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LIFE AFTER SPORT

*Anticipating, Planning, and
Succeeding in the Transition from a
Sports Career*

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Introduction Translation

There are silences that scream louder than speeches. The empty locker room, the extinguished floodlights, the fading applause, and that heart still beating as if waiting for one last final whistle. It is in this suspended space-time that one of an athlete's greatest trials is born: the aftermath. This strange moment, often dreaded, sometimes denied, but always inevitable, where one must learn to exist differently.

I wrote this book not just to talk about sport, nor to celebrate yesterday's feats, but to offer a helping hand to those who, one day, will have to turn the page without tearing it out. I wrote this book because too many careers end in an void, too many talents sink into oblivion, and too many men and women who shone on the field lose the light within them as soon as the stands empty. I wrote it because I profoundly believe that the true victory begins after the last game.

This book is not an academic manual, nor a series of rigid rules. It is a travel companion, a clear-sighted confidant, a mirror that is sometimes tough but always benevolent. It is addressed to all those who live or have lived sport as a consuming passion, a profession, a calling. To those who dream of medals, cups, and recognition, but who too often forget to dream their own future beyond the podium. I wanted it to be both an alarm signal and a source of inspiration. A sincere

alert to say: "Prepare yourself while you are still on top," and a comforting promise to whisper: "There is a life after the stadiums. It can be great, beautiful, useful, and even richer than you imagine."

This book invites you to dive into a human, pragmatic, and emotional exploration of an athlete's journey in all its complexity.

It starts where everything begins: in the raw excitement of the first training sessions, in the euphoria of the first contracts, in the youthful fire that believes everything is eternal. Then it journeys through the often-taboo stages of the career: the exhilarating peaks, the invisible injuries, the silent doubts, the filled bank accounts but the empty hearts. It squarely addresses the issues ignored during the career: managing money, the importance of one's circle, the fragility of the mind. It offers concrete pathways, clear tools, to help everyone build a conscious, chosen, and successful transition. It talks about training, skills, investment, and life projects, but also about loneliness, depression, and loss of bearings. Because all of this is part of the path. Because you don't leave sport like you leave a meeting room. You leave a part of yourself, and you must learn to be reborn differently.

The ambition of this book is not to make you dream, but to wake you up. To awaken consciences, to awaken

dormant ambitions, to awaken the vital forces that still slumber in those who think their usefulness ended with their last competition. My message is simple, but urgent: career transition is not a punishment; it is a second life to be written with intelligence, courage, and heart. What you have built with sweat on the field can become a solid foundation to build an empire of meaning, impact, and inner peace.

This book is also a declaration of love to athletes. Those who fought in the shadows, who suffered in silence, who gave their body and soul to wear the colors of a club, a country, or a childhood dream. It pays tribute to those who successfully reinvented themselves, but also to those who failed, because even failure holds sacred lessons. There is no ideal career transition; there are only personal paths, strewn with pitfalls, bursts of joy, and decisive encounters. This book explores several of them, never judging, but always illuminating.

Through deep reflections, practical advice, powerful stories, and tools to implement right now, this book becomes a weapon of resilience, a strategic plan for renewal, a compass for those who do not want their past glory to be their last success. It will help you understand that your skills are not limited to your body, that your discipline is a force of leadership, that your ability to endure, to get back up, to aim high is an asset

in all areas of life. That your story does not end where your career ends. On the contrary, it is just beginning.

So, if you hold this book in your hands, know one thing: you are not alone. Regardless of the stage of your career, whether you are at the peak or on the verge of the exit, this book is for you. It does not promise you an easy road, but a true one. It does not sell you a dream; it offers you a vision. That of an accomplished athlete, not just by their performance, but by the person they become afterward.

Turn the page. The greatest challenge awaits you: succeeding in your own transition.

Chapter 1 Realizing It Early: Sport Is Not the End Goal

When I was young, sport was everything to me. My alarm clock rang to the rhythm of my training sessions, my dreams unfolded in a stadium, and my deepest fears took the shape of an injury or a defeat. I believed my life would be summarized by a series of performances, trophies, and applause. For a long time, I couldn't see beyond the field. But I learned, sometimes painfully, that sport is a chapter in life, not the final page. That's why I'm writing this chapter with so much sincerity: to help you understand, starting today, that your biggest challenge won't just be played out in competition, but in your ability to anticipate the inevitable.

A sports career is short, sometimes shorter than we imagine. We all dream of a long career, full of glory. But the reality is that an injury, a underperformance, or a coach's decision can brutally put an end to a journey. High-level sport is demanding, unforgiving, and sometimes unfair. If you only start thinking about your future when the end is near, it will often be too late to act effectively. That's why I tirelessly repeat to the young athletes I meet: "Start building your future while you are still shining." The illusion of eternity in performance is the trap too many athletes fall into. We live in the moment, and that's normal. But the moment never lasts.

I remember a teammate, brilliant, adored, lightning-fast. At 28, he suffered a severe knee injury. No one thought it would be the end, least of all him. But the doctors were clear. He left the sport without having anticipated anything. No Plan B. No diploma, no network, no parallel passion. Just emptiness. The man didn't fail because he wasn't intelligent. He failed because he believed that sport would be eternal.

Building while everything is going well is the key to future freedom. You must understand that the best time to think about life after your career is now. When everything seems to be going well. When you are still visible, still sought after, still full of energy. Why? Because when you are at the top, you have the most leverage: contacts, an audience, partnership opportunities, airtime, resources. That is the moment you can start planting the seeds of what you will be later. Not afterward.

"The man who fails to look ahead will find himself living in dependence on others." This quote by [Benjamin Franklin, 1748] has always struck me. It applies particularly to us athletes. Depending solely on your career is like walking on a beam without a safety net. A simple loss of balance can be fatal. Sport should not be a gilded cage, but a springboard.

Developing a vision of yourself beyond the jersey. One day, during a workshop with young hopefuls, I asked

them a simple question: "Who are you outside of sport?" Most didn't know how to answer. Some said "football player," "basketball player," "sprinter." But that wasn't my question. I wanted to know what defined them as a man, as a woman, once the jersey was taken off. The silence that followed broke my heart.

Many athletes confuse their identity with their athletic function. However, you are much more than a title or a ranking. You have talents, values, and dreams that go beyond the boundaries of a field. Thinking about the post-career is precisely that: reconnecting with the human being, redefining oneself deeply, learning to say "I am" without necessarily adding "a player of...". It is a process of lucidity and self-respect.

Making dual preparation a habit. Preparing your sports career, yes. But in parallel, you must prepare your life career. A dual trajectory. This does not mean neglecting your current training or goals. It means creating a balance. Investing time in a secondary passion, taking an online course, starting to take an interest in different business sectors. Learning should never stop. Today, there are flexible formats, career transition coaches, and tools adapted to your constraints. Use them.

A judoka friend whom I admire very much told me: "I didn't wait until I was off the podium to think about my

future. While I was competing, I was learning." The result: upon his athletic retirement, he didn't wander, he smoothly transitioned. That is the whole difference between suffering the end and choosing it.

Practical advice: start a vision journal. I often recommend a simple but powerful exercise. Buy a notebook. Title it: "My Life After." Inside, every week, write down an idea, a desire, a skill you want to explore. It could be: "launch a clothing brand," "become a sports physiotherapist," "go back to school for a communication degree," "open a gym," etc. Little by little, this notebook becomes the foundation of your life project. It's not a distraction. It's a natural extension of your current passion.

The humility to accept that sport is not a guarantee for life. I would like you to integrate a fundamental truth: sport owes you nothing. It can give you glory, money, and travel, but it guarantees neither happiness, nor balance, nor a future. It is not a long-term insurance policy. And that's okay. It's up to you to use what it offers you today to build what you will be tomorrow. Sport is a formidable learning ground, an incubator of qualities: discipline, leadership, stress management. Use it.

As Paulo Coelho said: "One day you will wake up and there won't be any more time to do the things you've always wanted. Do it now." [Coelho, *The Warrior of*