

Empirical Study of the Career Progression and the Requirements for the Management of Professional Footballers

Kainz, Florian¹; Schöttl, Katharina² and Oberlehner, Christoph³

¹University Of Applied Management; ²University of Health & Sports Technology & Arts, Germany; ³Institute For Football Management
katharina.schoettl@my-campus-berlin.com

Theoretical Background

The study by Schmidt, Torgler and Jung (2017) examines the factors that play a role in helping young footballers choose a football career which means a variety of financial and personal risks. After deciding on a career in professional sports, young people in particular face a variety of challenges that a career as a professional footballer entails. In addition to the physical challenges of sport, these are also numerous organizational aspects, such as leaving the parental home. In order to deal with these challenges, they need the support of a professional management, which accompanies their career development. As early as 1992, Shahnasarian pointed out that too little attention is paid to the topic of career development, especially in research. However, there are still no studies that focus on the management requirements throughout a career as a whole, as well as looking at the transition to post-career phases. Statman (2017) stresses that this phase can be particularly critical to the success of an ex-footballer's life, showing that many athletes' bankruptcy filing starts shortly after the end of their careers. When looking at the different career paths of active professionals and ex-professionals, ranging from successful "second careers", for example, as a respected TV expert to social crashes to the livelihood, it also becomes clear what different courses the respective careers can take. It illustrates the importance of professional management, which keeps the player in all situations of his active sporting career as well as in perspective matters, such as preparing for the time after the active athletic career. In order to identify which central criteria are the quality of the advisory services, the study on "Career Management in Sport" was prepared and implemented at the Institute for Football Management.

The main goal of this study is to map a typical career progression and identify important achievements, challenges and problem areas of the career management of a professional football player.

Research Questions

From the main goal of the study, the following general research questions were finally derived:

1. What is the typical career progression of a professional footballer?
2. What requirements should a professional footballer fulfill in order to successfully shape his athletic career?
3. What are the key challenges for a professional footballer and his management during his athletic career?
4. What tasks does the management or the player consultant take on?
5. What should be done to prepare the player for the end of his active sports career and what are the key challenges in the transition to the post-active sports career?

Methodology

In the definition of the empirical study design, the data collection via qualitative expert interviews was chosen, to benefit from the survey depth and flexibility of this survey method.

20 representatives of player management agencies were selected as experts for the interviews, because, the players' counselors can fall back on experiences they have gained with different players. All interviews were conducted in the period from 01.10.2016 to 01.10.2017, with a duration between 45 and 90 minutes. All interviews were transcribed and analysed according to the usual scientific transcription rules and evaluated anonymously. The evaluation process was carried out both quantitatively and qualitatively.

Results

Based on the results, a picture of a typical career progression could be lined out. It shows that a typical career of a professional footballer begins at the age of 19-21 years and lasts about 15 years. It is accompanied by an average of three to four club changes domestically and possibly one to two club changes abroad, whereby the handling of these transfers represent the operative core business of the players consulting agency. One of the central problem areas in the athletic field of the player is dealing with injuries, why the consultation in medical matters is also one of the major tasks in the management of an athlete. Here, the management usually works together with a network of experts. The income levels of professional athletes are very heterogeneous, why financial management is also one of the core tasks in career management, not least because a large proportion of athletes found a family during their active career, which increases their social and financial responsibility. At the end of the active career, the players' biggest challenges are dealing with the new day-to-day routines, the loss of publicity, and the suddenly changing financial income situation. The high proportion of players who are struggling with mental symptoms makes clear that there is still potential for optimization in this area on the part of the management. The study results as well as comparative studies show that about two-thirds of athletes have a university entrance qualification to enter a career, but this is only used by a very small proportion of players in the sense of distance learning during their careers.

References

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