

**Title:** Olympic Athletes Back to Retirement: A Qualitative Longitudinal Study

**Authors:** Miquel Torregrosa, Yago Ramis, Susana Pallares, Fernando Azocar, Clara Selva

**Year:** 2015

**Keywords:** dual career, transitions, sport and education, athletic retirement

**Sports:** Team and Individual

**Journal:** Psychology of Sport and Exercise

**Main theme:** Benefits of a dual career

**Secondary themes:** Transitions

**Aims:** The aim of the study was to assess the retirement process of Olympic athletes, with the aim of evaluating the influence that following a dual career or being exclusively focused on sport can have in this process. The authors previously proposed three different types of career paths that athletes follow. These included a linear trajectory whereby the athlete is solely focused on sport, a convergent trajectory whereby sport is prioritised but is compatible with a job or education, and a parallel trajectory in which sport and higher education or work are equally prioritised.

**Method:** Data was collected longitudinally through interviews. Athletes' prospective views before retirement were compared against their accounts ten years later.

**Results and Practical Implications:** Results of the study suggest that athletes who followed dual careers (including the convergent and parallel paths) were more likely to engage in planning for their athletic retirement, retire voluntarily, have multiple personal identities, available social support and active coping strategies. These factors helped athletes to transition into an alternative professional career, highlighting how beneficial dual careers are to athletes. In contrast, athletes that followed a linear path and only had sport in their lives showed a lack of planning for retirement, involuntary retirement, one-dimensional athletic identity, low social support and reactive coping strategies. The study also suggests

that athletes who followed a dual career path were more accurate in anticipating how complex the retirement process would be, and due to their alternate identities, they had more resources to deal with the challenges of retirement. Athletes on the linear perspective however used poor coping strategies such as avoidance or denial when approaching retirement. This demonstrates how undertaking a dual career can increase acceptability and knowledge that retirement from sport is inevitable. Encouraging dual careers can also minimise the proportion of athletes needing psychological support upon athletic retirement. This highlights the magnitude of what a dual career can mean for athletes, and the implications of this study are around the need to continuously promote how a dual career can have a significant long-term positive effect on athletes.

TASS have produced this lay summary. The full article is available (permissions may apply): [https://ac.els-cdn.com/S1469029215000266/1-s2.0-S1469029215000266-main.pdf?\\_tid=1134d420-ac62-11e7-9f0c-00000aacb361&acdnat=1507492465\\_8d522fcbc53321a0a1cb78e96029b4e3](https://ac.els-cdn.com/S1469029215000266/1-s2.0-S1469029215000266-main.pdf?_tid=1134d420-ac62-11e7-9f0c-00000aacb361&acdnat=1507492465_8d522fcbc53321a0a1cb78e96029b4e3)