

# Life After Sport 2023

## **Athlete Career Transition Insights**

THE 5 PAGE SUMMARY

Draft 1.1

# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

## Situation

### About This

Intended to achieve 3 aims: help athletes to transition from playing sport to other careers, bring together people who share this interest and build awareness of the career coaching services of the author.

### Learning Objectives

The primary aim is to understand the alignment between the expectations of current athletes, the experiences of past athletes and the observations of non-athletes in sport.

Current Athletes  
*Expectations*

A black line-art icon of a person running to the right, with three short horizontal lines behind their back to indicate motion.

Past Athletes  
*Experiences*

A black line-art icon showing three stylized human figures of varying heights standing side-by-side.

Non-Athletes In Sport  
*Observations*

A black line-art icon showing three stylized human figures standing together, with a large trophy or award cup positioned above them.

Understanding the similarities and the differences between groups helps illuminate where different perceptions indicate opportunities to improve transition experiences for athletes. There are also interesting insights from immersion in the research which considered the following aspects: age, gender, sport code, level, career support awareness, how much career support they think they have, who they expect support from, who they actually get support from, how confident they are in terms of direction, skills and wellbeing, external obstacles perceived, internal barrier perceived, any transition role models impact of off field activity to on field performance and how much control they see regarding retirement from sport.

### The Method

250 Australians, split evenly between the 3 main subject groups were engaged via surveys and phone interviews after being invited to participate via LinkedIn and offered to share the results and an hour of free career coaching in return.

*These issues and more are all explored further on the full report.*

- **Barriers.** The top external barriers perceived by all groups: Skills, Planning, Not Having Money, Having Money, Immaturity/Age, Getting Employed, Balancing Dual Career, Qualifications, Experience (Range, Depth)
- **Fears.** The top internal concerns shared by all groups: Identity Lost, Disconnection, Fulfilment/Purpose, Balancing Dual Careers, Unclear Direction, Missing Structure, Financial Worries, Boredom
- **Needs.** The top wishes shared by all groups: Psychological Support, Try Before I Fly Opportunities, Financial Advisor/Skills, Simple Transition Overview/Guidelines, Mandatory Career Development (... despite doubts), Super Flexible Training Options, Athlete Retirement Fund/Super, Discover Off-Field Interests, Dedicated Transition Coach, Money/Financial Security
- **Traits.** There are common traits identified as differentiating smooth from bumpy transitions: managing self, identity, leveraging skills, preparation, connections, education & work experience, mindset and expectations.
- **Queries.** The top shared questions common to all groups: What are my career options? How can I transfer skills and close gaps? What support is available to me? How can I get more work experience?
- **Awareness.** Lack of awareness of meaningful career support was identified by approx 1/3 of respondents across all groups.

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- **Control.** Athletes are far less likely to leave on own terms than they expect and non-athletes don't realise this.
- **Uniqueness.** Of the 160 examples of athletes who were named as transitioning well, there were relatively few names in common, illustrating uniqueness of the individuals while also generating a powerful list of individuals to whom athletes can look for inspiration.
- **Reliability.** Non Athletes witness that social connections are more reliable for support than sporting connections. Ex-athletes found only life partners, career coaches and some other specialists matched the career support expected. Knowing this we can build on the strengths and address the weaknesses.
- **Scattering.** Current athletes have wider ambitions than past athletes and both have wider ambitions than non-athletes imagine. Appreciating the broader range suggests need for a broad range in support.
- **Mentor Inactive.** Mentoring by ex-athletes is wanted but especially by those least active in terms of career development. This highlights this is an effective opportunity to pursue.
- **Males Overconfident.** Male athletes rate themselves higher in terms of direction and female athletes rate themselves higher on skills. Mind you, the inactive males rate themselves higher than those engaged in career development. Although rating themselves higher, the past athletes call out skills as their weakest link.
- **Females Underconfident.** Females rate themselves significantly lower in terms of readiness and support than male athletes. Among past athletes, they identify direction as their weakest issue.

*These issues are all explored further on the full report.*

- **Addiction.** Seeing how athletes describe it, sport is probably an addiction. This means you're probably a drug dealer! Rather than retraining, athletes retiring from sport need something closer to rehabilitation.
- **Other Parallels.** Other areas feeling ripe for insights and inspiration include: relationship counselling, grieving the dead, managing homesickness and military/prison release programs.
- **Comparisons.** Athletes of all situations compared their situation unfavourably with athletes in different positions, suggesting a 'grass is greener' view of others which can and should be flipped.
- **Ranking Sports For Career Culture.** Not all sports are equal in terms of cultures for career development. Ranking sports helps distill what factors are driving this and where sports might look for inspiration.
- **Conflicts Of Interest.** There are some inherent clashes of interest apparent between different groups in sport. Being open and helping athletes to be aware of this helps them not to fall through gaps.
- **What Support Is Available.** It's not always apparent what career development support is available to different athletes so I've tried to shed some light on this. Hoping we can crowdsource the gaps.
- **Other Forces For Good.** A number of organisations are acting to support athletes in related ways so a list has been assembled.
- **Career Coach Q&A.** Responses provided to queries about what career coaching does and how, that emerged during the research.

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## Impact

### Opportunities

Here are some of the opportunities identified through this research:

'Match Day'	Businesses register to offer 'a day in the life' experiences to athletes.
'Rehab'	Outplacement for athletes that takes inspiration from addiction rehabilitation.
'Circles'	Provide transition support for and through partners, friends and families of athletes.
'Sportify'	Explore how lived experiences can contribute towards certification. E.g. 'Cert IV Elite Professionalism'.
'Mentoring'	Evidence suggests this can get cut through with the least career active. Use the list of role models.
'Career Coaching'	Here's another option for those who want a little time and space to find their best way ahead. Why not?
'Financial Wellbeing'	There's a clear need for help, whether it's with too much money or too little.
Share Learnings	Share tips and tricks to help athletes regarding a career development, especially the less supported fringes.
Profiles	Feature a weekly transition success story in the sports press.
Resume Template	Designed specially to help athletes show transferable skills. Done. Just email Max for a free one.

### Report

A full report is available free to those who participated in the research, and is also for sale, AUD\$150 +gst.

### Further Research

Twelve initial further questions have been identified that would be beneficial based on having done this research. These are available in the report. Opportunities to collaborate and learn more from the data produced are of interest.

### Presentations

There are follow up talks based on this work, available on request. They are designed specifically for each of the main groups studied: current athletes, past athletes and non-athletes in sport. In addition there is one for friends and families of athletes.

### Contact

Max Kalis  
max@maxkalis.com