

# 1 **Life after doping – a cross-country analysis of organisational support for sanctioned athletes**

## 2 **Abstract**

3 Aim: This article investigates the available support services/interventions offered by sporting  
4 organisations worldwide for athletes facing career transitions resulting from suspensions due to  
5 violating anti-doping policy. The authors aim to provide an overview of existing support systems and  
6 raise an awareness of the need of customised and structured support for sanctioned athletes as part of  
7 duty of care in sport,

8 Method: Web-based data was initially collected. Following this we contacted each sport organisation  
9 by email with a request to answer prepared research questions. Fifty sport organisations were  
10 contacted, including the International Olympic Committee (IOC) and National Olympic Committees  
11 (NOCs). The data from 22 sport organisations representing five continents are presented.

12 Results: The data are presented under five main themes: Termination of support, Psychological  
13 support, Financial support, Informative support, and Development in progress. The central finding is  
14 that none of the sporting organisations in this study has established a structured support programme or  
15 system for supporting doping sanctioned athletes to date.

16 Conclusion: In most cases sanctioned athletes are simply cut off from all organisational support and  
17 left to cope on their own when they are likely to be vulnerable. We argue there is a need for better  
18 awareness and support programmes of the challenges faced by athletes following a competition ban or  
19 other forced exit from sport due to an anti-doping violation.

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21 Keywords: doping, sport career transitions, organisational support, transition support, stigma

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## 25 1. Introduction

26 Anti-doping researchers have identified a range of ways that athletes may be harmed or suffer  
27 negative effects resulting from anti-doping processes (c.f. Dimeo & Møller, 2018). The World  
28 Anti-Doping Agency (WADA), a global anti-doping policy making body, sets out ten  
29 mechanisms through which an athlete may commit an anti-doping rule violation (ADRV)  
30 (WADA, 2015). Probably the most readily understood violation is returning a positive test for a  
31 prohibited substance. The initial positive result sets off a chain of events that can present various  
32 difficulties for athletes. For example, the provisional suspension given while waiting for a  
33 decision not only prevents competition, but may also be made public, leaving the athlete open to  
34 negative attention and scrutiny before the details have been established. If a decision includes a  
35 sanction in the form of a competition ban, athletes may lose sponsorships, income, relationships  
36 in their sport community, and may face social isolation due to the stigmatising nature of being  
37 labelled a doper (Coomber, 2014). Though there is evidence that up to 40% of positive tests are  
38 the result of inadvertent use (de Hon, 2016)—meaning the athlete did not intend to enhance their  
39 performance—athletes still face the negative outcomes of an ADRV.

40

41 In many ways, competition bans act as a form of involuntary retirement from sport (Lavallee,  
42 Grove, & Gordon, 1997). Though athletes given short bans may return to sport, some will face a  
43 permanent forced retirement. In either case, these points represent career transitions during which  
44 athletes may be especially vulnerable to issues like mental health problems and may require  
45 additional support while transitioning away from a full-time sport career. Based on publicly  
46 available information, the number of athletes potentially facing such transitions is not  
47 insignificant, though the full scale of this problem is hard to measure. We can make some rough  
48 estimates but not all the required information is available to be truly accurate. Drawing from  
49 WADA's 2017 Testing Statistics report we know that 1.43% of 322,000 tests per year result in an  
50 Adverse Analytical Finding (AAF), which is 4,596 (WADA, 2018). Of course, AAFs are not the  
51 same as sanctions for a number of reasons: that some positive tests are accounted for by

52 Therapeutic Use Exemptions (TUEs); others are multiple tests on the same athlete; and others are  
53 so innocuous that the athlete only receives a warning. It is also possible that the B sample is  
54 returned negative, or the athlete successfully proves it was contamination (this outcome is very  
55 rare). While the most recent years' statistics are not yet available, WADA reported that in 2016  
56 there were 1,595 ADRVs and that figure increased by 13% to 1,804 in 2017 (WADA 2019).  
57 Therefore, we can say that the number of athletes who face some form of anti-doping punishment  
58 has been in the region of 1,600-1,800, and that as the trend is upwards it may mean the 2018 and  
59 2019 figures will be higher. However, we do not know for how long these athletes (or support  
60 personnel) have been banned or how many of them make an attempt to return to sport.

61

62 If the ban is four years or more, they are less likely to make a return to sport and less likely to  
63 have career opportunities as a coach or related role. They will be stigmatised as a deliberate doper  
64 as a four-year ban usually involves a substance or method associated with deliberate cheating  
65 such as EPO, blood doping, growth hormone or anabolic steroids. The Testing Statistics report  
66 has categories of the substance or method found. Athletes in this situation are more likely to  
67 suffer the negative mental health pressures as they have suddenly lost their reputation and  
68 livelihood. Dimeo and Møller (2018) provide case studies of athletes who have committed  
69 suicide, attempted to commit suicide, suffered severe depression or had their lives dramatically  
70 changed by a doping sanction.

71

72 Athletes who are sanctioned may struggle to make a return to sport. They are likely to lose their  
73 sponsorship deals, potentially lose their contracts with a club or team, miss out on training and  
74 competitions, and may not receive much advice and support during their ban. Sports fans might  
75 associate all forms of doping with cheating so athletes making a return are treated with suspicion.  
76 This is especially difficult for athletes in sports where it is difficult to continue training during a  
77 ban without sharing facilities or staff with other athletes. The Code lays out a rule against  
78 associating with athletes or other support personnel who are currently sanctioned; it would be

79 considered an ADRV for any athlete, coach, or manager to work or train with a sanctioned athlete  
80 (WADA, 2019b, p.3). On top of living with the stigma of being labelled a ‘doper’, they may lose  
81 the opportunity to make a return to sport.

82 WADA sets out as part of its mission to ‘respect the rights and integrity of clean athletes’  
83 (WADA, 2019a). If we understand clean athletes to be those who do not run afoul of WADA’s  
84 rules, we are left to wonder about the rights and integrity of athletes who do violate those rules.  
85 This article focuses on this issue in addressing the central research question: Do sporting  
86 organisations provide support/interventions to high-performance athletes who have used banned  
87 substances and, as a result, have damaged/terminated their athletic careers? For the purposes of  
88 this article, an organisational intervention or organisational support is defined as a planned  
89 programme or services offered by a sporting organisation specifically designed to assist athletes  
90 in preparing for career transitions (Lavalley et al., 2014). Drawing on data collected from sport  
91 organisations, we explore what resources are available to athletes facing a career transition as a  
92 result of a doping sanction. We argue that as part of sport’s duty of care to athletes, sport  
93 organisations and governing policies must consider the needs of athletes facing career transitions  
94 resulting from anti-doping.

95

## 96 **2. Sport career transitions**

97 Career termination is an inevitable experience that high-performance athletes will face in a range  
98 of circumstance. Retirement is a transition moment that can increase risks, especially if they are  
99 unprepared for it (Hong & Coffee, 2018) and it also invites identity and coping issues (Sinclair &  
100 Orlick, 1994). Researchers have shown that high-performance athletes may be at an increased risk  
101 of suicide that is potentially associated with injuries, substance abuse, and relatively early  
102 retirement from their sporting career (Baum, 2005).

103

104 Studies in the area of sport career transitions have identified common reasons for athletes to  
105 terminate their sporting careers. The ideal career termination can be when an athlete retires

106 voluntarily, for their own personal, social, or athletic reasons (Taylor et al., 2005), or for pursuing  
107 a different career path (Lavalley, Grove, & Gordon, 1997). However, voluntary retirement also  
108 invites various difficulties, for instance when the decision is made due to the stress caused by  
109 competitions or discord with their coaches (Kerr & Dacyshyn, 2000). Lavalley et al. (1997) have  
110 identified various causes of retirement including work/study, lost motivation, the politics of sport,  
111 decreased performance, financial issues, decreased enjoyment, age, injury, and deselection.  
112 Although Lavalley et al. (1997) only considered age, injury, and deselection as involuntary  
113 reasons for retirement, other reasons can be considered to contribute to involuntary retirement.  
114 For instance, some athletes may terminate their sporting career because they are disaffected by  
115 politics of sport, are forced to reorder their priorities (work/study commitments, finance), or they  
116 become less competitive (decrease in performance) (Taylor et al., 2005). However, there should  
117 be one more significant reason for involuntary career termination: being suspended due to  
118 violating anti-doping policy.

119  
120 Researchers in the area of sport career transitions have considered how to assist high-performance  
121 athletes with issues related to transitions within or out of sport. This research shows that national  
122 sporting organisations have developed career counselling programmes for high-performance  
123 athletes (Anderson & Morris, 2000; Sinclair & Hackfort, 2000; Taylor et al., 2005; Wylleman et  
124 al., 1999). Anderson and Morris (2000) insisted that sporting organisations have responsibility to  
125 encourage athletes to have a balanced life between sporting and non-sporting careers, and to  
126 develop a well-rounded identity during their sporting careers. Since career transition support  
127 programmes enable sporting organisations to create an appropriate environment for high-  
128 performance athletes (Anderson & Morris, 2000), the organisational context of career  
129 development programmes is critical to help athletes have a smooth and healthy transition  
130 (Lavalley, Gorely, Lavalley, & Wylleman, 2001). With regard to this, Hong and Coffee (2018)  
131 provided an overview of organisational support provided to high-performance athletes from 19  
132 different countries. Their study reviewed programmes around the world, identifying their

133 similarities, differences, and difficulties so that sporting organisations might improve the support  
134 through sport career transition programmes. However, their findings did not explore whether or  
135 not the provision of such transitional support is accessible when athletes who were previously  
136 eligible for the services are sanctioned due to doping ADRVs. This is a key driver of the current  
137 research: to contribute to our understanding of transitions and transitional support to the literature.

138

### 139 **3. Cases on life after doping**

140 There has been increased awareness within academic research about the impact of a sanction on  
141 an athlete. However, the small number of studies in which ‘doped’ athletes have been interviewed  
142 have tended to focus primarily on the reasons why they doped, not about the consequences. These  
143 studies have also been limited to athletes who have deliberately doped, and not included  
144 discussions of alternative situations such as inadvertent doping or even forced doping.

145 Nonetheless, we can highlight several cases of sanctioned Olympic athletes who have struggled  
146 with the pressures of stigma, public criticism, peer criticism, and a significant narrowing of their  
147 career opportunities.

148

149 An example from the 1990s is that of English track and field athlete, Diane Modahl. She was  
150 falsely accused of using testosterone and was banned for two years. She appealed and won her  
151 case, but lost significant financial costs to the point that she was bankrupt. In her autobiography  
152 she tells of her depression, despair, and suicidal thoughts during her appeal period and in the  
153 aftermath (Modahl, 1995). Several years later, another English runner, Dwain Chambers, was part  
154 of the BALCO scandal in the early 2000s. He was banned for two years. Again, details of the  
155 stress and anxiety he suffered can be found in his autobiography. He was also vilified by other  
156 athletes when he made a return to the sport. Upon retirement, he failed to secure employment in  
157 sport and felt disappointed that prominent sports leaders continued to criticise him in public  
158 (Chambers, 2010). Marion Jones was also caught up in the BALCO scandal and was stripped of

159 her medals from the 2000 Olympics. Her emotional recovery was further disrupted by a prison  
160 sentence related to BALCO but not to doping. She did not return to track and field (Jones, 2011).

161  
162 Several cyclists have suffered from doping cases. In 2004, the Scottish cyclist David Millar was  
163 banned for two years after investigators found a syringe with EPO in his apartment. He wrote a  
164 detailed account explaining his sense of isolation and pressure in the aftermath of the sanction  
165 (Millar, 2011). Tyler Hamilton was an American Olympian who joined the US Postal professional  
166 team with Lance Armstrong. He confessed to doping in 2011, helping the case against Armstrong,  
167 and had significant problems with depression over several years. He has not made a return to  
168 cycling (Hamilton & Coyle, 2012). One of his other teammates, Floyd Landis, had faced many  
169 personal and financial issues that emerged from his positive test after winning the 2006 Tour de  
170 France. Another cyclist from this time period who was banned for doping was Michael  
171 Rasmussen. He has explained in books and media interviews how his depression led to suicidal  
172 thoughts and on-going emotional issues (Dimeo & Møller, 2018).

173  
174 Such examples are episodic, and we cannot say for certain how many sanctioned athletes have  
175 suffered such dramatic emotional turmoil. Many athletes do not wish to relate their stories in  
176 public. However, we can see from the above (e.g. depression, financial issues, and suicidal  
177 thoughts) that the consequences can be serious.

178

#### 179 **4. Method**

180 The present study is part of a large project of organisational support programmes for high  
181 performance athletes across the world focusing on organisational support for WADA sanctioned  
182 athletes. Data collection and analysis have been conducted by replicating Hong and Coffee  
183 (2018)'s study on sport career transition organisational intervention programmes for high-  
184 performance athletes. The ethics approval has been granted by the General University Ethics  
185 Panel (GUEP) at the University of Stirling.

186

187 **4.1. Data collection**

188 Web-based data collection was conducted first to find any relevant information to answer the  
189 research question between May 2018 and September 2019. As Hong and Coffee (2018)  
190 applied, data collection was initiated by investigating the International Olympic Committee  
191 (IOC) and National Olympic Committees (NOCs) websites to identify relevant websites of  
192 sporting organisations that could be able to answer the research question. The data from Hong  
193 and Coffee (2018) confirmed that the IOC and NOCs have developed support programmes for  
194 high-performance athletes and that they have practitioners/staff members who keep in contact  
195 with athletes. In this study, the IOC and NOCs have been chosen as the focus for two main  
196 reasons. First, NOCs are responsible for Olympians, all of whom are subjected to the WADA  
197 Anti-Doping Code. Second, many are mainly amateur athletes who do not have contracts with  
198 professional teams or lucrative sponsorship deals, which makes them more vulnerable when  
199 they have limited resources and support from their NOCs.

200

201 **4.2. Procedure**

202 None of sporting organisations in this study had made public the information associated with  
203 support provision for sanctioned athletes. The first author then contacted each sporting  
204 organisation to clarify information by requesting further information via emails, video calls,  
205 and by visiting some of the organisations (IOC, the Oceania National Olympic Committee  
206 [ONOC], and Sport Singapore). Although she initiated to contact some of the organisations  
207 through networks developed through the previous study, in the majority of cases she had to  
208 start with a general enquiry from each sporting organisation's website. Often, the previous  
209 contact persons no longer worked for their organisations. She was then directed to the person  
210 in charge at the time of the data collection.

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### 214 **4.3. Sporting organisations**

215 Sporting organisations, mainly NOCs, from 50 countries were initially contacted and data was  
216 collected from 24 organisations based in Australia, Belgium, Botswana, Canada, Denmark,  
217 France, Germany, Hong-Kong, Ireland, Japan, Malaysia, Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway,  
218 Portugal, Singapore, South Korea, Spain, the United Kingdom (UK), and the United States of  
219 America (USA) including the IOC and ONOC. The data from Norway and the UK has been  
220 excluded from this study. The organisation from the UK asked the research team to double  
221 check the information provided with their senior colleague but the senior colleague did not  
222 respond at all within the time period of data collection. The organisation from Norway  
223 provided the relevant websites, but the required information was not available. Therefore, the  
224 data from 22 sporting organisations will be presented in this paper.

225  
226 Other sporting organisations on the list of 50 countries were contacted at least five times  
227 within the time of data collection. They were excluded from the list of the data collection  
228 because they did not respond to email requests or refused to answer the questions. However, it  
229 is worth noting that the data was collected from five out of six continents across the world.

### 230 231 **4.4. Data Analysis**

232 The data collected was analysed based on the research question and the theoretical  
233 framework, the Holistic Athletic Career (HAC) model (Wylleman, Reints, & De Knop, 2013),  
234 which lays out five different levels of athletes' career transitions throughout their sporting  
235 career: Athletic, Psychological, Psychosocial, Academic and Vocational, and Financial. Each  
236 response to the research question regarding transitional support was coded according to which  
237 level(s) of support were available. Responses indicating no support were coded as 'no  
238 support'. Responses that did not fit the HAC were coded under new, emergent codes. This led  
239 to three additional codes, as discussed below.

241 Table 1: Approach to doping sanctioned athletes by country and sport organisation

Country	Sporting organisation	Answer to the research question
Australia	Australian Institute of Sport (AIS)	Have limited in the contact with an athlete during their ineligible period.
	South Australian Sports Institute (SASI)	No structured support programme/intervention is available yet. Aware that anti-doping education should be taken. The Australian Anti-doping staff delivers the educational programme. Data-based has been developed so it is possible to check if an athlete completes the educational course or not.
Belgium	ADEPS (Administrative service of the Ministry of the French Community of Belgium)	In case of banned substance use, the collaboration is terminated.
	Sport Vlaanderen (Administration of the Ministry of Sport)	No structured support programme/intervention is available yet.
Botswana	Botswana National Olympic Committee	A counselling session is arranged and beyond that anti-doping workshops are arranged for elite athletes generally.

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Canada	Canadian Olympic Committee	No structured support programme/intervention is available yet.
Denmark	Team Denmark	No structured support programme/intervention is available yet. They are immediately excluded from our support
France	Ministry of Sports	No structured support programme/intervention is available yet. However, some psychologists who are able to support such athletes are available.
Germany	German Olympic Sports Federation (DOSB)	No structured support programme/intervention is available yet.
Hong Kong	Sports Federation & Olympic Committee of Hong Kong, China (SF&OC)	Athletes who violate the anti-doping rules would not be able to benefit from the support programme.
IOC	IOC	Fully aware of the importance of this matter. A scheme development is in progress.  Athlete 365 Career + is an open access programme. Therefore, sanctioned athletes are still able to use the services.  Other additional services are up to NOCs.

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Ireland	Sport Ireland Institute	No structured support programme/intervention is available as such case has not happened yet. Keen to learn support schemes from other organisations.
Japan	Japanese Olympic Committee	No structured support programme/intervention is available yet.
Malaysia	National Sports Council of Malaysia	In most cases, there is no intervention for dope-positive athletes. Most of the time, the government will have to terminate them from the programs and the same goes to their associations. All athletes who involved in doping and found guilty by the disciplinary committee had been given notice of termination, and all allowance and even sponsorship packages will be stopped once they are found guilty. However, those athletes who work with the government will not penalised legally even if they were found guilty after the doping case heard.
Netherlands	NOC*NSF (National Olympic committee & National sports federation)	NOC*NSF, together with the Dutch government, recently just launched a procedure for athletes that make costs

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		in juridical procedures related to doping or match fixing. Athletes will be helped financially to undertake their procedure. Reason to do this is to give athletes a fair process.
New Zealand	High Performance Sport NZ	No structured support programme/intervention is available as such case has not happened yet.
ONOC	Papua New Guinea Olympic Committee Fiji National Olympic Committee	There has been only one case. This case made the organisation aware that depression, mental-wellbeing should be considered. Limited access to sport psychologists should be addressed in the Pacific regions.
Portugal	National Olympic Committee of Portugal, through the Portuguese Olympic Athletes Commission	No structured support programme/intervention is available yet.
Singapore	Singapore Sport Institute	As long the athlete is still carded under the SSI High Performance System, he/she will receive support from SSI.
Spain	The High Performance Sports Centre of Catalonia (CAR)	No structured support programme/intervention is available yet but it provides information regarding contact with the national coaches and federations.

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South Korea	The Korean Sport Olympic Committee (KSOC)	No special restrictions for such athletes.  The support services provided by the KSOC are all available for athletes who are on the KSOC athlete registration system.
USA	U.S. Olympic and Paralympic Committee	No structured support programme/intervention is available yet

242

243 **5. Results and Discussion**

244 None of the sporting organisations in this study has established a structured support programme or  
 245 system for supporting doping sanctioned athletes to date (Table 1). However, there were various ways  
 246 in which they responded to cases of suspended athletes and all the data was able to be categorised  
 247 under five different themes. Two of **the** themes from the HAC model were found in the data analysis:  
 248 Psychological and Financial Support. Termination of Support and Development in Progress were  
 249 identified from the data which have not been reported in the previous study of support programmes  
 250 for high-performance athletes (c.f. Hong & Coffee, 2018). Lastly, Informative Support was also  
 251 identified which considered as crucial for athletes in transitions (Pummell & Lavallee, 2018).

252 **5.1. Termination of support**

253 Four out of twenty organisations – ADEPS, Team Denmark, SF&OC, and National Sport  
 254 Council of Malaysia – explicitly indicated that they would terminate their support when an  
 255 athlete is shown to have violated anti-doping policy. With regard to this, Singapore Sport  
 256 institute (SSI) mentioned that the support would still be provided if an athlete met the  
 257 eligibility requirements. However, SSI has not indicated if the eligibility rules for the system  
 258 include any anti-doping policy related terms.

259 Athletes who have limited access to resources are especially at risk of experiencing traumatic  
260 transitions, and sporting organisations are responsible for ensuring that athletes develop a  
261 balanced life and identity during their sporting careers (Anderson & Morris, 2000). The  
262 availability of support of each individual athlete is one of the critical factors in their ability to  
263 cope with career transition (Pummell & Lavalley, 2019). Although sporting organisations  
264 worldwide have responded to the need for establishing relevant athlete career transition  
265 support programmes (Hong & Coffee, 2018), their responsibilities to their athletes and  
266 support **services could** be reconsidered with a view towards including suspended athletes who  
267 are likely to face traumatic transitions with their stigma.

268

## 269 **5.2. Psychological support**

270 Two out of twenty organisations – Botswana National Olympic Committee and Ministry of  
271 Sports (France) – mentioned that they provide some psychological support for sanctioned  
272 athletes via counselling sessions and sport psychologists. However, it is not clear if there have  
273 been some cases that suspended athletes have taken an advantage of their support provision,  
274 which was beyond the research questions asked in this study. With regard to psychological  
275 support, the ONOC mentioned that there has been one case of a suspended athlete that made  
276 clear the need for psychological support for mental health issues such as depression. They  
277 also addressed the issue of limited access to sport psychologists in the Pacific regions.

278 Researchers have demonstrated that athletes experience substantial psychological distress and  
279 adjustment following their career transitions (Lavalley, Nesti, Borkoles, Cockerill, & Edge,  
280 2000) and that the severity of their distress could be judged based on alcohol consumption,  
281 drug abuse, participation in crime, and anxiety and depression following retirement  
282 (Chamalidis, 1997; Mihovilovic, 1968). Although sanctioned athletes might be able to return  
283 to their sporting career, their psychological distress would not be less than other athletes  
284 facing retirement. Stambulova (1994) proposes a way of assisting athletes in transition crisis,  
285 highlighting the need to develop a continuous psychological support system. In Hong &

286 Coffee's (2018) study, a number of organisational sport career transition intervention  
287 programmes provide counselling sessions as a form of psychological support. However, the  
288 support is not tailored for suspended athletes and it is not clear if they can access the  
289 psychological support services even after being sanctioned in most cases.

290

### 291 **5.3. Financial support**

292 **National Olympic committee & National sports federation (NOC\*NSF, Netherlands)** has  
293 recently launched its financial support for athletes who undergo juridical procedures related to  
294 doping and match fixing. They have developed this scheme to ensure a fair process for  
295 athletes. The latest support provision differs from the financial support in general provided by  
296 other sporting organisations. Hong (2017) reported the contents of organisational sport career  
297 transition intervention programmes from 19 different countries. Four of 19 countries  
298 explicitly mentioned financial support within their support programmes: Financial planning  
299 and advising (the Canadian Sport Institute Network), Managing Finances (High Performance  
300 Sport New Zealand), Financial support for educational and vocational courses (the Korean  
301 Olympic Committee and the Korea Foundation for the Next Generation Sports Talent), and  
302 Financial support through scholarship (the Swiss Olympic). ADEPS (Belgium) also  
303 mentioned financial and administrative support but the specific financial support provided is  
304 unknown.

305 Stambulova (2003) indicated that athletes need to develop strategies for their financial  
306 independence and seek financial support to cope with career transitions, which has been  
307 addressed by some of the sporting organisations above and by NOC\*NSF's new financial  
308 support provision. However, in the same study of Hong (2017), identified that NOC\*NSF did  
309 not provide any financial related support for high performance athletes in particular for  
310 suspended athletes, but they provided 1) carer advice and career coaching; 2) educational  
311 guidance; 3) employment and training agency; 4) application and networking skills; 5) time  
312 management; 6) personal branding; 7) social media skills; topsport life skill coaching.



313

314 **5.4. Informative support**

315 The High-Performance Sports Centre of Catalonia (CAR) indicated that they provide  
316 information regarding contact with the national coaches and federations. There was no further  
317 information on what support the athletes can access once they are in touch with the national  
318 coaches and federations. The importance of informative support has been highlighted for  
319 athletes' career transitions (Pummell & Lavalley, 2019). Although the authors particularly  
320 examined the informative intervention for junior tennis players for their junior to senior career  
321 transitions by sharing senior tennis players' experience, it found that the experience of  
322 athletes who have successfully undergone similar transitions was considered helpful. This  
323 could be applied to a transitional support intervention for suspended athletes. The Botswana  
324 National Olympic Committee indicated that anti-doping workshops are arranged for elite  
325 athletes in general. The South Australian Sports Institute also mentioned that they were aware  
326 that anti-doping education should be taken, and the Australian Anti-Doping Agency staff  
327 members deliver an educational programme. Since its database has been developed, it is  
328 possible for them to check if an athlete completes the educational course or not. Although anti-  
329 doping education is crucial to protect athletes from violating anti-doping policy, an  
330 intervention to provide explicit information and guidelines for coping with life after being  
331 suspended and stigmatised is still missing.

332

333 **5.5. Development in progress**

334 The IOC pointed out that they were fully aware of the importance of this matter and there is a  
335 scheme in development. An alternative is the Athlete 365 Career + programme provided by  
336 the IOC, which is an open access online programme that sanctioned athletes are also able to  
337 access. In the case of South Korea, the KSOC provides its athlete career support programme  
338 without any restriction as long as they are on the KSOC registration system. Since elite  
339 athletes at all levels are eligible to register, they confirmed sanctioned athletes would be able

340 to access their support services if they are in the system. However, high-performance athletes  
341 demand tailored support services (Park et al., 2012; Petitpas & Champagne, 2000). Although  
342 the IOC provides a framework of support provision, it commented that additional services  
343 depend on each National Olympic Committee (NOC). The NOCs in this study include the  
344 Botswana National Olympic Committee, Canadian Olympic Committee, German Olympic  
345 Sports Federation, Japanese Olympic Committee, Korean Sport Olympic Committee,  
346 National Olympic Committee of Portugal, NOC\*NSF, ONOC, Sports Federation & Olympic  
347 Committee of Hong Kong, U.S. Olympic and Paralympic Committee. As discussed earlier,  
348 each NOC has responded to the issue in a different way, but none have established a  
349 structured support programme/system yet for sanctioned athletes. In addition, the ONOC and  
350 Sport Ireland Institute commented that they would be keen to learn what other organisations  
351 have developed their schemes for suspended athletes. This implied that good practice of  
352 established support system/intervention could be shared to help other sporting organisations  
353 who shared the same concerns to develop a new scheme in their context.

354

## 355 **6. Conclusion**

356 Athletes sanctioned for anti-doping violations face involuntary retirement from sport, or at least an  
357 involuntary transition, which may have negative outcomes on their lives, health, and overall well-  
358 being. The data presented here demonstrates that with few exceptions, sport organisations have little  
359 in the way of support available for sanctioned athletes. In most cases athletes are simply cut off from  
360 all organisational support and left to cope on their own when they are likely to be vulnerable. This  
361 points to a need for better awareness of the challenges faced by athletes following a competition ban  
362 or other forced exit from sport due to an anti-doping violation. In addition to broadening our  
363 understanding of the lack of support for doping-related career transitions, the findings in this paper  
364 signpost the issue of athlete welfare and well-being related to doping and career transitions to  
365 researchers and sport stakeholders. This is especially important as the latter are often bound, either

366 through policies or ethics, to provide a ‘duty of care in sport’ to the athletes for which they are  
367 responsible.

368 Current anti-doping policies tend to focus almost exclusively on ‘clean athletes’, or those who do not  
369 face anti-doping sanctions. While these policies might make sense given the rhetoric around doping,  
370 there is little support available to athletes receiving anti-doping sanctions. In light of what research  
371 has shown regarding the high rates of inadvertent use as the root cause for a positive tests (de Hon,  
372 2016) and the higher risks for athletes facing unplanned retirements (Hong & Coffee, 2018), this  
373 seems to be an approach with a distinct lack of empathy. However, these athletes are owed a duty of  
374 care by governing organisations, including when facing career transitions such as retirement or  
375 enforced breaks. As such, it seems appropriate to recommend that anti-doping organisations and sport  
376 governing bodies re-evaluate their current support structures for all athletes and make adjustments that  
377 would include provision for sanctioned athletes.

378 This **study** does have limitations. Although it was not the aim of current study, the authors appreciate  
379 that empirical evidences on athletes’ perspectives on such support have not been provided in this  
380 **study**. Future research might also consider evaluating the specific needs of such athletes and their  
381 perceived support in order to design transitional interventions to address these needs. Although a  
382 large number of sporting organisations, NOCs in particular, have been investigated, other sporting  
383 organisations not included in this study (**e.g. National Anti-Doping Organisations**) may have  
384 developed their own support systems. It would be worth investigating support system and available  
385 resources from other relevant organisations such as individual sport federations, as well as  
386 professional and non-Olympic teams, clubs, and leagues. Once again, the data presented in this paper  
387 should be used as a starting point to examine such support rather than as a comprehensive account of  
388 support available.

389

### 390 **Conflict of interest**

391 The authors have no conflict of interest

392 **References**

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