

Veterans

Activity Box 1.14

Module 1: Target Group



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Key Facts

- A study by FIFPro, the World's Footballers' Association, found that 39% of former pros suffer from mental health issues. Likewise, 32% report having developed a drinking habit (91)
- Emma Terho (Finland), a former ice hockey athlete, is the chair of IOC Athlete's Commission

Specific groups this Activity Box applies to:

- Retired players involved in both high-performance level or amateur level
- Former coaches
- Other groups: journalists Sport managers involved professionally in Sport
- Former Combatants (retired military)

Why is it so important

Contribution

Whereas Sport is the root of many physical and emotional problems for retired athletes, Sport for All can also be a solution to overcome these realities in these respects:

- Work in **self-development life skills** to reaffirm a person's identity: the loss of a preferred or dominant role may affect a person's overall self-concept (88).
- A new chance of involvement can **strengthen mental well-being**: Sport career termination induces dramatic changes in athletes' personal, social and occupational lives, feeling of emptiness, anxiety, and depression in their lives. The higher the competitive level, the more likely the chances to experience emotional adjustment difficulties.
- **Biological balance**: Especially in the early stages after retirement, athletes may face chemical imbalances in their bodies. During competitive lives, athletes have had regular doses of serotonin daily for many years. When this is suddenly decreased or stopped, negative effects can appear at a biological level (88).
- **Livelihood opportunities**: Not all athletes, especially from little leagues, can save millions in the bank after retirement. Involving athletes (e.g., event organizers) can create new alternatives for those who could not secure economic backing.
- **Community involvement**: Athletes are normally socially isolated due to the high-performance demands that oblige them to train, travel and rest. For many "normal" people, high-performance athletes are seen as super stars and are difficult to be addressed.

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International endorsement

IOC Athlete's commission:

Ensuring Athletes' viewpoint remains at the heart of the Olympic Movement decisions, representing the future, current and recently retired Olympic Athletes.

Barriers to Sport that should be overcome

- Sense of sadness to Sport once an athlete is forced to adopt a different role away from high performance.
- Lack of records and up to date information of former athletes.

Tips and key success factors

Involvement with close tights:

- Encourage strong relationships with coaches, family, friends and managers who care about your sporting success as well as your personal growth. Being supported by significant others to consider other avenues in life will help you keep an open mind and diversify your identity
- Combine Sport festivals or tournaments with tourism and also to attend with life partners or other relatives, hosting tournaments in different locations within the country combined with touristic options and social activities
- Adapt rules that enable the participation of family and friends

Acknowledge the contribution of those who were former athletes

- Complement Sport for All activities with spaces such as mentoring where Veterans can be recognized and be role models.
- Do not focus only on top athletes with accomplishments but on all who devoted their lives to the Sport.
- Veterans often like to revive the experiences enjoyed in the past, e.g., For table tennis, use 38mm balls or playing until 21 points instead of 11.

Tailored and planned activities depending on age and level

- As with the elderly, it is important to check the current health status of participants. Classification by age, gender and level should be carefully planned.
- As Veterans are used to competitive activities, organizing tournaments might be a smart option to attract this target group.

Other tips:

- Collect press reviews, videos and other historical pieces to create "nostalgia" events.
- Loss focus as the first aim is to involve these groups in physical activity. Other spaces such as award events, talks, etc., are important means to attract veterans.

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Available Resources

- IOC Athlete 365 platform. [Click Here](#)
- What became of the 1956 Hungarian Olympians? [Click Here](#)
- Life after Sport: depression in the retired athlete. [Click Here](#)
- FIFA Legends programme. [Click Here](#)

Sample Case

Sport for Veterans (NGO VET Sport)

- Aims to set the standard for improving Veterans' physical, mental, and emotional health through Sport, physical activity, and community involvement.
- Provides thousands of Veterans with continuous opportunities to reintegrate into their communities through Sport, community service, events, and partnerships.

More information:

Sport for Veterans: Stories from the field.

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