

Maximising opportunities for elite women athletes who suddenly need to transition into a new career beyond elite sport

In conjunction with Victoria University, the Amy Gillett Foundation (AGF) have jointly funded PhD research that will contribute to a better understanding of how national sporting organisations (NSOs) can support elite women athletes to transition into a second career after a sudden retirement from elite sport. The AGF is able to support this PhD through the generous donation of a silent philanthropist. AGF's history is connected with elite women athletes forced to suddenly transition to a new career due to a preventable cycling crash. There is also a connection between safe cycling infrastructure and increased female participation¹. There are areas of cycling safety that urgently need work and we hope this PhD encourages others to consider supporting the work of the AGF.

Why the need for the research?

Opportunities for women to participate in elite sport are growing exponentially across the world^{2,3}. As almost all athletic careers are short in duration⁴, there will be a marked increase in the number of elite athletes (especially women) who will need to transition to a second career. Current research into athletic retirement and career transition support specifically for elite women athletes is limited⁵⁻⁷. Additionally, career transition is a difficult time for many athletes, especially if athletic retirement occurred **suddenly** (i.e. due to career ending injury, deselection etc)⁸. NSOs are responsible in supporting their athletes throughout their entire athletic career including athletic retirement and career transition⁹. Whilst NSOs are increasingly aware of their responsibility to support elite athletes transitioning out of elite sport, organisational priorities and/or resource capacity are often limited, with available resources directed to other, more immediate areas of athlete and high performance sport development^{10,11}.

Where to from here?

Key stakeholders ranging from women who suddenly retired as elite athletes and managers from NSOs will be interviewed over the next eight months. Insights from these interviews will explore how NSOs can provide support to elite women athletes who need to transition suddenly from elite sport to a second career.

Ashleigh Marshall, PhD Student: ashleigh.marshall1@live.vu.edu.au

References

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