

Anne Cazar - Host (00:25):

Today, we're gonna be exploring the concept of can I have the best of both worlds? Can I have a career and also be doing what I love to do in my sports? We're speaking with Leonie Stanfield on the area of providing career advice and educational pathways for people who are in the sporting arena. The work is being undertaken by sporting bodies in recognition that while the current situation, elite athletes may be single minded about achieving their current sports career goals, quite rightly, but we also wanna show them that they should be starting to begin to think about what their future careers using the career practitioners' network, so they can add to their current success and not detract from it. So, Leonie joins us with significant experience within the vocational education and training sector and she works in the employment services. She is also a skilled workshop facilitator and speaker, and she presents at career conferences and expose. Leonie has a great interest in elite sport program. So welcome Leonie, how are you?

Leonie Stansfield (01:34):

Great, thanks Anne.

Anne Cazar - Host (01:35):

Thank you. So, Leonie, obviously the first question I've gotta ask you is, what is a career practitioner and what's your role in working with elite sports people?

Leonie Stansfield (01:46):

Thanks. Well yes, career practitioners help people manage their lives and their work and it's actually a profession. So, there are professional standards for career practitioners and there are professional associations. And as a practitioner, we assist a wide range of people with a lot of different life and career issues. So, anyone from exploring the beginning of a career, someone who wants to change a career midstream, someone who wants to find out the next step or just change a job or develop in their career. So, we do work with a lot of different people, including elite sports people.

Anne Cazar - Host (02:26):

How did the career practitioner's role come about? You know, what happened to bring up, to bring on these roles and the importance of these roles?

Leonie Stansfield (02:33):

Well, I think the Australian Institute of sport has a very strong commitment to athlete wellbeing and that's been growing and there's a sense in which as programs are holistically developed for athletes and career development is a key part of that. And so the career practitioner referral network works closely with the athlete wellbeing and engagement managers. It's a holistic way of assisting elite athletes to perform at their best and be yeah, reach their potential.

Anne Cazar - Host (03:09):

But where do they all come from? I mean, I'm probably trying to think. When did they all start? And when was it actually recognized that people in say elite sports athlete program require the services of a career practitioner, where did all that come about?

Leonie Stansfield (03:23):

Yeah, well, it's been two or three years really now since the career referral, career practitioner referral network in the AIS began. and it's really cutting edge in the sense of ensuring that the advice and career resources that are provided really match the excellence of a high-performance sporting community and that's for coaches and staff as well as for athletes as well.

Anne Cazar - Host (03:53):

Right. So, why is it important for you to have these discussions with elite athletes?

Leonie Stansfield (03:59):

Well, I think it's quite interesting that some of the research for elite athletes has actually shown that they actually perform better when they're engaged in positive, productive learning outside of their sport. And so, yeah, it's really, really interesting cuz the, you know, you might think it's the opposite that it might distract, but actually having something to focus on, as well as their sport, often helps to balance out life. So, I think there's a sense in which for elite sports people. Yes, they have an incredible focus on this sport, but life is more than sport too, and there is a place for them in terms of the contribution they want to make and the learning they want to be doing and the thinking they want to be doing for life beyond this board as well.

Anne Cazar - Host (04:50):

Cause it is true. I think one of the, a major concern of parents and some of, you know, people who are are trying to assist people and guide them on what the best is for either their child's career or their future or somebody who's of significance to, them is that underpinning worry about, well, how long do you, what's the age before your career has finished in a, in an elite sports? You know, it there's a, you know, you're not gonna be doing that necessarily. I'm not saying that that's not possible, but a lot of them that there may be a very short period of time when they are working in their sports program. And I am, I'm assuming that a lot of parents as well are saying, well, how does that work? It's fantastic, I'm glad that you love being a rugby league player, I'm glad that you love running or rowing or doing high jumps or the most wonderful things, but what are you gonna do for a career? And I don't mean that in a disrespectful way, we understand that that actually is a career, and they are working incredibly hard with it. So do you get that very, do you get that often that parents or people say, yeah, but my parents always worried about what I was going to do or coming into doing it.

Leonie Stansfield (06:11):

Yeah. Look, I think it's natural to want to maximise our options and longer term, and I think parents obviously want to do that for, for their children as well. The interesting thing is though, the world of work is changing so quickly. So even, you know, when I started work, the careers that we would have been quite different, there was a longer time in a career you might have had two or three careers and a number of jobs. Now research suggests that we'll have probably maybe seven or eight careers, maybe 16, 17, 18 jobs.

Anne Cazar - Host (06:47):

Absolutely.

Leonie Stansfield (06:48):

It's a really different way of thinking about things, and so there's a sense in which it doesn't have to be a one choice now that sets you up of the future. It is actually a whole series of choices you'll make throughout your life, as you change as a person as you grow as you want to try out new things. So, there's an openness to not being just one way to do something

Anne Cazar - Host (07:14):

As a career practitioner, what are the options in regards for athletes and career training and qualifications? So how has all this come about? Can you just take me through the process of doing that?

Leonie Stansfield (07:27):

Yeah, sure. So, as I said, working with the athlete wellbeing and engagement managers, it's an opportunity for athletes to book an appointment with a career practitioner and as we talk to them and find out a bit more about what their aspirations are, what is happening for them, what's meaningful, what they see as potential things that they're interested in future often, I think it's about talking about their skills, about the strengths and about story and helping them see that that's a value, you know, propositional combination, they're living out in their sport, but they can live it out in other contexts too and it's starting a conversation about that. There are sources of support for athletes. So, there's the athlete education, elite athlete education network and so that looks at key contacts within TAFE and within universities that are provided for athletes to help them navigate, identifying or choosing a course of study, one that will be flexible in terms of the sporting requirement. So, they get personalised support through that process as well.

Anne Cazar - Host (08:48):

What are some of the, maybe, misconceptions or things that you might need to address when you sit down with them? What are some of the things that comes up?

Leonie Stansfield (08:58):

Yeah look, I think, I think sometimes the thing that comes up before you even get to sit down with people is thinking, look, it's too early in my sporting career to even think about this, you know, I'm just getting started or, you know, there's plenty of time, I'll think about this later. Whilst that's completely understandable, there's this sense in which you can start a thinking process early. It doesn't, you don't have to give a lot of attention. You can start a process early and it's really about discovering more about who you are, just what to notice in what you enjoy and don't enjoy. And a career practitioner can help you have, I guess some insights into that process along the way, obviously things don't always go to plan. So sometimes it's helpful to have at least started a thinking process so that you can prepare a little and almost relax through your sporting career, knowing that you have something in mind that you are interested in.

Anne Cazar - Host (10:05):

Okay. So how do you mix the two, the two careers as such? How, how do the athletes mix to saying, okay, I've made that decision and I am, I am interested in starting that journey. How do they do that?

Leonie Stansfield (10:20):

Yeah, look, I don't think it's necessarily difficult, but it does take intentionality. So, it is about what you pay attention to and what you notice. An elite sport equips you with incredible transferable skills and in

fact some of the transferable skills that LinkedIn have just produced their latest report on future skills for, of what's been looked at for the future and if I think about those, some of those are really, very well aligned what elite athletes develop. So, things like resilience and adaptability was the top one, technology, communication across teams' emotional intelligence, collaboration, dealing with stress, time management. Now, all those things, these are things that the workforce, it's in high demand, and yet all these things are things that athletes are living out through their sporting career. So, sometimes it's just almost being more intentional about noticing what's happening in your sport and then it's about working out how that translates into new contexts as you might choose to move out of your sport at some point.

Anne Cazar - Host (11:34):

Yeah. And it's interesting that you say that because really that is what they do all the time, isn't it? It's not that they go on "I might, I'll have to think about doing some teamwork next week" or whatever. It's just, it's constant, isn't it? It's just like this. Yeah, everyday time, yep, everything like that.

Leonie Stansfield (11:51):

But we don't have a language for it. We don't have a language for it. We don't unpack it. And this is what career practitioners do. Career practitioners help people do that.

Anne Cazar - Host (12:01):

So, let's talk about what are some of the qualifications, or what are some of the things that you can offer or be suggesting, especially in the, in the vocational education space?

Leonie Stansfield (12:10):

Yeah. look, it's, it's not limited. We often have seen vocational education training as being the traditional trades, you know, and being an apprenticeship or a traineeship and maybe being quite fixed. But interestingly enough, we have an amazing array of extensions to those traditional areas. So, we still have apprenticeships and traineeships, but it's exploded in terms of the areas they're going to. But we also have micro credentials, so small, smaller sort of shorter, faster bites of learning. And those can be in things like, some of the ones I notice like, social media that's not surprising, drone maintenance, wow. Virtual reality, you know, some of the things that are really coming online as being new emerging areas, you can get upskilled in. But there's also other aspects of new technology. So, even in the energy sector, there are, there are courses around new energy systems. There's courses around interactive media, so 3D animation, screen and media programs, as well as all the business-oriented ones, as well as all the community services, the health the, you name it you know, vocational education is incredibly broad because it's about being practical. And, you know, there's so many areas we can work in now.

Anne Cazar - Host (13:43):

Sports people come from all different backgrounds. They come from all different life experiences. They're not necessarily only young, people come into sports after already having a career and then they might move and transition back out and they, and they move in there. So, subsequently the traditional idea that elite sports people need to move into either coaching or a sport related, or move into fitness and everything, is actually a myth. Isn't it? The idea is that they have another life, they have other interests, and they can explore that as-well.

Leonie Stansfield (14:22):

Yeah. Absolutely, absolutely. I think one of the reasons you see a number of them have moved into that area was because it was seen as a logical extension, but also a number of them have real interest in that space. So, for some of them, sometimes it's an area that they can move into that provides a steppingstone to something else outside. So, in a lot of our world of work, it's about steppingstones. It's not about one destination, but it's about a pathway through, and there are lots of different pathways. So just because they choose to stay in a sport, or a health-oriented pathway doesn't mean they'll stay there. And just because that's a pathway they could go into doesn't mean they have to go into that pathway. I have athletes going into construction, I have athletes going into business, athletes going into education. And often it depends on really what is their passion? What is their interest? and we have, certainly the Institute of sport has an evolved program, which is a way of connecting elite athletes into businesses, to giving them experience in a real work environment, to building their contacts. And all of that exploration can help people identify alternative pathways then just the usual.

Anne Cazar - Host (15:45):

And I think that's just, and once again, it just comes down to, this is just a normal part of life, you know. These, these people are just incredibly lucky and incredibly fortunate to have, to be able to live this fantastic sports life. And they've also still got that opportunity to move on into other life and another career just like everybody else does. So, I suppose my question would be Leonie for people who are career practitioners or who are working in the schools, if you had to give some advice to them and their child, or they've been asked about, you know, I really, really wanna do, you know, I love this passion and, you know, I've just totally devoted to this sport. What would be your message for them to reassure them? I suppose

Leonie Stansfield (16:32):

I would be saying you know, give it 110%. If you've got opportunities to utilize your potential, to utilize skills and developing areas in sport then absolutely. It's not necessarily going to disadvantage you. So that's something that you take with you, it's not something that stops you, it actually enhances your ability to manage your life as well. I would say it is about developing life and career management skills and, you know, being involved in sport can add to that, it's part of that, doesn't have to be an alternative.

Anne Cazar - Host (17:13):

When you're, you're talking about the Australian Institute of sport, this is also replicated, and you can see it reflected or mirrored in other sports associations as well. And that importance now of the fact is of the whole, the whole person, instead of just treating them as a resource or as a tool that importance that has to be applied to for their wellbeing also for their career development and also from, you know, just that mental health to recognise that there's, this person is multifaceted. So, and I think it's a great thing to see and I know that necessarily wasn't around say 10, 15, 20 years ago. And that's been an amazing change, isn't it? That recognition that hang on, everybody needs some assistance with what they're going and that coaching is just coming into different areas. So, Leonie, thank you very much for the opportunity to speak with you. I appreciate the work that you guys do and especially in trying to give people lots of opportunities or put on the table a whole range of options for people to explore and I also, I appreciate you the opportunity to allow us to discuss that concept about rethinking your ideas about what do you know about the careers when you become an elite sports person. So, thank you very much Leonie.

RETHINK Webinar – Can You Have It All

Leonie Stansfield (18:37):

You're welcome, thanks Anne.