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Who supports the athlete during the athletic career and after sport?

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SUPPORT MUST START DURING THE CAREER



THE FINAL HIRE

You need a Project Coordinator. Two finalists: same education, same experience, same test scores.



ALEX

- Calls a typical week “a constant balancing act”
- When two teams clashed, organised an alignment meeting and followed up
- Gives concrete examples and reflects on what could be better



JORDAN

- Followed established procedures and met deadlines
- Talks about team efforts, but in general terms
- Reliable and steady, but finds it hard to name what they personally did



WHO WOULD YOU HIRE? Raise your hand: Alex or Jordan

SKILLS, NO STORY

Jordan may have done everything Alex did. Jordan just could not tell it.

BUILT IN SPORT

HEARD BY AN EMPLOYER

Early morning training



Discipline and time management

Playing through injuries



Resilience under pressure

Listening to coaches



Openness to feedback

Reading the game



Strategic thinking

75%

of C-suite women say a sport background influences their hiring decision

52%

of C-suite women played sport at university level

Many athletes walk into an interview as Jordan: the skills are real, the language is missing.

EY & espnW (2014), survey of 400 women executives; skills map from the Second Half workshop

THE WHOLE ATHLETE

An athlete develops on five levels at once. When sport ends, all five change together.

DURING THE CAREER

WHEN SPORT ENDS



Athletic

Training and competing every day



Daily training and competition stop



Psychological

Identity built around performance



“Who am I without my sport?”



Psychosocial

Coach, teammates, staff every day



The daily network shrinks



Education & work

Studies often paused or delayed



Entering the labour market, often late



Financial

Club, federation, sponsors



A new source of income is needed

Holistic Athletic Career model: Wylleman, Rosier, De Brandt & De Knop (2016); Stambulova, Ryba & Henriksen (2021)

WHAT 126 STUDIES SAY

126

studies on leaving sport,
1968 to 2010

MAKES IT HARDER

- ✗ A strong and exclusive athletic identity
- ✗ An end that is not chosen: injury, deselection
- ✗ No plan for life after sport

MAKES IT EASIER

- ✓ Planning before the end
- ✓ Social support
- ✓ Other roles and group memberships



The review's practical recommendation: **provide proactive support.**

Park, Lavallee & Tod (2013), systematic review; Brewer, Van Raalte & Linder (1993); Haslam et al. (2021)

THE QUIET COST

Former elite athletes reporting mental health symptoms:

26%

anxiety or depression

16%

psychological distress

Current elite athletes: 19% to 34%, depending on the symptom

Self-reported symptoms, not diagnoses



Losing athletic identity reduced meaning in life.

Keeping old groups and joining new ones protected wellbeing.

Haslam et al. (2021)

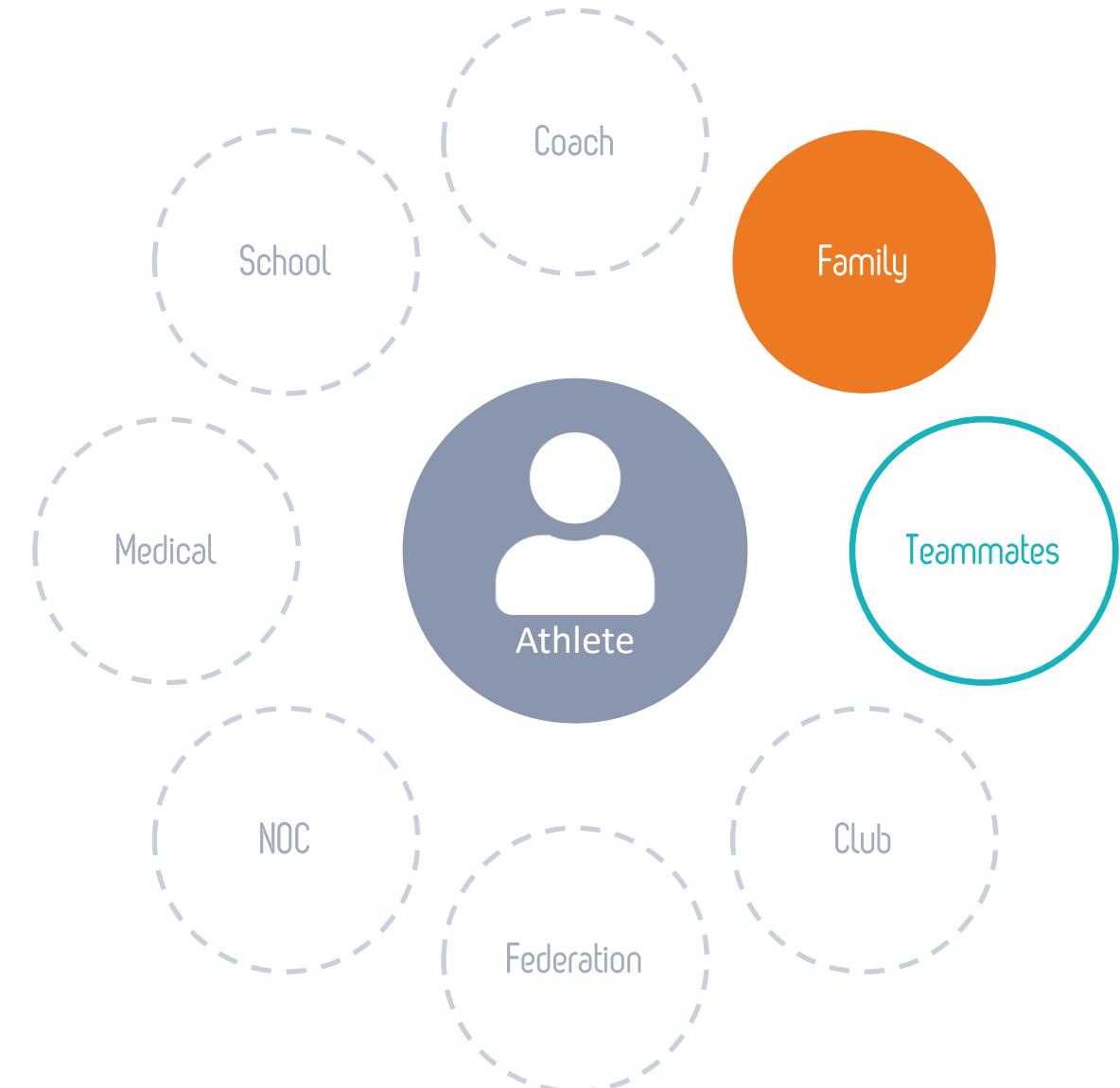
Gouttebarga et al. (2019), meta-analysis, British Journal of Sports Medicine; Haslam et al. (2021)

WHO IS AROUND?

DURING THE CAREER



AFTER SPORT



Missing on the right: employers, mentors, educators and career counsellors.

Illustration based on the psychosocial level of the Holistic Athletic Career model (Wylleman et al., 2016)

WHO OWNS IT?

Who should own the athlete's second half? Raise your hand once.

A



The athlete

B



Coach and club

C



The federation

D



The National Olympic Committee

E



Schools, universities, employers

Show of hands; the answer is discussed on the next slide

WHO OWNS IT?

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The National Olympic Committee

E



Schools, universities, employers

F



Everyone

Show of hands; the answer is discussed on the next slide

WHAT WORKS

When everyone owns it, nobody does. Seven successful European environments shared ten features.

A HOLISTIC STRUCTURE

- 1 A dedicated dual career support team
- 2 Efforts integrated across the whole environment
- 3 Shared understanding of dual career issues
- 4 Role models and mentorship
- 5 Access to expert support

A SHARED PHILOSOPHY

- 6 A whole-person approach
- 7 An empowerment approach
- 8 Flexible dual career solutions
- 9 Care for mental health and wellbeing
- 10 Open, proactive development of the environment

Storm, Henriksen, Stambulova et al. (2021), *Ecology of Dual Career (Erasmus+)*, 7 environments in 7 countries

THE POLICY GAP

2012

EU Guidelines on Dual Careers of Athletes

Governments, sport bodies, schools, universities and employers should work together to create the right environment for dual careers.

2022

What athletes say ten years later

21 elite athletes from six EU countries still could not manage a dual career and balance their resources. They asked most for organised governmental support.

We do not lack guidelines. We lack coordinated support.

European Commission (2012); Herold, Hallmann, Valantine, Huertas González-Serrano, Staškevičiūtė-Butienė & Breuer (2022)

OUR WORKSHOP

“Designing Your Second Career”: identity first, then skills, then a plan



PHASE 1

Self Discovery

- Who are you beyond sport?
- Roles, values, character
- Human values test



PHASE 2

Skills Mapping

- The Final Hire case
- Transferable skills map
- Executive skills test (ESQ-R)



PHASE 3

Career Exploration

- Career interest wheel
- Bridge: education, networking, experience
- 90-day action plan

Plus a workbook athletes keep: identity words, skills map, test results, personal brand statement

Workshop materials: Koričan Lajtman (2026), Second Half; tests: ESQ-R (Dawson & Guare) and a human values test (Schwartz)

WHAT ATHLETES NEED



1

To be seen as more than an athlete

Identity work comes before the CV.

Brewer et al. (1993)



2

A language for their skills

They have the skills. They need the words and the examples.

EY & espnW (2014)



3

People around the plan

Mentors, networks and employers who open the door.

Haslam et al. (2021); Storm et al. (2021)

THREE SHIFTS

FROM

Reactive: help after retirement



TO

Proactive: from the junior years

Park et al. (2013)

Performance only



The whole person, on five levels

Wylleman et al. (2016)

One actor alone



A coordinated team with a clear owner

Storm et al. (2021)

Park, Lavallee & Tod (2013); Wylleman et al. (2016); Storm et al. (2021)

ONE ACTION EACH



NOCs

Name a dual career contact. Bring career sessions to athletes who are still competing.



Federations

Build career planning into national team programmes from junior level.



Clubs & coaches

Protect time for study and work. Talk about life after sport early.



Schools & universities

Offer flexible schedules, exam dates and online learning.



Employers

Offer part-time roles, internships and mentors to active athletes.



Athletes

Start the conversation yourself. Your second half begins now.



OUR MESSAGE

SUPPORT MUST START
DURING THE CAREER,
NOT AFTER IT.

The best time to build the second half is while the first half is still being played.

OVER TO YOU

“What is one thing your organisation could start this season, for athletes who are still competing?”



Turn to your neighbour



1 minute



Share with the room

YOUR QUESTIONS



Your experience, your questions, your disagreement

THANK YOU

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HR

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