sessions and the competitions increase.

3) Mastery in Sport

“During sport maturity, the number and level of competitions is increased and professionals seek to maintain any competitive advantage they have obtained and developed during growth”⁶. From this stage, the athletes will have to push as hard as they can to maintain their highest level in competition. A team of professional coaches, physicians, agents, managers, physio-therapists and financial advisors as well as family will be supporting the sportsperson on a day to day basis to keep him on the best level

⁶ Shank M.D., (1999), Sports Marketing: A Strategic Perspective

possible. If attempts to maintain those high-quality levels and competition are unsuccessful in the maturity stage, an athlete may try alternative strategies to extend his activity life cycle before his career begins to decline and eventually disappear.

It is important to mention that during this time, athletes are in contact with competitive sport at the national level or at the international level. During this transition they aim towards professionalism, focusing on preparation for training and competitions. In this phase various changes occur in their lives. Often they need to change cities, and from a day to another they will find themselves in a new social environment, and they have to adapt to the new cultural and social lifestyle.

This is when the athlete requires the least amount of help from any third party as he is at the peak of his career. Everything is taken care of for him. The time when the athlete does not believe that he will require any kind of help. It's his performance that he cares for and not his future.

It is during the later years of this stage where the help is required. That is when the athlete knows that his life as a sportsperson may not last forever. Even though he knows that he does not know what to do. He would hold on to all that he has in order to not let go of the moment. It's the fear of changing occupations without any guidance that makes the athlete vary of changing and thinking about his future.

4) The Decline Phase

If several attempts to remain in sport do not work efficiently or as expected, an athlete will have to make a crucial decision before his sporting career comes to an end.

Once the sporting career comes to end (in a life-cycle of an athlete) is when the decline begins. The athlete is normally not at fault for this. No one can be blamed for enjoying one's glory, fame and money but at this point, in every aspect, the decline begins. This is exactly the point where retirement and challenges are faced. The problems that occur during this phase will be stated.

5) Adaptation to a New Life phase

Does there need to be a decline before the athlete's new life begins or is this avoidable? This paper will try to answer this question and suggest a way of how to minimise the decline.

III. Retirement in the context of the Life Cycle

1) Definition and Special Aspects in sport

While usually retirement is defined by psychologists as "... the necessary manifestation of the mutual withdrawal of society and the aging population from one another."⁷, this is not the case in sports. Usually, retiring athletes clearly can not withdraw from society. They have to get back to society and a "normal life". Normal life in this context means holding a job and settling in one place. Their career transition happens from the sub – culture of elite athletes to the average social and cultural demands of life: „You are in a small world and you are going out to do something different.“, this is what Chris Witty, an Olympic Gold medallist said after she retired from her full - time sporting career as one of the United States finest ice skaters in early March 2007.

There are only a small percentage of competitors who can afford to retire for good after sport, because they were able to earn enough money and therefore can afford to live from their savings. Richard Bunn, Director of the UCI Academy Manchester, formulated this scenario as follows: "Not every athlete is a World Champion." In addition to this, retiring elite athletes are certainly not part of the aging population. Due to the fact that high level sporting performance demands strong physical skills and good health elite sportspersons are usually very young.

The only analogy between retirement from sport and labour force is that career changes are inherently negative events, requiring considerable adjustment.⁸ Although this assumption may be useful in drawing a parallel between successful retirements from the labour force and sport, it certainly does not explain the conversion process of retiring athletes from sport to normal life. Very few former athletes have a post career management plan or have attempted a business empire of a big scope. The few who had a plan are the ones who looked beyond their sport career and are engaged in proper business holding. Unfortunately, future planning, once their career is over is not a priority for the majority of sportspeople.

2) Reasons for Retirement

The reasons for retirement are divided "into two categories: retirements that are freely chosen and those that are forced by circumstances"⁹ out of the athlete control.

⁷ Kansas City Study of Adult Life in Sport Psychology, 2004

⁸ Lerche, 1981

⁹ W. M. Webb in Career Transitions in Sport, 2000

Under this main division there are a number of reasons why the athletes' sporting career comes to an end.

Different researchers¹⁰ have demonstrated that it is possible to divide the most common causal factors of the career ending into four categories: injuries, chronological age, deselection, and personal choice.

The involuntary reasons would include injury, age and deselection. These are the reasons that are not controlled by the athlete. He does not have an option but to retire under such circumstances. Injury is considered the most stressful reason for athletic career retirement, because it is something for which athlete are not prepared¹¹ regard retirement due to age as one of the most significant reasons because psychological motivation, social status, and physical capabilities can all complicate an athlete's ability to continue competing at a high professional level.

Regardless to their age athletes might have to retire due to involuntary reasons or may freely choose to disengage from competitive sport.

Deselection is related to physiological consequences or chronological age; it is the structural factor of failing to progress to the next highest level of elite competition.

Voluntary reasons happen when the athlete makes his own decision to end the career and this would include personal choice. Usually, as demonstrated by Wylleman, De Knop, Menkehorst, Teeboom, and Annerel (1993) with ex-Olympic Belgian athletes, many individuals freely elect to disengage from high level sport for a combination of personal, social, and psychological issues. There are a lot of reasons because of which the athletes may retire voluntarily from the sport career, such as: financial complications, lack of life or sporting satisfaction, or wanting to spend more time with their family, etc. Every person experiencing a retirement requires some degree of adjustment¹²; each athletes' adaptation to career termination is subjective.

As suggested from the conceptual model of career transition in sport of Taylor e Ogilvie's (**Figure 3**), a raft of interrelated variables (psychological, social, and structural) mediates the overall quality of adjustment.

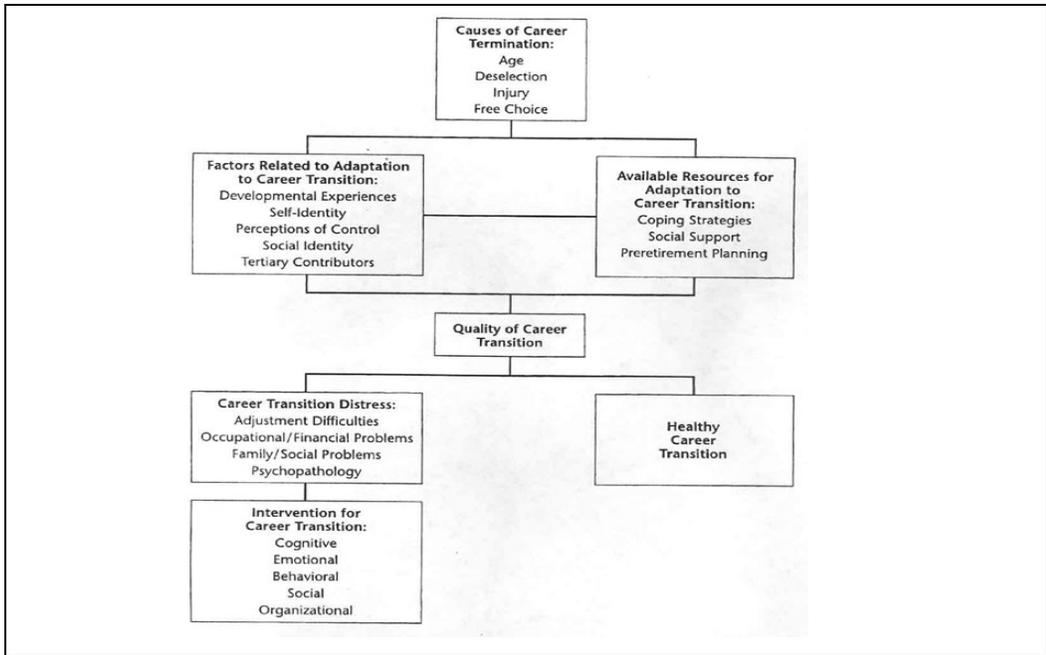
Usually it is said that involuntary reasons could create devastating and traumatic consequences for the adjustment. Studies suggest that injury-related retirement causes more adjustment problems than other retirement reasons do. Athletes that make the choice to retire voluntarily are not force, and are prepared and have already made a plan for their future.

¹⁰ Taylor & Ogilvie, 1993; S.M. Murphy, 1995; Werthner & Orlick, 1986

¹¹ Werthner & Orlick, 1986

¹² Lavallee D. (2000) Career Transition in Sport

Figure 3: A Conceptual Model of Career Transition (Taylor & Ogilvy, 2001)



A number of studies have suggested, retiring from sport is an inevitable source of emotional distress¹³ The adjustment and the difficulties that the athletes may go through during this period, play a fundamental role for the consequences of the transition. Each athlete is different and experiences the transition period, retirement and adjustment in their own way. The consequences may be both positive and negative. For one athlete it can be harder than for another playmate.

Some athletes are able to transfer their mental skills from sport to their new career or interest without any helps from third parties. They are aware of their personal qualities and they know how to develop those skills.

Other athletes may go into trouble, such as: depression, start using drugs and alcohol, suicidal tendencies, frustration, difficulties of adapt, inferiority complex, loss of social identity, ties with family and friends or identity crisis.

3) Doping as a reason for retirement

A subject of actual public interest is ending a sporting career after being suspended due to a doping offence¹⁴.

Doping is forbidden, controlled and sanctioned in the domain of sport today. The reasons for this are simple. One objective is, to provide fair competition and to respect ethical values such as medical ones,

¹³ Haerle, 1975; Mihovilovic, 1968; Weinberg e Around, (1952)

¹⁴ Please see Appendix for history

by giving treatments only in order to prevent or cure illnesses, rather than to create physical advantage. Another one is to protect the athletes' health, because doping can cause irreversible short and long term damage or even death.

Partly as a result of the FESTINA scandal during the 1998 Tour de France, the WADA was established in 1999 in Lausanne as an independent international anti – doping agency. Pursuant to the terms of the Lausanne Declaration its objective was to promote and coordinate the fight against doping in sport internationally. It was set up as a foundation under the initiative of the IOC with the support and participation of intergovernmental organisations, governments, public authorities, and other public and private bodies fighting against doping in sport. The agency consists of equal representatives from the Olympic Movement and public authorities.¹⁵

One of the most important achievements to date in the fight against doping in sport has been the drafting, acceptance, and implementation of a uniform set of anti-doping rules, the World Anti-Doping Code. It was applied by sport organisations in 2004 and by the governments no later than the first day of the Winter Olympic Games in Turin 2006.¹⁶ According to this WADA Code, doping is defined as:

“... the use of a (...) substance or method which is potentially harmful to athletes' health and/or capable of enhancing their performance, or the presence in the athletes' body (...) or evidence of the use thereof or (...) of the use of a Prohibited Method”.¹⁷

Consequences of a doping offence for the athletes' career

Doping in sport is mainly sanctioned by the sporting bodies. As part of the “Rules of the Game”, it is a subject which the National and International Federations are autonomously responsible for. Only in Italy, Spain and France is doping considered a criminal offence and therefore public authorities, in addition to the sport federations, have the legal base to act. Nevertheless, the authorities have not punished any athlete yet. The subject is also controversial, because it might lead to double standards of measurements, inside the sporting world and on the state level.

The sanctions of a doping offence are based on the WADA Code and enforced by the federations. While the first doping offence is sanctioned with a flexible suspension up to a maximum of two years, the second one leads to a life long suspension. The latter obviously equals termination of a sport career. But also the first suspension can end it, depending on the time span of high performance in certain sports and the age of an athlete. For instance, a 32 year old biathlete might be too old to maintain an elite level for two years out of any international competition.

¹⁵ www.wada-ama.org

¹⁶ List of Code Acceptance available at www.wada-ama.org

¹⁷ Art. 2 of the World-Anti Doping Code

Doping: a voluntary or involuntary reason of retiring from sport?

After studying the researches and analysis it is considered that there is one more reason for retirement from a sporting career: cheating.

As seen above, a doping suspension can lead to retirement from sport. Is it a voluntary or involuntary reason? While voluntary reasons are based on choice, involuntary reasons occur when the athlete does not have an impact on the timing of ending the sport career. Therefore the question arises, how to qualify the case, when an athlete has to retire because of suspension?

How does doping happen? Richard W. Pound, Chairman of WADA, put it this way:

“Understand this – doping in sport is almost never accidental. It is almost always planned and deliberate. It is carried out with the specific intention of enhancing performance, knowing that it goes against the rules of sport and that it is dangerous to the health of the athlete.”¹⁸

This leads to the assumption that doping is most of time done on purpose by the athlete.

Still, from an analytical and legal point of view there must be a differentiation between voluntary retirement from sport and an intentional doping offence.

In terms of causation, doping on purpose does not mean that an athlete is planning to end the career. The causation chain is not that simple. In fact, the interesting point about this is, that an athlete dopes because he wants to continue with elite sport on a high level. In any case, the athlete has the choice to do it, even if it is not intention but negligence towards the consequence of suspension and the risk of ending a career. The overriding question should be: “Can ending my career because of doping have an impact on my transition back into normal life?”

In summary it can be said, that even though ending a career due to doping is not intentional, an athlete should be prepared for this result. The existing doping prevention programs¹⁹ should therefore include this topic in their education for athletes. It is one of the consequences besides health problems and ethical issues and among those the one that could have the biggest impact on their personal life!

Consequences of retirement due to doping for the transition process

As already mentioned, the psychological consequences for an athlete who is not prepared to end a sport career are tremendous. In addition to this, the perception of a doped athlete in society is negative.

¹⁸ Pound, D. (2006), Inside Dope – how drugs are the biggest threat to sports, why you should care, and what can be done about them

¹⁹ For instance the UCI educational programs about anti-doping

Therefore networking for a new job during the transition process might be hard, especially in domains related to sport.

It also must be mentioned, that there could be legal consequences in countries such as Italy, which already included doping in their criminal codes. Last but not least – the impact of doping on athletes' health might limit the opportunities of a relatively pleasant transition into a new life after sport and also the options for a new career.

4) Where to locate retirement in an athlete's life cycle (Ideal stage)

The concept of retirement is an issue that goes further than just the loss of sport. It is often a difficult transition that affects athletes in several spheres of their lives. The athlete's life cycle is a natural consequence of experiencing previous stages during the development and decline of their careers. According to sports psychologist Romina Plataroti "in general, retirement will be more difficult for sportspeople with a strong identity as an athlete. Athletes who have been playing their sports from a very young age, who have made few friends outside of their sport, will probably struggle more than the athletes who spent more time developing other parts of him or herself".

Professional athletes --like any other person have to deal with a career retirement- have fears, insecurities and barriers during their professional sporting career. However, in most of the cases an athlete will try to defeat these obstacles from a very superficial perspective. They are more reactive rather than being proactive for the long term solutions and the internal conflicts that may arise. A person making a living from the professional sport ideally should have a clear concept that retirement comes earlier than the last day of practicing professional sport. As explained in **Figure #2**, the transition process starts at an early stage in the 'Athlete's Life Cycle' and requires a long process of redefining personal objectives and spending long periods of time in predicting both perspectives, economic and professional to see where and what would the ideal scenario be for that person once the "D Day" approaches.

Unfortunately, it is common in professional athletes not to have a 'Plan B' as backup to prepare themselves for a career transition process. Many examples in sport show that an adequate preparation, including education is one of the key success factors to live comfortably after the days in stadiums, hotels and training sessions are over. Romina Plataroti, who represented her home country Argentina as a gymnast in the 1992 Barcelona Summer Olympic Games, states "In 1994 I had finished high-school; then I began experiencing other interests away from sport. I felt that my phase as a gymnast was over. I was extremely satisfied with all my achievements in the sport, but I wanted to pursue a college career in Psychology and in general start to enjoy a new life without so many sacrifices, schedules, and

pressure. She knew that she will have to retire soon, and therefore did not want to experience an emotional crisis. She wanted to keep in mind her future endeavors. “I decided to prepare myself only until the Pan-American event in 1995 and then retire” this South American former Olympic athlete and now a sports psychologist says.

As observed above, an athlete needs to have a firm foundation prior to his leaving sport. The concept of retirement goes beyond the end of practicing sport at the professional level. Education should be a priority in the development of a sportsperson’s life. The last period of an athlete’s life cycle i.e. retirement will be less traumatic if the athlete has a good education level, and proper planning for departure is considered during the last stages of professionalism.

D. THE TRANSITION PROCESS

1. Psychological Models for Transition in Sport

Athletes’ sport careers and the transition from athletes’ sport careers into a life after sport has been a subject of increasing interest especially for psychologists for more than sixty years now. While in 1980 Mc Pherson²⁰ analysed, that 20 references could be found during an extensive literature search within the field related to an athletes’ career, Lavallee²¹ reported 270 related references in 2000.

In 1955 a pioneering examination by Bookbinder²² was done about careers of professional baseball players in the US. The outcome was that athletes are confronted with a wide range of psychological, interpersonal and financial issues during their career. Following this breakthrough, between the 1950s’ till 1980’s the focus was mainly on the psychological and social challenges of adaptation. It only recently shifted to the question of future alternatives for former athletes and how they can adapt into a normal social environment best. Several models have been outlined in the sport psychology literature.

1) Gerontology

Gerontology is `the systematic analysis ... of the aging process.²³ It combines biological, social and psychological components and concentrates on the mutual interaction between society and aged. Summarising the general idea, it tries to explain the life and activities of those who age successfully.

²⁰ McPherson, S.L. (1980) Retirement from Professional Sport: The Process and Problems of Occupational and Psychological Adjustment

²¹ Lavallee, D.and Wyllemann, P. (2000), Career Transition in Sport: International Perspectives

²² Bookbinder, H. (1955), Work Histories of Men leaving a short life span Occupation, Personnel and Guidance Journal

²³ Atchley, R.C., (1991), Social Forces and Aging: An Introduction to Social Gerontology

Sport Psychologists have therefore suggested that some of these models are applicable to sporting careers such as: activity theory, subculture theory, disengagement theory, continuity theory, social breakdown theory and social exchange theory.

In 1953 it was already suggested by Havinghurst and Albrecht²⁴ that individuals try to maintain the level of activities they are used to throughout their life span. If the adjustment of retirement is to be successful, the active roles that are lost upon retirement need to be substituted in order to keep some continuity. Although this might be true in normal life, in sports it is hard to implement. Even if elite athletes keep some of the activity patterns they had during their sport career, those are hardly to substitute outside the sporting world. The social breakdown theory by Kuypers and Bengston²⁵ is the youngest between the gerontology models. It analyses the cycle associated with the process of social reorganisation after retirement. It uses all the older gerontology models and states that individuals become increasingly liable to external evaluation and grouping after the loss of a retirement related activity. According to this, social judgement leads former athletes to reduce their involvement in sport until the activity is totally eliminated from their life. This theory has found much favour within the sporting community. In order to avoid such a decline, it is suggested that athletes should prepare for the redefinition of their objectives prior to their actual retirement!²⁶ In summary: being prepared for social reconstruction will help the athlete to maintain the self – image and keep him off a major psychological crisis, after the termination of the sport career.

2) Thanatology

Thanatology is the study of the process of death and dying. It was introduced by Park²⁷ in 1912. It has become a multidisciplinary science, including 62 different variables that influence a dying individual.²⁸ The sport psychology community has suggested that this model is helpful for sport in the areas of injury and retirement, especially the point of social awareness.²⁹ It still seems very strange to apply a science of death and dying to such an active life of athletes. Therefore the following models of transition seem to be much more applicable.

²⁴ Havinghurst, R.J. and Albrecht, R. (1953), *Older People*

²⁵ Kuypers, J.A., Bengston, V.L., (1973), *Social Breakdown and Competence: A Model of Normal Aging*

²⁶ Baillie, P.H.F. and Danish S.J., (1992) *Understanding the Career Transition of Athletes*

²⁷ Park, R. (1912), *Thanatology*, *Journal of the American Medical Association*

²⁸ Rando, T.A., (1986), *Loss and Anticipatory Grief*, Lexington, MA: Lexington Books

²⁹ Rosenberg, E. (1984), *Athletic Retirement as Social Death: Concept and Perspectives*

3) Recent frameworks related to transition

Whereas the Gerontology and Thanatology Models focused on single events in a life, the transition related studies describe a process.

Transition is defined by Schlossberg as an “event or non event, which results in a change in assumptions about oneself and the world and thus requires a corresponding change in one’s behaviour and relationships.”³⁰ For this model, three main components are important: the characteristics of the individual experiencing the transition, the perception of the particular transition, and the characteristics of the pre – transition and post – transition environments.

The individual characteristics herby are: sex, age, state of health, race, value orientation and previous experiences in similar transition processes. Regarding the second point, Schlossberg and colleges have suggested that role change, affect, source, duration and degree of stress are all important factors to consider. For the pre – and post transition environment the issues of importance of evaluation, institutional support and physical settings are crucial.

Using this guidelines, athletes from all over the world and different sports have been interviewed in order to collect some data.³¹ Wyllemann developed this idea in 2000 by using predictable transitions throughout the career of an athlete³²:

³⁰ Schlossberg, N. K., Waters, E.B. and Goodman J., (1995), `Counselling Adults in Transition: linking Practice

³¹ Parker, K.B. (1994), *Has - beens and Wonna – bees: Transition Experiences of Former Major College Football Players*, *The Sport Psychologist*

³² Adapted from Wyllemann; P. (2001), *Understanding the Roles of Coaches and Parents in the development of athletes*

Figure #4: Stages for a Professional Athlete according to the environment

Age	10	15	20	25	30	35
<i>Athletic level</i>	Initiation		Development		Mastery, Perfection	Discontinuation
<i>Psychological level</i>	Childhood	Adolescence		Adulthood		
<i>Psychosocial level</i>	Parents Siblings Peers	Peers Coach Parents		Partner Coach	Partner Coach	
Academic/Vocational level	Primary education	Secondary education	Higher education	Vocational training Professional Occupation		

This model (**Figure #4**) will be used in this thesis in order to find out how to simplify the transition process for the athlete’s best.

What one can learn from all the research that has been done is, that successfully aging in sports can only happen if a continuity level during the transition process can be maintained. This is due to the fact that major changes in life are usually experienced as negative events. Therefore an early adjustment is crucial. Adjustment is a relative term. It is both, internal and external process of an interacting individual with his environment.

As Darwin already said: “Life presents a continuous chain of struggle for existence and survivals.” Life is a continuous process of overcoming difficulties or of making adjustments. The problem of alteration is related to arriving at a balanced state between the needs of individuals and their satisfaction. The best adjusted individuals experience minimal changes and greater continuity following changes in their career³³. Within sport there is a special fact that the adjustment level can be predicted by examining the significance of sports careers to the athletes and their environment. The more meaningful it is considered to the athlete, the more difficult it is to adjust later on and prioritize important personal goals. During a sporting career, the goal of an athlete is success. This means maximising physical talent according to the demands (activity) as well as engaging into the structures of organised sport (network). After a sporting career the priority of individual goals is totally different. One has to focus on other activities (like jobs) and different social networks.

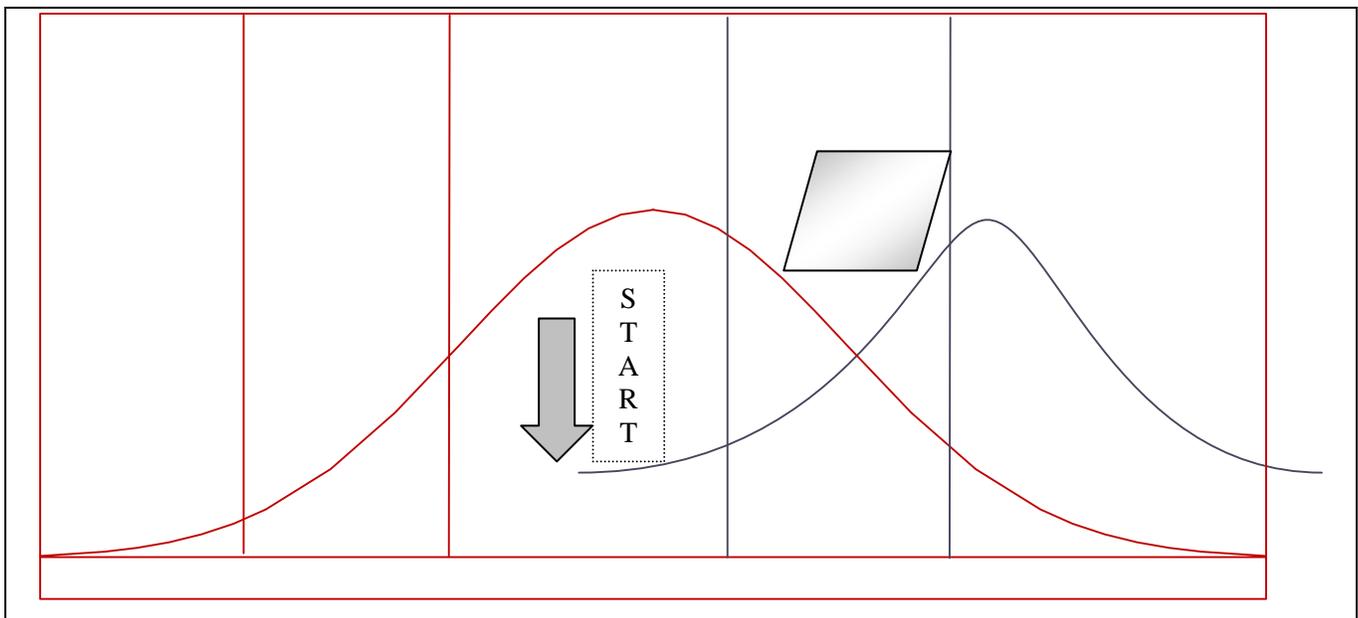
³³ Andersen, M. B. (2000) Doing Sport Psychology

This clearly shows why many athletes try to stay close to sport after terminating their career.. They hereby try to minimise the changes following the transition in order to keep more continuity in the network they have been using before. But at the same time it also shows that this is the consequence of missing alternatives and a lack of preparation.

As stated before, adjustment can not only be achieved by an individual who is trying to fit better into a new environment. It can also be done if the environment, in this case, the society, tries to adapt better to elite sports in order to prevent a social breakdown of athletes who dedicate their life to sport and the image of their countries, clubs and environments.

II. When does transition start?

Figure #5: The Process of Transition starts before Retirement in Sport arrives



It is difficult to define an exact moment when the transition begins in the life cycle of an athlete. All athletes have different reasons to retire at different ages.

A lot of explanatory models of career transitions are concerned with the stage of career termination and the beginning of a post career life. In many cases that is what really happens: athletes do not think of their future life until their career comes to an end. The termination of a high-level sport career, in most of the cases, is considered as a traumatic moment of the athlete's life. After a life that is dedicated to prepare training and competition and a life of success where they always think of the present and not of

the future, they discover that they have to start again from the bottom. From being a 'star', the athlete goes on to become a 'normal person' in a very short period of time.

To avoid and prevent this trauma, it is important to start the transition before the actual end of the sport career (as explained in **Figure #5**). The athletes during the phase of Mastery in Sport (high-level competition stage of their life) should start thinking about their future. It is a sacrifice because it means that not only do they have to concentrate in the preparation of matches and training but also to invest time and money in something that is not related to sport such as education. This could lead to the coaches and clubs not being too happy about the choice, because they consider it a distraction. In the majority of the cases the environment around athletes is concentrated on the present: obtain result and success.

This situation can be helpful only when an athlete decides to retire voluntarily. He is prepared and has the time to plan his future. As it is described in the topic above, the retirement from a sport career may be both: voluntary and involuntary.

Although the exact moment of when the transition begins or ends cannot be specified as this is subjective in terms of how the career of an athlete comes to an end, the fact that the athletes need to start thinking of their future before their career ends stands true. It cannot be emphasized enough that the athletes should not think of their 'post career life' once the sporting career has ended. There needs to be proper planning beforehand.

III. Challenges of Transition

The overshadowing aspect of this topic is that the athletes lose out on all the help that they had during the peak of their sporting career. There should be awareness of the fact that the glory and fame will not last forever. Even though some of the athletes are aware of that fact, they do not have anyone to turn to for help or guidance. There are a lot of internal and external obstacles that the athlete needs to overcome during the period of transition.

For this topic, we will concentrate on two main aspects.

1. Internal: Challenges that the athlete has control over and affects him in a certain way, personally.
2. External: Challenges that the athlete only has a limited control over, but is also environmental and social.

1) Internal Challenges

i. Personal:

Personal challenges that the athlete faces are with regard to his beliefs, attitudes, emotions, feelings, social and family ties and image. These are certain things that the athlete needs to deal with first. He faces the challenge of being able to be happy being himself and happy with the decision that he has made. He has to understand that his own attitudes and beliefs will undergo changes. Most of the athletes will not have the same kind of satisfaction, excitement and thrill that they went through while pursuing sport.

There will be compromises that need to be made. It is very important that there is acceptance on behalf of the athlete. There will always be a small percentage that never accepts the loss of their participation in sport, some take longer and some accept it immediately. The loss of physical and social status can be painful and becomes the "Achilles' heel" of the athletes' identity. The degree to which athletes derive their identity from their athletic roles often determines the intensity of the identity crisis they face at the end of their sport career.³⁴

ii. Health:

Another one of the internal challenges include health issues. Even though this is one of the last things that the athletes give importance to, there needs to be more awareness about it. The main reason why the athletes don't realize the importance of this is because during their career, they always had their own doctors, physiotherapists, etc. taking care of them while they didn't have to worry about their own medicines and work-outs. One of the other major issues is that, the athletes' bodies while they play sports is used to heavy and vigorous training. The body needs recovery time just as in a normal day's training; they need to 'warm-up' and 'cool-down' after the sporting career when they do not have any training sessions, they need a whole period of 'cooling down'. The athletes have to make sure that they keep exercising regularly so there are no 'sudden' changes that their body goes through.

Many retired players "have a rate of moderate to severe depressive symptoms similar to the general population," said lead researcher Dr. Thomas L. Schwenk³⁵. "But they also have a huge burden of chronic pain, from injuries and the stress of a professional sports career. The two interact to cause significant sleep disturbance and other miseries."

³⁴ <http://www.fepsac.com/module.asp?page=detail&XModuleId=8243&ProductId=2670>

³⁵ <http://www.healthday.com/Article.asp?AID=604116>

The physical health is a main concern as the athletes have a very strong and positive image about themselves when they are practicing sport but they need to be aware that it will not be the same once their career is over. Age is another factor that contributes to the problem.

The change from intensive physical activity to less or no activity may preoccupy athletes because of physical and psychological transformations they experience such as gaining weight, the loss of muscular mass or increased anxiety. Excellent physical condition becomes a nostalgic memory affecting the athlete's identity. Questions such as "Who am I?" and "What am I doing now?" often arise during this period of identity wavering. Former athletes who continue to be physically active feel more comfortable than those who become sedentary.

2) External Challenges

i. Financial:

Due to the income that the athletes are used to during their careers, the spending habits are high. They get habituated to the certain amount of money always being credited to their bank accounts. It is also important to note that some athletes do not take care of their bank accounts. Some have their agents or business managers doing the same for them.

This is one of the main challenges as the athletes need to start taking care of their finances. They have to start being conscious of what they spend, their bills and not to run up on their credit cards etc. Borrowing money is another problem. The athletes have the challenge of paying them back. These things could be dealt with only once the personal challenges are overcome. Here again, they can only spend the amounts that they did during their sporting career if they have the same amount of income through another source such as business or investments made during the sporting career. It is also important that during their sporting career the athletes realize that the things will not be the same and make smart investments.

ii. Occupational:

Athletes will not have an open mind about different career. They also have a mindset about what they can do and what they cannot. This is a major challenge as athletes need to transfer their skills and abilities to a new career. For this they need an objective and subjective analysis of their skills and abilities. Occupational challenge is the biggest one, however, this can be only met with once they athlete has accepted and overcome all the personal challenges.

Also, this challenge/obstacle cannot be met by the athlete alone. There needs to be a lot of help from third parties such as institutions and people who are specialists in this field.

E. EXAMPLES OF PROGRAMS TO SUPPORT TRANSITION

Thanks to the wide range of researches, theories and models, it is easier for sports organizations and federations to create post career programs.

There are important programs at the national and international level made by federations and associations. For example the IOC, FIS, and UCI are really active and involve in this field.

I. UCI Program

The UCI Academy was established in 2005 in collaboration with the World Academy of Sport. The academy is at its infancy stage. Sensing the need for the athletes and the people involved in the same industry to continue with their education while pursuing their career in sport, the UCI created this program.

The academy itself provides a wide range of educational programs for the athletes, cycling industry executives, managers and administrators. UCI's education model is very wholesome and detailed. They offer a number of degrees and certificates which range from sport specific, pre-university, university to industry. Its biggest achievement is the International Bachelor's degree which is recognized almost worldwide. The program is organized by the World Academy of Sport Manchester, UK. Athletes have a chance to enter in any of the above mentioned programs as long as they meet the educational criteria. Keeping in mind the life that athletes lead, the program is very flexible. They offer distance learning for the degrees over a period of three years. All the programs have a possibility of further education and enhancing the skills that the athletes and the executives possess. Furthermore, the programs are specifically tailored to the needs and demands of the current issues for the respective students, such as doping and nutrition. MBA and diplomas are also available for the students.

The detailed academic programs show that there is a lot of potential. The fact that all academic material is available in various languages and that the Academy itself is trying to adapt to the needs of the athletes proves the validity and the perseverance of this International Federation to succeed.

II. IOC Program

The Olympic Movement groups together all those who agree to be guided by the Olympic Charter³⁶. In order to study certain subjects and make recommendations to the Executive Board, the President of the IOC sets up specialised commissions. According to Rule 21 of the Olympic Charter: "An Athletes' Commission shall be constituted, the majority of whose members shall be athletes elected by athletes participating in the Olympic Games." Created on 27th October 1981, the Athletes' Commission is the link between active athletes and the IOC. It is composed of active and retired athletes, holds at least one meeting each year and meets regularly to issue recommendations.

During the first International Athletes Forum in October 2002, the concerns of making the transition from elite sport to normal life was an integral part of the discussions. The final recommendation was as follows:

“Self-marketing for athletes during and after their sporting career

- Athletes, especially young ones, should view “transition from sport” as a natural process in their life development and sporting experience, so that their role in society as sportsmen/women can move smoothly beyond the playing field.

- Athletes should not be forced to choose between sport and education.

- Active athletes should also be responsible for the education of young athletes.

- NOC’s and National Federations should recognise that they share the responsibility of assisting athletes in managing life after sport through guidance, education and other means of communication.

- IF’s must be conscious of scheduling requirements, not only for the health of athletes, but also to create opportunities for them to integrate into a post-sporting career life, using coaches, agents and teachers as part of that process.

- Resources provided to the athletes should include sharing information from government sources, compiling examples of the “best practices” of other Olympic partners, such as WOA and using elite athletes to assist with and develop athlete transition and education.”³⁷

³⁶ It includes the IOC, OCOGs, NOCs, IF’s, the National Associations, clubs and the athletes.

³⁷ www.olympic.org

As can be seen from the quotation above, one of the Forums` recommendations was that NOC`s and IF`s should recognise that they share the responsibility of assisting athletes in managing life after sports through guidance, education and other means of communication. In February 2005 this dream of the athletes became reality. The IOC in close cooperation with Adecco, launched the “Athlete`s Career Program” (ACP). The parties signed a contract which is valid until the 31st of December 2008. Its objective is to facilitate athletes` transition to the labour market. The Adecco Group, the worlds largest Human Resources Services Company first started a program with the Spanish NOC in 1999. Ten NOCs were selected to take part in this program initially. The current member countries are: Denmark, Finland, Germany, Hungary, Italy, Mexico, Norway, New Zealand, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Slovenia, South Africa, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, and USA. Targeted countries for expansion are: Australia, Canada, Croatia, Czech Republic, Great Britain, France, Japan, Korea, Morocco, Netherlands, Singapore, and Uruguay.

1) ACP Mission & Vision

The program is to be delivered at no cost to the NOCs and the athletes.

According to the ACP Fact sheet, from the 25th of May 2007, provided by N. Laine – the IOC Project Manager of the ACP structure, the mission of ACP is:

“ ...to develop, manage and deliver core career content and job placement support on a global basis, that has been customised to meet local requirements. On a regular basis maintain a improvement process to ensure that the process delivers value to the athletes through cooperation of the IOC, Adecco, the NOCs and other program stakeholders.”

2) Methodology

Adecco is relying on 20 dedicated teams around the world, as well as a personalised methodology incorporating professional evaluation, career planning, support and finding employment. Elite athletes of the member NOC`s can apply through a registration form online.

The program it is a two phase program: the first part is a career development track that combines a transition Career Seminar (self analysis, CV, cover letters), Personal Analysis (first interview with career advisor) and Professional Preparation (second interview about professional profile, necessary training, personal development plan). This is supported by an online program designed by Lee Hecht Harrison (a transition specialist). During this process there is also a list used which was created during

the 2nd International Athletes Forum in Lausanne 2005. Athletes from different sports were asked to compose a list of skills that in their opinion are often developed or needed both in the world of international sport and in the world of business. They listed 30 skills of which every single athlete, who wants to participate in the ACP program, should identify personal skills out of this list³⁸.

The second track of the program is job placement. Athletes are now introduced to Adecco clients and kept on a candidate database. The company became a founding member of Business and Disability in 2004. This is a network of European companies, supporting disabled persons access to the labour market. Hereby the company gains experience in the field job searching for handicapped people which might be helpful in the transition process for Paralympians as well.

Adecco's CEO Dieter Scheiff said: `Sports competition requires an extensive personal investment from athletes that leaves them limited time to prepare for their professional life. This is where we come in and offer our expertise.

III. Other programs

In the USA, programs to help athletes in various areas of their academic and athletic careers, including termination, are organized in many colleges and universities. This is due to the equal importance given to education and sport in the universities.

“NCAA has set forth the CHAMPS/Life Skills program to support the academic progress of the student-athlete towards intellectual development and graduation. Every affiliated institution has a CHAMPS/Life Skills coordinator who is a faculty member of that institution and functions as an on-site representative of the program. One of the specific sections of this program is commitment to career development. This segment of the program helps the student-athlete look ahead to his or her future after college. Since the vast majority of student-athletes do not continue in their sports after college, this section helps them prepare for the next step and pursue career goals”³⁹. The program is designed to address athletes developmental needs based on their year in school, address the idea of "life after sports", and help the student understand that many lessons learned through playing sports can be applied to life.

Positive Transitions for Student-Athletes is a program designed for the psycho-social and career-related issues surrounding the college sport retirement transition. The Positive Transitions Sport Retirement

³⁸ Wyllemann; P. (2001), Understanding the Roles of Coaches and Parents in the development of athletes

³⁹ The NCAA News, 2003

Model is a research-based, systematic framework grounded in reality therapy that holds student-athletes responsible for addressing sport retirement and for not dwelling on "what could have been"⁴⁰

The model uses athletic transferable skills as a teaching tool (e.g., goal setting, communicating effectively with team mates) to assist student-athletes in building confidence in their skills and abilities beyond sports (ibid). The three interrelated components: identity development, athletic transferable skills, and career exploration, are addressed in a 2-credit hour, 10 week course. The course includes (a) exploring identity, values, personality, and interests; (b) learning athletic transferable skills, such as goal setting and communication and decision making skills; and (c) exploring career issues such as professional networking, informational interviewing, resume writing, and job interviewing (ibid). Stankovich performed an evaluation study on 139 athletes who completed the course and summarized the findings, which revealed an increase in career maturity, an increase in confidence in career decision-making skills, and an increase in readiness to retire from sports.

The University of Missouri at Columbia has a new program for athletes named "Life after Sports" "which focuses on career coaching, sports transition and job placement to current and former student-athletes"⁴¹. An alumna and former All-American gymnast, Julie Dorn-McBride, and her husband Adrian McBride, a former college and NFL football player, created the company "Life after Sports". Together they use their practical knowledge from the world of high-level athletics to help current and former athletes navigate the potentially rough path from the college and professional ranks to the real world. They have a specific program for the athletes-student business arena. Athletes are encouraged to get involved with this program as soon as they begin their athletic career at the University of Missouri. They are given a questionnaire to complete to provide background information, career objectives, and thoughts about planning for the future. The athlete is coached in career building goals and skills, assisted with sports transition issues, and in some cases given the opportunity to begin an internship or career with a network of employers sought out specifically to be a partner in this program and to help athletes get work experience⁴² Due to the stringent schedules required during college athletic careers, athletes tend to graduate from college with very little real world work experience. This can put them at a disadvantage when competing for jobs against non-athlete graduates who may have had jobs or internships that provided working experience prior to graduation. Although this is a new program, the hopes are that it will become a model for developing programs to assist athletes with their transitions at universities nationwide.

⁴⁰ Stankovich, Meeker, & Henderson, (2001) Career Transitions in Sport: International Perspective.

⁴¹ www.lifeaftersports.org

⁴² Additional information available at www.lifeaftersports.org. Missouri, USA

In USA again there is another program called “Mentor Management Systems”⁴³ founded by Jerry Sherk. After a twelve-year career with the Cleveland Browns, he dedicated his current career to finding ways to help athletes achieve a successful and spiritually-rewarding life during retirement. Sherk returned to graduate school and earned a Master's degree in counselling. Mentoring, according to Sherk, is a way to bring together players who have made a successful retirement transition with current players prior to their retirement. By sharing their wisdom and assisting current players to articulate and plan for their vision of a post-career life, mentors can provide the support and guidance necessary to help players approach post-career life challenges with the same talent, fervour, determination and skill they used on the playing field.

There is a program called “Life-skill program for athletes”, or also known as “Athlete career and educational program”, based on a tour of countries that had made progress in this area. The majority of research that has been undertaken on life-skill programs for elite athletes has been carried out in the United States, United Kingdom, Canada and Australia. Programs have been located in the periphery of the infrastructure of elite sport given limited funds, and not strongly promoted with athlete and coaches.

These are programs designed to develop social, educational, and work-related skills in elite athletes. They can include career counseling that help athletes identify an area of interest for a post-sport career and directs them to appropriate avenues of training for jobs in that field. Other services in those programs include the development of generic social and interpersonal skills that can help the athletes present themselves well in interviews and perform well in job. Programs often emphasize the potential for athletes to transfer the skills they have developed in sport into other area of life.

In the United Kingdom there is a company called O.P.E.N.⁴⁴ (*Olympic and Paralympic Employment Network*). It is part of the British Olympic Association, UK Sport and British Paralympics Association committed to providing support programs to athletes and coaches with the aim of making them more successful. These programs encourage a balanced approach to sporting success and an easier transition to life after sport.

⁴³ www.mentorms.com

⁴⁴ www.bluearrow.co.uk/open

IV. FIFA

FIFA stands at a unique position to contribute, in an active, honest and non-paternalistic way, for the development and education in ways that no other sports organization can. FIFA with more members than the United Nations, added to many facts, such as no single FA having veto power and clearly controlling its policies. It gives FIFA more legitimacy than any other international organization.

FIFA counts on an increasing budget for development, and the spillover effects are visible, particularly in some poor countries. For instance, the FUTURO III pro-active course programs focus on the education of member association instructors in the topics of coaching, refereeing, administration and management and sports medicine. Participants in this program are expected to be actively teaching in their member associations, both before and after the course. Wherever possible, the workshop should be held in Goal Project or Financial Assistance Program (FAP)-financed facilities.

According to the 2006 FIFA Annual Report, FIFA counts with a US \$157 million per year for development programs. Out of that amount, only a 19% is assigned for specific education programs. Currently, football's ruling body does not consider courses for its main actors a priority. A CSR department was recently created by FIFA but more with a social purpose, not for the aid of the sport's major actors. FIFPro, the collective international voice of the world's professional footballers was founded in 1965. There are just 42 active country members associated with it out of 208 FA members in FIFA). Its programs cover legal and commercial topics for footballers. It supports them in disputes but no education processes exist.

Football is no longer considered just a global sport, but also as unifying force whose virtues can make an important contribution to society. FIFA uses the power of football as a tool for social and human development, by strengthening several initiatives around the world to support local communities in the areas of infrastructure, health, and social integration.

F. BEST PRACTICES OF EXAMINED PROGRAMS & GENERAL CHALLENGES

As can be seen from the examples above there are various programs all over the globe to support the transition process of athletes after sport.

It is difficult to choose “a best practice” project. Each program tries to adjust to the social and cultural background of their region, the level of sport organisation where they are implemented regional, national or international. Even their objectives differ. While some mainly focus on education, others try to build networks or support university sport.

Since the improvement of transformation after professional sport is being tackled –the biggest remaining challenge is how to motivate the athletes to take this subject seriously while not considering it to be negative for the sporting career. Most of the time the support provided is perceived as a threat rather than a chance.

The best practice of the above examined programs will be summarised in order to learn from each experience.

To analyse the UCI program, one of the most important things to be learnt from the research is that they have put a lot of thought in to the program and really felt the need to establish it. The first 50,000 CDs were sent out for free to all the national associations. “That is the kind of ‘push’ required so that the athletes start their education

The next level of education will be paid by the athletes themselves. The program will be available in all languages as per requests from the national associations. Also, with the technology available these days, the athletes need not sit in classes in order to study. The material is readily available for the athletes as and when they want to study. Since the athletes are always on the move, they need the distance learning programs so that they can study as and when the time permits”⁴⁵

As soon as any International Federation gets into a partnership with Manchester World Academy, all their members (NF’s) of the International Federations are registered automatically. Up to date, 161 NF’s are registered with the UCI Academy.

The one thing that UCI has done best is to have ‘tailor-made’ programs such as free first level education, automatic enrollment of NF’s, easy availability and accessibility, availability of courses in different languages (mother tongue), and Executive Programs.

When it comes to the ACP program, launched by IOC and Adecco in 2005, it clearly has to be said that the biggest asset is the global network.

While the program is an international one it is practised in local offices who know there environment. This guarantees regional adaptation while the main bodies are centralised in order to work efficiently. The coordination is done within the IOC by the ACP management team. This body has members from the IOC as well as from Adecco which guarantees a very good communication as well as high-quality

⁴⁵ Interview with Mr. Richard Bunn. June 2007

knowledge exchange. Those are the most important tools to improve the program steadily, as stated in the ACP vision.

The second point that is outstanding is that the program is provided to the athletes and the NOCs for no cost.

On top of this, 1,000 athletes have already been successfully placed into employment contracts on the labour market. It should also be mentioned that the effort to integrate disabled people into the job placement process can also be helpful to reintegrate Paralympic athletes.

In most of all the “other existing programs”, the average age to attend the programs is 17 years. Starting when the athletes are still very young is a very important point to be considered. The goals of CHAMPS/Lifeskill and Life after Sports are not to trivialize anyone’s athletic abilities but to build on those skills and traits that the athletes already possess such as commitment, confidence, teamwork, problem solving, and the pursuit of excellence to help match the goals of student/athletes to those of other companies.

In the “Mentors Management System”, the best practice includes the guidance given to the athletes by former players. It gives a touch of reality as those former athletes can impart the real/life experiences to the young players.

FIFA’s development areas are planning and modernization of the game (FAP, GOAL Project, Football for Hope, Futuro III, etc.). It provides tangible benefits for all its FA members. Considering the fact that FIFA pays attention to CSR, it is striking that there is no established post-career program for the athletes. FIFA in a joint venture with FIFPro could design and implement education plans in the future for the main characters in the sport: active and retired footballers.

G. PLAN B CONSULTANT PROGRAM

I. Objective

The objective of the “Plan B Consultant Program (CP) is to connect the existing career transition programs with athletes in a better manner. It aims to use the best practises from other programs, while closing the gap between the active athletes and their first step towards participating in those transition programs. A specialised education should be provided for professionals from a tailored background by implementing a certification degree at the NOC level. Those consultants should guide athletes within a specific region by supporting them just like physicians in their teams during their sporting career. In this way there is a maximum chance to get to know them, use the knowledge learned in the Plan B

consultant course and prepare and assist them during transition in order to have a smooth landing from elite sport into normal life.

A consultant would be successful if he identifies the personal skills of the athlete and is able to help the athlete to transfer those into his new job. The athletes have a lot of transferable skills like for example: interpersonal, team related, leadership, self-assurance, ambition, ability to perform under pressure, and adaptability.

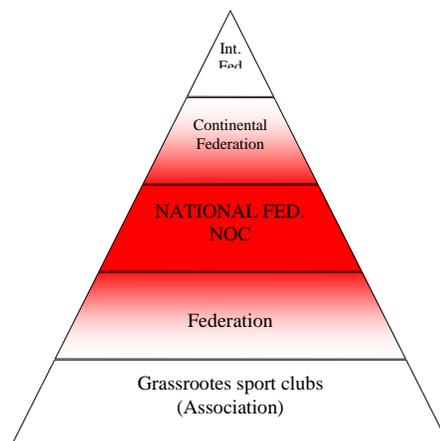
II. Levels of Implementation

1) Why & Where to implement the program?

Another interesting question is where to implement the consultant program. First of all the choice between the free market and the sport organisation pyramid has to be made. Since the domain of sport is structured in detail in order to administer and promote sport around the globe, this program should be part of the network and not be offered externally.

Considering the facts that the athlete is the core object but the sport network is also important, the most efficient way would be to establish the program on a national level. The reasons for this are simple: Within the sporting structure there are different levels on which the idea could be implemented:

Figure #7: Organizational Structure of Sports

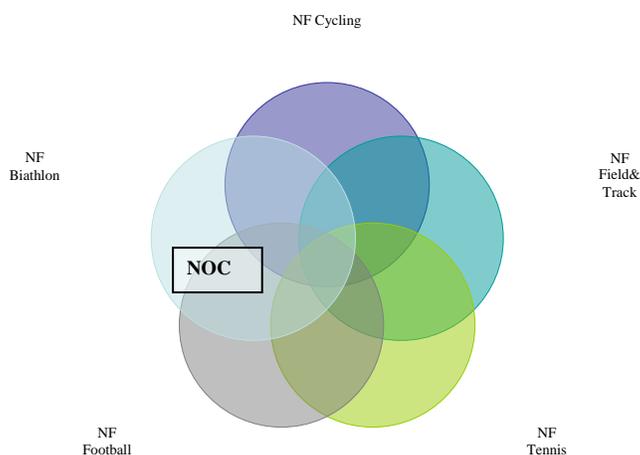


As it can be seen on **Figure #7**, the national federation level is most central one within the structure. On the one hand it is easier to network with the lower levels of federations and clubs (base of the athletes). On the other hand a close link to the continental and international sport federations can be

maintained. It is also important that the CP is applied on a national level due to the cultural, social, political, ethical, and economic aspects. At the national level the dynamics and the structure of the country are better understood.

It would be best to choose the NOC as the organisation for implementation. It combines many different sports and is an administrative body that knows well about the federations. In this way a maximum number of athletes of different sports can be reached. Please refer to **Figure #8** which shows the graph that includes an example of the NOC 's member federations

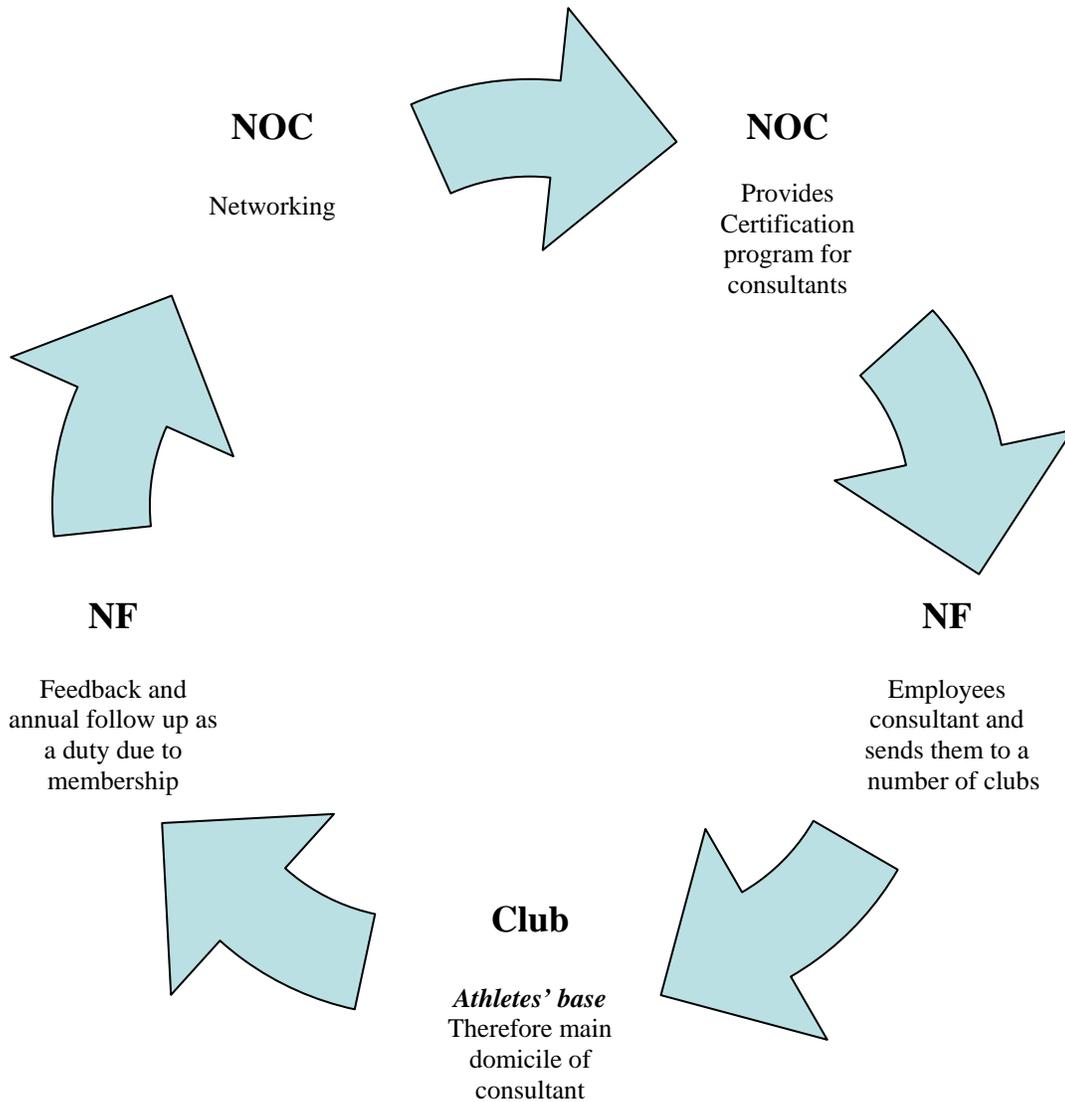
Figure #8: Co-relationship between a National Olympic Committee and member federations



In order to provide the best possible support, the consultants should be integrated within one national federation each. In this way they know the positive sides as well as the challenges of a specific sport best, and can therefore understand the athletes better.

Within the federation they should be responsible for a certain number of clubs in which they provide their advice. The idea is similar to a club physician who takes care of a certain number of athletes in clubs. Those again have to give feedback and follow ups to the NF's, which then provide the data to the NOC in order to improve, develop and adjust the consultant program and network.

Figure #9: Key tasks of the CP Implementation



2) When & How to implement the program?

To implement the Plan B CP it is important to have a strategy, the right moment, date and a place. That is why the “When” to launch the Program is vital; the first presentation will be made at a big event, where all the federations are present. The launch of the Plan B programs will be made at the annual General Assembly meeting of the IOC. The program will need the advantages that a unique event like this will provide. During the IOC meeting, a few minutes will be dedicated to the program and a special session will be created after the General Assembly to explain the rest of the details.

The objective of Plan B Consultant Program is to work through the NOC's but for the launch it is important to have an international platform, to have the maximum reach. In addition, it is the only occasion where there is a possibility to cover almost all sports. This will be the first and official presentation, but the General Assembly will become an annual occasion where the Plan B programs will organize workshops, present reports with the feedback of the previous year and the news and additions for the next one. It will also be the event where the federations and NOC's can give their suggestions and complaints.

Following the official presentation five workshops, one for every continent, will be organized. It is another "unofficial" presentation, at an international level to reinforce the programs to all the federations.

After these "big events", Plan B CP will be presented at all the international and national events such as World Championships, Olympics, Italian Championship of Athletics, etc. Plan B CP will be presented in every single event to promote and to spread the programs to make sure that in every country, in every sport and at every level Plan B is known.

To summarize, Plan B will start with knowledge and awareness at the international level but will be implemented at the National level and all the information will be available at the majority of the sport events.

Of all the aspects PLAN B CP is connected to, perhaps the most important is the one related to the means and processes of how to implement it. To put in practice the suggested program, firstly each NOC may apply the guiding principles coming from the major sports ruling body, in this case the IOC. To execute the program inside the NOC, an Administrator needs to be appointed so he acts like the direct responsible working as the link between the head consultants (who will be concerned with the different coaching methods), and the NOC contacting the sport federations nationwide. The Administrator, a key character, will be the only tie with the IOC (and the program's regional offices in a long-term action plan) to execute the vertical instructions, always with the support and approval by the President and Executive Committee members of the NOC.

Two key aspects to be considered at this point are: the executive in charged of being the contact person must be a member of the Athlete's Department of the NOC and have a strong relationship with the Development Department (if any exists on the local basis). The other matter to be considered is that the person responsible for the expansion of the program must have important networking of contacts at all levels involved in the sport. Not only he/she will need to be in permanent contact with the different sport federations and associations, but mainly with clubs and athletes that will be the target market to provide education to prepare them for a better future after the sporting career.

When designing the transition consultants program, the local Administrator will be implementing the guidelines having in mind a business notion like one of a major beverage multinational: “Act global but think local”. Not every NOC will be able to implement the program at the same time and conditions.

There has to be an awareness drive and a solid marketing plan behind it. Promotion at all levels in the structure of the national sport industry is required. Perhaps the program can be launched through an “All-Sports Week” event having different sport disciplines practiced in one same city. Besides all the NOC’s and federations’ representatives and officials, specialized media and industry’s executives will be learning what this entire program is about. As a long-term aim, the number of consultants should raise depending on how well the CP is perceived. Consequently, there will be a larger number of athletes benefiting from this Program.

There is the possibility of creating an internal network (intranet) so all the federations involved send a report of all the activities held during that period.

III. Requirements to become a Transition Consultant

The target group to attend the CP would be people that have already obtain a degree in Psychology, Law, Management, Communication or Sport and have some practical experience as well. They could be internal federation employees, club representatives, coaches, formal players, as well as external applicants, as long as they meet the criteria.

It is important to have a group of consultants with different skills and capabilities to acquire the best possible results, so that they can work as a team and put all the strengths together, sharing and exchanging suggestions, in order to obtain the best success working with the athletes. Even though the consultants come from various backgrounds, eventually they are on the same side of the medal.

IV. Curriculum for CP

1) Communication Program

Communication is defined by the National Joint Committee for the Communicative Needs of Persons with Severe Disabilities, (1992, p. 2) as

"any act by which one person gives to or receives from another person information about that person's needs, desires, perceptions, knowledge, or affective states. Communication may be intentional or unintentional, may involve conventional or unconventional signals, may take linguistic or non-linguistic forms, and may occur through spoken or other modes."

Communication is a process that allows people to exchange information by one of several methods. There are auditory means, such as speaking or singing, and nonverbal, physical means, such as body language, paralanguage, touch or eye contact.

Communication occurs on many levels (even for one single action), in many different ways, and for all beings, and some communication means.

It is fundamental for the promotion of the values of humanity and society. Communication is the basis of human relations. Sport is a leading example where these values are applied; it therefore plays an important role for sporting entities and initiatives. So giving athletes an awareness of the techniques and skills of the same would deliver enormous value to them.

Why communication is important for athletes:

Communication is important for athletes not only after the end of their sporting life but, first of all, during their own professional sporting career. It is fundamental for athletes to understand this, given they remain in contact with a changing and multifaceted environment which includes various interest groups. They are constantly moving within a large network composed not only of teams, clubs, federations, supporters, but also of many different representatives of the world of media. This is often hard and difficult for sport people to appreciate, because they generally do not have the experience of dealing with the media: and therefore being able to pick up communication skills could be a very helpful tool for them.

A strong basis in general communication skills that enable athletes to develop their awareness and response to different circumstances would be of tremendous value to them. This could, for instance, be helpful in strengthening the relations that they must face in the team with others athletes, coaches, clubs, and staff and also with the media. Often athletes face difficulties not only when they find themselves in front of a microphone, speaking and dealing with the media networks, but also when they deal with their own team-mates. Alternatively they may be emotionally introverted which would prevent them from easily opening themselves to others; this can result in serious communicational problems with coaches and/or colleagues. More so, this could also result in a negative effect on their sporting performance. In essence, developing good, direct and clear communication with the people who surround them is one of the main elements that enable athletes to obtain good results. To do this, athletes must understand what it takes and be familiar with the act of communicating and transmitting their views correctly to others. This is particularly important given athletes often find themselves in the

glare of the public eye. They must be able to deliver their thoughts, messages, or information, using either speech, signals, writing, or specific behaviour; this type of interpersonal rapport can eventually help them master the art and techniques of using words effectively to impart information or ideas.

This kind of knowledge can also prove helpful for exceptional athletes who move on to become the future professional figures who act as key role models in the world of sport from a technical point of view, eventually serving as educators or coaches. By mastering communication skills, they will be able to communicate the fundamental formative, social and ethical values of sport.

Athletes who express strong attitudinal skills and good capabilities in this area have the option to then continue to train themselves with more specific studies in communication. They could help others find a more effective way to simplify their transition from a sporting career to life after sport or even choose to specialize in this area as a job for their future.

The job of Plan B is to create professional consultants with exceptional communication skills who are able to understand if an athlete has the right profile to transfer their own skills to the world of communication.

Once trained by the consultants, the athletes would be able to put their experience to manage sporting events and initiatives, as well as in fostering relations with the people around them. The intention is for such people to be able to effectively use all the opportunities provided by new developments in media and technology.

To obtain the best results, and help athletes become future professional figures; the consultants must be highly specialized in communications and able to understand the athletes well. They should be able to understand how to use their specific knowledge to help train the athletes by giving them the right inputs. The Program intends to create a training course for our consultants in communication divided into two different modules, and these are sub-divided once again into 4 sections as follows.

Module One: Knowledge of basic skills, public relations and network

First section:

- Introduction to Communication
- Public Relations: (with all the network including: the press, team, television, supporters, other athletes and themselves)
- Sociology of Mass Communication

Second section:

- Law of Communication and Information

- Branding and Advertising
- Strategy of Communication
- Communication Marketing

Module Two: Specialization in Communication

Third section:

- Theory and Methodology of Mass Communication
- Theory and Methodology of New Media and New Technologies
- Theory and Methodology of Journalistic and Broadcasting languages
- Events' Communication

Fourth section:

- Graphic Design for Communication
- Elaboration and Composition of texts
- Digital Writing
- Visual and Interaction Design
- Journalism

There are three key learning objectives that our consultants must learn and strive to make part of their thought process. These are: Strategy of Communication, Values (as fundamental elements of sport culture) and Languages (as a tool for approaching the communication of sport).

These are the essential notions that we hope our consultants will be able to transmit and place into the mind of our athletes.

2) Psychology Program

As the previous research suggests, psychology is a critical and main aspect of the transition challenge. One could have the best career and financial situation but if he or she has any kind of mental issue, the career or the money will not be of any help.

The CP consultants need to have a thorough knowledge about how to help athletes overcome any kind of trauma or emotions about dealing with their career coming to an end and then help them figure out what they want to do in their future life.

For the Psychology Module that the consultants will be studying, Plan B CP has its own strategy. As there is no special criteria for the consultants to be psychologists or psychiatrists, the module itself has to be simplified and yet complete in everyway.

The psychology module will cover only what is important for the consultants to help the athletes. During this section, Plan B has developed a simple strategic plan that will help the consultants in assisting the athletes to move into their new lives.

The process will include three steps and each one has to be dealt with care and enough time. The name of the process is “SAG”⁴⁶.

STABILITY



ANALYSIS



GUIDANCE

Stability: In terms of dealing with the trauma of giving up something that the athlete loved. The consultant has to make sure that the athlete’s state of mind is normal and is not affected in anyway. Once it has been established that the athlete is mentally “stable” the consultant can move on to the next step.

Analysis: The consultant should have enough tools and knowledge to analyse the personal capabilities, skills and interests of the athlete apart from the sporting skills. There are two types of analysis that the consultant will need to conduct.

-Objective Analysis: This is when the consultant looks into what already exists. It includes qualifications, degrees and experience.

-Subjective Analysis: The interests and skills of the athlete that are not on paper or certificates have to be found. This analysis requires certain tools and tests that are used in psychology. It is important that the next step, i.e. the Guidance is given based on the objective and subjective analysis of the athlete.

⁴⁶ Developed by Miss Pooja Parikh

Guidance: It will be the consultant's job to come up with suggestions and options so that the athlete has a better understanding of what he is capable of doing; therefore, the athlete can look into appropriate fields for the post-career job.

First Section: Introduction

Importance and Scope of Psychology as a subject

Why the psychology module is being taught

Psychological terms

Overview for the next sections

Second Section: Problems

Getting familiar with mental or psychological problems.

Consultants should be fully aware of what kind of problems the athletes may go through.

Every psychological problem that we have mentioned in our research will be explained.

Symptoms of these problems will also be discussed in detail as there are times when the athlete himself may not be aware that he has a problem.

Third Section: Help

The consultants will learn about how to help the athletes in overcoming these issues.

Even if the consultant feels that he cannot help enough, he should be aware about whom he could send/refer the athlete to, such as a doctor or a psychiatrist.

Fourth section: Analytical Tools

There are numerous psychological tests used to see each individual's aptitude and intelligence. The consultants will be taught how to use the tools and analyse the results and scores. Examples of some basic tools are: IQ tests, Aptitude and Achievement tests, and personality tests. This section will end with Career Counselling guidance where in each consultant will be taught how to give sound career advice based on the analysis.

Each consultant will be vigorously tested on all of the above sub-modules.

End Note: Once the consultants have passed the test, they will be regularly provided with materials and up-to-date information about new tests and problems as and when they arise. It is important that the consultants follow up on their knowledge in order to help the athletes in the best possible way.

3) Management Program

A Business Management course will be implemented for the consultants' coaching program. This will prepare the coaches to teach the national federations representatives (and subsequently to the athletes and sportspeople) for positions of leadership in business and sport administration in the local, national, and international arenas. Emphasis will be put on the basic principles in which the economy gives a business person tools to assume productive roles.

The main goal in this module is to produce graduates who have the administrative skills, necessary tools to solve problems, methods to research, and professional business standards at all levels of management, including small business and corporate levels. This module within the executive education program will work for athletes as a bridge with the real business world outside the sports field and will be divided into five different areas of study:

- Management & Entrepreneurship
- Economics
- Marketing
- Finance
- Information Technology

First Section: Management & Entrepreneurship

After their professional retirement, athletes sometimes may want to start their own project with the savings base accumulated during their sporting life. This general introduction is mostly designed for athletes who have in mind to start and manage their own business. Sportspeople as any other person involved with business need to assimilate and use knowledge from abroad, and be aware of personal, economic, and organizational changes that take place elsewhere.

Luis Fernando Saritama -- a 23 years old footballer of Ecuador's National Team and a Business Management undergraduate student himself- mentions: "In a globalized economy and in the world of

sports where everything is interconnected, athletes must have an ability to think beyond the borders of just one country or region”.

This sub-module of the Plan B CP may include lectures and workshops in topics like: principles of small business/entrepreneurship, operations management, organizational development, effective leadership, health administration, human resources management, strategy in business, wage control, and comparative/cultural management.

Second Section: Economics

The sports industry involves several stakeholders like clubs, players, leagues, broadcasters, sponsors, event promoters, agents, among many others. “Economics uses the idea of maximizing behavior to provide a unified framework for studying human action”⁴⁷. The curriculum for the Economics sub-module will be implemented to give students an understanding of the economic theory and its application to a broad range of behavior in society.

Macro and micro-economics principles may be reviewed through case studies to show practical examples. A sportsperson needs to know basic concepts to be able to start and maintain a savings base not only during his active stage, but also throughout the post-retirement. Due to a lack of economics knowledge, there have been many cases in sport celebrities that have lost an important part of their assets like footballers Diego Maradona and Mané Garrincha or the American boxers George Foreman and Mike Tyson.

Third Section: Marketing

Companies and professional athletes themselves have many options of how to structure their links with sports, a growing niche in marketing, when looking to promote their products in a specific market or services and target accurately their customer needs. According to the Harvard Business School, the marketing function is “to study, analyze, and provide solutions about markets; potential needs, desires and behavior of customers; and the commercial role of organizations”. In addition, it organizes and monitors the distribution of products or services from a company to customers.

Management initiatives and revenue growth through the sport industry need to be analyzed in this sub-module. Federations and clubs explore new ways to bring additional income from events, merchandising, and ticket gates. The branding of an athlete is an increasing sector in sports management; here, overlapping factors are considered like the popularity of the sport, individual skills, winnings, charisma, and recognition from the public. Among others, topics will include advertising

⁴⁷ G. Foster (2006). *The Business of Sports*

campaigns, sponsorship, endorsements, club marketing, brand management and association, and image and promotions development.

Fourth Section: Finance

Financial tools, analysis and evaluation are key factors of many stakeholders in sports management, and of course an athlete is not out in this field. The Finance Sub-module will prepare the transition consultants and later the athletes, for the most critical areas of decision making in finance. Basic mathematic principles and business planning need to be understood by an athlete in order to manage his career.

Routine activities dealing with finance usually include signing contractual documents; personal banking (savings, loans, percentage fees); long-term investment; buying assets like a house, car, or getting a personal and family insurance policy. Also, project management, and a very brief introduction to accounting may be seen in this Finance sub-module within the executive coaching program.

Fifth Section: Information Technology

Currently professional athletes are in contact with computers on a day to day basis. Sportspeople need to concentrate during long periods of training and high competition, so surfing the internet or emailing with coaches, agents, family and friends becomes a routine for them as they need to travel. Information technology and computers are part “of a change needed because the external environment is changing: We have to change, because the world is changing”⁴⁸

If the athlete is planning to create and manage a small business, he will need to administrate all the proper software programs available in the field for an efficient accomplishment of the business goals. Daily operations, financial management, and database controls may be used to collect information of the company or personnel management.

In order to measure the understanding and adequate use of the Management Section in the Plan B CP, the future consultants will have to present written exams and oral presentations; and as a final assessment the development of a feasible business plan will be required. This business plan will include all areas covered in the module: management/entrepreneurship, economics, marketing, finance, and IT.

⁴⁸ Madella A., & Chelladurai P. (2006). Human Resource Management in Olympic Sport Organizations.

4) Law Program

Another part of the provided program should be Law.

At first, it might be not very obvious, as to why this should be subject of the education for the consultants. It seems that the transition after sport is mainly a psychological challenge, from what has been proved in this paper so far.

Having a closer look to the issue one will find, that many of the problems arising after termination of a sports career are either of social or economical nature.

As Thomas Probst --one of the Professors teaching the CIES Law Module of the International Master for Law, Management and Humanities in Law 2007- in his lectures stated: `The Law defines the basis and the limits of any economic or commercial activity`.

Due to the commercialisation of sport, agreements are a widely used. Therefore legal issues need to be taken into consideration. On one hand they are especially important when it comes to contracts in areas such as: employment, sponsorship, merchandising and broadcasting. Along with this goes confidentiality, which is protected by law as well. On the other hand, disciplinary issues can become important for athletes, the protection of intellectual property rights, torts and insurance as well medical ones.

As can be seen, the consultants should be aware of many aspects in order to be capable of giving supportive advice to athletes during the transition process. This does not mean that they can substitute lawyers. They should be able to see, when professional advice from a lawyer is needed and advice the athlete to contact one.

Since legal matters are closely connected to the local law system, the specialists teaching this sub-module should be experts in the region of the NOC that offers the course.

In this way care can be taken of that the best possible context is provided. It would not be helpful to apply the same legal context in every country. Therefore the following is a suggestion for what should be included in the context of the Course:

First Section: Contractual Law

Employment law

Transfer deals

Sponsorship agreements

Sporting agency issues

Media right agreements

Second Section: Torts and Insurance

Sporting injury

Defamation

Insurance – Risk management (assets, risk, expected revenues from assets)

Third Section: Administrative Law

Business competition law

Disciplinary issues and doping

Nationality, Visa, Immigration and related issues

Fourth Section: Tax Law

Income Tax

Residency Issues (legal residence, tax territories and related income)

In order to keep themselves updated with the legal issues related to sport the consultants they should read the periodical ‘Sport and The Law Journal’ of the British Association for Sport and Law Limited, Twickenham.

V. Teachers and Time Frame

The staff of the Plan B CP course will be composed of specialists who have a theoretical and a practical background.

The interaction of the former athlete with people that still are actively part of the sport network is very important. The future consultants need to understand the athlete. It is imperative that they are aware of the athletes’ habits, mentality, and way of living.

The time frame of the Course should be given by the NOC’s since they know best about the needs and possibilities in their country. A suggestion for this issue would be to provide a course over six long weekends. The first one would be an introduction to the program’s objectives then four sessions would follow in order to provide knowledge about Communication, Psychology, Management and Law. The last sub-module should be used for an examination about all four of these subjects in order to obtain a certificate.

VI. Financing the PLAN B CP

In order to have a financial sustainability for the Plan B CP suggested at the National Federation level, some key points need to be considered. First, the educational program for consultants should be funded by the umbrella organization or sport confederation, in this case the IOC, to promote the massive expansion of the program exclusively designed to help athletes during their transitional process after retirement. Local governmental support and official authorities help are also features in the market that need to be observed.

Ideally, the transition consultants program will be funded with resources coming from three sectors: the major sport ruling body, the NOC's fund and the local community. At the start, the program until it is well-known on a national basis should be offered for free to attract as many potential local education coaches. Once the program is running fluently and is sustainable, the Program will have two different levels: At the first stage there would be a 'Junior' level of education that could be paid by the NOC; for the 'Senior' level program the consultants will be charged a certain amount of fees. Athletes, depending on their economic situation, may also contribute with funds to the program so that they can be more committed to their own studies.

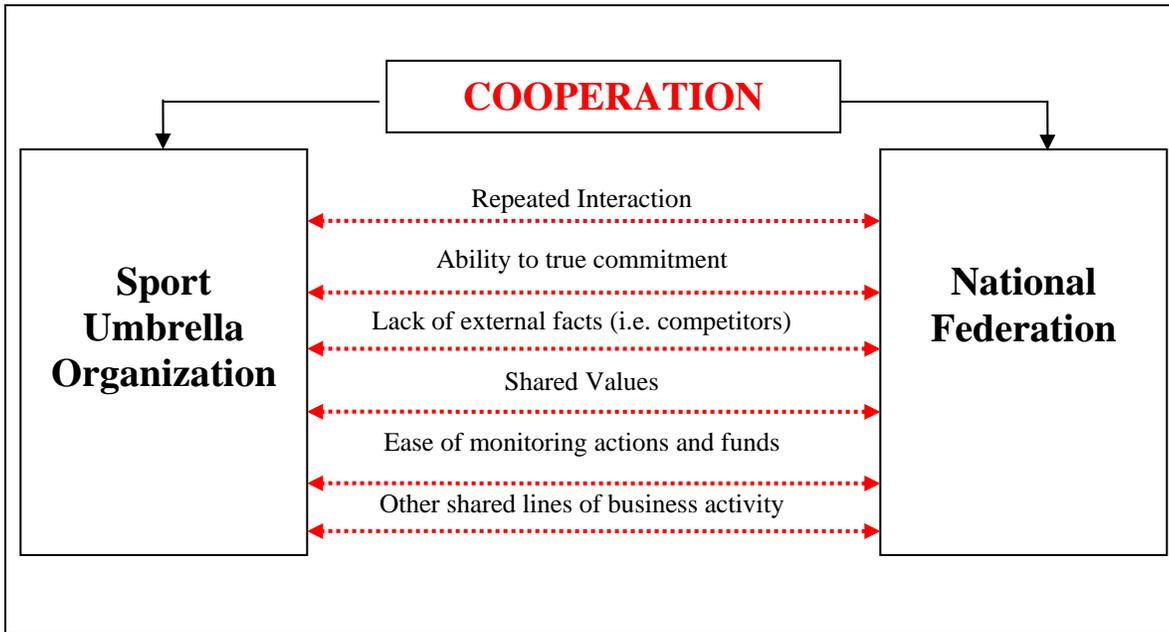
A non-profit organization in sport

Author Sharon Oster in her book "*Strategic Management for NGOs*" mentions "if the sports organization is non-profit oriented, the viability to penetrate a new market is created by revenues generated from fees, grants, or donations to financially support it" The most important reason of how a non-profit organization can be successful is because it produces trust in either donors, government agencies, or customers (associations, clubs, and athletes). For the transition consultants program, the users are the many local sport organizations that depend on it for their fundraising.

The donors are a group considered crucial too for a typical nonprofit organization in sports. Donors can be corporate, individual, or the state. In most cases, non-profit oriented institutions have little power relative to the government, but this is not always the case. In particular, in cases in which the government agencies (especially in under-developed markets as Africa and Latin America) are using nonprofits to provide services as substitutes for government activities, those institutions can use considerable power. Cooperation, as showed in **Figure #10**, between sport nonprofits is also facilitated by the dominance of networks (formal and informal) among these types of organizations.

Figure #10: Factors that encourage cooperation between the Sport Umbrella Organization and National Federations

(Adapted from Strategic Management for Nonprofit Organizations)



VII. Role of the Consultant and Advantage for Athletes

Plan B program is dedicated to the athlete. The consultants must prepare the athletes for their future and the athletes must be open-minded to receive inputs not only about sport.

The objective is a way to understand the aptitudes of each sport person, and try to apply and transfer those qualities and skills to other fields. It is important to consider each athlete independently; every athlete is different and should be “studied” by consultants in a personal way. The consultant plays the most important role at the first stage. It is a delicate mission: they begin a relationship in order to understand the athlete’s mind.

After the consultant has understood the athlete through the psychological skills he can bring awareness regarding the managerial, legal and communication aspects.

This is a need for the athletes, to have a smooth transition into a normal life after a sport career. The consultants will give advice, information and inputs to the athletes, addressing them to the right teachers, mentors, and specific programs.

It is important that the consultant is always present as a support for the athlete during every stage of his career. During all phases of the athlete’s life the environment and the people around him such as coaches, managers, family and friends also play a crucial role.

The Plan B CP consultant enters in the life of the athlete only when they are in their third transition. When young athletes (around 17 years) enter into high level of competitive sport, where they approach a professional status and are focusing on preparation for training and competition. During this phase in a lot of countries athletes are obliged to make a decision: to go on with professional sport or to continue with their education.

The role of the Plan B consultant is to close the gap between the active athletes and their first step towards retirement, but not to guarantee a job placement. Plan B Consultants should help athletes keep an open mind to other fields, and not only sport. So that the athletes' transition from his sporting career to a normal life is simplified.

H. CONCLUSION

Sport is a part of culture.

Athletes give their best not only for fame; their performance also contributes to the reputation of sport. On an international level it can even affect the country's image. Therefore sportspersons at the core of this domain are an interesting subject to look at. This paper focused on the subject of retired athletes.

If Plan A - the sport career -comes to an end, a Plan B needs to be in place. Problems during the retirement process of sport have always existed and therefore been a subject of concern in theory and practice for almost a century now.

Athletic career terminations differ from other career retirements due to the uniqueness of the athletes' identity and the special circumstances that the sportspersons face in their surroundings.

Withdrawal from sport always has two sides. It ends an athletic career and at the same time a new period of life begins. The problems of transition from sport to a new life exist in every discipline and country. The geographical area is of little importance when each athlete makes a decision to retire. It is a global problem. Most athletes have a negative perception of the change. The reasons for this are the fear of not knowing what to do and the lack of preparation. These two factors are inter-dependent. If the athletes can perceive the necessary shift more positively, they would prepare actively and vice versa. Only if there is a positive attitude towards something will there be some productive and constructive actions towards the goal.

Clarifying the main issues that plague the retirement from sport is the first step towards getting closer to the solution. There is already an awareness of the numerous challenges. The problem lies in the little action that has been taken to improve the situation. Athletes, specialists and the people involved in the process all know that the problem exists but very few solutions are in place.

The main problem is that athletes believe transition is an event at the end of a sporting career. This is not true. It is a process which already begins while they are still active. Therefore it is essential, that they start thinking about how they want to retire early and plan their course of action. Even though the awareness about the issue has been rising during the last years, there is no system in place that provides a complete solution to this problem.

Preparation is a crucial. While athletes are still active, they do not like to think about their future after sport. Usually they concentrate on the moment and all the advantages that their job provides. They might not realize that sooner or later their career will come to an end and after their career ends they ask themselves: "What will I do now?" After retirement it takes some time before they understand that

their life has changed. Only then they realise that they must do something to feel alive again and focus on other goals.

Not only do the former athletes have to rearrange the priorities of their lives, but they also need to find a solution for all the different problems arising. The overriding question is how to solve the psychological, economical and social problems. Do they get help for this or are they on their own?

As Jacque Rogge, the current IOC President said: “Athletes... dedicate their lives to sport and it is only right that sport should give them something back at the end of their sporting careers.”⁴⁹

Considering the fact that the sport domain is built around the athlete as the central part of performance, the responsibility to tackle this issue has to be split. Not only the athlete but also the sporting federations should take care of simplifying the transition process after the sporting career for competitors.

On one hand, the athletes have to prepare individually and look for help themselves for instance, if they have psychological difficulties. On the other hand, support is provided by sport organisations because of the fact that more than one obstacle appears it is only logical that the objectives of the existing program, which want to support transition, differ. Some offer online education to athletes in order to fit their preparation in their work out schedule, others only focus on job placement, in addition there are programs that want to transfer the skills of the athlete from sport to work. In summary, there is no integrated program.

For this reason the PLAN B consultants were created in this paper. The main objective is to support the athlete and to connect them with the existing career transition programmes in a better manner. It aims to use the best practices from other programs while closing the gap between the active athletes and their first step towards participating in those..

To achieve this, the project creates a new figure in the sport system. This person will be on the administrative side of the sport after obtaining a certificate through a PLAN B course.

The general aim of this educational program is to provide the potential consultants with adequate comprehension, knowledge and skills to prepare them for transition consulting. The consultant should expand the ability to apply theoretical information, methods, and practical skills.

The six sub modules will develop critical and analytical tools in the fields of communication, psychology, law and management in order to provide tailored advice. One of the important tools that the consultant will use is the local and international network within and outside the sport industry. The consultants will help enhance the development of the professional athletes' interpersonal skills (since

⁴⁹ FOCUS, The Athlete Career Programme , April 2007, Lausanne

I. APPENDIX

Abstracts of Interviews:

Elite Athletes that have planned well their transition post-sport

ROMINA PLATAROTI (Argentinean gymnast - Barcelona 1992 Olympic Games)

**Personal interview conducted in Spanish, via e-mail on June 17th, 2007. Neuchatel, Switzerland*



“When I was only 15 years old, I participated representing my home country Argentina at the Olympic Games in Barcelona ’92. I retire from gymnastics at the age of 18.

My last official competition was at the Pan-American Games hosted in Mar del Plata, Argentina in 1995. I decided to prepare myself only until that event and then retire. As a matter of fact, I was feeling a need to exploit something new, develop my knowledge in other phases of my life.

In 1994 I had finished high-school; then I began experiencing other interests. I felt that my stage as a professional gymnast was over. I was extremely satisfied with all my achievements in the sport, but I had the desire to live new emotions, pursue a college career in Psychology, have more spare time, and in general start to enjoy a new life without so many sacrifices, schedules, pressure...

The practice of Gymnastics has a particularity concerning the age of the sportsperson. I began practicing it when I was 6 years old and I trained until I was 18, spending most of my time dedicated 100% to gymnastics, an activity that during that long period I really loved and gave me great pleasure. In 1994 I decided to redefine my internal situation: it was the end of a phase as I was closing a cycle in order to start a new one from scratch.”

Currently, Romina works as a Sport Psychologist in Argentina, where she is also a member of the Sport Activities Council of the Municipality of Buenos Aires. More information about her outstanding career can be obtained accessing: www.rominaplataroti.com.ar

LUIS F. SARITAMA (Ecuadorian footballer – Germany 2006 FIFA World Cup)

**Personal interview conducted in Spanish, via e-mail on June 28th, 2007. Neuchatel, Switzerland.*



“Although I have a very comfortable lifestyle for someone my age (23), I decided to pursue a career in Business Administration as a personal goal. I have always wanted to succeed at the academic level. I chose to study this field because I really enjoyed creating and managing companies. For the future, I’m planning to get involved with football enterprises as it has been proved that football is linked

in many aspects to business management (marketing, sports management, advertising, economics, global economy, etc.) While in college I enjoy the following subjects: accounting, finance, project management, foreign languages, advertising and taxation. To add something, I frequently hear my colleagues complaining they need to develop their math skills. This problem is more related to the socio-economic level of the country where the athlete was born.

Based on my own experience, I am positive any professional athlete can adjust his for training schedules to continue his education. But a strong sense of commitment, organization, and cooperation from all the parties involved (athlete-coach-institution-professor) is required. The sportsperson needs to organize well both activities without affecting his performance in neither of them; and on the other hand, sport coaches and college teachers need to understand the athlete’s desire to succeed.

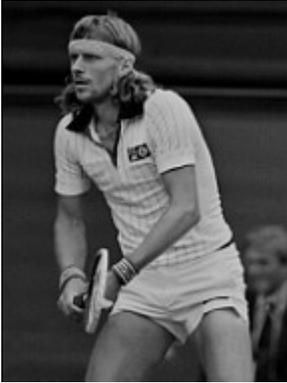
I strongly believe that an educational program “tailor-made” for pro-athletes can develop and expand their knowledge and help them preparing for a better future after the post-career. I think all stakeholders (federations, clubs, the institution providing education, and players) should finance this program. What I mean, is that even the footballer should contribute with financial means for his education; with this, he will have a bigger commitment with his studies. For sure the athlete’s economic situation will need to be observed before asking him to pay his education.

A footballer’s career usually lasts until he/she is 35 years old depending on different circumstances. If I have all the necessary “tools” –like been well prepared academically or having a solid financial backup to start my own business- definitely I am sure I will be ready physiologically to leave football with no problems at all, before football abandons me... Again depending on my situation once retirement comes, I would love to stay related to the sports industry as an official or team manager. However, my priority will be to spend more time with my family and my personal matters”.

Luis has a contractual relationship until year 2009 with the popular Mexican football club America, and he is regularly being called to play for the National Team of his home country Ecuador.

BJORN BORG (Swedish tennis player – 5 times Wimbledon champion during 1970s)

**Interview by Josh Sims published in the Inflight Easyjet magazine. June, 2007 issue. London, England.*



‘Bjorn Borg, a sport legend, the man who put rock ‘n’roll into the conservative world of tennis and recently voted the second greatest player of all time (after Pete Sampras), nowadays does rather well out of pants. Since 10 years ago, Borg launched with Worldwide Brand Management (Borg takes a percentage on sales) a clothing line with his name on a bold geometric pattern in orange. Why underwear? “Because everyone in the world wears underwear. We all need underwear,” says Borg. “And it’s a good business”. Results: net sales in 2006 were up 51% to US \$37m, and has three own-brand stores in operation.

“I was always keen to try as many new experiences in life as I could when I retired. When I was competing, I was playing, practicing, eating, sleeping, and that was about it. I don’t regret that. It came from the heart, I had a great time and great success”, the former World No. 1 tennis player born in 1956 says.

“But then you have to learn about a different kind of life and it’s not that easy. You do good things, you do bad things. It’s part of life to learn, to find out what you like. And business was what I wanted to get into. If someone will ask me advise, I will give these five business lessons:

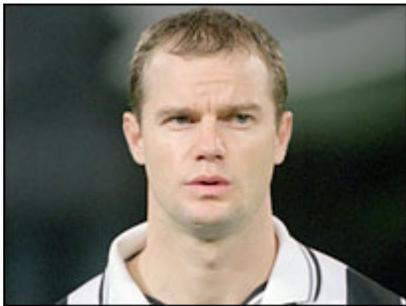
- Get the right people from the start. The right management is essential
- If you want to get involved in a certain business, get all the facts first. Do lots of reading.
- Take it slowly from the beginning. And build slowly.
- Learn what people like –who the people on the street are, the ones who actually buy your products.
- Keep your eyes open –there are good business ideas everywhere.

There have been rumors he intended to commit suicide a couple of times at the end of his career. Despite those rumors were never confirmed, Bjorn Borg stressed he suffered a severe depression crisis leading with his post-career stage. Borg won US \$3.65m in prize money alone, plus millions from endorsements, and is still a multi-millionaire. In March 2006, he intended to sell his 5 Wimbledon trophies at an auction. His friend John McEnroe convinced him to drop the idea. He explains the decision simply by saying: “I’m not sentimental about trophies or money. Not everything in life is money. The people I started out the business with, who I thought were my friends, were only after the money... I think, in general, I trust people less now –certainly in business but maybe in my private life, too”.

Case Studies of Athletes in Problematic Situations

Building a successful career in sport takes more than physical development. Mental development is crucial to helping athletes achieve their potential and understanding their internal conflicts. Besides the family, friends and intimate group, it can be the role of the sports psychologist to get into the mind of the competitor and free up any problems that may be waiting. This may be very simple like teaching methods of concentration, or stress management, or self-motivation; or it may mean only talking and listening carefully enough to make recommendations about the athlete's performance improvement. To really help athletes, a sports psychologist must have a valid interest in and knowledge of sports in general. That interest and experience helps build the trust necessary to make a difference.

Some case studies will be now observed to see what went wrong for some sportspeople that could not deal well with their internal demons and struggle with their transitional processes after retirement in sports (**Information for cases obtained at websites www.wikipedia.com and <http://news.bbc.co.uk/sport2>. May-June 2007*).

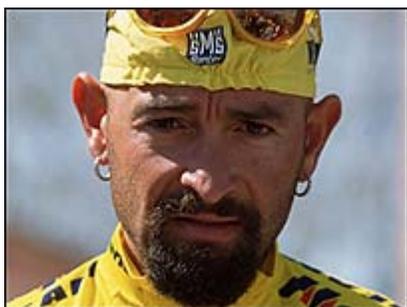


1. GIANLUCA PESSOTTO, born in 1970, is an Italian former footballer who played with Juventus for the majority of his career. Among his achievements as a football player, Pessotto won the UEFA Champions League (played in 4 UCL Finals) and UEFA SuperCup in 1996, the Intercontinental Cup in 1996, 1 UEFA Intertoto Cup in 2000, 6 Scudetti and 4 Italian with Juventus FC.

For the National Team of Italy, Pessotto was capped 22 times. He played for his country at the 1998 FIFA World Cup and Euro 2000. He is one of many experienced players who have been at Juventus FC for a long period of time. Injuries and other issues in the closing stages of his career limited his first-team opportunities to mainly being used as a substitute to younger colleagues.

Pessotto retired at the end of the 2005/2006 Serie A season, and was successively appointed as the new Juventus team manager. Afterwards, Pessotto survived a 15-metre fall from a 4th story window at the headquarters of Juventus, on 27 June 2006. As he was holding a rosary, it is believed that he was attempting suicide. His suicide attempt coincides with widening investigations regarding possible match fixing amongst Italy's top clubs including Juventus, where Pessotto is Sports Director.

Although not implicated in the scandal, the retired footballer was said to be feeling depressed and sad with his role at the club. Pessotto's wife Reana said he was unhappy with his role at Juventus FC and had been suffering from melancholy. "He himself is unable to understand how it happened. He doesn't remember anything of that day and he cannot find a reason. He kept telling me that there was too much difference between being on the field and behind a desk," she said.



2. MARCO PANTANI (1970-2004) was an Italian cyclist considered as being one of the best climbers of all times in professional cycling. He reached his peak after winning both the Tour de France and the Giro d'Italia in 1998. The bandana he often wore and his attacking style of riding led to him being identified like 'Il Pirata' (the Pirate). But his career was destroyed by doping allegations

after he was thrown out of the 1999 Giro d'Italia for failing a blood test. At this major event, he was banned while in the lead after failing a test for haematocrit - an indicator, though not proof, of the use of performance-enhancing drugs. A needle containing traces of insulin was found in his hotel room in a police raid in 2001 too. He was suspended for six months, and a court dismissed his claim for lack of proof

Soon after that episode he entered a health clinic specializing in the treatment of clinical depression and drug addiction. At that point the chances of him once again being a contender in major races looked small. Former colleague Miguel Indurain paid tribute to Marco Pantani by saying: "He got people hooked on the sport. There may be riders who have achieved more than him, but they never succeeded in drawing in the fans like he did."

A former coach of him also said "Marco has paid a very dear price for everything. For years he was in the eye of the cycling storm after being world number one. "He then withdrew into himself. He was alone." He died of a cocaine overdose in 2004 in Rimini, Italy. However, Pantani many years later was find not guilty of sporting fraud in October 2006.



3. AGOSTINO DI BARTOLOMEI (1955-1994) was an Italian football player, who played midfield most of his career for A.S. Roma. After playing for other top clubs like Vicenza and A.C. Milan, he returned to Roma in 1976 as one of the unmovable players of the team.

During this period, and with Nils Liedholm as coach, Di Bartolomei became undoubtedly leader of the team and obtained the title of captain. He won a memorable Scudetto (Italian championship) for Roma in 1983. The following season, he helped his club defeating Liverpool F.C. to win the European Cup (current Champions League).

At the end of his sporting career, and after having an argument with the former management at his club, he never received a formal job offer as an official for A.S. Roma as they initially promised him. After giving up for trying to work for his old club, Di Bartolomei didn't have any other proposal than to become a RAI broadcasting commentator. Di Bartolomei, who suffered from clinical depression in his later years, committed suicide by shooting himself with a Smith & Wesson 38 on May 30, 1994 -- ten years to the day after Roma had lost the European Cup final to Liverpool on penalties.

The major motif to commit suicide, later was informed, was his critical economic condition. He has just been rejected a bank loan and felt completely abandoned by his former Roma teammates. In his farewell note he wrote: "I feel deeply trapped in a hole".

Recently, the Municipality of Roma named a street on his honor, and also there is a youth football academy after the name of Agostino Di Bartolomei.

Elite Athletes Perception of the provided services

It is relevant to observe the result of this recent survey conducted in Italy, mention in a part of the article *Come sostenere l'atleta di alto livello nel suo cammino verso l'alta prestazione* by E. Cutuli , P. Frisknecht, & A. Madella at *Atheticastudi*, Volume 37. It shows that the 88% of the athletes interviewed do not take advantages from the support of the transition career programs available in Italy.

This research proves how important is to implement a Consultant Program, like Plan B.

The following is the original version in Italian.

Le percezioni degli atleti di alto livello

Dopo aver esposto ed analizzato le principali iniziative rivolte alla combinazione con l'educazione e all'inserimento nel mondo lavorativo di atleti di alto livello al termine della loro carriera agonistica, passeremo brevemente in rassegna alcuni risultati di una ricerca condotta sulla percezione degli intervistati della qualità dei servizi erogati in funzione della carriera degli atleti di alto livello.

L'indagine ha riguardato un campione di 35 atleti/Italiani, abbastanza bilanciato tra i due sessi. Su 35 intervistati ben 19 hanno partecipato ai Giochi Olimpici e di questi 17 risultano essere i medagliati; Inoltre su 35 intervistati ben 25 hanno partecipato a Campionati del Mondo e 20 ai Campionati Europei .

Data la limitata popolazione di riferimento e la difficoltà di accesso ad atleti di questo livello, si può certamente ritenere che l'insieme di soggetti osservati garantisca certamente la rappresentatività delle informazioni raccolte e la loro elevata pertinenza rispetto al tema. La struttura dell'intervista era così caratterizzata:

La prima parte aveva per oggetto la raccolta di informazioni di carattere personale, come i dati anagrafici, informazioni concernenti l'attività sportiva praticata, il titolo di studio in possesso con il relativo percorso, le conoscenze linguistiche ed infine notizie riguardanti le esperienze lavorative.

La seconda parte analizzava la percezione di qualità e la soddisfazione per i servizi erogati dalle organizzazioni sportive agli atleti di livello, attraverso una scala Likert a 6 valori. Nello specifico, sono state chieste informazioni sui servizi e sulle opportunità di varia natura ricevuti durante la carriera agonistica, se tali benefici si fossero esauriti al termine dell'attività e se essi fossero davvero rispondenti alle loro reali necessità ed esigenze. A tal proposito si è domandato al campione oggetto

dell'indagine un giudizio comparativo e cioè se si sentissero più o meno fortunati, in termine di possibilità rispetto ai coetanei o agli altri praticanti e se tali servizi siano stati almeno in parte prolungati dopo il ritiro dall'agonismo.

Sono quindi state indicazioni o proposte agli intervistati per identificare possibili azioni intraprendere per andare incontro alle necessità effettive degli atleti.

Va precisato preliminarmente che vi era una sostanziale differenza dell'età media degli atleti interessati, 32 anni per gli uomini e 21 per le donne. Questo dato, infatti è fortemente influenzato dal fatto che sono state oggetto di indagine, anche le ragazze della Squadra Nazionale di Ginnastica Artistica e Ritmica, le quali hanno un'età media abbastanza bassa. La maggior parte degli atleti componenti il campione erano ancora impegnati nell'attività agonistica; infatti solo 6 atleti su 35 si erano ritirati anche se alcuni altri l'avevano significativamente ridotta.

Dall'esame del grafico di figura 1, relativo all'età di inizio dell'attività, emerge come la maggior parte gli sportivi presi in questione abbiano cominciato a praticare la propria disciplina sportiva ad un età compresa tra i 3 anni ed i 8 anni. La media dell'età di inizia è pari a 7 anni e mezzo, l'età minima 3 anni e mezzo mentre quella massima è 17.

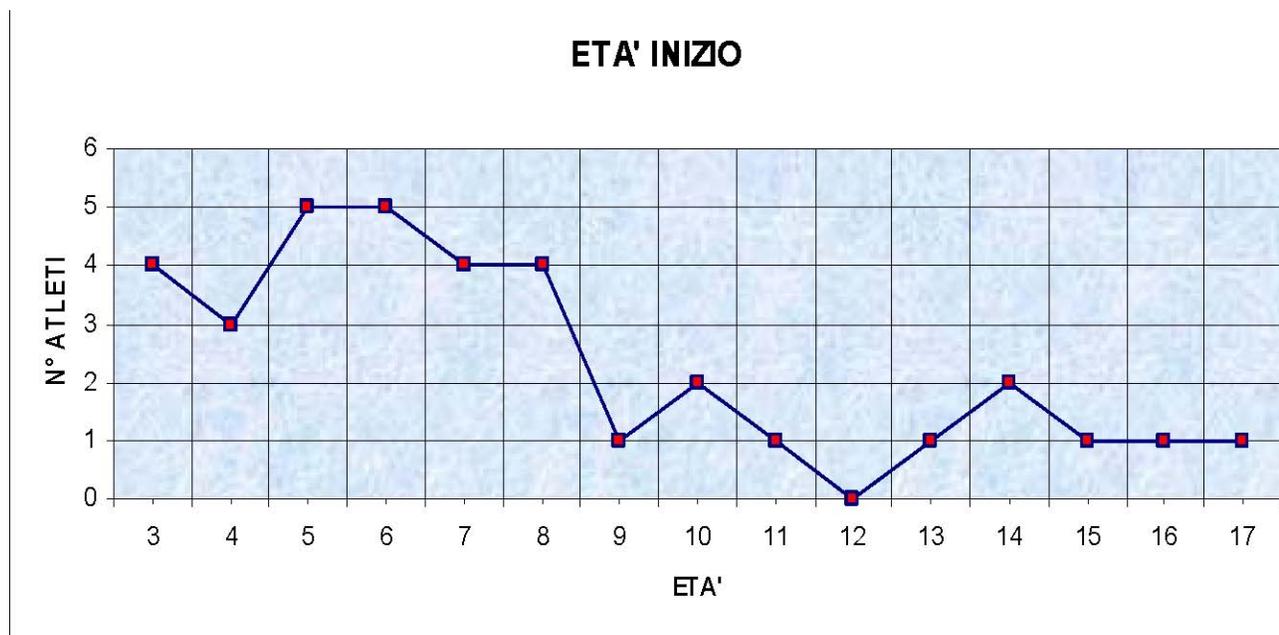


Figura 1- Distribuzione degli atleti del campione per età di inizio dello sport

L'indagine anagrafica era accompagnata da domande sul percorso di studi e sul titolo conseguito.

Malgrado l'opinione comune che un ragguardevole numero di atleti giunga al termine della carriera agonistica, avendo interrotto o non avendo mai iniziato un qualunque percorso formativo, il campione considerato presenta caratteristiche assai diverse (cfr. figura 2)

TITOLO DI STUDIO

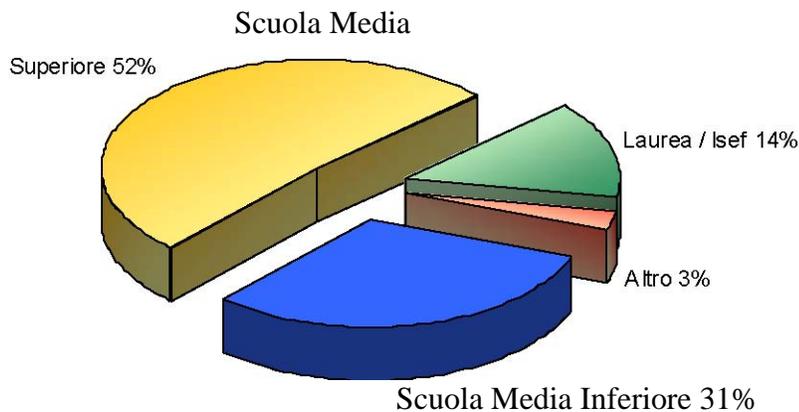


Figura 2 – Distribuzione del campione per titolo di studio

Come si può notare, più della metà degli intervistati (18 su 35) ha concluso gli studi medi superiori con il diploma., il 31% (11 su 35) lo hanno interrotto con la licenza media e il 14 % (5 su 35) è riuscito a conseguire una laurea e/o un diploma I.S.E.F.

Per quanto riguarda le conoscenze linguistiche, i dati ottenuti rivelano che tutto il gruppo di intervistati dichiara di comprendere e parlare la lingua inglese, ben 20 atleti su 35 conoscono due lingue ed addirittura 4 su 35 più di due lingue. Tale dimestichezza con le lingue straniere è presumibilmente frutto di diversi fattori oltre alla formazione scolastica; ad esempio la possibilità di stare a contatto con atleti e/o tecnici stranieri durante gli allenamenti e/o le gare, l'opportunità di visitare, durante le competizioni, località estere, dove è necessario parlare la lingua inglese per le normali necessità.

Quanto alla situazione lavorativa, allo stato attuale, del campione intervistato, 1 atleta non ha risposto al questionario, 15 atleti su 35 hanno una occupazione stabile, di essi 9 fanno parte di gruppi sportivi militari dello Stato (Carabinieri, Polizia, Polizia Penitenziaria, Guardia di Finanza, Esercito, Aeronautica e Guardia Forestale) mentre i restanti 6 svolgono le seguenti attività: insegnante, allenatore, dirigente sportivo e libero professionista.

Quanto all'interesse da parte degli atleti analizzati di ricoprire un ruolo con mansioni tecnico – manageriali all'interno delle società sportive, Federazione d'appartenenza o C.O.N.I. Le risposte hanno indicato come prevedibile una preferenza per le mansioni tecniche (56%) rispetto a quelle manageriali (22%). Bisogna però precisare che poco meno del 50% degli atleti non hanno dato una risposta al quesito proposto.

La parte centrale del questionario era finalizzata ad individuare di quali benefici gli atleti avessero goduto durante la propria carriera. Dall'analisi delle risposte emerge chiaramente che le Federazioni sono le istituzioni, più vicine alle quotidiane e concrete esigenze degli sportivi, per cui risulta evidente che nell'arco della loro carriera la Federazione di appartenenza diviene il principale interlocutore. Il ruolo del CONI attraverso il Club Olimpico è tuttavia decisivo e viene percepito come un elemento di grande impatto sulla possibilità di raggiungere o meglio mantenere il livello di

Gli atleti dichiarano di cominciare a beneficiare dei servizi offerti una volta entrati a far della squadra nazionale; questo significa ad esempio che per i ginnasti tali forme di sostegno cominciano molto prima rispetto ad altre discipline sportive. Purtroppo tutti gli intervistati, anche quelli ancora in attività, evidenziano il fatto che conclusa l'esperienza sportiva anche tali benefici per la maggior parte si esauriscono. Le domande poste, prevedevano la possibilità di esprimere per ciascun servizio usufruito, un livello di soddisfazione che aveva un campo di valori da 1 a 6, secondo la nota metodologia di Likert.

E' possibile notare come sia i servizi medici che quelli di carattere tecnico (assistenza di allenatori e di altre figure specializzate) siano quelli più apprezzati agli atleti che invece reputano decisamente insufficienti o del tutto assenti, quelli legati ai servizi pensionistici, alle sovvenzioni e ai servizi di supporto alla carriera e/o di orientamento professionale. Nella tabella che segue, è possibile analizzare nel dettaglio i risultati ottenuti.

	Soddisfatti	Non soddisfatti	Non usufruito
Servizio medico	57%	29%	14%
Servizio psicologico	14%	23%	62%
Trattamento pensionistico	6%	14%	80%
Borse di studio	45%	29%	26%

Altre sovvenzioni	6%	9%	85%
Supporto alla carriera	9%	3%	88%
Servizi tecnici	85%	15%	-
Servizi assicurativi	29%	45%	26%

Tabella n. 1 – Livelli di soddisfazione per le varie tipologie di servizi

Complessivamente 23 atleti su 35 con una percentuale pari al 66% risultano insoddisfatti per quanto loro fornito. In particolare dall’analisi delle interviste emerge che gli uomini risultano essere, in percentuale, maggiormente insoddisfatti (72%), rispetto alle donne, (62%). Gli atleti intervistati non percepivano alcuna differenza dal punto di vista dell’usufruzione dei servizi rispetto ad altri e quindi non si consideravano né più fortunati, ne meno fortunati.

Si è inoltre cercato di capire nel caso di atleti che hanno interrotto l’attività, in che modo le istituzioni sportive, avessero facilitato la transizione ad attività lavorative. Gli atleti ancora in attività sono invece stati consultati a proposito di quali agevolazioni, ad esempio flessibilità dell’orario lavorativo, licenze e/o ferie straordinarie per gare e/o competizioni avessero usufruito in funzione dell’ottimizzazione dell’attività agonistica. Dall’analisi e dalla valutazione delle risposte registrate emerge la percezione che, una volta “appese le scarpe al chiodo “ lo sportivo si sente abbandonato al proprio destino e tutte le particolari attitudini sviluppate durante la propria carriera possano risultare inutili ed inutilizzate, infatti oltre il 70% del campione intervistato ha dichiarato che le istituzioni sportive durante tale fase risultano essere pressoché assenti sia nell’orientamento che nella formazione e nell’inserimento professionale.

Gli atleti in attività invece notano una scarsa disponibilità di accordi o convenzioni atte a evitare l’interruzione dei percorsi formativi, necessari a fine carriera, per entrare nel mondo del lavoro con competenze professionali, in modo mirato e consapevole. Questa esigenza è stata avvertita in modo massiccio dalla maggioranza degli atleti (83%).

History of Doping

The word doping is derived from the Dutch word *dop*, the name of an alcoholic beverage made of grape skins used by Zulu warriors in order to enhance their prowess in battle. The term became current around the turn of the 20th century, originally referring to illegal drugging of racehorses. The practice of enhancing performance through foreign substances or other artificial means, however, is as old as competitive sport itself. Ancient Greek athletes are known to have used special diets and stimulating potions to fortify themselves. Strychnine, caffeine, cocaine, and alcohol were often used by cyclists and other endurance athletes in the 19th century. Thomas Hicks ran to victory in the Olympic marathon of 1904 in Saint Louis with the help of raw egg, injections of strychnine, and doses of brandy administered to him during the race. By the 1920s it had become evident that restrictions regarding drug use in sports were necessary.⁵⁰

⁵⁰ Source: www.wada-ama.org

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