

Practice 2 – BMSS 2018 MYE

Text 3

The text is an article on the impact of retirement on sports stars. Read it carefully and answer Questions 15 – 22 in the Question Booklet.

- 1 It is often said that a sports star will die twice, the first time at retirement. For elite athletes who have dedicated their lives to sport, what happens when your time comes to an end? If you are not an athlete, then who are you? Elite athletes train extensively for years and in many cases, this consumes the majority of their young lives. Many often make substantial personal sacrifices in order to pursue their dreams of glory. These may include moving away from family to train full-time in academies, sacrificing personal or romantic relationships, taking breaks from their academic studies and making considerable financial sacrifices. For many athletes, retirement is a concept that they do not wish to think about in great detail. However, whether they have achieved Olympic glory or failed to reach the pinnacle in their sport that they had aspired to, all athletes' careers will eventually come to a close, whether this is through age, injury or exhaustion. 5
- 2 However, what happens to these athletes once they leave the days filled with rigorous training, the extensive time spent travelling and the buzz and adrenaline of competing? This is the time in their lives where they may be susceptible to depression. Olympic Champion cyclist, Victoria Pendleton, expressed her extreme relief of retirement after the London Games. She cited that she could not wait to go on to new ventures in her life and was much happier now that the pressure of competing was no longer a burden. However, not all athletes will enter retirement with such ease and willingness. Many will struggle with adapting to a "regular life" where they are no longer in the limelight and perhaps, in their eyes, become forgotten members of society. 10
- 3 Sport career termination brings about dramatic changes in athletes' personal, social and occupational lives. This can in turn potentially affect individuals cognitively, emotionally and behaviourally. The social and professional changes induced by retirement from sport can in effect cause distressful reactions. These retired athletes express a feeling of emptiness in their lives and one of the main stakes of this transition is to therefore reconstruct and adjust themselves on the basis of a new lifestyle. The transition that is made by professional athletes from a full-time athletic career to that of retirement has received considerable comments in the sports media. Studies have found that the transition is often difficult because of the sudden cessation of intense demands of elite athletic performance. This is compounded by the sudden loss of the athlete's intense devotion to professional athletic competition and its accompanying rewards. 25
- 4 What exactly is it that often leads retired professional athletes to spiral into depression once they leave the days filled with rigorous training, the pressure of competition and the glory days behind them? 30
- 5 A "tunnel vision syndrome" affects many elite athletes to varying degrees at some stage of their careers. It is often the case that coaches, parents, professional sports agents and general managers are able to see it. However, athletes who are unaware that they suffer from tunnel vision spend far too much time thinking only of training, competition and results. As a result, athletes are left ill prepared for the balanced perspective required of "real world" career opportunities. Athletes often cannot see their lives following another career path and as soon as the dreaded retirement looms, with this, brings a void that the comfort of a training routine once filled. 35

- 6** Athletes by nature are mentally tough individuals and are often perceived by the public to be fitter, healthier and happier than others. It is this attitude and stereotyping that can make it more difficult for them to approach someone for help. Therefore it is highly important for close family, friends, team mates and coaches to understand that depression cannot always be seen and the athlete may indeed never admit to how they feel for fear of shame and embarrassment. The most important message is to understand that despite their incredible success in their hard-fought and dedicated careers, the process of retirement is a difficult one. It is in this time that social support and communication is of vital importance if the athlete is to avoid the dreaded post-retirement blues.
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Flesch-Kincaid 44.1

Grade Level 12.7