
ATHLETES IN RETIREMENT IN THE USSR

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There is an established system in the USSR concerning pecuniary aid and stimulation, assistance in getting education, and securing jobs for athletes facing the end of their careers.

As a rule for providing higher levels of general education for athletes, necessary conditions are created during long-term training sessions. In sports camps special classrooms and libraries are provided. Experienced teachers from secondary schools, high schools and universities are invited to conduct lessons, Athletes have certain advantages when entering universities and colleges — they are granted scholarships.

Top athletes who decide to become coaches are able to enter special schools which help them make the transition from high sports activities. After graduation from these schools they are assisted in getting jobs.

Many former athletes become physical culture instructors and coaches in colleges

and schools. Some former athletes get jobs that have nothing to do with sports.

Nowadays mass media discuss the problem of paying allowances to sports veterans as they prepare for new careers. For instance, there's a special social assistance program for former athletes in the USSR.

On reaching pension age — 55 for women, 60 for men — former top competitors are granted a pension, subsidized housing and medical aid.

An important part of the program for retiring athletes is moral encouragement — they are helped to become active in sports unions, federations and committees and to become involved in labor and party organisations. They are also encouraged to be active in the various clubs and unions for veterans of sport. The best athletes are awarded honorary titles in these organisations.

• It's important that you stay physically active. The years of training 6-7 days per week have been demanding, and it's important to slowly ease your body to a less intense level of activity. You may want to continue in your sport, but not at the national team level. There is no need to turn your back on a sport activity in which you have become very expert. You can compete at the masters level, in local competitions or participate just for fun. Or you may want to try and

learn an entirely new physical activity that will keep you fit and mentally stimulated at the same time.

• Support from important people whose caring extends beyond your performance, such as boyfriends, girlfriends, family members and supportive coaches, can help with the transition process. It can be a great help simply having someone who will listen and lend support. This could be an ex-athlete who has gone through