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DIRECTIONS OF POST-SPORT ADAPTATION OF PROFESSIONAL ATHLETES

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Abstract

The purpose of the study is to determine the directions of post-sports adaptation of professional athletes in modern Russia. As the theoretical basis of the study, the provisions of institutional theory are used. The research method is a survey of representatives of professional sports who have completed a sports career. The results of the study show that the life plans of professional athletes are focused mainly on retraining in order to change their type of activity, or an attempt to continue a sports career, but in a different status - a trainer, sport manager, a sports official.

Keywords

Professional sports – Post-sports adaptation – Retraining – Sports career

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Introduction

For an athlete, professional sport is not only a specific labor environment for producing a sports result, but its habitat. As a result of the selection of sports activity as a professional occupation, the individual acquires a "certain, exclusive range of activities".

Here, the "social institution" acts as a social mechanism that implements two main socialization functions:

- integrative, that is, provides structural integration of the individual;
- normative, in other words, is responsible for the preservation and reproduction of norms, values, rules of behavior, etc.

A fairly common methodological error of a number of sociologists is, in our opinion, their perception of sport from the standpoint of standard definitions and requirements for the description of a social institution. General principles about social institutions are used when considering sports as a social institution.

As a result, the institute of sports does not always capture the specifics. In our opinion, it is important to take into account the features of sports activity in the sociological analysis of sport as a social institution. This activity was initially aimed at developing the bodily organization of man. The functioning of the sports sphere of society is ensured by state institutions and organizations, which usually have a "vertical power". At the same time, this sphere is interconnected with the life activity of a number of social institutions: family, education, army, healthcare, etc. At the same time, the social need of society for sports determines the need to integrate all the main social institutions.

Research background

The institutional approach to professional sport as a sphere of public relations, with its own functionality, normative-value complex, a set of status-role constructs, etc., is based on the conceptual provisions of T. Parsons¹ (the concept of the institutional structure as an integrative component of modern society), R. Merton² (functional concept in relation to various types of human activity), P. Bourdieu³ (in the interpretation of his concept of habitus in relation to sport), P. McDonough & A. M. Nunez⁴, L. Vakan⁵ (also a role-playing concept of professional sports, an athlete as a carrier of the functionality and values of the sports institute in society), T. Alkemeyer & N. Buschmann⁶ (the concept of subjectivity of bodily practices - forms of personality formation in relation to sport), E. Moss & R. Garb⁶, M.

¹ T. Parsons, Talcott Parsons on institutions and social evolution: selected writings. University of Chicago Press. 1985.

² R. K. Merton & R. C. Merton, Social theory and social structure. Simon and Schuster. 1968.

³ P. Bourdieu, "Physical space, social space and habitus. Vilhelm Aubert Memorial lecture", Report, num 10 (1996): 87-101.

⁴ P. McDonough & A. M. Nunez, Bourdieu's sociology of education. Critique and utopia: New developments in the sociology of education in the twenty-first century. 2007.

⁵ L. J. Wacquant, Towards a reflexive sociology: A workshop with Pierre Bourdieu. Sociological theory. 1989.

⁶ T. Alkemeyer & N. Buschmann, Learning in and across Practices: Enablement as Subjectivation. In The Nexus of Practices (pp. 20-35). Routledge. 2016.

⁷ E. Moss & R. Garb, "Integrated psychotherapeutic treatment of somatoform and other psychophysiological disorders", Psychotherapy and psychosomatics, Vol. 45 num 2 (1986): 105-112.

Kocherian⁸ (the concept of socio-psycho-physiological construction of sports practices in society).

The social status of professional athletes can be characterized, first of all, through the composition of their life knowledge, skills and abilities, which they acquired in the process of sports socialization (professional socialization). It should be noted that the assessment of their social position by the people themselves, in this case, professional athletes, can significantly diverge from public opinion on this subject. Thus, on the one hand, it is possible to single out social expectations from the application of knowledge, skills and abilities acquired in sports and, on the other hand, the real result and, in fact, the volume of satisfied social needs, the social opportunities and prospects acquired by a professional athlete based on the sports socialization results and professionalization.

Methodology

The composition of the expectations of professional athletes related to the upcoming post-sports adaptation can be characterized through the following empirical indicators:

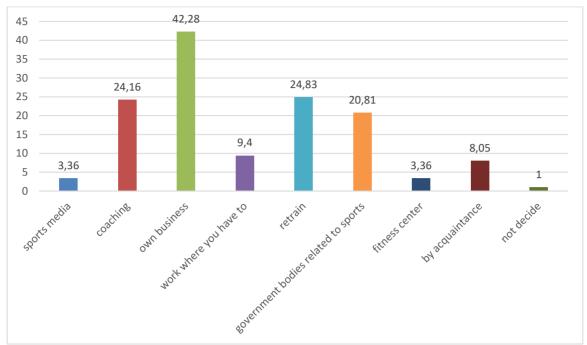
- the composition of life plans of professional athletes after the end of a sports career;
- post-sports prospects of self-realization in the structure of public relations;
- the most problematic areas of life now or later in an adaptation situation:
- assessment by an athlete of the risk level of successful post-sports adaptation;
- an athlete's assessment of the "right choice" of a sports career as an attempt to successfully socialization;
- evaluation by an athlete of chances for an outstanding sports career;
- an athlete's assessment of their own level of "professional mobility" (are they easy to adapt now or adapt to difficulties and adapt to the changes associated with leaving professional sports in the future?);
- the relationship between the athlete's own professional development strategy, the ability to construct a career and success in life.

Results

Respondents' assessment of the directions of post-sports development is related to the nature of their social expectations. The nature and directions of social expectations are determined by the features of the socialization of professional athletes in the conditions of a sports institute and are expressed in the following answers of the interrogated athletes, Figure 1.

⁸ M. A. Kocheryan, Factors motivating professional athletes to achieve high sports results. In Materials of reports of the 52nd International Scientific and Technical Conference of Teachers and Students.

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Source: Compiled by the authors

Figure 1
Results of respondents' assessment of the directions of post-sports adaptation of professional athletes, 2018, %

The life plans of professional athletes are mainly aimed at retraining for a change in occupation, or at an attempt to continue a sports career, but in a different status - a trainer, manager in the field of sports, a "sports" official, etc. One way or another, but we can talk about the desire of a professional athlete to maintain, or to provide a relatively high level of salary, as well as to find a highly paid job. The athlete is "attached" to the sports institute so much that he practically does not consider such an option as starting a post-sports life "from scratch", trying to re-realize himself, having sharply changed his occupation and lifestyle, having moved in particular to another region or city.

A comparative analysis of the survey data over the past 3 years has shown that institutional attachment is also complemented by a significant improvement in the conditions for engaging in professional activities over the past few years (growth in salaries and fees, improvement of the training base, etc.). Apparently, this is due to a slight increase in those wishing to continue their sports career.

In general, we can say that the athlete's plans are defined, because he does not seek to rely on an uncertain case, to "catch the moment" in order to arrange his life after leaving professional sports.

Thus, we can draw the following conclusions about the directions of post-sports adaptation of professional athletes: plans to continue his career in sports, while changing his professional status (horizontal career with further vertical prospects), or to find a well-paid job, including through education.

In the second place among the athlete's life plans are two alternatives: plans related to organizing his own business, or involving by friends, relatives, etc. in theirs business.

THE CORE OF LIFE PLANS								
increase educational level for further career	pursue a career as a coach or manager	find a well-paid job				get a family, and provide it		
THE PERIPHERY OF LIFE PLANS								
organize own business with friends		accept acquain		favorable es, a trainer	offer	from	relatives,	

Source: Compiled by the authors

Table 1
Life plans of professional athletes after the end of a sports career

So, the most promising occupation (with a margin of more than 20% of the vote) from the point of view of post-sports development, lifestyle changes, most athletes consider the business sector: 42% of the total number of respondents indicate that they have prospects to do business after leaving professional sports.

In second place, as the most likely (but not so desirable) are the prospects for coaching and retraining. Respondents rank the third place in the prospect of leaving sports as sports officials - for example, the Ministry of Sports, the regional or city sports committee, etc.

Obviously, the prospect of owning a business (especially, according to the study, in the dynamics of recent years) is most attractive for professional athletes. Since this status is in no way inferior, and in some respects potentially surpasses the "high rank of a professional athlete". According to high-class athletes, own business allows solving such problems as:

- "a worthy replacement for a sports career";
- "the opportunity to develop further, without losing the social position and professional level that have already been achieved";
- "the best scope of the acquired communicative competencies."

In the expectations of professional athletes, the business is fully consistent with the institutional determined expectations, namely it provides:

- high level of income;
- the ability to make decisions independently and not work for anyone;
- the ability to take risks and get the necessary adrenaline;
- the opportunity to enjoy the respect of relatives and friends.

It should be noted that in recent years, the athlete's orientation towards organizing his own business or participation in the business of acquaintances has increased significantly. Obviously, this is due to the high assessment of their own capabilities, as well as to the increased level of social claims in the new conditions of changing attitudes towards sports. Professional athletes are gradually occupying an increasingly significant social status position in Russian society. Coaching is not so attractive, but it is a significant prospect, a real option for a former professional athlete. Firstly, the athlete does not change the environment, but only adjusts his status in it - he becomes not the producer of a high sports result, but the production manager⁹. It also gives him the opportunity to realize himself and enjoy (in case of success of his wards) the respect of his inner circle. However, in the

⁹ T. Tshube & D. L. Feltz, "The relationship between dual-career and post-sport career transition among elite athletes in South Africa, Botswana, Namibia and Zimbabwe", Psychology of sport and exercise, num 21 (2015): 109-114.

Russian Federation, the profession of an athlete is far from being able to provide a stable and high income in all sports (there is also little stability in business, but incomes are usually high) ¹⁰. Thus, coaching does not guarantee financial stability.

The possibility of retraining is, in fact, an alternative to starting building a career from scratch. According to respondents, such a prospect is the main one when there are no opportunities to open own business, and at the same time, coaching does not bring financial prosperity and satisfaction. In addition, the personality of each individual athlete, his life experience, the specifics of his upbringing, as well as the unique life situation in which he finds himself, play a significant role.

Finally, every fifth professional athlete sees in the public service a good prospect of post-sports development. The official personifies athletes with stable social status and material well-being. As respondents often say, "an official is not a state employee," he is in power and manages the distribution of public funds. However, it is far from always possible to occupy a good position - this usually happens by coincidence or as a result of patronage, acquaintance, etc.

As for coaching, this is the closest prospect to realization, although not as desirable as business, since it is probably not capable of becoming an adequate material and status replacement for a professional sports career. At the same time, a professional athlete can easily master the profession of a coach. To do this, he does not need to put a lot of effort, as in the case of organizing his business, or retraining and professional re-socialization. As a rule, at the end of a career, "options and suggestions where and how to train appear by themselves." In this case, the athlete, as already mentioned, does not change the environment. He only masters a different, but well-known to him status. These and other assumptions about the prospects of coaching work confirm the data of the pair distribution. So, for example, at the graduation stage (when an athlete is just about to finish a professional sports career), more than 43% of respondents in the subgroup see a real prospect in coaching, while at the beginning and at the peak of a career, only 22% and 24% of respondents indicate coaching among possible prospects. It is interesting that only 17% of respondents from the subgroup who have already completed their sports careers "rely on coaching".

The respondents' perception of the prospects for retraining is also dynamic depending on the stage of their professional career. It can be seen that retraining for a professional athlete is quite difficult, however, in the situation of post-sports adaptation, the option to change the field of activity, to get an additional education and to start a professional career again is the most real (it's probably business is difficult, coaching does not provide an adequate standard of living, with sport authorities - often there is no possibility and connections, etc.). More than 33% of respondents in the subgroup who graduated from a sports career favored retraining prospects, with 28%, 14% and 14%, respectively, at the beginning, at the peak and at the stage of decline.

The dynamics of respondents' perceptions of the prospect of leaving sports for state or municipal service looks like this: 23% - at the beginning of a career, 19% - at the peak, 7% - at the stage of decline and 17% at the end. Probably, the following regularity takes place here: at the beginning and at the peak of a sports career, when the question of post-

¹⁰ B. P. Yakovlev & N. R. Usaeva, Change in structure of motivational sphere at initial phase of adaptation to post-sports activity. Theory and Practice of Physical Culture. 2014.

sports adaptation is mainly theoretically, athletes note the official's stable social status. However, the closer and more specific the situation is the completion of a sports career, the more an athlete encounters difficulties in finding a job for a particular civil servant. The number of vacancies, as a rule, is very limited and a good option in the field of public administration can be found very infrequently (only 7% of respondents reported this). However, as practice shows, in the process of searching for options, former athletes still find an opportunity to enter the civil service, despite the fact that, in their opinion, this is a good prospect for post-sports development (17%, like business and coaching).

Other possible options for post-sports development, such as sports journalism, work in the fitness industry, as well as orientation to the situation, professional athletes as a group as a whole or by subgroup are not promising (from 1 to 8%).

Conclusion

The study showed that for athletes, their experience and achievements are not only an opportunity to successfully realize themselves in other significant social and professional areas of society, but they are also perceived as a specific and important social resource in life. For example, as shown by a survey and analysis of the statements of participants in problem groups, most often "sports baggage" is perceived as "social capital, which is a combination of real or potential resources associated with possessing a stable network of more or less institutionalized relations of mutual acquaintance and recognition - in other words, with membership in a group." Such resources, "associated with group membership" and, accordingly, giving the possibility of further institutional membership are, in the general opinion, of the athletes surveyed: health, education and status.

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