

An Investigation into Ex-Professional Athletes' Attitudes to Leadership in Sports Business

Management: a primary
research investigation

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Table of Contents

1	Chapter 1: Introduction	5
1.1	Background Research - Issue	5
1.2	Rationale for Research Issue	6
1.3	Significance of the Project	6
1.4	Research Aim and Objectives	7
1.5	Research Questions	8
2	Chapter 2: Literature Review	9
2.1	Core Themes	9
2.1.1	Preparation for post-sports careers	9
2.1.2	Support for athletes post-retirement	10
2.1.3	Provision of financial literacy to athletes	12
2.2	Theoretical Framework	13
2.3	The Leader-Member Exchange (LMX) Theory	17
2.4	Research Gap	19
3	Chapter 3: Methodology	20
3.1	Introduction	20
3.2	Research Philosophy	20
3.3	Research Approach and Sampling	21
3.4	Data Collection Methods	23

	3
3.5 Data Analysis Methods	24
3.6 Validity, Reliability and Generalisability	25
3.7 Ethical Considerations	26
3.8 Conclusion	26
4 Chapter 4: Results and Discussion	28
4.1 Thematic Analysis	28
Leader's responsibility towards post-career athlete development	28
Impact of transitional challenges	29
Practises and interventions for motivating ex-professionals	30
Financial literacy for athletes	31
Ex-professionals' perception of leadership effectiveness	32
4.2 Discussion	34
4.2.1 The Transitioning Process	34
4.2.2 Financial literacy for athletes	37
4.2.3 Post-Retirement Motivating factors for employees	38
4.2.4 Role of the management leaders and ex-athletes attitude towards them	39
5 Chapter 5: Conclusion	42
References	44
Appendix i: Code Table	51
Appendix ii: Interview Transcripts	54

Table of Figures

Figure 1: Schlossberg's theory of transition (SketchBubble, 2023)	13
Figure 2: Schlossberg's theory of transition (Derrick, 2019)	14
Figure 3: The Kubler Ross Model (Little, 2021)	16
Figure 4: The LMX process (Bristoll, 2020)	18

1 Chapter 1: Introduction

1.1 Background Research - Issue

APA defines Leadership as the act of organising, directing, coordinating, and encouraging people in order to achieve a common group or organisational goal. Leadership is typically cooperative rather than coercive, transactional (leaders and followers exchange their time, energies, and skills to increase their joint rewards) and transformational (leaders inspire and motivate followers) (APA, 2023). Frawley et al. (2018) reveal that the key to success in professional sports is having a talented team and a strong leader at the helm. Their findings show that effective leadership sets one franchise apart from another and provides a competitive advantage in the industry. Similarly, Macquet and Skalej (2015) investigated the extent to which sports management leadership prepares professional athletes for life after their careers. Ex-professionals' success in post-career life is contingent on their ability to adopt positive attitudes and undergo transformations, as many are ill-equipped to navigate life beyond sports. (Macquet and Skalej, 2015). Law, Bloyce, and Waddington (2021) highlight the increasing lack of post-career development programs and mentorship for ex-professional athletes. Accumulation of evidence shows that mentoring is fundamental in supporting athletes during the transition phase (Hallmann et al., 2019). However, the mentoring relationship determines the impact of the support received by retiring and retired athletes. The proposed study, therefore, aims to explore ex-professional athletes' attitudes towards the leadership of sports franchises and how positive attitudes can facilitate a smooth transition to success after sports careers.

1.2 Rationale for Research Issue

The number of ex-professional athletes struggling in life due to poor economic status is considerably high across the globe. Boyd, Harrison, and McNerny (2021) note that 78% of ex-professional athletes who declared bankruptcy are National Football League (NFL) and National Basketball Association (NBA) players. Some of these players come from developed countries such as the United Kingdom and the United States. Exposure of ex-professional athletes' bankruptcy implies a lack or limited support from sports governing bodies to athletes during active participation in sports and after retirement. Athletes rarely receive guidance on how to manage their income and lifestyle during their active periods in sports. Similarly, the high number of athletes declared bankrupt suggests a lack of financial literacy and skills that are essential in managing salaries and funds received during active years in sports. However, these issues can be explored in detail through the collection of first-hand information from ex-professional athletes. Their views will be critical in understanding the amount and effectiveness of support they receive from sports governing bodies.

1.3 Significance of the Project

This project will provide valuable insights for sports franchise leadership, helping them understand perceived limitations that contribute to the financial instability faced by ex-professional athletes. The findings may assist these organisations in self-evaluating their practices to improve in areas they seem to underperform in. Equally, the outcome of this project aims to help the leadership of sports franchises understand the benefits of providing athletes with financial literacy and skills critical to managing personal funds. Athletes, particularly those who are active in sports will also potentially benefit from the outcome of this project. The reported findings will aim to help them understand the limitations that exposed ex-retired

athletes to bankruptcy or financial, as well as emotional instability. This knowledge can inform the design of leadership development programs specifically tailored to the unique challenges and opportunities in the sports industry. Finally, this project has the potential to influence industry-wide practices, by highlighting the importance of supporting and nurturing athletes' transition into sports business management roles and other such career paths. This can lead to the implementation of appropriate policies and initiatives that prioritise the holistic development and well-being of athletes throughout their careers.

1.4 Research Aim and Objectives

This project aims to explore ex-professional athletes' attitudes towards the leadership of sports franchises and how positive attitudes could facilitate a smooth transition to success after sports careers. From the aim, the following objectives were derived:

- i. To determine the contributions of sports business management leaders in guiding ex-professional athletes.
- ii. To determine whether transitional challenges affect the adjustment of ex-professional athletes.
- iii. To assess whether interventions are effective in motivating ex-professional athletes in their careers.
- iv. To explore the views of ex-professional athletes regarding the effectiveness of sports business management leadership.

1.5 Research Questions

- i. Are sports business management leaders responsible for mentoring Athletes' post-career development?
- ii. What is the impact of transitional challenges on ex-professional athletes' success after retirement?
- iii. Are UK sports mentors finding suitable methods to motivate athletes?
- iv. What is the attitude of ex-professional athletes towards sports business management leadership?

2 Chapter 2: Literature Review

2.1 *Core Themes*

2.1.1 *Preparation for post-sports careers*

Babiak and Sant (2020) found that professional athletes often exert a significant influence over their fans and the public, resulting in increased standing in public life, media, business, and charitable activities, during their active career. Similarly, Shrum (2022) argued that while professional sports can foster personal and career growth, increased engagement in media and public spheres could result in blocked career, identity, emotional, and academic issues. In agreement, Dobrow Riza and Higgins (2019) posited that after professional careers are over, the transition period is usually filled with challenges. Mainly, the authors suggest that considering the transition period is tough, therefore professional athletes' managers and sports business management leaders should be charged with helping athletes develop their development networks early into their careers (Law, Bloyce, and Waddington, 2021). Accordingly, the literature offers differing opinions on whether sports business management leaders and athletes' managers should be responsible for preparing athletes for life beyond their careers. This is due to their extensive involvement in sporting activities, media, and charity events.

Wicker, Dallmeyer, and Breuer (2020) noted that professional athletes often maintain a highly disciplined lifestyle to prepare for professional sporting events and related commitments. However, they face challenges in adequately preparing for their post-retirement years and future personal endeavors. Methot and Seibert (2021) supported these findings and further elaborated that transitioning into everyday life can be challenging for professional athletes at the end of their careers. As a result, they have trouble adapting to real life after performing professionally

due to the drastic change. The emerging theme is that professional athletes must be prepared for post-sports careers, financially, emotionally, and socially.

2.1.2 *Support for athletes post-retirement*

Consequences also block and confuse athletes from developing networks beyond their professional careers (Avory and Rumbold, 2016; Shrum, 2022), which leads to the next emerging literacy theme, which is the concept that Sports Business Management leaders should also be responsible for aiding in the development of their athletes' networks early to ease the transition and prepare them for life beyond their careers (Stambulova et al., 2022). Hong and Fraser (2021) conducted research to evaluate the organisational support that competitive athletes receive to help them develop not only financial literacy but also a variety of self-management skills. The outcome of their study showed that only 15 out of 23 organisations from 14 countries acknowledged their provision of support relating to financial planning and management to athletes. Comparatively, Hong and Fraser (2021) established from a different study that researched the financial literacy together with self-management of athletes that only 8 out of 20 athletes received full funds in their early years of competitive sports. A common theme that emerges from these two studies is that support for athletes post their active stage receives inconsiderable attention from the sport organisation bodies compared to their competitive years. The outcome of the review tends to imply that athletes lose their usefulness post-retirement, leading to minimal support they receive from relevant bodies.

Nevertheless, a considerable number of athletes terminate their interest in sports due to a lack of financial support (Hong and Fraser, 2021). Hong and Fraser's (2021) recent findings stress their initial observation, as they noted that eight sports organisations did not provide athletes with any support. An assumption that can be drawn from the findings of these studies is

that a considerable number of sports organisations are unaware of the usefulness of financial support to professional athletes. Kim and Won (2022) stress the observations made by Hong and Fraser (2021) by presenting the inaccessibility of business-sponsored sports teams as one of the reasons for the early retirement of disabled athletes. According to Kim and Won (2022), the challenges associated with procuring basic needs and satisfying other personal wants due to inadequate monetary support compel athletes to reconsider their participation in sports. The gathered evidence presents financial challenges as a critical issue sustained by competitive athletes.

The experiences of competitive athletes noted by Hong and Fraser (2021) are comparable to those of ex-professional athletes (Kim and Won, 2022). According to Kim and Won (2022), athletes who retire early from sports due to lack of funds continue to exhibit signs of struggle, affliction and distress. They experience difficulties in managing their true desires and opportunities due to economic pressure. Compared to Kim and Won (2022) who learned that most retired athletes find it difficult to secure a new job, Boyd, Harrison, and McInerney (2021) established that most athletes experience difficulties in deciding to become entrepreneurs post-retirement. A theme that can be derived from these findings is that athletes struggle to establish new identities post-active period in sports. They find it hard to locate a new suitable job, leading to their exposure to further financial challenges. Similarly, the outcome of the literature review illustrates a lack of preparedness in athletes for life after retirement from sports, where they receive little to no support from their managers or leadership. Based on the findings by Boyd, Harrison, and McInerney (2021) and Kim and Won (2022), athletes view sports as their only source of livelihood. These findings also illustrate a lack of support from sport organisation bodies that are tasked with preparing athletes for post-retirement life. The organisations rarely

provide athletes with relevant guidance relating to their lives during their active lives and post-retirement.

2.1.3 Provision of financial literacy to athletes

Existing evidence emphasises the usefulness of providing competitive athletes with financial literacy to guarantee their good financial well-being post-retirement (Hong and Fraser, 2021; Moolman, 2019). According to Hong and Fraser (2021), financial literacy is a fundamental life skill that is useful in making sound financial decisions besides helping individuals to realise personal financial well-being. Hong and Fraser (2021) argue that financial management skill refers to individual competence in managing personal finance as well as coping with financial issues premised on personal knowledge, developed skills, and experiences. The outcome of this literature review tends to inform that athletes require assistance to enhance their development of financial literacy and skills that are useful in managing financial issues.

Hong and Fraser (2021) further reinforce the findings by Moolman (2019) and Hong and Fraser (2021), by indicating that life transitions are often challenging, hence necessitating ex-professional athletes to have reliable coping and adaptive skills. Considering the athletic career is considerably short compared to other careers, early retirement is inevitable, and preparation for post-sports is critical (Hong and Fraser, 2021). Lavalley et al. (2014) who conducted their study almost a decade ago made observations that are consistent with those by Hong and Fraser (2021), as they note deselection and other issues such as career-ending injuries compel athletes to retire early. Due to these probable events, researchers stress the need of providing athletes with financial literacy along with self-management skills (Hong and Fraser, 2021; Moolman, 2020). Martin et al. (2014) equally recommend athletes be provided with pre-retirement planning. From the gathered evidence, it is arguable that life transitions associated

with retirement from sports recommend early preparation of athletes for life after active engagement in sports.

For the proposed study, athletes' career engagements and management leadership in relation to their preparedness towards life- beyond their professional careers, will be explored in deeper detail. These factors significantly influence ex-professionals' transition into everyday life in society and relate to their successful private lives beyond their professional careers.

2.2 Theoretical Framework

The proposed study will utilise Schlossberg's Theory of Transition (1981) as well as the 'Kubler Ross' model to analyse the impact of transitional challenges on ex-professional athletes' success after retirement. Schlossberg's theory of transition proposes three different types of transitions.

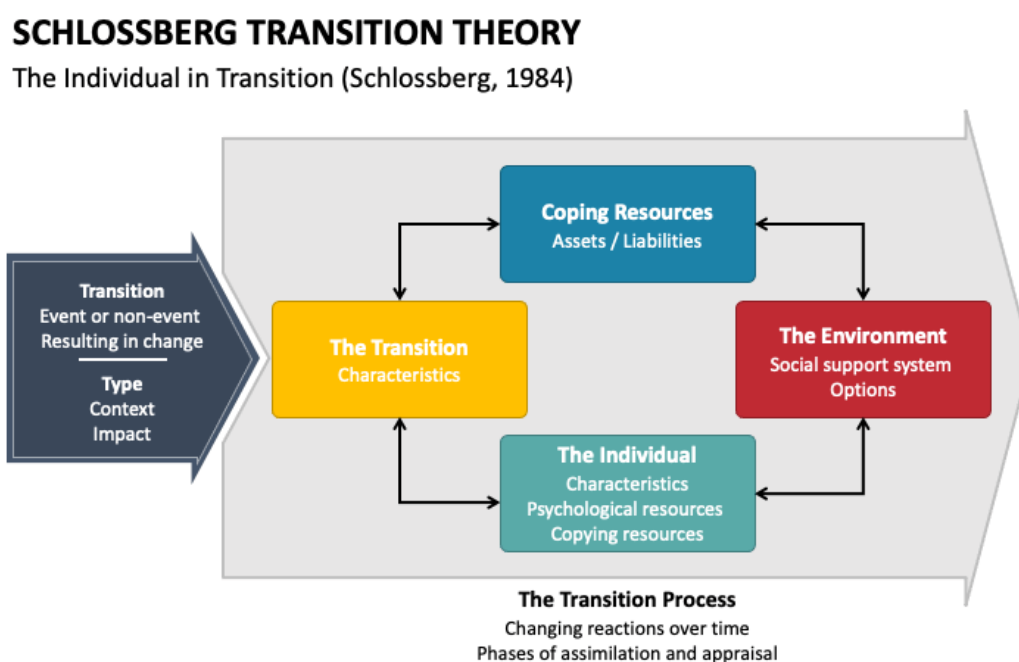


Figure 1. *Schlossberg's theory of transition* (SketchBubble, 2023)

Figure 1 highlights the transition process. The process reflects that an event or non-event leads to a change. The change process may have some specific characteristics that may differ depending on the situation. The individual may use the resources that are required to deal with the change process. The environment holds considerable importance, as individuals may draw support from it. The individual that is going through the change process develops certain characteristics. The individual may utilise the available psychological resources to deal with the challenges of the change process. The process has been further elaborated in Figure 2.

Situational transitions, which involve external changes or events that are often beyond an individual's control, such as changing teams, coaches, or sports

organisations (Flowers et al., 2014; Shrum, 2022). Developmental transitions could include moving from junior to senior levels of competition or transitioning from a youth athlete to a college athlete/coach (Schlossberg, 1981). Cultural transitions could include international athletes adjusting to a new culture or language while competing abroad.

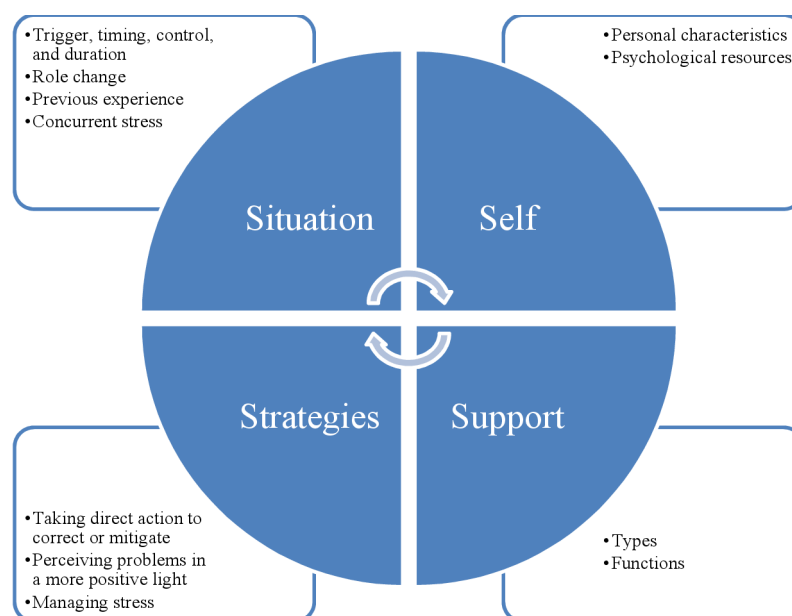


Figure 2. *Schlossberg's theory of transition* (Derrick, 2019)

Figure 2 illustrates one of the types of transitions, the situational transition. It suggests that a situational transition may lead to a role change; the previous experience may become useful or completely irrelevant; however, the person would be under concurrent stress. The second aspect of the change process is strategies, which are the different types of strategies that may be adopted by the person to cope with the change process. This may include making direct changes, managing stress, and having a positive perception. The third aspect is self, where personal characteristics and psychological resources are utilised. Finally, the different types and functions of support systems are also important aspects of the change process.

Moreover, Schlossberg's theory emphasises adults' transition, implying that the theory is also appropriate and can be adequately utilised to explore the attitudes of ex-professional athletes towards sports business management leadership (Stambulova and Samuel, 2020). From this perspective, it can be comprehended that adults continuously go through transitions characterised by solid structural developments. Concerning the study matter, the theoretical approach is directly associated with the level of success or failure that ex-professional athletes encounter beyond their careers. This mainly involves their perception of how helpful leadership was in helping them prepare for life during and beyond sports (Morris, Tod, and Eubank, 2017). The theory explores the transition between the two lifestyles, focusing on the impact, preparedness, and setbacks experienced after professional careers are over.

Research has also shown that the transition out of sport can be a challenging and complex process for athletes, with some experiencing high levels of stress, anxiety, and depression (Wippert and Wippert, 2019). However, the Kübler-Ross model suggests that these emotions are a normal part of the grieving process and that athletes can move through them with time and support. The Kübler-Ross model, also referred to as the "five stages of grief," is a psychological

framework that outlines the emotional phases individuals undergo when faced with significant loss or change. The five stages, namely denial, anger, bargaining, depression, and acceptance, have been applied to various contexts, including the transition of athletes who quit sports and struggle to form a new identity.

The Kübler-Ross change curve

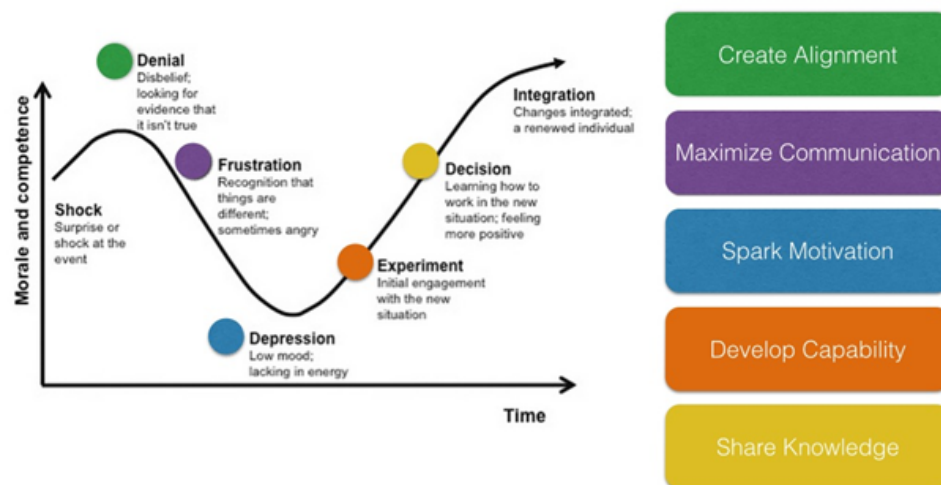


Figure 3: *The Kubler Ross model* (Little, 2021)

Figure 3 reflects different phases of the Kubler-Ross change curve. The first stage is that of shock, where the individual may only try to comprehend the change that have occurred. The second stage is denial. At the third stage, the individual may feel a sense of frustration. They may face depression at the fourth stage. In the fifth stage, individuals may start to experiment with new situations. They may start to adjust to the environment at the sixth stage. Finally, at the integration stage, the individual may become a part of the renewed situation. To effectively cope with the situations, individuals should create alignment, maximise communication, spark motivation, develop capability, and share knowledge in the respective order of phases.

Upon retirement or quitting, athletes may confront a diverse range of challenges and emotions, such as loss of identity, purpose, and social connections. To help athletes transition out of the sport, researchers and practitioners recommend a range of strategies, including career planning, education and training, mentoring and coaching, social support, and mental health counselling (Lavalley et al., 2016; Wippert and Wippert, 2019). These strategies can help athletes develop new skills and identities, build new social connections, and find meaning and purpose beyond their athletic careers.

2.3 The Leader-Member Exchange (LMX) Theory

The Leader-Member Exchange (LMX) Theory is a form of leadership theory that focuses on the relationships between leaders and their followers (subordinates). Sheer (2015) outlines the concept that leaders form unique exchange relationships with each of their subordinates, leading to the creation of two distinct groups: the in-group and the out-group. Furthermore, The LMX Theory highlights that leaders tend to have different levels of exchange with different subordinates based on their perceptions of the followers' abilities, commitment, and compatibility with the leader's goals and values. The LMX theory also recognises that these relationships can be dynamic, as well as possess the ability to evolve over time. Leaders can work to improve relationships with out-group members, transitioning them into the in-group through increased communication, support, and trust-building behaviors.

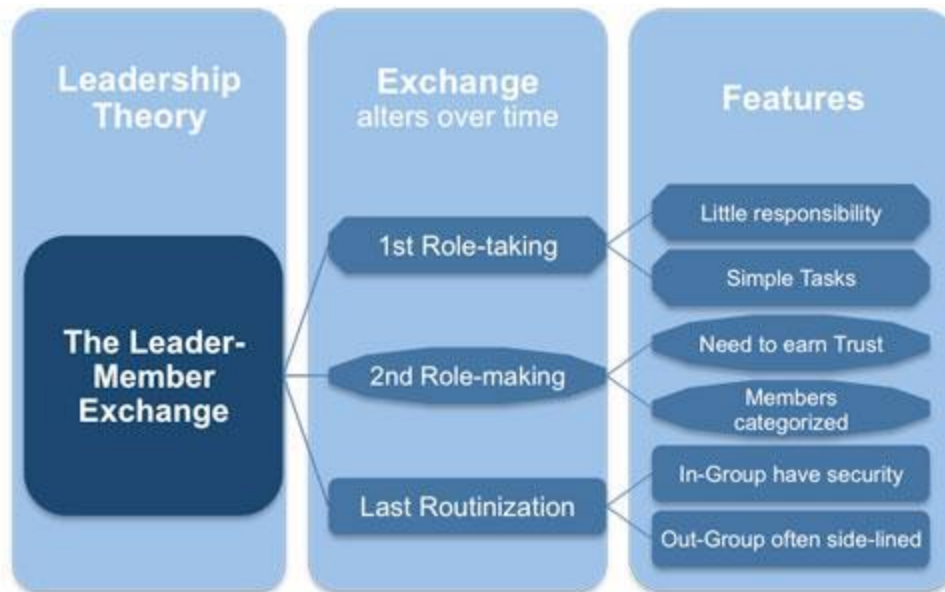


Figure 4. *The LMX process* (Bristoll, 2020)

The above figure defines the process by which the followers are assigned little responsibility at the beginning. In their second role, they are expected to earn the trust of the leaders. On the basis of the first and second roles, they are either included in the close group or excluded.

In agreement, Erdogan and Bauer (2015) suggest that the quality of these leader-member exchanges can have a significant impact on subordinates' job outcomes and overall job performance. In contrast, Gottfredson et al. (2020) criticise the theory and argue that it lacks clarity regarding the criteria for including individuals in the in-group or out-group. It is not always clear how leaders make these distinctions, and this ambiguity may lead to perceptions of favouritism and inequality among subordinates. The LMX Theory acknowledges that leaders form different relationships with different subordinates, but it may inadvertently perpetuate biases in the workplace. Leaders may form in-group relationships with individuals who are similar to them in terms of background, personality, or values, potentially excluding others who do not fit these criteria.

2.4 *Research Gap*

The current literature explored in detail the factors that confuse and block the development of career networks such as increased sporting activities and engagement in media and public spheres as well as athletes' lifestyles. However, it failed to explore the efficacy of business management leadership's efforts in sports towards ensuring professional athletes are prepared for life beyond their careers. In the same context, the literature further informs that sports business management leaders and athletes' managers should be responsible for ensuring athletes can adjust to their everyday lives after retirement. To explore the identified literature gap, the proposed study aims to explore the issues surrounding the efficacy of post-career transition programs to help athletes prepare for and become more successful after their sports careers are over.

3 Chapter 3: Methodology

3.1 *Introduction*

Primary research will be relied on in completing this project since it allows the gathering of data directly from individuals who are well-informed about the problem under research (Dejonckheere and Vaughn, 2019). This section covers the steps that will be followed in collecting data from retired athletes. Apart from providing the research philosophy and research design, sampling and data collection methods will be provided. The approach that will be used in analysing data as well as the ethical issues that will be observed is also provided in this chapter.

3.2 *Research Philosophy*

An interpretivism philosophy that entails the extraction of meaning from people's interaction with the environment will be used in this project (Chowdhury, 2014). Interpretivism research philosophy is suitable for examining the perceptions of athletes because it acknowledges the importance of subjective experiences and meanings attached to their lived experiences. Interpretivism recognises that individuals construct their experiences through social interactions, culture, and language (Denzin and Lincoln, 2005). Mainly, the research philosophy was selected because it enables in-depth assessments to be conducted of athletes' careers before and after retirement and the managerial and coaching challenges experienced during the transition (Alharahsheh and Pius, 2020). Uduma and Sylva (2015) further elucidated that with an interpretive paradigm, the research will be able to consider different factors, including athletes' experiences, attitudes, perceptions and abilities based on their lifestyles; and ability to adjust their mindsets during the transition from professional playing days to the real world. The argument by Uduma and Sylva (2015) is consistent with that by Ryan (2018) who opine that this philosophy handles truth and knowledge as products of people's interpretation of personal

experiences. From this perspective, the interpretivism philosophy is appropriate for the proposed study; it helps the research describe and explore ex-professional athletes' realities whilst simultaneously looking for rich and experiential data. As such, the proposed study will undertake interpretive research to draw meaning and understand ex-professional attitudes from their experiences and perceptions during the transition from professional playing days to the real world.

3.3 Research Approach and Sampling

The proposed study will also employ a qualitative research design to explore ex-professional attitudes towards sports business management leadership in line with the selected research philosophy. Qualitative research design has been selected because the approach enables the opportunity to obtain and explore a more realistic understanding of the athletes' experiences and challenges faced during the transition into everyday lifestyles. These cannot be examined using numerical data or statistical methods utilised in quantitative research approaches (Eyisi, 2016). Additionally, a qualitative research approach will also be used because of its ability to enable the researcher to interact with the participants; the design allows will allow the researcher to gain a more holistic view of the ex-professionals athletes' experiences and, thus, their attitudes (Basias and Pollalis, 2018). The qualitative approach will also help analyse data from interviews and focus groups, which draws a more structured and detailed understanding of ex-professional athletes' experiences and challenges before and after retirement (Uduma and Sylva, 2015). The qualitative research design will be appropriate in exploring ex-professional athletes' perception of the sports management leadership roles and responsibilities to ensure their successful transition from their careers and becoming more successful after retirement.

The commonly used sampling methods in qualitative research are snowballing technique and purposive sampling (Suter, 2011). Researchers adopt snowballing if fewer potential informants are available and if it is expected that these respondents will lead to more or more-relevant informants. This is most suitable for seeking out specific information from a focus group and a particular subject of interest (Ranjbar et al., 2012). The current project adopted a purposive sampling method in locating the most relevant participants. This approach entails the recruitment of people with adequate information about the researched subject and is accessible (Stratton, 2021). In reference to this project, the use of a purposive sampling approach entails limiting the recruitment process to professional athletes who have retired. Equally, the use of a purposive sampling method ensures the recruitment of approachable and accessible individuals as respondents (Etikan, Musa, and Alkassim, 2016). Accordingly, sports retirees who demonstrate a willingness to engage in this project are the most relevant respondents to this project.

Using the purposive sampling method, ex-professional athletes will be selected from a variety of sports in the UK. The selection of a small sample size is influenced by the complexity of collecting primary data. In their study, Boddy (2016) illustrates intensive procedures are employed in collecting non-numeric data, hence necessitating the use of a few individuals as data sources. Moreover, the use of small sample size will guarantee the allocation of adequate time to each ex-professional athlete to share their experiences and views about the quality and quantity of professional support they received to help in their transition process.

3.4 *Data Collection Methods*

Seidman (2013) argues that qualitative research methods, like interviewing, enable a more thorough and contextualised exploration of complex phenomena. Through direct participant engagement, detailed data can be gathered and uncover unexpected issues, leading to a more nuanced understanding of the research topic. Therefore, qualitative data collection methods such as interviewing can offer a more comprehensive and insightful understanding of the complexities of the research topic. According to Dejonckheere and Vaughn (2019), an interview enhances the collection of individual views and experiences concerning a particular issue. Accordingly, this method allows the exploration of personal perspectives along with lived experiences of ex-professional athletes. Perry and Bigelow (2020) further expand on the utility of interviewing methods, by indicating that it promotes meaning-making through comprehension of the amount or level of support that ex-professional athletes receive to help them cope with life after sports. Consequently, the use of interviewing methods will guarantee comprehension of the needs and concerns of ex-professional athletes.

Although there are numerous methods of gathering data from an interview (McGrath, Palmgren and Liljedahl, 2018), a semi-structured method will be the most suitable method. Semi-structured interviews will be ideal for this project, as they provide respondents with room to share detailed information on the researched questions. In support of semi-structured interviews over structured interviews, Dejonckheere and Vaughn (2019) insinuate that semi-structured interviews allow the exploration of issues in detail due to the freedom the respondents have in sharing all information. Therefore, the proposed study will collect data through 8 different open-ended questions that relate to the 4 main research questions mentioned previously. The semi-structured interview will consist of a video call, where responses will be

recorded and transcribed. Additionally, the schedule of the interviews will be made flexible to allow easy participation – this will be done by sending out a separate email, asking each participant to select a suitable time slot, which will maximise the length, quality and detail of their responses. Both physical and virtual methods will be used in engaging the respondents in answering the semi-structured interviews. Physical interaction will be appropriate for ex-professional athletes who are proximal and accessible, whereas virtual methods such as Microsoft teams will facilitate the collection of information from retired athletes that cannot be accessed physically. The virtual methods will help address issues associated with geography and time.

3.5 Data Analysis Methods

The analysis procedure will include thematic analysis, which has been proven to be reliable and effective in evaluating evidence. Thematic analysis is beneficial because it allows, yet in depth, flexible interpretations (Kiger and Varpio, 2020). Essentially, thematic analysis will help to answer the research question in line with the already established literature findings. On the contrary, the thematic analysis presents difficulties because it tends to generate different themes, which may be difficult for the researcher to understand or focus on the study objectives-many of these codes may overlap, making it challenging to accurately and distinctly separate or group them together (Javadi and Zarea, 2016). Nevertheless, the flexibility of this analysis approach makes it suitable for this project. First, it does not require any expertise when used in analysing data (Nowell et al., 2017). A thematic approach allows analysis of a collection of data in unison without any complication besides ensuring the identified objectives along with research questions are addressed in detail (Nowell et al., 2017). Conclusively, a thematic analysis

approach will guarantee a detailed, emotional and comprehensive evaluation of gathered data to gain insight into transitional issues experienced by ex-professional athletes.

The four stages of conducting thematic analysis will be observed during the evaluation of collected data. As illustrated by Nowell et al. (2017), the collected data will be read and listened to carefully to facilitate the tabulation of the most important information. This process will be followed with coding, as keywords of information will be recorded for reference. The extracted codes will be grouped based on the similarity of the conveyed message to generate key themes. The last stage of the analysis will be the identification of themes that answer specific objectives (Nowell et al., 2017).

3.6 Validity, Reliability and Generalisability

The selected data collection method aims to ensure validity and reliability, yet issues of generalisability remain due to the small sample size and the nature of data collected through semi-structured interviews (Gentles et al., 2015; Etikan et al., 2016). Moreover, the sensitivity of the study's topic may pose challenges to candidness throughout the interview, one such issue may be the lack of will of the participants to expand their answers and truly provide a proactive and meaningful response, while the reliability of qualitative approaches is dependent on participants' perceptions and comprehension of the interview questions (Leung, 2015). Nonetheless, the study's validity is reinforced by its exploration of ex-professional attitudes, experiences, and opinions on the management of sports in the UK (Smith, 2018). However, the study's findings will not be generalised to the entire ex-professional population, as the small sample size is not representative of all professional sports and careers in the UK (Maxwell, 2021).

3.7 *Ethical Considerations*

The proposed study will be conducted according to ethical research principles and Westminster University's Ethical Committee. Accordingly, before participating, participants will be provided with a debrief about the study's scope, objectives and significance, which will ensure all participants are conversant with the study (Harriss, MacSween, and Atkinson, 2019).

Additionally, informed consent will be required before undertaking the study. The individuals who will agree to take part in the project will be informed about their voluntary participation and liberty to withdraw from the study at any point without any associated consequences or implications before consenting to their participation. They will also be informed that no incentives will be provided during and after the completion of their participation (Navalta, Stone, and Lyons, 2019).

Anonymity and confidentiality will also be emphasised throughout the study, as no identifying information will be required, and all gathered information and data would only be used for the study (Harriss, MacSween, and Atkinson, 2019). The ethical considerations that will be prioritised in the proposed study are voluntary participation, anonymity and confidentiality, as well as being provided with ethical approval by the WBS Board of Ethics.

3.8 *Conclusion*

The study anticipates establishing that many ex-professional athletes lack the immersion in their professional career engagements and other associated engagements in the media, public spheres and charitable activities that are specifically linked to their sport. Similarly, current demands contribute to their poor planning and continuous link to their personal sport. In the same perspective, the study also anticipates establishing that increased participation in sporting activities and professional engagement alongside normal lifestyles leads to difficulties transiting

and adjusting to normal life after retirement (Daly et al., 2022). Another prediction is the concept of athletes receiving inadequate salaries to help them manage their lives and needs after retirement from active sports, which further leads to retired athletes having trouble locating new jobs due to the strong attachment they have established towards sports. The study is expected to discover that difficulties experienced during the transition into a normal lifestyle are promoted by sports business management leadership that lack an effective component, or programs to ensure ex-professional athletes are well prepared for life beyond their careers- with fewer challenges during the transition post-retirement (Barth et al., 2021). It also anticipates establishing athletes receive limited financial support from business management leadership during their active participation in sports and after retirement. As such, sports business management leadership is crucial in ensuring that professional athletes participating in highly competitive sporting activities are also trained and well-prepared for life after their careers. They should focus on more than just the business aspect of the engagements (Frawley et al., 2018). Mentorship programs and training for post-retirement development ease the transition process.

4 Chapter 4: Results and Discussion

4.1 The chapter is based on the results of the thematic analysis conducted on qualitative interview data. The first section provides the results based on the direct quotations and responses of the participants. The second section conducts an in-depth analysis of the results and compares them with the literature. *Thematic Analysis*

The results are categorised as per the following themes:

4.1.1 Leader's Responsibility Towards Post-Career Athlete Development

The theme evaluated the role of the sports business management leaders in supporting and developing the athlete's post-retirement careers. Male footballer 1 suggests:

In my opinion, it is their job , actively engage with, and understand athletes' aspirations, skills, and interests, even beyond football. Another role I think about often is personalised career counselling. These leaders, as well as my coach, can help ex-players and myself identify potential career paths within the football industry, such as coaching, scouting, or sports media.

The response infers that athletes have high expectations from the coaches not only on the field but also that management leaders should guide and train them for their post-career phase as well. They should assist them in finding venues where ex-athletes could utilise their skills and start new careers. In contrast, Female Footballer 1 had a negative experience and noted:

Unfortunately, based on my personal experience as a former semi-professional footballer, the support I received after quitting the sport was not really what I hoped for. I believe there is a gap in the assistance provided by these leaders, especially for young women.

The response infers that athletes, especially female athletes, had high hopes for the management leaders, and they believed that leaders would play an effective role in their post-career phase as well. The hopes and expectations however, were not met, and they believe that female athletes receive even less support as compared to their male counterparts. In comparison, Male Footballer 2 specified

Management leaders should be in charge of guaranteeing a role within the club or the industry; most commonly, they can do that by ensuring the ex-athlete gets educated in the interview process and other essential career information.

The response infers that management leaders should focus on two specific areas: networking and educating athletes. The leaders should guide, educate, and train the athletes regarding career choices and should also use their networking skills to find new roles for ex-athletes.

4.1.2 Impact of Transitional Challenges

The theme delved into the complexities encountered by former athletes during the shift from their active sports careers to retirement. Female gymnast 2 elaborated:

It's a little bit difficult to find a set career path because you've devoted your whole life to the sport. so you haven't built any other experiences in other work fields, and it can be quite mentally challenging.

The provided analysis underscores a primary hurdle encountered by ex-athletes during their transition – a deficit in essential career guidance, skills acquisition, educational preparation, and associated elements. Consequently, they often contend with a state of aimlessness, accompanied by psychological distress and strain. Female gymnast 3 concurs with this perspective and highlights: *I would say the hardest part of having such a job is the difficulty of*

helping an athlete who is going through a period of sadness, sometimes even depression, after retiring from the sport. Athletes who quit the sport experience a period of confusion and resentment, and we aren't really offered any help or understanding and I admit that even I went through this in the beginning stages. I physically and mentally could not accept that my career was over and I have to do something completely different. Mornings I woke up quite angry because I did not know what to do with myself and my days felt extremely empty I was angry that I could no longer continue doing what I love.

The LMX theory underlines the importance of quality relationships between leaders and members, where former athletes might lack the support and guidance necessary for effective transition and career development. This deficiency resonates with the response, as athletes appear to lack the necessary mental and emotional scaffolding to focus on a career beyond their sports.

Furthermore, the psychological consequences that athletes face, particularly depression, correspond to the Depression stage of the Kubler Ross Model. Athletes who succeeded in a regimented and rigorous sports environment may lose their sense of purpose, self-esteem, and identity when they transition. This mental turbulence corresponds to the emotional pain shown in the response.

In further agreement, Female Gymnast 4 conferred:

British Gymnastics, specifically within rhythmic gymnastics, have not been helpful whatsoever in supporting me for my post-career development, as I have felt like I have had to work through this on my own as I find the career that is tailored to my interests.

The response identifies a lack of support from institutions and clubs in the post-retirement phase, which could be termed the most severe transitional challenge that ex-athletes face. Due to this lack of support, they are forced to find new ways on their own, which is not always possible for every athlete.

4.1.3 Practises and Interventions for Motivating ex-Professionals

The theme focused on motivating factors, initiatives, and interventions that help ex-athletes develop their post-retirement careers in other fields. Female gymnast 1 specified the following:

Once I retired, I was offered a job right away as a coach at my club, where I have been training as a gymnast. However, the mentoring programmes I was trained on were not effective. I did not receive any understanding, any sponsorship, or any further support; after a few weeks, I was a nobody.

The response reflects that while the respondent was lucky to get a job immediately after her retirement, the same opportunity is not available to every athlete. While there are programmes and interventions available, these are not effective enough to prepare the ex-athletes for new careers after retirement. In contrast, Male Footballer 1 did not agree and said the following:

A notable example of a successful mentoring programme in the context of semi-professional football in the UK is the "Professional Football Transition Mentorship Scheme." This initiative pairs us ex-professional footballers with experienced mentors who have transitioned successfully from playing to non-playing roles within the football industry.

The response reflects that there are special programmes and initiatives in place that specifically focus on connecting retiring athletes with ex-athletes. The institutional initiative is aimed at supporting the retiring athletes and helping them learn from the experiences of former athletes and current professionals. In disagreement, Female gymnast 2 identified:

Sadly, in rhythmic gymnastics I am not aware of any mentoring programmes that even exist or any initiatives that have been taken to help ex-athletes come out of their shell and try to expand in different career Fields. This has always been the case for gymnastics in this country.

The response suggests that not all types of sports have specially designed initiatives. In the case of gymnastics, no facilities for training programmes, interventions, or initiatives exist to motivate the athletes in their post-retirement phase.

4.1.4 Financial Literacy for Athletes

The theme examined the case of financial literacy for athletes, which is a very important matter after athletes have retired, their main source of income ceases to exist. Male Footballer 1 noted

Providing financial literacy workshops, access to trusted advisors, and resources on financial planning, investment, and entrepreneurship can empower us ex-players to make informed decisions about our financial future.

The response highlights the factors that could sufficiently support the athletes in managing their finances after they have retired. At the same time, the response also highlights the bitter reality that athletes have no financial knowledge or education provided by management leaders while they are still active in their careers. Agreeing with the assertion, Female Footballer 1 suggested

Many athletes, including myself, are unprepared to handle the sudden financial shift that comes with retirement. Leaders should provide financial education programmes to help us.

The response again reflects a lack of financial education and training for active sportsmen. The negative consequence of such a lack of guidance is that once the athletes are retired, they are unable to cope with the challenges of retirement and a lack of earning sources. Financial programmes therefore constitute an essential requirement for both active and ex-athletes. In support of the argument, Female Gymnast 2 proposed:

Both the ex-athlete and the coach-plus-leader may struggle to go through the process of educating them on budgeting, investment options, and long-term financial planning.

The response reflects that not only the players but also the coaches are financially untrained, and they have no knowledge of how to support themselves financially after their retirement from active sports.

4.1.5 Ex-Professionals' Perception of Leadership Effectiveness

The theme explored how effective the ex-athletes consider the leadership of the management in supporting them and launching a new career. Female swimmer elaborated on her perception of leadership effectiveness, and stated the following:

The management I had was focused on favouritism and engaged in toxic behaviour that I could not see myself in and has perhaps discouraged me from continuing swimming or partaking in mentoring opportunities.

The response reflects that ex-athletes may have a severe negative assessment of the leadership. They may consider them highly ineffective and even detrimental to their success. In comparison, Male Footballer 2 conferred

I have only been a witness to the adequate sense of consideration and understanding among my former coaches and managers. I wished that they supported and took care of the athletes with greater methods and means.

The response reflects that while support is available from the side of the coaches and managers, it is not adequate. The management leaders need to be more effective in their policies, strategies, and actions towards the athletes. In contrast, the Female gymnast 3 specified

Some leaders demonstrated a genuine commitment to my well-being and career transition, providing valuable guidance and support. They took the time to understand my unique situation and offered personalised assistance.

The response reflects that every sportsman had a unique experience, and unlike others, some were able to get competitive leaders who did not only care for the team but also supported them after they had retired from active sports.

4.2 Discussion

4.2.1 The Transitioning Process

The results identified that the transitioning process from athlete to ex-athlete is highly challenging and difficult for sportsmen. Furthermore, the lack of support and guidance makes the situation even tougher for them. They have to face different factors in the transitioning period that are difficult to cope with. The first and foremost is the ending of the sporting career and moving towards a new career, which has to be started from scratch. The success of transition depends on various external factors that, in many cases, are beyond the control of the athlete, such as the availability of opportunities, support or lack thereof from institutions and organisations, the economic situation.. The results indicated that the athlete was forced to face these situations on their own a large majority of the time. The findings also validate the

assertions of Schlossberg's Theory of Transition (1981), which suggested that situational transitions involve external changes or events that are often beyond an individual's control. The results and direct quotations also showed that various factors during the transition period were not specifically under the athlete's control, such as lack of management schemes provided by the country for young athletes, adequate care after or during retirement and effective motivational strategies such as sponsorships, grants or apprenticeship opportunities. The findings revealed that during their sporting years, the athletes were well entrenched in a binding and specific type of sporting culture. Once they retire, however, adjusting to new jobs and roles requires adjusting to new cultures.. The results support the points of Stambulova and Samuel (2020), who highlighted Cultural transitions in Schlossberg's Theory of Transition (1981) and suggested that individuals may have to face cultural challenges and misappropriations in their transitioning phase. The findings also revealed that adjusting to new environments without proper guidance and training was one of the main challenges faced by ex-athletes.

Furthermore, the results indicated that during the transition phase, the athletes had to face various psychological issues. At first, accepting the end of a career proved to be a difficult phenomenon for athletes. These athletes remained in a sense of denial in the initial period. Once reality dawned on them, it put them under significant stress and pressure, which outlines the concept that athletes derive a sense of self-worth from their achievements in sports. Quitting suddenly can lead to a drop in self-esteem and self-conceptualisation, which further adds to the pressure and stress experienced. For that reason, the transition period is not without its negative effects on the psychological state of athletes, where there is further aggravation , caused by the uncertainty surrounding their careers. The results were therefore in line with the postulates of the Kübler-Ross model as identified by Lavalley et al. (2016), which proposes a psychological

framework based on five stages of grief, of which the first is that of denial and the last is that of depression. The findings additionally supported the assertions of Wippert and Wippert (2019), who suggested that the transition out of sport can be a challenging and complex process for athletes, with some experiencing high levels of stress, anxiety, and depression. The findings unveiled that the melancholia enveloping athletes subsequent to their retirement might impede their capacity to adequately concentrate on pursuits related to post-retirement career advancement, potentially leading to a prolonged phase of heightened anxiety and depression.

A lack of support from organisations and sports associations was one of the primary challenges faced by the athletes in the transitioning period. The lack of support was observed in a multitude of ways; however, the most visible reflection of the lack of support was observed in the lack of initiatives regarding post-career development. After retiring, the athletes found themselves lacking the social networks and public speaking skills necessary for interaction and the pursuit of new career avenues. They experienced a loss of contact with their previous coaches and managers. Simultaneously, they had not received guidance or training in establishing networks beyond their professional sports realm. This compounded their situation, leading to a crisis in both identity and social connections. The results therefore validated the postulates of Lavalley et al. (2016) under the Kübler-Ross model that upon retirement or quitting, athletes may confront a diverse range of challenges and emotions, such as loss of identity, purpose, and social connections. The situation could be significantly improved if the athletes were trained during their active sports careers in various fields, such as career and financial planning. The lack of these facilities tends to create more challenges for athletes. The findings validated Wippert and Wippert's (2019) views that strategies such as career planning, education and training, mentoring and coaching, social support, and mental health counselling are recommended for ex-athletes.

Such initiatives could make the transition from athlete to ex-athlete significantly smoother, and mental stress and psychological trauma are also expected to be substantially reduced.

4.2.2 Financial Literacy for Athletes

The results identified that one of the most neglected areas that required careful attention for the retiring athletes was financial literacy. While the players are active in the sport, they keep receiving their payments, and finances are generally sorted out. However, once they are retired, their main source of income ceases to exist. They could have survived effortlessly if they had taken initiative in their sporting careers so that they could reap the benefits of them after retirement. The results, however, identified that athletes are not effectively educated, trained, and enlightened on these matters, and they are never told the dire consequences they might be forced to face as a result of their lack of knowledge. The findings of the study complied with the results of Moolman (2019), who found that providing financial literacy to competitive athletes guarantees their good financial well-being post-retirement. The irony, however, indicated by the results, revealed that this important matter is generally ignored by business management leaders. The findings showed that not only the athletes but even the coaches do not understand the need for financial planning, investment, and budgeting. As a result, not only the athletes but also the coaches have to face issues of financial challenges and bankruptcies. The results therefore validated Hong and Fraser's (2021) findings that financial literacy is a fundamental life skill that is useful in making sound financial decisions and also helps individuals realise personal financial well-being. The results, however, showed that sportsmen lack this life skill and, for that reason, face financial challenges in their post-retirement period.

4.2.3 Post-Retirement Motivating Factors for Employees

Insightful information was provided through the interviews, on the state of interventions and career development motivations for the athletes. The attitudes of the participants were diverse in nature. The results showed that sports that are more popular, more actively followed, and receive substantial private and public funding, such as football, were powered by initiatives that focused on mentorship programmes for athletes. Such programmes connected retiring athletes with professionals who had already embarked on a new career after their retirement from active sports. Such mentorship programmes were termed positive by the athletes, and they suggested that such programmes effectively help them in their transitioning period. The results therefore invalidate the findings of Boyd, Harrison, and McInerney (2021) that exposure of ex-professional athletes' bankruptcy implies a lack or limited support from sports governing bodies for athletes during active participation in sports and after retirement. The result, in contrast, revealed that the situation is not universal and that there are standardised programmes in place by the sport governing bodies that support the ex-athletes in launching new careers based on their skills, aptitude, and education. The findings also did not comply with the assertions of Macquet and Skalej (2015) that Ex-professionals' success in post-career life is contingent on their ability to adopt positive attitudes and undergo transformations. The results showed that initiatives, programmes, and motivating elements are equally important for smooth transformation, along with a positive attitude.

The results also highlighted the negative aspects, and it was identified that other than football, the governing bodies of other sports did not have any intervention or training programme in place to support the careers of the athletes. In cases where such programmes existed, they were termed ineffective and did not significantly contribute to the professional

development of the ex-athletes. The results were in line with the findings of Hong and Fraser (2021) that support for athletes after their active stage receives inconsiderable attention from the sport organisation bodies compared to their competitive years. Such practise could be associated with the fact that governing bodies of sports either do not recognise the need for such interventions and initiatives or, in the cases where they do, lack the required resources. Training programmes may exist in football, but they were found to be completely non-existent in gymnastics and ineffective in other sports. Due to his lack of initiative, the athlete is the ultimate loser. The results validated the views of Boyd, Harrison, and McNerny (2021), who suggested that most athletes experience difficulties in deciding to become entrepreneurs' post-retirement and locating a new suitable job. The results correctly identified that sportsmen and ex-athletes would continue to face similar challenges until sport governing bodies recognised the need and importance of interventions, training programmes, and motivating initiatives for retiring athletes.

4.2.4 Role of the Management Leaders, and Ex-Athletes' Attitude Towards Them

The results provided insightful information on the subject matter, and the responses helped to understand a variety of factors related to the attitude of ex-athletes towards sports business management. The results showed that the sportsmen generally have high hopes for the business management, and they expect that the management will take adequate measures to ensure that after their retirement, they are able to start new careers effectively. This is due to the fact that, while they are still active in sports, they give their full attention to the field. As a result, once they are retired, they find themselves in a complex situation where they suddenly become unskilled, unemployed, and lack proper support. The results therefore validate the postulates of Wicker, Dallmeyer, and Breuer (2020), who noted that professional athletes face challenges in adequately preparing for their post-retirement years and future personal endeavours. The findings

showed that sportsmen expect management leaders to train them for such endeavours as understanding their aspirations, skills, and interests and identifying potential career paths. They expect the management leaders to train them for their post-retirement phase. The results, in contrast, revealed that management leaders do not, in general, effectively play this role. The results invalidated the findings of Hong and Fraser (2021), who showed that a significant number of organisations acknowledged their provision of support to ex-athletes. The results, on the contrary, suggest that only a minority of the sports organisation and their management leader may effectively focus on the post-retirement careers of the athletes.

The results identified that some of the ex-athletes were not satisfied with the relationships that they had with their management leaders. The athletes accused them of favouritism and supporting one group of athletes over others. The findings could be termed to support the notions of The Leader-Member Exchange (LMX) Theory and validate the arguments of Sheer (2015), who contended that leaders form unique exchange relationships with each of their subordinates, leading to the creation of two distinct groups: the in-group and the out-group. The results showed that such group creation was also witnessed in the case of ex-athletes, who were divided into distinct groups. One had the complete support of the management leaders, but the others were generally ignored. However, the findings also showed that this was not a universal case and that a few of the athletes who participated in the interviews, were able to follow truly caring leaders. Overall, the findings support the postulates of The Leader-Member Exchange (LMX) Theory and validates the findings of Gottfredson et al. (2020) that leaders form different relationships with different subordinates, which inadvertently perpetuates biases in the workplace. The findings also revealed that this may not always be the case, and in order to be an effective leader, adopting inclusive behaviour for all followers is vital.

The results identified that the attitude of the athletes towards the management leader's effectiveness was based on individual experiences. Some athletes were positive about the roles of their management leaders and coaches, while others were highly negative. The responses indicated that it may not be possible to adopt a uniform stand on the effectiveness of the management leaders. In contrast, if the majority response is analysed, a general sense of dissatisfaction exists among the management leaders among the ex-athletes. The responses showed that after retirement, contacts between athletes and management leaders are lost, thereby ending any opportunity for collaboration. The results therefore supported the arguments of Law, Bloyce, and Waddington (2021) that management leaders should be charged with helping athletes develop their development networks early in their careers. The results found that this is not done, and as a result, athletes face challenges post-retirement and therefore develop a negative attitude towards their management leaders. The results were in compliance with the assertions of Frawley et al. (2018) that sports business management leadership is crucial in training and preparing athletes for life after their careers, and they should focus on more than just the business aspect of the engagements. The results indicated that the majority of the business leaders fail in this area, and the perception of the ex-athletes towards their effectiveness becomes negative.

5 Chapter 5: Conclusion

The research project aimed to explore ex-professional athletes' attitudes towards the leadership of sports franchises and how positive attitudes can facilitate a smooth transition to success after sports careers. Four objectives were therefore set for the study. The first one focused on determining the contributions of sports business management leaders in guiding ex-professional athletes. The second objective determines whether transitional challenges affect the adjustment of ex-professional athletes. The third objective assessed whether there are interventions that are effective in motivating ex-professional athletes after their careers. Finally, the fourth objective focused on exploring the views of ex-professional athletes regarding the effectiveness of sports business management leadership. A qualitative methodology was adopted for the study, and interviews were conducted with the ex-athletes. Their responses were analysed thematically. The response obtained from the participant helped in understanding the ex-athletes' perceptions, their challenges, and their expectations from the management leader.

The first research question explored whether sports business management leaders are responsible for mentoring Athletes' post-career development. The results identified that ex-athletes had high expectations from sports leaders and believed that their contribution and support were highly essential to a smooth post-career transition. The second question explored the impact of transitional challenges on ex-professional athletes' success after retirement. The results identified that the transitional challenges were immense and affected the ex-athletes severely. Athletes face various external factors beyond their control, such as ending their sporting career and entering a new one from scratch, adjusting to different cultures and environments, and dealing with psychological issues like denial, stress, and depression. The absence of support from organisations leads to a loss of identity, purpose, and social connections,

necessitating proactive measures such as career planning, education, mentoring, and mental health counselling during their active sports careers to facilitate a smoother and more successful transition into post-athletic life. The third question evaluated whether UK sports mentors found suitable methods to motivate athletes. The results identified that motivating factors such as training programmes and interventions are highly restricted and ineffective. Sporting associations and sport governing bodies need to seriously work on interventions and training programmes to motivate them in their post-sporting career development. The fourth question examined the attitude of ex-professional athletes towards sports business management leadership. The results showed an unsatisfactory attitude towards management leadership due to their ineffective and unsatisfactory contribution. It is suggested that management leadership make serious efforts to initiate programmes, strategies, and policies to support the ex-athletes in their transition to other professions after retirement from active sports, in order to ensure their athletes experience a successful and meaningful journey; therefore a multifaceted approach is essential. Real-world exposure for these ex-athletes comes through Internship Placements, where Sports Business Management Leaders are responsible for bridging the gap between sports and corporate environments. Networking Events also help ex-athletes expand their horizons and connect with potential employers after retirement, a concept that was not present in any of the interview responses. A holistic approach that incorporates skill development, emotional reinforcement, networking, and active participation in the sports community creates the groundwork for smooth work transitions. This strategic framework not only improves individual chances, but also offers significant contributions to the broader domains of sports and business.

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Appendices

Appendix i: Table of Codes

	Themes	Colour Code	Sample Excerpt
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Highly important role • Responsible for understanding aspirations, skills, and interests • Responsible for personalised career counselling • Identification of career paths • Assistance for young female athletes • Responsible for guaranteeing a role within the club • Responsible for the education of the retiring athletes 	Leader's responsibility towards post-career athlete development	Light Grey	<p>It is their job to like..actively engage with athletes to understand their aspirations, skills, and interests....even beyond football. Another role I think about often is personalised career counseling</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Difficulty finding a set career path • Lack of experience in other fields • Mental challenges and psychological issues • Coping with sadness and depression 	Impact of transitional challenges	Turquoise	<p>Establishing partnerships with organisations offering employment opportunities or mentorship for ex-female players has also been challenging specifically for me.I had to do lots of extensive networking and</p>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Denial of developments occurring • No support from sports associations • Every athlete on its own 			<p>negotiations to meet the right people who respected what I do and showed a genuine interest in helping me.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of financial literacy • Lack of knowledge on financial planning and budgeting • Lack of education on investing • No guidance on entrepreneurship • Need to conduct financial education plans. • Lack of financial knowledge among coaches • There is no long-term financial planning for athletes 	Practices and interventions for motivating ex-professionals	Light Green	<p>If I did receive proper coaching and mentoring, I would have most likely gone down the route of becoming an analytics coach in football. Special post-retirement programs should be present and operated in the majority of clubs in this country. However, it could also be done externally - by a third-party organisation.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of financial literacy • Lack of knowledge on financial planning and budgeting • Lack of education on investing • No guidance on entrepreneurship 	Financial literacy for athletes	Light yellow	<p>some workshops from time to time that can explain how we can manage our finances a bit better after retirement and basically how to make as much money as possible doing what we love</p>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Need to conduct financial education plans • Lack of financial knowledge to coaches • No long-term financial planning for athletes. 			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Negative perception • Inadequate measures by management leadership • Toxic behaviours and approaches • Favouritism • Genuine commitment by leaders • Understanding of the situation • Assistance and support for athletes 	Ex-professionals' perception of leadership effectiveness	Pastel blue	<p>The last few years as a competitive gymnast I sadly developed quite a negative attitude towards their leadership. It was very messy for many years and lots of changes kept going into place and then removed and then going into place again and then being removed again which led to lots of conflict and confusion. None of their methods have been effective in supporting athletes who have quit the sport.</p>

Appendix ii: Interview Transcripts

Interviews

MALE FOOTBALLER 1

Question 1: In your opinion, what role should sports business management leaders play in the post-career development of ex-professional athletes?

So...in the context of semi-professional football in the UK, I played football for 7 years, so I think sports business management leaders..uh..I would say..have a vital role to play in the post-career development of ex-players. In my opinion, it is their job to like..actively engage with athletes to understand their aspirations, skills, and interests....even beyond football. Another role I think about often is personalised career counselling. These leaders,as well as my coach can help ex-players and myself to identify potential career paths, such as coaching, scouting, or sports media. Moreover, they can assist players in exploring opportunities in related sectors, such as sports marketing, event management, or community development. I would like to think that...Sports business management leaders should establish strong connections and networks within the football community overall...., connecting ex-players with relevant industry professionals.... Organising some networking events, job fairs, and mentorship programs with retired players who have successfully transitioned into non-playing roles. Plus they should like... they should collaborate with local clubs, leagues, and football associations to offer educational programs , training opportunities specifically designed for ex-players. These programs could focus on developing skills like coaching, sports administration, or sports science which are different pathways, but it still helps us stay within the sport and I would feel like I have an important role and duty.

Question 2: Can you provide an example of a successful mentoring program or initiative that sports business management leaders have implemented for yourself or other ex-professional athletes ?

An example of a successful mentoring program in the context of semi-professional football in the UK.. is the... "Professional Football Transition Mentorship Scheme." This initiative, pairs us ex-professional footballers with experienced mentors who have transitioned successfully from playing to non-playing roles within the football industry. So uh the way this works is..The mentorship scheme begins by doing tests of the ex-players' skills, our interests, and our goals. Based on this assessment,.... mentors with relevant experience are matched with the players. The mentors are typicallyretired players who have gone through similar transitions themselves, ensuring they have a deep understanding of the challenges faced by ex-players such as me . The mentorship program consists of regular one-on-one meetings, either in person or via video, where the mentors provide us with guidance on career options, personal development, and networking strategies. They help us identify transferable skills gained through football and explore potential roles within coaching, management, administration, or other football-related fields. This program also helps with group events, workshops, and seminars. These gatherings offer opportunities for us to network with industry professionals

Question 3: What are some obstacles that sports business management leaders face when trying to mentor ex/professional athletes and how can these challenges be overcome?

Mentoring ex-professional athletes in semi-professional football in the UK has some unique challenges I would say for sports business management leaders. One significant obstacle I have noticed is the limited awareness and understanding among... ex-players about potential

career paths beyond the professional level. Many players I have spoken to or trained with may have focused solely on their playing careers and have limited exposure to non-playing roles within football. To.. overcome this challenge, sports business management leaders should actively engage with other semi-professional clubs, leagues, and football associations to promote awareness of the diverse career opportunities available for us. They can organise career seminars, industry panels, and informational sessions specifically tailored for us semi-professional footballers, where successful individuals in non-playing roles share their experiences and provide insights into alternative career paths within the football industry.

Another obstacle is the financial constraints that semi-professional footballers often face. Unlike our professional counterparts, we sometimes may not have substantial financial resources to invest in further education or training. To address this challenge, sports business management leaders can maybe...seek uh...partnerships with educational institutions, sponsorships, or funding bodies to provide scholarships, grants, or hmm... programs for ex-players. By making educational and vocational training opportunities more accessible, I guess the financial barriers can be minimised. The time constraints we have as semi-professional footballers can uh...in a way create some challenges to mentoring. Many players juggle football commitments with full-time jobs or educational pursuits. To overcome this, sports business management leaders should offer flexible mentoring arrangements, such as evening or weekend sessions, virtual meetings, or condensed mentorship programs that take into consideration when we are available

Question 4: What resources or support systems do you believe would be most helpful for ex-professional athletes in the UK as they navigate the challenges of retirement?

For ex-professional footballers in semi-professional football in the UK, several resources and support systems can greatly assist us in navigating the challenges of retirement. Firstly, comprehensive career counselling services tailored specifically to the football industry are vital. These services in a way....should provide guidance on exploring career options within football, such as coaching, scouting, or sports administration, as well as opportunities in related fields like sports media, TV, marketing, or community development. Career counsellors with expertise in the football industry can help us ex-players identify transferable skills, develop personalised career plans, and navigate job search strategies.Access to networking opportunities within the football community is equally important. Ex-players should have avenues to connect with current and former professionals, club representatives, and industry experts who can provide mentorship, advice, and potential job leads. Creating networking events, alumni associations, or online platforms specifically for ex-footballers can help these connections and foster a ...supportive community..... Financial education and support systems are crucial for ex-players, as retirement from professional football can bring financial challenges. Although I successfully graduated from college and applied for university, I didn't receive as much support as I expected and still faced a few financial challenges since I was semi not pro..... Providing financial literacy workshops, access to trusted advisors, and resources on financial planning, investment, and entrepreneurship can empower us ex-players to make informed decisions about our financial future. Mental health support should be readily available. Retirement from football can lead to a loss of identity, purpose, and social structure which I briefly felt especially the first few months after I quit. Having access to psychologists, counsellors, or support groups that specialise in

athlete transitions can provide the necessary emotional support, coping strategies, and guidance through the psychological aspects of our retirement.

Question 5: In your experience as an athlete, what factors contribute to an athlete's motivation, and how can sports business management leaders and UK sport mentors work together to ensure athletes are properly motivated?

In my experience as a semi-professional footballer, several factors contribute to an athlete's motivation. Firstly, the love for the game and the desire to compete and improve are fundamental motivators, specifically for myself. The passion for football drives me to train harder, set goals, and ...push myself beyond my limits. Sports business management leaders and UK sport mentors can tap into this intrinsic motivation by fostering a positive football culture that celebrates the joy of the sport. Setting clear and achievable goals is also crucial for motivation. Sports business management leaders can work with our coaches and mentors to help footballers set both individual and team-based goals. These goals should be challenging but like...also realistic, providing a sense of purpose and direction. We did receive regular feedback and performance evaluations when I used to be semi-pro , which I Suppose can support the players' progress towards their goals and keep them motivated. Recognising and rewarding achievements is another effective motivational tool. Sports business management leaders can collaborate with sponsors, clubs, and associations to establish incentives, such as Player of the Month awards or end-of-season recognition. Celebrating individual and team ...accomplishments not only boosts motivation but also fosters a competitive environment that drives players to excel. Additionally, a supportive and positive team environment is essential. Sports business management leaders and UK sport mentors can encourage team-building activities, foster open communication, and promote a culture of support and inclusivity. Creating

a sense of belonging among footballers enhances their motivation by providing a supportive network that encourages them to give their best on and off the field.

Question 6: What methods did your coach use to motivate you during training sessions, and did you find them effective? How does this contrast to the methods used at competitions ?

.....During training sessions, my coach employed various methods to motivate me as a semi-professional footballer. One effective approach was setting specific training targets and providing constructive feedback. These targets were related to improving technical skills, tactical understanding, or physical conditioning. By breaking down large goals into smaller, achievable targets, my coach helped me stay focused and motivated throughout training. Regular feedback sessions allowed me to assess my progress, identify areas for improvement, and make necessary adjustments, boosting my confidence and motivation. Moreover, my coach emphasised the importance of teamwork and collective success during training. He fostered a positive and supportive training environment, encouraging open communication and collaboration among teammates. This created a strong sense of motivation within us , which made us push each other to perform at our best.In contrast, the methods used at competitions in semi-professional football differed slightly. While training focused on individual and team development, competitions placed a greater emphasis on mental preparation and maintaining a competitive mindset. My coach would provide strategic guidance, analyse opponents' strengths and weaknesses, and help us develop game plans. They would emphasise the importance of self-belief, mental resilience, and executing our roles effectively on match days.

Question 7: What qualities or characteristics do you believe are most important for sports business management leaders to possess in order to effectively support ex-athletes in their post-career development, and have you seen any examples of such leadership in your own experience?

As an ex-semi professional footballer, I believe several qualities and characteristics are crucial for sports business management leaders to effectively support footballers in their post-career development..... Firstly, empathy and understanding of the challenges faced by footballers are paramount. Sports business management leaders should have a deep appreciation for the demands, pressures, and transitions that occur during and after a football career. Good communication skills are also vital. Leaders should be able to listen actively, ask insightful questions, and provide clear guidance and feedback. Effective communication fosters trust and ensures that footballers feel heard and understood throughout their post-career journey. Flexibility and adaptability are essential qualities for sports business management leaders. They should recognise that each footballer's path and goals may differ and be able to tailor support accordingly.Whether it's exploring career options, offering educational resources, or facilitating networking opportunities, leaders must adapt their approach to meet the unique needs of each individual. Furthermore, leaders should be well-connected within the football industry and possess a strong network of professionals and organisations. This allows them to provide valuable introductions, mentorship opportunities, and access to resources that can facilitate footballers' post-career development.In my own experience, I have witnessed exemplary leadership in sports business management. I had the privilege of working with a manager who demonstrated empathy, effective communication, and a strong network. They understood my aspirations beyond football and connected me with individuals in the industry

who provided guidance and mentorship. Their support and guidance played a crucial role in my successful transition from professional to semi-professional football and my subsequent exploration of non-playing roles within the football industry.

Question 8: How has your personal experience with sports business management leaders impacted your attitude towards their leadership, and do you believe they have been effective in supporting ex-professional athletes post-career development in the UK?

Luckily my personal experience has always been positive, and my personal experience with sports business management leaders has had a significant impact on my attitude towards their leadership. The support and guidance I received from my two coaches during my transition from professional to semi-professional football, as well as my training days were invaluable. Their expertise, resources, and networks helped me navigate the challenges of retirement and explore new opportunities within the football industry. Their leadership has been effective in supporting ex-professional footballers' post-career development in semi-professional football in the UK. Through personalised career counselling, mentorship programs, and networking initiatives, sports business management leaders have facilitated successful transitions for many ex-players. They have provided the necessary guidance, encouragement, and connections to help footballers identify and pursue meaningful careers beyond their playing days. The support I received from sports business management leaders allowed me to explore coaching opportunities..., gain qualifications....., and connect with professionals in the football industry, which enabled me to continue my involvement in football in a different capacity. Their leadership has instilled in me a sense of confidence and optimism about my post-football career.

FEMALE FOOTBALLER 1

Question 1: In your opinion, what role should sports business management leaders play in the post-career development of ex-professional athletes?

Sports business management leaders have an important role to play in supporting ex-professional athletes during our development after we leave the sport. Unfortunately, based on my personal experience as a former semi-professional footballer, the support I received after quitting the sport was not really.. What I hoped for. . I believe there is a gap in the assistance provided by these leaders...especially for young women. We dedicate our lives to the sport, sacrificing time, energy, and personal commitment but when it's time to retire, we often find ourselves lost and without a clear direction or support system to help us... and sadly I believe male footballers receive a lot more support and recognition than us. .They should use their connections in the football industry to help us find the right employment and to make sure we have the necessary skills and opportunities for success outside of this sport. Many athletes including myself, are unprepared to handle the sudden financial shift that comes with retirement. Leaders should provide maybe financial education programs to help us ? so we can make better decisions. Retiring for me so I could go to university was very challenging for me, although I attend a very prestigious university now, very oftenI miss the sport and wish I could get back into it. .

Question 2: Can you provide an example of a successful mentoring program or initiative that sports business management leaders have implemented for yourself or other ex-professional athletes ?

As far as I am aware, there was a FIFA coach mentorship programme for women in Football last year, the programme lasts I think...around 1 year, made up of many online and face

to face meetings usually lead by experienced coaches. The program goes beyond traditional mentorship by offering special workshops and training sessions specifically designed to address the needs of female footballers. These sessions cover topics such as personal branding, networking, negotiation skills, and entrepreneurship.

Question 3: What are some obstacles that sports business management leaders face when trying to mentor ex/professional athletes and how can these challenges be overcome?

There is a general lack of understanding among sports leaders regarding the specific challenges faced by ex-semi-professional female footballers. Their experiences are often overshadowed by those of elite athletes, leading to insufficient support and guidance. Establishing partnerships with organisations offering employment opportunities or mentorship for ex-female players has also been challenging specifically for me. I had to do lots of extensive networking and negotiations to meet the right people ...who respected what I do and showed a genuine interest in helping me. I think that one way the careers of female footballers can be improved is by educating leaders about the unique challenges faced by ex-female players, and I'm sure this will foster better understanding and lead to more tailored support initiatives. It would also be great if sports representatives could create specific connections with organisations who have a big will to advertise and help female footballers.

Question 4: What resources or support systems do you believe would be most helpful for ex-professional athletes in the UK as they navigate the challenges of retirement?

So...I can not give an example of a personal resource I have been aided with...even after I quit the sport but one thing that is sometimes on my mind..is continued education, I think it plays a big big role in helping female athletes go beyond their sports careers. I sometimes also imagine what it would be like to be consistently motivated..maybe offered a scholarship or

vocational training program, .. something that would allow me and them to pursue further education or gain new skills aligned with our post-sport aspirations. I guess retirement is also very mentally draining and can affect your mental health, I;m sure this isnt the first time an athlete has said this. another thing I want to suggest is programs that offer access to sports medicine specialists, physiotherapists, and strength and conditioning coaches. These programs could provide personalised exercise regimens, injury prevention strategies, and resources for managing sports-related health issues, ensuring that we continue to prioritise our physical well-being.

Question 5: In your experience as an athlete, what factors contribute to an athlete's motivation, and how can sports business management leaders and UK sport mentors work together to ensure athletes are properly motivated?

Could you give me a minute to think about the question?

Of course, as much time as you need ...

My biggest motivator when I was training was probably the role models I looked up to. Sports business management leaders or representatives can help us make connections between us athletes and successful professionals who have experienced similar journeys. Mentors can share their experiences, provide guidance, and serve as role models for us, inspiring athletes and reinforcing their motivation. There is one thing I would like to point out though....being good at football and having constant energy and motivation to attend training and matches should first come from inside, it is so so important for an athlete to be taught to love the sport from within and must first have an extremely strong desire to stay in the sport and make a commitment for many years. Passion is the driving force behind an athlete's motivation. As a female footballer, my love for the game started my motivation to train, compete, and improve. I recall in such detail

*the feeling of stepping onto the pitch for the first time, the big adrenaline rush during matches, and the joy of connecting with teammates and people watching. So I think **this genuine passion is often what helps athletes through the ups and downs of our careers.** Something that would've helped me even more would be to experience a positive environment, back then women's football wasn't as popular. and I'm certain I would have pursued football for longer if I had a more supportive family. Recently I read that the Women's FA cup finals was packed and full of fans and viewers, reaching a record breaking crowd of 77 thousand, which amazed me! And it made me very proud knowing that I was once professionally in this sport too and also that women's football is gradually becoming more popular!*

Question 6: What methods did your coach use to motivate you during training sessions, and did you find them effective? How does this contrast to the methods used at competitions ?

*Before each training session even started....**my coach would always start with communication, giving us a range of different exercises and how they will benefit our body and mind, so the need and desire to self improve during and after each training session was a good way to motivate myself to produce great results.** In contrast, the methods used during competitions had some distinct differences. **My coach focused more on collective motivation and team cohesion during games.** There was a big emphasis on team talk before every match, where he would deliver inspiring speeches to boost our spirits. **My coach also believed that individual feedback was very important, which could improve the team's performance as a whole** . And then....some days..he would like to switch it up? Introduce lots of games and group races and activities so we could also improve friendships within the team but also create a more competitive environment, he would also place some challenges or rewards after the games.*

Question 7: What qualities or characteristics do you believe are most important for sports business management leaders to possess in order to effectively support ex-athletes in their post-career development, and have you seen any examples of such leadership in your own experience?

I think it is so so important for them to have a great feeling and sense of understanding, meaning that it would be important for them to be empathetic . Management leaders need to empathise with the unique challenges and experiences that ex-athletes face during their transition. Understanding the physical, emotional, and mental aspects of retiring from sports. Ideally they should be quite outgoing, connections and a way with words should come naturally to them, and for this to work they should have quite high confidence, so they are stern and certain in their decisions and choice of words...so they can make the best connections possible...They should also like..have the ability to be always supportive and creative, be ready to offer alternative solutions when something doesn't work out or when an athlete is experiencing an obstacle in their career.

Question 8: How has your personal experience with sports business management leaders impacted your attitude towards their leadership, and do you believe they have been effective in supporting ex-professional footballers' post-career development in the UK?

It's a bit difficult to say because my experience was not the most positive. I think that the relationship and attitudes I had with sports leaders and management affected my view on the sport especially as a woman quite negatively.

MALE FOOTBALLER 2

Question 1: In your opinion, what role should sports business management leaders play in the post-career development of ex-professional athletes?

I believe that it's crucial for seniors and the management team to support the development of a professional athlete even after they have quit the sport. I've been committed to football my entire life therefore, I did not form the connections I needed outside the sport or had planned a different path in case I quit. Unfortunately this happened and I wasn't backed by the management staff in my team. It was extremely difficult to consider anything else other than football and I really could have relied on some help and guidance from the people I put in everything for. I'm happy you have asked this question because this particular issue needs addressing. Management leaders should be in charge of guaranteeing a role within the club or the industry, most commonly they can do that with ensuring the ex-athlete gets educated in the interview process and other essential career information.

Question 2: Can you provide an example of a successful mentoring program or initiative that sports business management leaders have implemented for yourself or other ex-professional athletes ?

Well, I actually did not receive any mentoring programs due to my condition as a semi-professional footballer only. Most lower division clubs don't have the finances to support such programs and their priorities... differ a lot from all other successful clubs. Improving the stadium and improving the training grounds is a more important investment for them when the real focus should be on the mental health and development of athletes like me.

Question 3: What are some obstacles that sports business management leaders face when trying to mentor ex/professional athletes and how can these challenges be overcome?

One example is the financial difference between the two careers for sure. A lot of my ex-teammates were excited to play elite football for the money and fame mainly. Being given an opportunity that consists of an average pay, a lot of them were demotivated to continue down this path. The lack of ...financial and human resources contributed heavily to that problem. Semi-professional teams didn't have the connections and partnerships with big organisations or other professional teams to ensure their ex-athletes have a secure job opportunity once they quit. This often resulted in a disappointing and unsatisfactory end between the players and the management team.

Question 4: What resources or support systems do you believe would be most helpful for ex-professional athletes in the UK as they navigate the challenges of retirement?

I think mental health support would be the most appropriate answer here. It's extremely hard for an athlete when he/she is facing the fact that they can no longer continue doing what they love. Being out alone in the real world without any support or previous experience is a devastating reality and... I would have definitely appreciated it if the people I worked for prevented that in some way. If I did receive proper coaching and mentoring, I would have most likely gone down the route of becoming...maybe an analytics coach in football. Special post-retirement programs should be present and operated in the majority of clubs in this country. However, it could also be done externally - by a third-party organisation.

Question 5: In your experience as an athlete, what factors contribute to an athlete's motivation, and how can sports business management leaders and UK sport mentors work together to ensure athletes are properly motivated?

I have always stayed motivated with adequate and frequent goal setting inputs. For an athlete, you always have to reach your goals and have to exceed all initial expectations. That is if you want to reach the top level of any sport. Goals were set every day, every match and every season. It was our duty to follow them at all times to bring the club to greater success. I felt a sense of contribution and fulfilled duty. The effective feedback and praise after completing the goals was the factor that made me want to bring out the best of me at all times. It is a pleasant feeling to know that you are respected and appreciated. Therefore, to answer the second part of your question, I think initiating advanced methods of goal setting and feedback would be beneficial to all current athletes. It is likely they will find good use for those methods even after they have quit the sport.

Question 6: What methods did your coach use to motivate you during training sessions, and did you find them effective? How does this contrast to the methods used at competitions?

Apart from the methods I just said, my coach also used punishment-based motivation techniques. If we were not training up to the expected standard, he would often send us to run laps around the pitch. We of course wanted to just play football and often feared that punishment. The worst out of all was when you were put on the substitute bench either for bad behaviour or bad training performance. Everyone was scared of that and therefore, wanted to always please the coach and perform on the top of their game. During competitions and official matches, the rule was permanently set that if we lost miserably or a few of the players didn't put in their everything, the coach would not give us a rest day after the match. We really valued our rest days and that alone, made us all motivated and filled with desire to win.

Question 7: What qualities or characteristics do you believe are most important for sports business management leaders to possess in order to effectively support ex-athletes in their

post-career development, and have you seen any examples of such leadership in your own experience?

Mainly they need to be patient and considerate of the situation of an athlete that had to quit the sport, regardless of the reason. It is a tough period for everyone that has gone through it and therefore, receiving constant support and guidance definitely makes it easier. You are also bound to find and choose your future career in a better sense. A more important factor and characteristic is to be able to connect your ex-athlete to a reliable employer within or outside the industry of football. Creating opportunities for ex-athletes and providing them with the skills that will be crucial for their future career development is a quality all management teams should possess and implement. Out of the characteristics I mentioned, I have only been a witness of the adequate sense of consideration and understanding within my ex-coaches and managers. Most of the time that was seen as enough but looking back into the past now, I strongly disagree and I wished that they supported and took care of the athletes with greater methods and means.

Question 8: How has your personal experience with sports business management leaders impacted your attitude towards their leadership, and do you believe they have been effective in supporting ex-professional athletes post-career development in the UK?

I feel like my time at the club has its positives and negatives, this includes my relationship and attitude towards the management team. They were supportive and they did manage to motivate me at the time but as soon as I quit, they diverted their attention and focus to the athletes still at the club. It seemed off like I am not their concern anymore and I'm not a part of the club. I do not blame them because our club was in the lower divisions of semi-professional football. Resources weren't enough, people lacked certain experience and connections to the industry and the pay wasn't motivating anyone to go out of their way to help ex-athletes in their

future careers. We were all simply there to train and to play matches. My attitude has always been professional and I have followed exactly as they said. There was mutual respect during my time there, which I appreciated very much and had the desire to work in the industry. Unfortunately that did not happen however, I hold no grudge against my ex-management team because the mutual expectation wasn't incredibly high. We weren't a professional team, most of the time it was all just a bit of a laugh. To improve the outcome of my post-career development I have always suggested and believed that an external company should exist to aid ex-athletes transitioning into jobs within or outside their sport. Most small clubs simply don't have enough human and financial resources to be able to help and mentor all the people concluding with football.

FEMALE GYMNAST 1

Question 1: In your opinion, what role should sports business management leaders play in the post-career development of ex-professional athletes?

Sports Business Management Leaders could play a significant role in the post career development of ex-professional athletes, supporting ex-professional athletes with career advice , or providing financial help with opening their own business.

Question 2: Can you provide an example of a successful mentoring program or initiative that sports business management leaders have implemented for yourself or other ex-professional athletes ?

Once I retired , I was offered a job straight away as a coach in my club, where I have been training as a gymnast. However, the mentoring programs when I was training were not effective, even before I competed at Commonwealth games. After the Commonwealth Games, all I received was a lottery ticket and a beer as a reward... I did not receive any understanding, any

sponsorship or any further support, after a few weeks I was a nobody. The only help I have ever received has been from my coach alone. But hopefully later in my career, I am planning to do a judging course and receive a qualification as a judge.

Question 3: What are some obstacles that sports business management leaders face when trying to mentor ex/professional athletes and how can these challenges be overcome?

I think that sometimes Sports Business Management leaders have to deal with difficult situations, when they have to show extra support and care if an athlete is having lots of trouble. For example, when an athlete has to retire not due to their own decision, but because of an injury or mental health problem, or financial difficulties. In this case Sports Management leaders would provide essential support and can be an emotional experience for a Sports Business Manager if they go through this monthly/weekly...

Question 4: What resources or support systems do you believe would be most helpful for ex-professional athletes in the UK as they navigate the challenges of retirement?

There should be way more courses! And programs and workshops for ex-athletes to share their knowledge ,experiences to younger gymnasts, this is essential!

Question 5: In your experience as an athlete, what factors contribute to an athlete's motivation, and how can sports business management leaders and UK sport mentors work together to ensure athletes are properly motivated?

Many factors and people are involved in this process: athletes themselves, their coaches , their families , teammates and friends . Sports business management leaders have their part as well , supporting athletes with information , advice and financial stability.

Question 6: What methods did your coach use to motivate you during training sessions, and did you find them effective? How does this contrast to the methods used at competitions ?

My Coach always used a positive approach towards the training , encouraging and helping me in every part of the session and explaining things in great detail so I fully understand what is required for me to do. I was working under a detailed programme, and I always knew what exactly I had to do to achieve my goals. At competitions my coaches continued to guide and support me , keeping me calm and concentrated . During my journeys to competitions- which sometimes take like...3 or 4 hour drive, my coaches would sometimes suggest for me to close my eyes and imagine my routine, and they would send my music for each routine- they would highly emphasise on visual techniques and imagery, specifically at competitions

Question 7: What qualities or characteristics do you believe are most important for sports business management leaders to possess in order to effectively support ex-athletes in their post-career development, and have you seen any examples of such leadership in your own experience?

I believe that Sports Business Management has to possess qualities, such as creativity, open mind , will to help and support. They should be able to give advice and provide ex-athletes with options for their future career.

Question 8: How has your personal experience with sports business management leaders impacted your attitude towards their leadership, and do you believe they have been effective in supporting ex-professional athletes post-career development in the UK?

I think that there should be a general programme for ex- athletes, who decided to stay involved in the sport, whether as a coach, or a judge, club manager or a member of technical committee. If such a programme existed, I believe that more ex- athletes would stay in sport, inspiring younger generations. My experience wasn't anything like that , I just received support

from my own club, where I am working now as a coach. If this is successful then more sub programmes can be created that can teach ex athletes to specialise in a specific area

FEMALE GYMNAST 2

Question 1: In your opinion, what role should sports business management leaders play in the post-career development of ex-professional athletes?

I've been doing gymnastics for a long time and I recently quit due to an injury. One of the things I think is very important for a sports business management leader to do is to look after all the athletes and make sure that they are healthy and not prone to any injuries. This applies even after they have retired from the sport. in my case it would have been lovely and very supportive to receive some kind of help or update on my injury or my circumstances even after I quit the sport but instead everything was left on hold and I didn't receive any feedback or any information regarding my position and what career path I can choose now that I've quit. Throughout the period I was actually training I did receive some help based on my ankle injury and as soon as I quit I didn't receive any follow-up. It's so important for a sports business management leader to also guide and provide mentorship for athletes such as me who have suddenly much earlier than they expected to.... and it's a little bit difficult to find a set career path because you've devoted your whole life to the sport ...so you haven't built any other experiences in other work fields and it can be quite mentally challenging. This sudden end to my career also led to me having a gap year So I can properly decide what I need to do with my career and to also figure out what I truly want to study at university since the lack of support and the lack of mentorship lead to me developing negative attitudes towards Sports in general

Question 2: Can you provide an example of a successful mentoring program or initiative that sports business management leaders have implemented for yourself or other ex-professional athletes ?

Sadly in rhythmic gymnastics I am not aware of any mentoring programs that even exist or any initiatives that have been taken to help ex athletes come out of their shell and try to expand in different career Fields. This has always been the case for gymnastics in this country. Our coaches do their very best to provide everything for us and to help us as much as possible, where most of the time there is no benefit for them in the long run..financially speaking. Even on the British gymnastics website,they have many courses for acrobatics, trampolining, and artistic, but they never have any courses available for rhythmic gymnastics, on top of this it is extremely expensive and all competitions, programs we have to fund ourselves our whole career, which I think is extremely unfair considering the achievements I've produced for this country...Set alarm for I can give is that there are many judging and Coaching courses available for a variety of different sports, But specifically for rhythmic gymnastics it has taken British gymnastics to introduce a level two coaching course 10 years..... 10 years there was not even one level two coaching course available for anyone which led to so many coaches when I was growing up being stuck on having a level one for many years. Considering but mostly everything can be done online now I really do not think it's acceptable for it to take 10 years to produce one course. Extremely disappointed with the organisation

Question 3: What are some obstacles that sports business management leaders face when trying to mentor ex/professional athletes and how can these challenges be overcome?

If I were to put myself in the position of a sports business manager I would say one of the challenges to overcome is seeing and witnessing the ranges of deep emotions that an athlete goes

through when quitting the sport. If a sports leader is truly dedicated to their job, they will often form attachments and understanding and empathy towards athletes, witnessing many athletes throughout your job career quitting can be quite heartbreaking and challenging...I think they can overcome this by scheduling regular check in sessions with each athlete, check their progress outside of the sport, offer them some feedback or connections to kick start their new career something I never got the chance to experience after quitting the sport. Both the ex athlete and the coach plus leader may struggle to go through educating them on budgeting, investment options, and long-term financial planning. It can also be quite difficult to build a social network for that specific athlete Since they have been solely focused on the sport for many years.

Question 4: What resources or support systems do you believe would be most helpful for ex-professional athletes in the UK as they navigate the challenges of retirement?

One thing I believe is beneficial is the introduction of more judging and Coaching courses, specifically gymnastics because they are hugely lacking in this area, Like I mentioned earlier, I really think it's unacceptable for there to be such a lack of resources and courses for over 10 years. Another resource or support system I would like to be in place is a breakdown and run through of the different changes made in the rule book after every competition. Our sport tends to change very frequently and so do the rules and it's very important for the whole of the UK engaging in rhythmic gymnastics to be up to date with these changes but sadly we are always left behind and we are always the last country or group of coaches to understand when and why these changes have been made, Which leads to a further negative effect of our gymnasts that we are trying to get them on a high level to be behind on their routines because sometimes some of the movements in their dance routines do not count and I have noticed coaches recently are completely unaware of this due to the huge lack of communication and support offered by British

gymnastics and others. So I think it's very important for x athlete who are thinking of becoming coaches or judges to be offered a breakdown or some sort of presentation or meeting after every big let's say world championship or European Championship with an overview of what movements count and what movements do not count and what new changes have been put into place instead of being left in the dark.

Question 5: In your experience as an athlete, what factors contribute to an athlete's motivation, and how can sports business management leaders and UK sport mentors work together to ensure athletes are properly motivated?

When I was little and training in the gymnastics centre many of the older girls were actually my role models and I looked up to them. I used to think that they were very beautiful, flexible and talented and I wanted to be exactly like them if not better. when you are young you do not think about the materialistic aspects of Sport such as winning grants sponsorships or money, you think more about your performance more about your visuals and also how you can be the closest thing possible to your role models. I would say that having a good role model is the first step of having strong motivation, another motivating factor would probably be the happiness and the satisfaction or seeing how happy my parents are for me when winning a medal or competition for me family comes first and when I was competing I was extremely happy when my parents were proud of me and when they supported me at every competition they were also my biggest motivator having a loving family that understands the sport well and also understands the sacrifices you make and still support you all the way is a very strong motivating factor that needs to be spoken about more frequently as people tend to underestimate the power a positive family environment can have on an athlete. Intrinsic motivation also goes under this category I think it's very motivating when your coach or your mentor or sports business

management leader goes through specific empowerment sessions and workshops so you can fully access your capabilities where they emphasise on personal growth and skills development.

Sports Business management leaders should specifically focus on providing positive reinforcement and constructive feedback, which is essential to motivate athletes. Sports business management leaders and mentors should recognize and celebrate athletes' efforts, progress, and achievements.

Question 6: What methods did your coach use to motivate you during training sessions, and did you find them effective? How does this contrast to the methods used at competitions ?

When we are given a set structure for the training session and we know that we will receive some sort of sticker or reward at the end of training which is more like extrinsic motivation I am more focused at training sessions and I am more eager to complete my plan faster (when I was younger). This isn't really a motivator but it is very common for coaches to use negative reinforcement during training sessions for example when you don't do a routine that is to the best of your abilities or your behaving in a lazy manner a training session you get additional routines or exercises added to your plan which make you even more tired which makes you think twice about the way you behave and the way that you act during training sessions. Another method would be to do a few routines that are perfect in a row knowing that we will be rewarded with a small toy a small voucher or something that would make us really happy and satisfied with our work I would say that this contrasts a lot to the methods used at competitions because usually at the competition it is very important for the coach to be level minded and to also be very calm and collected during the competition so that I as an athlete and other gymnasts are not experiencing high levels of stress before our performance. so any negative reinforcement

or any signs of stress tend to be minimised as much as they can just before, and, during competitions so that our performance can reach its peak

Question 7: What qualities or characteristics do you believe are most important for sports business management leaders to possess in order to effectively support ex-athletes in their post-career development, and have you seen any examples of such leadership in your own experience?

A key characteristic that I think they should have is probably to be quite empathetic and understanding. They should understand that every athlete is unique and every athlete also comes with their own personal problems and difficulties and they need to be quite flexible and understanding in a way that can ensure the athletes are still being motivated and still making some sort of progress despite having obstacles. When a sports business management leader understands the sacrifices that athletes make they can put into perspective how difficult the sport actually is and how much support and help we need in order to continue succeeding usually when a sports business management leader has a background in sport it's easier for them to understand and relate to us and the difficulties that we face. This links in with having a wide range of knowledge and expertise. In order for them to be successful they should always be up-to-date with recent changes and information regarding different sports, new network opportunities and educational programs. Add on to this I think a sports business management leader should also have very good social and networking skills, they should be able to form connections and attachments quite easily and they should also have a relatively outgoing personality so it is much easier for them to socialise with necessary connections that can help to expand the sport further both emotionally and financially. Sadly the leadership that's behind British gymnastics tend to be quite lazy and are not very open on making new connections or

resources for rhythmic gymnasts specifically. like I mentioned in one of the previous questions it took sports leadership almost 10 years to introduce a level two course for coaching which again I do not think this is right at all and it will make the sport go downhill in the long run.

Question 8: How has your personal experience with sports business management leaders impacted your attitude towards their leadership, and do you believe they have been effective in supporting ex-professional athletes post-career development in the UK?

The last few years as a competitive gymnast I... developed quite a negative attitude towards their leadership. It was very messy for many years and lots of changes kept going into place and then removed and then going into place again and then being removed again which led to lots of conflict and confusion.None of their methods have been effective in supporting athletes who have quit the sport.not only this but the prices of courses have almost tripled in the last few years... making it inaccessible for ex gymnasts who are from a slightly lower income background. Sponsorships or grants have not been introduced either so even if these gymnasts were once extremely talented no matter how many world championships, Commonwealth Games, or British championships they competed in- even international competitions, sports leadership and British gymnastics in regards to rhythmic gymnastics simply do not care and they only care about the Financial benefits of these courses rather than what can actually be taught and changedin the system.

FEMALE GYMNAST 3

Question 1: In your opinion, what role should sports business management leaders play in the competitive and post-career development of professional athletes?

I started gymnastics at a very young age, I had a few different coaches growing up so my experiences with all of them and the sports business management leaders they were connected to

are all very different and there's a big range in terms of the help I received as well as the quality of coaching. the very first coach I have as well as the sports management leader she was working with, was quite unreliable in the sense that she did not even turn up to the training sessions on time to coach us and would usually come to training sessions very tired with a huge lack of interest and lack of desire to coach us, which can hugely affect a child when they are young but nevertheless I decided to continue the sport knowing that one day I will have a better coach and my success will be a lot higher and a lot more well known. So this goes without saying that the first role a Sport business management leadership play is to make sure that each individual gymnast's coach is arriving on time to training sessions and possesses a true desire to help and to mentor that athlete they are assigned to. I also think it is of most importance to form a healthy attachment and relationship with that athlete, this is also the job of the sports business management leader themselves- as it is vital for them to know that athlete well to a personal level and understand what their individual needs and challenges in the sport are. If we link this to post Career Development I think it It is so important for that sports business management leader to stay well-connected with that athlete even after retirement so they can navigate them through the challenges of the real world and help them pick a specific course or a specific degree they want to go into so they can expand their Talent and their knowledge a lot further and to also meet the Right Friends and connections so they can stay in that industry without feeling the loss or the detachment from the sport too much.

Question 2: Can you provide an example of a successful mentoring program or initiative that sports business management leaders have implemented for yourself or other ex-professional athletes ?

So I don't know any specific mentoring programs or initiatives but the second coach that I was moved to was well connected to a very committed and Intelligence sports business management leader, I won't mention his name due to anonymity but he helped the club I was training at as well as my coach massively to find a beautiful venue to train at and that was probably the peak of my career and the years that I trained with my coach and with him I was probably the happiest and I was going to the most competitions. He even had a separate office within the same building we were training in, I remember sometimes being called in for meetings, with my family as well, when we're having difficulties at training sessions or to even have an update on our behaviour . I also remember having a meeting with him to help me with my GCSE choices and that's when he offered that I try a sports and also take up sports as an A Level and thanks to his suggestion I got very good grades and very good mental ship leading up to my exams which didn't disrupt my training sessions. When it was the peak of my career that's probably when rhythmic gymnastics itself as a sport was very successful in the UK, there was lots of funding available we were also doing lots of shows and performances to spread awareness and love for the sports since that's when the sport started initially growing in the UK and that's when it was most popular. the sports business management leader trade his best to give us lots of Castings and lots of performances outside of competitive rhythmic gymnastics so we can show the world how beautiful the sport is and how much hard work and effort is put into it. One of the performances I did was in Wales with my other team members, and it was very warming to see how many people were watching and how many people were impressed with the skills that we can do. It was a very reassuring moment. I was also lucky enough to perform professionally at many different high schools and primary schools which made lots of young girls fall in love with the sport which made me so happy. so I wouldn't really say this is an initiative

that the whole rhythmic gymnastics sector in the UK adopted but it is what our sports business management leader was personally doing to help us expand our careers further during our time in the sport. But when I quit the sport it was a different story and I lost connection with that sports business management leader but luckily my personal coach still stayed in touch with me and was helping me with my university choices and also some other career parts I wanted to go into such as working in the council or becoming a PE teacher which was a big passion of mine. We worked on this together to contact different schools and different job opportunities but my sports business management leader himself was not involved even though I think we should have maintained contact with me and all the other gymnasts at the club in order to help us continue down a different career path

Question 3: What are some obstacles that athletes and sports business management leaders face when retiring, and trying to mentor ex/professional athletes and how can these challenges be overcome?

I have to put myself in a sports business management leader's shoes. I would say the hardest part of having such a job is the difficulty of helping an athlete who is going through a period of sadness, sometimes even depression after retiring from the sport. Athletes who quit the sport experience a period of confusion and resentment, and we aren't really offered any help or understanding and I admit that even I went through this in the beginning stages.

I physically and mentally could not accept that my career was over and I have to do something completely different. Mornings I woke up quite angry because I did not know what to do with myself and my days felt extremely empty I was angry that I could no longer continue doing what I love and I can no longer continue doing something that is such a deep passion of mine and I'm certain that many athletes have gone through the stages as well. So being the

management leader who is trying to help all of these athletes in one go can be quite mentally draining in a way because you have to absorb and take in every single athlete's emotion and heavy transitioning period which is filled with emotions such as anger, sadness, and denial. I felt so hopeless when I quit and that feeling did not leave my mind and body for a long time. Can be quite a demanding job if done correctly because these athletes seek an immediate alternative and would try to negotiate and grasp anything that is close to their sport in terms of a career because they cannot accept that they have officially left the sport whether it's injury or family related the pain remains the same, with not many job opportunities available. Let me think for a second what might help with this.... One option would be to offer lots of patients and support as a management leader. Another way of minimising the pain and the grief experienced when quitting would be to run workshops or educational programs that can make the athlete feel like they're still part of the bigger picture. Think that retirement and what we can do after retiring from the sport should be explained to us at a much younger age not in the last days or months of our career I think this should be an ongoing process and should be taught from the early stages of the sport so we have many years to plan ahead what we want to do and also to start up other hobbies apart from let's say rhythmic gymnastics

Question 4: What resources or support systems do you believe would be most helpful for ex-professional athletes in the UK as they navigate the challenges of retirement?

Back when I was training every single competition, especially international competitions, world championships and world cups and rhythmic gymnastics were funded by British gymnastics. Then over the years the management suddenly changed and we had to pay for everything ourselves which led to so many young girls quitting the sport not because of their own desire but because they simply could not afford to continue financially. Support system that I

think would be helpful is to continue some sort of funding for big competitions or at least pay the flight tickets and the hotel because as you know things are becoming very expensive recently and this will make the sport go downhill and it's causing so many gymnasts to quit which is unnecessary and it makes me so upset to see the sport goes so downhill in a matter of just a few years. The support system would be thorough and detailed education on what kind of careers you can branch into after retiring from gymnastics, depending on what are individual hobbies and interests are- I don't think we are educated enough throughout our training days to know what we actually want to do after leaving the sport. For this to work open and honest communication is the most important part. In terms of resources I think a lot more coaching, mentoring and teaching courses should be available especially for professional athletes because we dedicate so much time and effort to succeed and yet we are given nothing in return. What would be very helpful would be some workshops from time to time that can explain how we can manage our finances a bit better after retirement and basically how to make as much money as possible doing what we love

Question 5: In your experience as an athlete, what factors contribute to an athlete's motivation, and how can sports business management leaders and UK sport mentors work together to ensure athletes are properly motivated?

This is probably quite a cliché answer but I do think having the right role models can deeply motivate an athlete and make them want to be more successful. Maybe the trophies, medals or some sort of reward can also motivate athletes. Athletes also experience enjoyment through having different challenges in the support which motivates them. That constant need to master a desired skill or a difficult skill can also make an athlete thrilled or get an adrenaline Rush from it which can sometimes motivate them as well

Question 6: What methods did your coach use to motivate you during training sessions, and did you find them effective? How does this contrast to the methods used at competitions ?

Goal setting..before each training session, by setting clear targets with my coach, I have something to strive for, which can increase motivation and focus during training sessions.

Getting lots of personal attention during training sessions is also a big motivator for me. I think it is important to also have a variety of exercises throughout training sessions in order to avoid boredom. The most important motivator for me would be positive reinforcement- when my achievements and efforts are recognised and it's a consistent behaviour, it is what used to make me the happiest when I was training. But at competitions, receiving real-time feedback constantly is reassuring I guess because you know you have someone beside you to support you when the adrenaline, or pressure is overwhelming, you always have someone to bring you back down and to help you focus, this leads to emotional regulation. Compliments, or positive comments before performing are also a big plus, this used to boost my self esteem. I guess its different at competition because negative reinforcement, or constant corrections or negative comments can completely throw an athlete off and make them even more stressed, so there needs to be some sort of healthy balance

Question 7: What qualities or characteristics do you believe are most important for sports business management leaders to possess in order to effectively support ex-athletes in their post-career development, and have you seen any examples of such leadership in your own experience?

One essential quality for sports business management leaders is the ability to connect retired gymnasts with reliable employers both within and outside the gymnastics industry. Creating opportunities and facilitating connections with potential employers is vital for the athletes' successful transition. Equipping us with the necessary skills for our future career development is also crucial, and management teams should prioritise this aspect. From my own experience, I have not witnessed a sense of consideration and understanding that often from my former managers, but I did from one of my coaches. At the time, it seemed sufficient, but in hindsight, I strongly believe that greater support and care should have been provided to athletes. Looking back, I wished they had implemented more effective methods and means to support us during the challenging period of retirement.

Question 8: How has your personal experience with sports business management leaders impacted your attitude towards their leadership, and do you believe they have been effective in supporting ex-professional athletes post-career development in the UK?

Reflecting on my journey, I must admit that my interactions with sports business management leaders were mixed. Some leaders demonstrated a genuine commitment to my well-being and career transition, providing valuable guidance and support. They took the time to understand my unique situation and offered personalised assistance. Their empathy and understanding made me feel valued as an individual, not just as an athlete, but then some, even coaches when I was younger showed little interest in my progression during and after the sport which was upsetting. There were instances where I felt let down by the lack of support and attention given to ex-athletes like myself. It seemed as though our needs were overlooked or considered secondary to other priorities. This left me feeling uncertain and lost in my post-career journey.

FEMALE GYMNAST 4

Question 1: In your opinion, what role should sports business management leaders play in the post-career development of ex-professional athletes?

Personally, I have always had a close relationship with my coaches even after I quit the sport, both within the sport and my life on a personal level. Hence, why I believe it is important for sports business management leaders to remain in close contact with their former athletes in order to provide support whether they decide to continue development in the sport or move on completely. An example of this would be providing work/ assistance spaces so the ex-professional athlete has the opportunity to pass on their past knowledge.

Question 2: Can you provide an example of a successful mentoring program or initiative that sports business management leaders have implemented for yourself or other ex-professional athletes ?

I'm not sure of many specific successful mentoring programs or initiatives, however to develop my knowledge through coaching and judging, I have begun coaching and judging courses with the help of my former sports business management leader. This has really improved my abilities over time, and I can now notice a clear difference through the work my athletes are doing.

Question 3: What are some obstacles that sports business management leaders face when trying to mentor ex/professional athletes and how can these challenges be overcome?

I would imagine that as a sports business management leader it would be very difficult to not only stay in contact with the former athlete but also help them every step along the way to ensure their retirement from the sport is safe and healthy . Especially since most professional athletes after quitting may fall into an unstable period of emotions as they may feel clueless or empty, since they are missing such a huge part of their daily lifestyle.

Question 4: What resources or support systems do you believe would be most helpful for ex-professional athletes in the UK as they navigate the challenges of retirement?

In my opinion, I think a form of a good support system would be if the sports business management leaders help ex professional athletes to navigate their career choices depending on how close they want to remain to the sport or in general, their other interests and hobbies, which initially should be well known by the sport business management leaders due to their close relationship during their professional career.

Question 5: In your experience as an athlete, what factors contribute to an athlete's motivation, and how can sports business management leaders and UK sport mentors work together to ensure athletes are properly motivated?

Having a close relationship with the coaches and sports business management leaders would be very vital to improve the athlete's motivation as if they know them to a more personal level and if the athlete feels more inclined to opening up to them, then it would be much easier to provide support and cater to their needs as an athlete.

Question 6: What methods did your coach use to motivate you during training sessions, and did you find them effective? How does this contrast to the methods used at competitions ?

I believe certain athletes need motivation from their coaches and sports business management leaders in different ways. For example, I personally thrive best through positive

motivation and encouragement, therefore motivational words and actions were most helpful for me. However, I've noticed some of my other teammates worked best through negative reinforcement and periods of increased pressure.

Question 7: What qualities or characteristics do you believe are most important for sports business management leaders to possess in order to effectively support ex-athletes in their post-career development, and have you seen any examples of such leadership in your own experience?

I think to be a good sports business management leader, they would definitely need to show a huge desire to the sport, and motivation to constantly help improve their athletes. From personal experience, I found that throughout my career the most beneficial sports business management leader was one which I had a clear establishment between personal and professional relationship.

Question 8: How has your personal experience with sports business management leaders impacted your attitude towards their leadership, and do you believe they have been effective in supporting ex-professional athletes post-career development in the UK?

Throughout my professional career as an athlete I had a very good relationship with my sports business management leader, as I felt we both understood each other very well and I really enjoyed working with them, therefore I looked up to their work and consequently am inspired to be like them. However, British Gymnastics, specifically within rhythmic gymnastics, have not been helpful whatsoever in supporting me for my post-career development as I have felt like I have had to work through this on my own as I find the career that is tailored to my interests.

FEMALE SWIMMER

Question 1: In your opinion, what role should sports business management leaders play in the post-career development of ex-professional athletes?

Should be able to offer mental health support and different coaching programs as stepping away competitive swimming and finding yourself not doing anything can feel demoralising

Question 2: Can you provide an example of a successful mentoring program or initiative that sports business management leaders have implemented for yourself or other ex-professional athletes ?

For swimming, i did not complete a mentoring program but i am aware that many ex-swimmers went onto being coaches through the current coaches with the leadership training needed for the next generation of competitive swimmers

Question 3: What are some obstacles that sports business management leaders face when trying to mentor ex/professional athletes and how can these challenges be overcome?

When you cannot separate personal and professional relations with the athlete and leaders - some leaders are quite selective and have favourite who they wish to train and offer efficient support and programs, while with others, they do not pay as much attention too. By separating the personal and professional relations, can leaders truly help every ex athlete? there will always be biases

Question 4: What resources or support systems do you believe would be most helpful for ex-professional athletes in the UK as they navigate the challenges of retirement?

Mental health support or opportunities to talk to other ex athletes in group session to share lessons and experiences - or offer mentoring programs

Question 5: In your experience as an athlete, what factors contribute to an athlete's motivation, and how can sports business management leaders and UK sport mentors work together to ensure athletes are properly motivated?

Some factors are the coaches encouragement and belief in them while receiving family support and the athletes constant reindeer of hard work - remind athletes that the end goal is not the fame or the money, but rather what they can achieve and what their body allows them to do, to be successful in the support. Also, to avoid favouritism as it can demoralising and discourage an athlete from trying hard.

Question 6: What methods did your coach use to motivate you during training sessions, and did you find them effective? How does this contrast to the methods used at competitions ?

The coach would push us to race the other swimmers and imagine as if you are racing in a competition while also pushing swimmers to reach their quickest time - the methods were still similar but at competition, it mainly felt like if you did not feel like you achieved the expectations at the competition that the coach had set for you in training, it was hard.

Question 7: What qualities or characteristics do you believe are most important for sports business management leaders to possess in order to effectively support ex-athletes in their post-career development, and have you seen any examples of such leadership in your own experience?

To form a friendship and understanding for who they are - keeping in contact and offering coaching and mentoring opportunities or to sustain the "healthy lifestyle" - from my

experience, *i was not given those opportunities as i was not in the place that i could take on coaching or mentoring*

Question 8: How has your personal experience with sports business management leaders impacted your attitude towards their leadership, and do you believe they have been effective in supporting ex-professional athletes post-career development in the UK?

From my experience, my attitude has been not as positive only because, the management I had was focused on favouritism and engaged in toxic behaviour that i could not see myself in and has perhaps disencourage me from continuing swimming or partake in mentoring opportunities - as most of the leaders were men, if there were more women, then maybe my attitude would be more positive and i'd be more inclined to seek support for post career development in the UK.

PARTICIPATION INFORMATION SHEET

An Investigation into Ex-Professional Athletes' Attitudes to Leadership in Sports Business Management: a primary research investigation

Researcher(s): *Stephanie Antonova*

Supervisor: *Nuala O'Sullivan*

The objective of this study is to examine the impact of effective leadership on athletes' long-term success beyond their professional careers. The study aims to gain a comprehensive understanding of how leadership can be utilised effectively to provide support to athletes. This research is expected to reveal that the difficulties encountered when transitioning to a conventional lifestyle indicate a lack of effective implementation or program within sports business management leadership. This deficiency fails to adequately prepare former professional athletes for their post-career life, resulting in a more challenging retirement period. Essentially, the proposed study will employ interpretive research methods to derive insights and understanding regarding the attitudes of ex-professional athletes during their transition from their playing days to the real world - based on individual experiences.

Your involvement in this study will entail the following activities:

-Completing the Participation Information Sheet and a consent Form.

-Engaging in an interview with me via Microsoft teams (based on a time slot of your choice which will later be emailed to you), where you will share your perspectives on Sports Business Management as an ex-athlete. This interview is expected to last approximately 40 minutes and will be recorded for transcription purposes. Rest assured, the audio recording will be deleted once the transcription process is complete.

Please note:

- Your participation in this research is entirely voluntary.
- You have the right to withdraw at any time without giving a reason.
- Wherever practicable, withdrawal from the research will not affect any treatment and/or services that you receive.
- You have the right to ask for your data to be withdrawn as long as this is practical, and for personal information to be destroyed.
- You do not have to answer particular questions either on questionnaires or in interviews if you do not wish to do so.

- Your responses will normally be made anonymous, unless indicated above to the contrary, and will be kept confidential unless you provide explicit consent to do otherwise, for example, the use of your image from photographs and/or video recordings. [NOTE: it may not be possible to maintain confidentiality in certain circumstances, e.g. where issues of child safety have been identified. You should seek clarification from the researcher and/or their supervisor if you are concerned about this].
- No individuals should be identifiable from any collated data, written report of the research, or any publications arising from it.
- All computer data files will be encrypted and password protected. The researcher will keep files in a secure place and will comply with the requirements of the Data Protection Act.
- All hard copy documents, e.g. consent forms, completed questionnaires, etc. will be kept securely and in a locked cupboard, wherever possible on University premises. Documents may be scanned and stored electronically. This may be done to enable secure transmission of data to the university's secure computer systems.
- Please notify the researcher immediately if any adverse symptoms arise during or after the research.
- If you wish, you can receive information on the results of the research. Please indicate on the consent form if you would like to receive this information.
- The researcher can be contacted during and after participation by email (w1727473@my.westminster.ac.uk) If you have a complaint about this research project you can contact the project supervisor, {Nuala O'Sullivan} by email (N.Osullivan@westminster.ac.uk) or by telephone (02035066721)

CONSENT FORM

Title of Study: ANALYSING EX-PROFESSIONAL ATHLETES' ATTITUDES TOWARDS LEADERSHIP IN SPORTS BUSINESS MANAGEMENT – PRIMARY INVESTIGATION FROM THE UK

Lead researcher: *Stephanie Antonova*

I have been given the Participation Information Sheet and/or had its contents explained to me.

Yes ☐ No ☐

I have had an opportunity to ask any questions and I am satisfied with the answers given.

Yes ☐ No ☐

I understand I have a right to withdraw from the research at any time and I do not have to provide a reason.

Yes ☐ No ☐

I understand that if I withdraw from the research any data included in the results will be removed if that is practicable (I understand that once anonymised data has been collated into other datasets it may not be possible to remove that data).

Yes ☐ No ☐

I would like to receive information relating to the results from this study.

Yes ☐ No ☐

I wish to receive a copy of this Consent form.

Yes ☐ No ☐

I confirm I am willing to be a participant in the above research study.

Yes ☐ No ☐

I note the data collected may be retained in an archive and I am happy for my data to be reused as part of future research activities. I note my data will be fully anonymised (if applicable).

Yes ☐ No ☐

Participant's Name: _____

Signature:



Date: 06/07/2023

This consent form will be stored separately from any data you provide so that your responses remain anonymous.

I confirm I have provided a copy of the Participant Information Sheet approved by the Research Ethics Committee to the participant and fully explained its contents. I have given the participant an opportunity to ask questions, which have been answered.

• CONSENT FORM

Title of Study: ANALYSING EX-PROFESSIONAL ATHLETES' ATTITUDES TOWARDS LEADERSHIP IN SPORTS BUSINESS MANAGEMENT – PRIMARY INVESTIGATION FROM THE UK

Lead researcher: *Stephanie Antonova*

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Yes ☐ No ☐

I have had an opportunity to ask any questions and I am satisfied with the answers given.

Yes ☐ No ☐

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Yes ☐ No ☐

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Yes ☐ No ☐

I would like to receive information relating to the results from this study.

Yes ☐ No ☐

I wish to receive a copy of this Consent form.

Yes ☐ No ☐

I confirm I am willing to be a participant in the above research study.

Yes ☐ No ☐

I note the data collected may be retained in an archive and I am happy for my data to be reused as part of future research activities. I note my data will be fully anonymised (if applicable).

Yes ☐ No ☐

Participant's Name: _____

Signature:

G.D

Date: 07/07/2023

This consent form will be stored separately from any data you provide so that your responses remain anonymous.

I confirm I have provided a copy of the Participant Information Sheet approved by the Research Ethics Committee to the participant and fully explained its contents. I have given the participant an opportunity to ask questions, which have been answered.

• CONSENT FORM

Title of Study: ANALYSING EX-PROFESSIONAL ATHLETES' ATTITUDES TOWARDS LEADERSHIP IN SPORTS BUSINESS MANAGEMENT – PRIMARY INVESTIGATION FROM THE UK

Lead researcher: *Stephanie Antonova*

I have been given the Participation Information Sheet and/or had its contents explained to me.

Yes ☐ No ☐

I have had an opportunity to ask any questions and I am satisfied with the answers given.

Yes ☐ No ☐

I understand I have a right to withdraw from the research at any time and I do not have to provide a reason.

Yes ☐ No ☐

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Yes ☐ No ☐

I would like to receive information relating to the results from this study.

Yes ☐ No ☐

I wish to receive a copy of this Consent form.

Yes ☐ No ☐

I confirm I am willing to be a participant in the above research study.

Yes ☐ No ☐

I note the data collected may be retained in an archive and I am happy for my data to be reused as part of future research activities. I note my data will be fully anonymised (if applicable).

Yes ☐ No ☐

Participant's Name: _____

Signature:



Date: 08/07/2023

This consent form will be stored separately from any data you provide so that your responses remain anonymous.

I confirm I have provided a copy of the Participant Information Sheet approved by the Research Ethics Committee to the participant and fully explained its contents. I have given the participant an opportunity to ask questions, which have been answered.

• CONSENT FORM

Title of Study: ANALYSING EX-PROFESSIONAL ATHLETES' ATTITUDES TOWARDS LEADERSHIP IN SPORTS BUSINESS MANAGEMENT – PRIMARY INVESTIGATION FROM THE UK

Lead researcher: *Stephanie Antonova*

I have been given the Participation Information Sheet and/or had its contents explained to me.

Yes ☐ No ☐

I have had an opportunity to ask any questions and I am satisfied with the answers given.

Yes ☐ No ☐

I understand I have a right to withdraw from the research at any time and I do not have to provide a reason.

Yes ☐ No ☐

I understand that if I withdraw from the research any data included in the results will be removed if that is practicable (I understand that once anonymised data has been collated into other datasets it may not be possible to remove that data).

Yes ☐ No ☐

I would like to receive information relating to the results from this study.

Yes ☐ No ☐

I wish to receive a copy of this Consent form.

Yes ☐ No ☐

I confirm I am willing to be a participant in the above research study.

Yes ☐ No ☐

I note the data collected may be retained in an archive and I am happy for my data to be reused as part of future research activities. I note my data will be fully anonymised (if applicable).

Yes ☐ No ☐

Participant's Name: _____

Signature:



Date: 09/07/2023

This consent form will be stored separately from any data you provide so that your responses remain anonymous.

I confirm I have provided a copy of the Participant Information Sheet approved by the Research Ethics Committee to the participant and fully explained its contents. I have given the participant an opportunity to ask questions, which have been answered.

• CONSENT FORM

Title of Study: ANALYSING EX-PROFESSIONAL ATHLETES' ATTITUDES TOWARDS LEADERSHIP IN SPORTS BUSINESS MANAGEMENT – PRIMARY INVESTIGATION FROM THE UK

Lead researcher: *Stephanie Antonova*

I have been given the Participation Information Sheet and/or had its contents explained to me.

Yes ☐ No ☐

I have had an opportunity to ask any questions and I am satisfied with the answers given.

Yes ☐ No ☐

I understand I have a right to withdraw from the research at any time and I do not have to provide a reason.

Yes ☐ No ☐

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Yes ☐ No ☐

I would like to receive information relating to the results from this study.

Yes ☐ No ☐

I wish to receive a copy of this Consent form.

Yes ☐ No ☐

I confirm I am willing to be a participant in the above research study.

Yes ☐ No ☐

I note the data collected may be retained in an archive and I am happy for my data to be reused as part of future research activities. I note my data will be fully anonymised (if applicable).

Yes ☐ No ☐

Participant's Name: _____

Signature:

N.K

Date: 09/07/2023

This consent form will be stored separately from any data you provide so that your responses remain anonymous.

I confirm I have provided a copy of the Participation Information Sheet approved by the Research Ethics Committee to the participant and fully explained its contents. I have given the participant an opportunity to ask questions, which have been answered.

• CONSENT FORM

Title of Study: ANALYSING EX-PROFESSIONAL ATHLETES' ATTITUDES TOWARDS LEADERSHIP IN SPORTS BUSINESS MANAGEMENT – PRIMARY INVESTIGATION FROM THE UK

Lead researcher: *Stephanie Antonova*

I have been given the Participation Information Sheet and/or had its contents explained to me.

Yes ☐ No ☐

I have had an opportunity to ask any questions and I am satisfied with the answers given.

Yes ☐ No ☐

I understand I have a right to withdraw from the research at any time and I do not have to provide a reason.

Yes ☐ No ☐

I understand that if I withdraw from the research any data included in the results will be removed if that is practicable (I understand that once anonymised data has been collated into other datasets it may not be possible to remove that data).

Yes ☐ No ☐

I would like to receive information relating to the results from this study.

Yes ☐ No ☐

I wish to receive a copy of this Consent form.

Yes ☐ No ☐

I confirm I am willing to be a participant in the above research study.

Yes ☐ No ☐

I note the data collected may be retained in an archive and I am happy for my data to be reused as part of future research activities. I note my data will be fully anonymised (if applicable).

Yes ☐ No ☐

Participant's Name: _____



Signature:

Date: 10/07/2023

This consent form will be stored separately from any data you provide so that your responses remain anonymous.

I confirm I have provided a copy of the Participant Information Sheet approved by the Research Ethics Committee to the participant and fully explained its contents. I have given the participant an opportunity to ask questions, which have been answered.

• CONSENT FORM

Title of Study: ANALYSING EX-PROFESSIONAL ATHLETES' ATTITUDES TOWARDS LEADERSHIP IN SPORTS BUSINESS MANAGEMENT – PRIMARY INVESTIGATION FROM THE UK

Lead researcher: *Stephanie Antonova*

I have been given the Participation Information Sheet and/or had its contents explained to me.

Yes ☐ No ☐

I have had an opportunity to ask any questions and I am satisfied with the answers given.

Yes ☐ No ☐

I understand I have a right to withdraw from the research at any time and I do not have to provide a reason.

Yes ☐ No ☐

I understand that if I withdraw from the research any data included in the results will be removed if that is practicable (I understand that once anonymised data has been collated into other datasets it may not be possible to remove that data).

Yes ☐ No ☐

I would like to receive information relating to the results from this study.

Yes ☐ No ☒

I wish to receive a copy of this Consent form.

Yes ☐ No ☐

I confirm I am willing to be a participant in the above research study.

Yes ☐ No ☐

I note the data collected may be retained in an archive and I am happy for my data to be reused as part of future research activities. I note my data will be fully anonymised (if applicable).

Yes ☐ No ☐

Participant's Name: _____



Signature:

Date: 15/07/2023

This consent form will be stored separately from any data you provide so that your responses remain anonymous.

I confirm I have provided a copy of the Participant Information Sheet approved by the Research Ethics Committee to the participant and fully explained its contents. I have given the participant an opportunity to ask questions, which have been answered.

• CONSENT FORM

Title of Study: ANALYSING EX-PROFESSIONAL ATHLETES' ATTITUDES TOWARDS LEADERSHIP IN SPORTS BUSINESS MANAGEMENT – PRIMARY INVESTIGATION FROM THE UK

Lead researcher: *Stephanie Antonova*

I have been given the Participation Information Sheet and/or had its contents explained to me.

Yes ☐ No ☐

I have had an opportunity to ask any questions and I am satisfied with the answers given.

Yes ☐ No ☐

I understand I have a right to withdraw from the research at any time and I do not have to provide a reason.

Yes ☐ No ☐

I understand that if I withdraw from the research any data included in the results will be removed if that is practicable (I understand that once anonymised data has been collated into other datasets it may not be possible to remove that data).

Yes ☐ No ☐

I would like to receive information relating to the results from this study.

Yes ☐ No ☒

I wish to receive a copy of this Consent form.

Yes ☐ No ☐

I confirm I am willing to be a participant in the above research study.

Yes ☐ No ☐

I note the data collected may be retained in an archive and I am happy for my data to be reused as part of future research activities. I note my data will be fully anonymised (if applicable).

Yes ☐ No ☐

Participant's Name: _____



Signature:

Date: 16/07/2023

This consent form will be stored separately from any data you provide so that your responses remain anonymous.

I confirm I have provided a copy of the Participant Information Sheet approved by the Research Ethics Committee to the participant and fully explained its contents. I have given the participant an opportunity to ask questions, which have been answered.