
DUAL CAREER

8 April 2013

This session provided an introduction to FEI stakeholders on the FEI's plans to create a dual career programme for equestrian athletes. In this programme the FEI's role is to assist in the process transiting from sports to a professional career by providing guidance, education and facilitation of contacts. To achieve these goals the creation of the "FEI Campus", an Online Education platform, is seen as an ideal tool. FEI Campus is a multi-purpose online education platform that will initially serve the purpose to provide education opportunities for FEI Officials, coaches and other equestrian stakeholders. In the same way it could be used to support the FEI Dual Career plans.

What makes Dual Career so important for FEI?

It is FEI's responsibility as the world governing body of equestrian sport to assist and guide its athletes so that they discover opportunities for preparing themselves for the labour market. Athletes should have the possibility of obtaining appropriate qualifications and utilising the unique experience and skills they have acquired in sport.

The success of employment initiatives is determined by the degree of cooperation between the sport and other sectors, such as education, health or the labour market. Areas like social security, health support or taxation for athletes require cross-sectoral cooperation on a national governmental level.

From the athletes themselves, a high degree of self-motivation is required for them to pursue their own Dual Career paths. To study and compete successfully at the same time is an additional burden, and there is a risk of failing in both.

What can the FEI do to help its athletes?

Cooperating closely with the IOC within its IOC Athlete Career Programme, which includes Olympic Movement, National Olympic Committees, International Federations and National Federations, to generate awareness of the need for a professional education among its own athletes, to stimulate cooperation between the sport and the horse sector, to provide extensive information on professional education opportunities worldwide, to provide guidance and information for athletes on employment opportunities, in cooperation with national entities, to provide advice to National Federations by creating a national network of sport organisations, education institutions, employment representatives, health and finance authorities and finally to offer flexible tools for athletes for accessing educational training such as Online Education.

Dr Harald Müller, FEI Executive Director Education and Standards, presented the new FEI Campus concept. The FEI Campus will make the FEI the first Olympic sports organisation introducing professional online education for its stakeholders. This flexible tool will also provide support to the FEI Solidarity programmes.

International Olympic Committee (IOC) Executive Board member and chair of the IOC Athletes Commission Claudia Bokel (GER) presented the IOC Athlete Career Programme (ACP), launched in 2005 and renewed in 2012 through to 2020. The programme is offered by the IOC and the National Olympic Committees (NOCs) in co-operation with Adecco, the world's largest provider of solutions in human resources.

Thomas Batliner (LIE), former Olympic Jumping rider and investment consultant, and Sergei Aschwanden (SUI), judo bronze medallist in the Beijing 2008 Olympic Games, spoke of their experiences as elite athletes who have successfully transitioned into the business and academic worlds. The key roles of preparing the transition and the athletes' entourage were emphasised.

Maury Peiperl (USA), Professor of Leadership and Strategic Change at IMD business school, made a lively presentation on the subject of managing career transitions. He identified different career paths and outlined their specific characteristics. He highlighted the fact that linear career development is no longer the norm and that radical professional changes are more frequent. The business world is gradually becoming receptive to individuals such as athletes who come from non-traditional backgrounds and have been able to make bold career decisions.

The panellists agreed that one of the biggest challenges facing athletes today was the lack of information about the tools facilitating career change. They stressed the importance of sports organisations getting closer to their athletes – in-person at events and seminars or through social media – to understand their needs and create interest and motivation.