

## Life After Football

# CAREER PLANNING GUIDANCE: SIX STEPS TO HELP YOU MOVE ON

Making the transition from playing into a career can be challenging. It is difficult to know where to start. In this article we look at what you can do now to embrace change and facilitate your retirement from sport.

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**F**ew people like change. After all, we are hardwired to fear the unknown as, in evolutionary terms, we see uncertainty as a threat. We improve our chances of survival by staying where we feel safe. Don't venture too far in case you meet a sabre-toothed tiger lurking around the corner! Moving out of sport is no different. The thought of retirement is often scary. It is easier to avoid the subject for as long as possible. But, at some point, you will be forced to turn the corner and, just like the sabre-toothed tiger, retirement will be staring you in the face.

Fortunately, studies have shown that planning your retirement while still competing actually improves your sporting performance. Addressing the "elephant in the room" or, in our case, the sabre-toothed tiger, helps you move on. So, what can you do to transition from playing into a career? Here are six strategies that work:

## Plan your future

Transition out of sport is complex and often takes longer than you think. Change doesn't come from one day to the next. Life post-sport can be very different from the life you know now. Preparation serves as the bridge between the two worlds. Remember, retirement from sport doesn't always happen on your terms. Injury or de-selection can take the decision away from you. By starting to plan your future in advance, you are taking control of your life, not leaving it up to fate.

## Understand who you are

The better you know yourself, the easier it is to find out what you want to do next. Get feedback from people who know you well. Ask about your strengths and where they see you in the future. How does this differ from how you see yourself? Take time to observe people you admire. What is it about them that you like? Do you also have these



strengths? Reflect on what really matters in your life and let this knowledge influence your goals. If the going gets tough, you are more likely to stay on track if you are heading in a direction that is meaningful to you.

## Discover the possibilities

We often limit our choices to what we know and never fully explore our options. Make a list of all the jobs you can think of, including occupations of family and friends. Consult job profiles on sites such as [www.prospects.ac.uk](http://www.prospects.ac.uk) to get information on other professions. Start talking to people about their jobs: what they like, what they don't, how they found the job. Take an interest in people around you, even the fans you meet. By widening your circle of awareness, you will begin to see opportunities you didn't know existed.

## Test your options

It is only by trying out options that you can gain a real picture of what a job entails. Find someone who does the job you are interested in and ask if you can shadow them for a few hours. Can you imagine yourself doing the same thing? Keep testing potential jobs until you find something that really interests you. Volunteering is also a great way to get experience. Any professional experience you gain now will help you when you come to prepare your CV in the future.

## Build a professional network

Finding a job is often about your connections. Many job vacancies are not even advertised so you need a wide circle of acquaintances. It is never too early to start building your professional network. Join an online site such as [www.linkedin.com](http://www.linkedin.com) and connect with people. Remember to keep your profile professional. Pictures of your holiday or what you had for lunch don't belong here. LinkedIn is also a great place to hear about job openings.

## Choose a winning team

Transition out of sport can be challenging. The right support network is critical. The people around you really matter. Take a close look at your support. Who can give you an unbiased opinion on your skills and achievements? Who can challenge you to fulfil your potential? Who can you confide in when you need to talk about your concerns? If your support network doesn't feel right, think about who else can assist you. Contact a career coach or find a mentor. It is often very useful to talk to former athletes who have successfully made the transition.

The move out of sport into a career can be challenging. Beware of the "superman syndrome": "It's not going to happen to me". It will. The sabre-toothed tiger of retirement will venture into your world even if uninvited. Don't let it overwhelm you. Make these six steps a part of your journey today. ■

**Career After Sport by Julie Schladitz is available now from Amazon**

