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ACE

ATHLETE CAREER AND EDUCATION ENHANCING YOUR SPORTING LIFE



While in the middle of my career I didn't understand the importance of balance. I wish I had, because I truly believe it would have made me a better athlete. I thought all I needed to do was swim – nothing could have been further from the truth. Hindsight is a wonderful thing.

Daniel Kowalski, former Olympic swimmer, now ACE Adviser



ACE has really provided me with an avenue to have a greater sense of balance in my life. In the end, it helps you with your sporting performance as well.

Elise Rechichi, Olympic sailor

BALANCE

Balancing or integrating your sporting goals with the other components of your life can be a challenge: dealing with family, study, work and social demands takes planning, compromise and creativity.

Research shows the same thing as the ACE network has found: athletes who achieve a sense of balance in their life also tend to perform better in training and competition.

Furthermore, athletes with interests and commitments outside of sport face less difficulty adjusting to life after sport, as they already have an alternative focus for their energy.

Having balance in your life also means you may be able to develop skills outside of your sporting experience that can be applicable to alternative careers.

Finding ways to integrate the various components in your life requires:

- identifying priorities: it is important to determine what your needs are, and from there you can develop strategies
- setting goals: goals help to establish direction, record your achievements and integrate all the things happening in your life
- good time management: effective time management should enable you to feel more balanced and perform at your best. But, before you look at how to best manage your time and gain some balance, you need to think about how your time is currently being used and how you would like it to be.

The ACE network has a team of great advisers with a history of helping athletes with lifestyle management. We work with elite athletes experiencing similar demands to you, to help find the best solutions, and can assist with all of the strategies discussed on this factsheet – so speak to them now, before the demands become overwhelming.



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I have always studied and worked throughout my orienteering career. However, when I returned from Sweden, I became more focused on finding a long-term 'career' job. I started focusing more on the future and my life after sport.

I talked to people, including ACE staff at the ACT Academy of Sport, about my options and tried to identify what it was I really wanted to do. I also did some work experience to get a feel for what sort of work was around.

Jo Allison, orienteering



I asked the ACE crew, 'Once the swimming is over what do I do?' They answered, 'What are your interests?' I told them and they came back to me with a list of courses I could do and that's what I've followed through.

Sam Bramham, Paralympic swimmer

CAREER PLANNING

A career is a sequence of paid and unpaid work roles, which you undertake throughout your life. Sport can be the main priority in your career now, but it is a good idea to know what other options you have and plan for the time when sport is no longer your main priority.

Age is an important factor in high performance sport and it is unlikely that you will be an elite athlete for your whole working life.

It is vital you consider what you would like to do in addition to your sport to ensure your wellbeing into the future. You might still want to be involved in sport, perhaps as a coach, physiotherapist or event coordinator.

Alternatively, there are a range of non-sport related careers that former athletes have gone into, in areas as diverse as media representation, teaching, IT consultancy, carpentry, property management and medicine. Others have managed their own businesses, from large scale media and marketing enterprises to single fishing boats.

ACE can help you manage your career goals as part of our career counselling and planning service. We can assist you to explore your options and find the best pathways to achieve your goals, in a way that suits you. This could involve:

- assessing your current skills, interests, values and abilities
- considering time available, financial commitments and goals
- gathering information about possible careers
- identifying strategies to achieve your career goals.

As you identify skills, motivators and interests, it is easy to become excited about making plans for a future that integrates a career in sport and alternative options!



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My studies kept me grounded, and I actually got my best results at uni when we were travelling with the team. For me it's no good if my coach demands that I be a full-time athlete. I know I perform better when I have another focus besides my sport. It keeps me grounded and gives me the perspective that I need to stay sane!

Amber Halliday, former Olympic rower, now cyclist



I don't think there has ever been a time when I had to choose between studying and training. I've always seen them as really symbiotic. I found that they actually work incredibly well together and I was a much happier student and a happier athlete when I was doing the two together.

Heath Francis, Paralympic athlete

EDUCATION

Completing an education at the same time as training for elite sport is challenging. However, comprehensive research and testimonies tell us that athletes who successfully integrate their studies and training can achieve excellent results in both areas.

Furthermore, athletes who continue education during their careers as high performance sportspeople often feel more comfortable embarking on their life and career after sport.

Currently, Year 12 (or equivalent) is considered by business and society the minimum educational level to ensure long-term employment. Qualifications beyond this, along with work experience, ensure your competitiveness in the job market.

ACE advisers can help you work out a schedule that allows you to keep up your studies without compromising your sporting goals. We can liaise with schools, TAFEs and universities to work with you to find a solution that suits your needs.

The Elite Athlete Friendly University program is an example of a national approach to meeting the flexibility that athletes require.

Our advisers provide support for athletes through all stages and forms of education:

- primary school: for gymnasts, for example
- secondary school: Years 7–10 and Years 11–12 (which may be stretched over three years)
- technical and further education: apprenticeships and traineeships, for example
- university: campus-based and distance education
- short courses for particular skill and knowledge development.

ACE is also here to offer advice and guidance on finding the right courses, and we can assist with applying for educational scholarships in Australia and overseas.



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Retiring is a special challenge. After the relief of not having to train so intensely and travel, you do have a sense of loss and miss the competition and associated contacts. But I have always had other goals – family and study – to keep me focused and looking ahead.

Robert Newbery, former Olympic diver



One of the hardest transitions in life is moving from living an elite athlete's life to that of the nine to five workday. By preparing yourself during your years of sport you can make the transition easier. From a career perspective, sport should be used as a key to open doors to the corporate world, rather than something to hang your hat on and say, 'Hey, give me a job'.

Chris Fydler, former Olympic swimmer
"Beagle" (Bondi Rescue), Susie O'Neill,
Chris Fydler, Sandra Morgan-Beavis

TRANSITIONS THROUGH AND FROM SPORT

The process when an athlete moves from one life direction to another is known as transition. It can be small moves – such as changing coaches, education focus and employment, or relocating – and larger changes, such as due to injury, removal of funding or retirement.

ACE advisers understand that changes can affect athletes in different ways and we are committed to helping each athlete manage their own individual transitions.

Often, elite athletes don't consider that the career they are putting all their energy into right now might only last for a few years. Your retirement may be of your own choice but it may also be as the result of injury or no longer making the cut, so it is a good idea to have a plan for your life after sport well thought out before that day arrives.

Many athletes indicate that planning for a post-sport career lessens their anxiety about transitions and allows for a greater focus on high performance goals.

ACE advisers can help you make the transitions through and from sport a little smoother. We have the experience and the knowledge to advise on how to plan for the sport and life changes you will inevitably experience, and we can put you in touch with other service providers, such as performance psychology, to assist with these transitions. ACE also provides follow-up support after athletes have left their program or team.

We have found that the athletes who make successful transitions have benefited from:

- having other interests in addition to their sport role
- retiring voluntarily
- having post high-school education and transferable skills
- a social support network
- planning prior to retirement, in financial, psychological and career terms.



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I started working with the ACE program when I was on a scholarship with the Tasmanian Institute of Sport. ACE has helped me in many ways, from getting CVs organised to helping with sponsorship proposals. I know from dealing with athletes as a coach that the program is very helpful, especially with the athletes who are at the age of finishing school, job hunting or dealing with university issues

Darren Balmforth, former Olympic rower and coach



I know what I want to do and I'm definitely going to manage to get there with the things that I have learnt through the ACE program. ACE helps you to develop so many different skills other than your sporting skills. I'm definitely excited about my future and I can't wait to get going!

Candice Liddy, hockey

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TAILORED ASSISTANCE

Each elite athlete's situation is unique. Athletes differ in sporting goals, age, family situation, education, career aspirations, location and personality. This is why the ACE program is designed with a flexible structure for elite athletes from all over Australia (including those travelling overseas) so they can make the most of career, education and personal development opportunities.

ACE advisers know that the amount (and kind) of assistance required is different in every athlete's case, so we work to tailor a program to suit you. Whether you are looking for long-term assistance with balancing your life, exploring career options or just need your résumé checked, ACE has something for you.

Additionally, ACEonline is available anywhere with internet access, to help you identify your career interests and skills, provide information on career and lifestyle issues, and help develop your résumé.

Some of the things ACE can assist you with are:

- **career counselling and planning:** exploring different career pathways and goals
- **personal development training courses:** training in public speaking, media, time management, financial planning and interview skills
- **educational guidance:** assisting with university study options and liaison, vocational training and school
- **employment preparation:** writing résumés and applications, and assisting with job searching skills
- **career referral networks:** using ACE's wide network to assist with work experience
- **transitional support:** assisting with retirement, injury and relocation, and setting goals for life after sport
- **online services:** using ACEonline to assist athletes in rural or remote areas and those travelling overseas
- **referrals:** referring athletes to other services (for example, psychologists, relationship counselling and financial advisers)
- **lifestyle management:** helping to manage the balance between sporting and non-sporting pursuits.