

Professional Development Plan

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Long-Term Career Goal

My long-term career goal is to lead the psycho-educational services at a nongovernmental organization (NGO) in the efforts to educate on the most effective athlete development and high performance strategies. Additionally, I would like to be an adjunct professor at a university, teaching the pedagogy of sport and performance psychology. Although my practice will be performance enhancement psycho-education (McHenry et al., 2021), that may not be the entirety of my job description (Martin, 2020). Although Martin (2020) takes a negative view the lack of purely sport psychological job titles, I find the prospective of a dynamic title enticing. Job titles could include: High Performance Director, Head of Mental Performance, or Director of Athlete Development. Although these may appear to be vastly different roles, it is important to recognize that every NGO has a unique organizational chart and to remain flexible to do the work under a variety of job titles. As Portenga et al. (2017) described, it is the objective of performance excellence that defines the role rather than the interventions themselves.

Short-Term Goal

My short-term goals are divided into three areas: academics, certification, and professional experience. The first academic short-term goal is to complete my Master's of Science in Sport and Performance Psychology in September of 2026. I have been told anecdotally that leadership mental health and sport performance positions in NGOs require a doctoral degree, so I plan to continue through the University of Western States (UWS) to pursue my doctorate in education, to be defended in September of 2028. Certification is another important aspect to signal to the public that I am competent in my field, so I plan to become a Certified Mental Performance Consultant (CMPC) through the Association for Applied Sport Psychology (AASP; 2025) shortly after completing the master's program. The third arm of my

short-term plan is to gain professional experience with athletes through joining a private practice team and starting a private consulting practice of my own at the completion of the master's program focusing on youth athletes, their parents and coaches. Two private practice teams have indicated that they are interested in exploring my joining the team at that time.

Training, Certification, and Specialization

Because I do not have an educational or professional background in mental health, it is important to my specialization to gain competence in sport and performance psychology first through education. So, my initial academic training will be the master's and doctoral sport and performance psychology programs at UWS. Recent graduates from sport and performance psychology programs have noted that there are more employment opportunities for candidates who have a doctoral degree (Wooding et al., 2022). And a doctoral degree is required for teaching in a university setting. CMPC certification through AASP (2025) requires a master's degree or above, mentorship, a comprehensive exam, and then continuing education credits to maintain certification. I plan to attend AASP national and regional conferences as well as webinars in order to remain well-versed in the latest sport psychology research.

Clinical Supervision and Practice

As I will not be a clinician or licensed mental health practitioner, most of my formal supervision will take place within the mentored experience portion of the CMPC certification, which is a total of 400 hours (AASP, 2025). The 400 hours include 350 hours by the mentee (me) and 50 hours of time spent directly with the mentor. To facilitate my psycho-educational specialization, I plan to choose a mentor who has worked with an NGO. A benefit of completing my mentorship through UWS is that my mentor will also be a professor, so I can also learn from their teaching experience in my pursuit of a professorship.

Labor Market Information

As detailed in the most recent AASP Compensation report (2020), only a quarter of mental performance practitioners have roles that focus exclusively on mental performance consulting, and there is a wide variety of setting - from Olympic committee, to academia, to military. Based on this survey, it is important to recognize that practitioners have to forge their own way in the professional world. The median salary for mental performance work is approximately \$75,000 and could include working in multiple contexts (AASP, 2020). Whereas, according to ZipRecruiter (2025), the median salary for high performance directors is close to \$120,000. I believe that focusing on the psycho-educational aspects of sport and performance psychology will enable me to have the dynamic professional experiences required to fit into an NGO leadership team because, although mental health and sport psychology have been a hot button media issue in the last decade, the popularization has not necessarily translated into named positions (Martin, 2020).

Personal Brand or Offering to Your Profession and Clients

My personal brand will capitalize on the combination of my elite athletic experiences and well-rounded education. I will be the educated athlete who not only knows what it takes to “make it” and how it feels to have successes and failures on the way, but also now have the evidence-based tools to translate that experience into helping clients perform their best. Instead of avoiding the discussion that I am not a licensed psychologist, I want to emphasize the fact that I am an educator. I believe that will appeal to athletes in particular because having to seek any sort of treatment from a health provider can be seen as a weakness. My practice is based on teaching athletes how to strengthen and use their minds effectively. I will have degrees in the arts, sciences, and education, so I am able to be dynamic and creative in my teaching. Lastly, my

status as an active competitor is important to my brand to remain visible to the community in intend to serve and remaining a respected member of that community.

Technology in Your Professional Offering

Technology is inextricable from providing private practice mental performance services as well as elite athlete development services because the service population is geographically dispersed. It may be difficult for a private practitioner to gain enough clientele from their local community to maintain livable earnings. Offering video conferencing services broadens the geography of potential clients, adds greater accessibility, and can be more cost-effective (Watson et al. 2014). Communication with clients will likely be almost entirely through technology such as email, texting and voice calls. Watson et al. (2014) urge that one must be aware of confidentiality issues, maintaining boundaries and keeping appropriate records when using these modes of communication. An important way to maintain professional boundaries is to be mindful of my digital personal presence both personally and professionally, which means making sure my website, professional social media, and marketing accurately portray my title and qualifications (Watson et al., 2014). It also means keeping my personal social media and private in order to maintain professional boundaries.

Networking and Marketing Strategies

Networking and marketing will be essential for explaining to the public and sport organizations why my services are necessary. Despite the popularity of sport psychology in the media, Prior et al. (2024) found that high performance directors in their interview study still had heuristic ideas about athlete mental health and put the onus of mental health care on the athletes themselves. People are generally more open to listening to new approaches in an informal setting, so embedding myself in sport contexts and talking about what I do to as many people as

possible will be crucial (Wooding et al., 2022). For private practice, I will use my social network in my community to disseminate information about what I do. Wooding et al. (2022) also attest that marketing through consistent social media self-promotion is necessary. Initially, I also plan to market my services through free talks at the library or local bookstore. I hope to gain a professional reputation within the field through meeting colleagues at the AASP conferences (AASP, 2025).

Self-care Strategies

As an active athlete, my self-care strategies will take extra consideration because my personal passion activity will be linked to my professional practice. As such, it will be important to “practice what I preach,” to my athletes and students. Quartiroli et al. (2022) expressed that the nontraditional settings of sport psychology practitioners requires intentional focus on behaviors that develop, protect, and restore mental and physical well-being, and they must individualized to the practitioner’s specific values. Some relevant suggestions for self-care practices were: solitude and meditation, letting go of perfectionism in practice, and creating a strong support network (Quartiroli et al., 2022). For me, rest from my athletic pursuits will also be essential for maintaining the physical well-being necessary to practice ethically and effectively. Because I am highly physically active, lower intensity leisure activities such as reading or sewing may offer the most restorative mental and physical reset. Creativity in my personal self-care strategies can translate into creativity in client strategic plans.

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