



IFF Athlete Career Programme

**Guidelines for How to Make Good Choices
for Your Future**

ATHLETE GUIDE

2014

This guide is intended for use by Floorball athletes. The guide will focus on ways in which amateur elite players can balance their training and competition schedules with work and study, as well as the rest of their life outside of the Floorball court. Parents, coaches, and trainers are also encouraged to read it and be aware of the challenges and opportunities athletes encounter.

This guide is available on the IFF website. It is intended for electronic distribution to every IFF Member Association, for further free distribution. It is not to be used for commercial purposes. Please think twice before printing, and save paper.

Introduction

For the vast majority of players, Floorball is not a professional sport that can provide an income on which to live. With only a few exceptions, all elite-level Floorball players must combine their love of the sport with work or study commitments, as well as pursuing other interests and family commitments.

Your sports career will always be a valuable, memorable, and important part of your life, however, an elite Floorball career is time sensitive. As your body ages, even with the best training, you will most likely retire from elite competition in your thirties. You need to prepare for these changes and use what you have learnt during your Floorball career to your best advantage in your future.

Floorball may not be a professional sport in regards of individual financial reward, but it is becoming increasingly professional in regards of organisation and commercial responsibilities, as well as the time and physical demands being placed on the players at elite levels. Many athletes face heavy training schedules that are increasingly difficult to combine with work or study. Many struggle to balance education or training alongside their sport commitments. However, the success of being able to combine sport and work or study may also help to aid success in your career.

For a young, upcoming athlete, sport can become consuming. You live and breathe your sport. You train at every available opportunity, often sacrificing your social interactions, family and education in pursuit of excellence. Work or study helps to dilute the emotional attachment to sport and put success or failure into perspective. It allows an individual to develop a more rounded appreciation of self-worth, and place personal value in something other than sport. It can help to reduce the pressure on you, the athlete, as you realise that there is more to the world than performance, and can make it more enjoyable and easier to perform.

Every athlete is different, because every person is different. However, there are some common, shared experiences of being in a high-level sports career. The **International Olympic Committee** has many internet resources available to help athletes. They are available electronically to the public, so that non-Olympic athletes can also access them and use them. You can find them all here:

<http://www.olympic.org/athleteskit>

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1. COMBINING SPORT & STUDY

Is it possible to successfully combine academic study and high-level sport?

The short answer is yes. With the right motivation and support from those around you it is, of course, possible to balance study and playing Floorball at an elite level.

Your health and happiness are more important than sporting success. However, the pressure to succeed can sometimes seem more important. You may want to balance stress and tiredness from training with seeing your friends. Studying may seem like the least important thing in your life.

Secondary School (High School)

When you begin to compete more seriously as a Floorball player, you may find that your school work begins to suffer. Some of the reasons may be the following:

- You don't have the energy to study after training
- You feel tired and can't always concentrate
- You don't have the time in your schedule for training, studying and friends
- You have to travel a lot to train or compete, and you miss school days

Increased Floorball training, the desire to improve, the desire to be successful, can all be stressful. Poor school performance will probably increase your stress. You may not have the time to be the top student of your class, but you do have the time to be a good student, and a good student is one who works in order to learn.

University Studies or Technical Training

Just like with secondary education, it is possible to combine higher education at university or college with Floorball. Consider the amount of time you have to commit to your studies. Explore your options, especially which universities or colleges are open and flexible to supporting students who are athletes. There may be distance education or online learning programmes which you can access.

What are some of the things you can do to help improve your study performance?

- Talk with your school / university about your situation. If you need, have your parents &/or coach help you to talk with your school. When a school or university is informed, they can take measures to help you complete your school work. This could include rescheduling tests or exams which conflict with competition days, allowing deadline extensions for some assignments, or assigning make-up work so you can keep up with what you have missed
- Be aware of what you eat and drink. A healthy, balanced diet should be able to provide you with the energy you need for training and studying. Fruits and vegetables may not seem as appealing as snack food, but when you think about the energy trade off, it's worth it. Sugar or caffeine will give you a short boost of energy, but will not be long-lasting, and your energy will drop again.
- Be aware of how much sleep you are getting. Your body and mind need sleep to repair and restore you after your daily routine. Make sure you are getting regular hours of sleep. Although you may try to push yourself to do everything, sleep deprivation will lower your productivity
- Manage your time. It can be hard to be aware of how much time one spends every day doing a certain activity. But take a moment to think carefully about how you spend your time and then write a plan for how you can use your time in a way that is best for you.

Tips to help improve your study time

- Plan your week with study times included. Just as you have a training schedule, make a study schedule. Know which days you are going to study, and which days you are going to relax or see friends.
- Try to study for the same number of hours consistently and build a routine. When you are busy, a good routine makes it easier to balance all the things you need to do.
- Take a short break after every hour of study, something small like having a drink of water or walking around the room. It will help you to maintain focus. Don't turn on the TV or your computer until after your scheduled study time is finished.
- Identify things that distract you from studying and limit them. Do you need to turn your phone on silent? Is your house too noisy? Tell your parents, friends, coach and teachers about your study goals. Ask them to help you accomplish them.

Tips for Parents

- Pay attention to how your child is doing at home and at school, and help them to take responsibility for the choices they are making.
- Discuss what you think are important priorities for life and listen to what they want to achieve.
- Be in touch with coaches or trainers.

Tips for Coaches & Trainers

- Observe if your player seems tired or stressed.
- Ask them how they are balancing studying and training. Help them to build a training & study schedule that meets all of their needs.
- Be in touch with parents.

For more resources, please visit:

IOC Education Page - <http://www.olympic.org/introduction-education>

How to balance Sport & Education - <http://www.olympic.org/how-to-balance-sport-and-education>

These pages give many downloadable resources on time management, goal-setting, note-taking skills, how to study while travelling etc.

Add example of current athlete experience

2. MOOCs—Massive open online courses

What is a MOOC?

A 'MOOC' is a Massive Open Online Course. MOOCs are a popular way to study without attending a school or college. Taking online courses enables students to choose to study when it suits them.

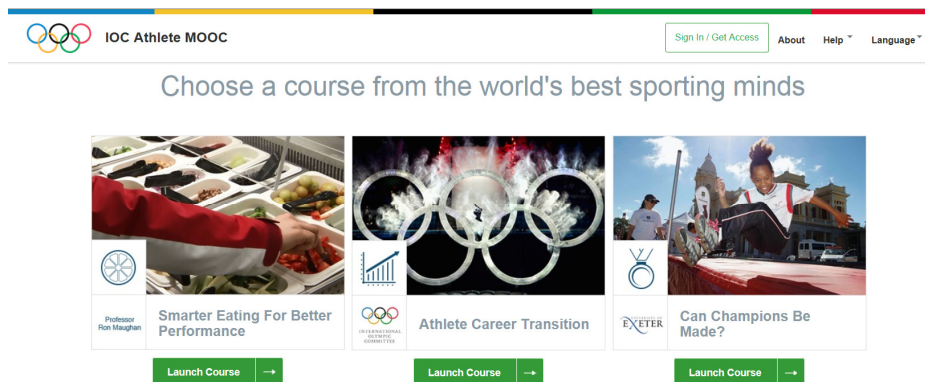
IOC Athlete MOOC

The International Olympic Committee has brought together Olympic champions, world-renowned coaches, top academics and inspirational leaders to teach subjects ranging from nutrition to sports management. The IOC Athlete MOOC is an innovative new way for elite athletes to study while training and competing. Anyone can access the IOC Athlete MOOC, wherever they are, and all courses are free of charge. The IOC Athlete MOOC is designed to give you bite-sized pieces of information in a logical sequence, so you can pick content relevant to you or dip in and out.

The courses feature academic lecture videos created by leading academics and professionals from the world of sport. They also include practical insights from top athletes, coaches and inspirational leaders. Our short courses are designed for elite athletes, delivered by experts in their field and are available online at any time.

*"MOOCs open the door to the "Ivy League" for the masses of athletes", - said **Sergey Bubka**, Chairman of the IOC Entourage Commission. "It is an online course aimed at unlimited participation and open access via the web. In addition to traditional course materials such as videos, readings, and problem sets, MOOCs provide interactive forums that help build a community for students, professors, and teaching assistants (TAs). I'm sure MOOCs will become a basic means of education for those athletes who want to expand their horizons and prepare themselves for life after sport".*

The IOC is proud to present this interactive learning portal and wishes to thank institutions and individual contributors who have given their time and expertise to making these courses. These contributors are leading authorities in their field, and the IOC has chosen not to influence or edit their output. Views or opinions contained in the content belong to the contributor and do not represent the views and opinions of the IOC.



The screenshot shows the IOC Athlete MOOC website. At the top, there is a navigation bar with the IOC logo, the text 'IOC Athlete MOOC', and links for 'Sign In / Get Access', 'About', 'Help', and 'Language'. Below the navigation bar, the main heading reads 'Choose a course from the world's best sporting minds'. Three course cards are displayed in a row. The first card is titled 'Smarter Eating For Better Performance' by Professor Rich Maughan, featuring an image of a person preparing food. The second card is titled 'Athlete Career Transition' by the IOC, featuring the Olympic rings logo. The third card is titled 'Can Champions Be Made?' by Exeter University, featuring an image of a person in a red and white outfit. Each card has a green 'Launch Course' button with a right-pointing arrow.

Visit the IOC MOOCs website and start learning..... <http://onlinecourse.olympic.org>

3. TRANSFERABLE SKILLS

What kind of skills have I learned as an athlete that I can transfer to a professional working environment?

You may not realise it, but the experiences you have as an elite level athlete can be provide you with valuable and transferable skills later on in your professional life. The important thing to know is how to develop your skills and present them professionally.

Think about your life as if you were a future employer. What do you have to offer? What is a future employer looking for? As globalisation is ever increasing, cross-cultural skills are becoming more valuable in the work place. The ability to work in a team, handle pressure, meet deadlines, set clear goals, prioritise development areas, critically analyse a situation, draw conclusions and learn from it, as well as delivering results. These are all skills that are relevant to working life, as well as being a key part of your sporting life. Leadership and public speaking are additional skills that can add something extra to your resume.

Some of the skills you may have include:

Adaptability & flexibility

You are probably familiar with a lot of travelling, with schedule changes, training and competing in new and unfamiliar environments. If you are confident in your ability to get your training done and meet your personal athletic goals no matter your environment, then you will be able to handle a working environment where change and flexibility are constant.

Cross-cultural skills

You have probably visited many different cities and countries during sporting events, interacting with different cultures and fellow athletes from a wide range of social, religious and cultural backgrounds. Having respect for other cultures and being open to communication with others from different backgrounds is a key skill.

Teamwork

Teamwork is about having respect for those around you, listening to others, identifying problems and finding ways to solve them together. It is about discovering how you can all work best together to achieve your desired results.

Your club or national team is full of different people - Head Coach, assistant coaches, trainers, managers, medical staff, fellow athletes, media staff. Each person on the team has a distinct role to play and each person relies on others to perform their individual role to the best of their ability for the benefit of the whole team. As a team you support each other in your individual roles.



Photo: IFF - WFCQ 2014

Ability to handle pressure

You have already thought about the pressure in balancing training with school work, social life and competitive success. You may have had to face more pressure at a younger age than some of your friends and peers who are non-athletes. Sooner or later, everyone faces pressure and stress, and so developing strategies to manage pressure is a key life skill. If you have been able to find a healthy balance as an athlete between your duties and commitments, this is a transferable skill to working life.

Ability to meet deadlines

You have learned to prepare and train yourself for competition. In the working world, you must learn to prepare and train yourself to meet deadlines. This is one reason why further education helps people to find employment later on, because they have been trained to meet academic deadlines. However, meeting deadlines is a basic life skill, and one you are surely able to master as an elite athlete.

When you know there is a deadline ahead of you, set goals and manage your time, in the same way you would if you were preparing for a competition.

Ability to deliver results

The ability to deliver means that you are able to do what you say you are going to do. Part of an athlete's success lies in his or her mental preparation and strength. Technique, skill, speed, stamina and strength are certainly key parts, however, when you are evenly matched with an opponent, sometimes the result of competition becomes a question of willpower.

What is your attitude? When you meet a challenge, do you hesitate and worry about the outcome or do you give everything you've got? Identify if this is an obstacle for you and train your attitude.

In work, as in sport, a great deal depends on your attitude. In the same way that you can feel overwhelmed by your opponent in a final, and give up, a work project can seem overwhelmingly difficult to complete. Be aware of behavioural triggers. Are you avoiding work, procrastinating, unable to find motivation? Sometimes the reason may be psychological. Until you have dealt with it, it may feel very difficult to compete or work effectively

Sometimes feeling overwhelmed can be the result of being unprepared. If you identify this in your life, take the steps to change.

Leadership

Have you ever taken a leadership role in your team, club, community, school or National Association? The leadership roles you take in sport are directly transferable to work environments. As a leader you take control, show responsibility, are accountable for results and provide a role model for others.



Photo: Fabian Trees/WFC2012

Public speaking

As an elite level athlete, you will encounter the press and media. Managing them is a useful skill. Although it can be difficult or unexpected at first, learning how to talk to the media, and to deliver your own message, is a valuable skill. The same applies in the work place, where you need to be able to express yourself clearly and confidently. You may think that being good at public speaking is a skill that some have, and some don't, but, like all skills, public speaking can be learned.



Photo: Martin Flousek/WFC2013

Tips for better public speaking

- ◇ Have you ever trained hard before a competition, felt nervous right before, but gone on to the court and performed to the best of your abilities? Public speaking can be like that. The more practice you have, the more comfortable you will feel. You may always feel a little bit nervous, but if you are prepared, you know that you can always do it.
- ◇ When you are delivering a message, either for yourself, the team, sponsors, or campaigns you represent, practice what you are going to say. Think about the topic carefully, as if you had to explain it to your parents or a good friend. The more you know your material or the topic you are speaking about, the easier it will be
- ◇ If you find you are nervous or not confident about public speaking, don't be discouraged. Keep trying. You will find that you will grow comfortable as you get used to it, and your sense of confidence grows

For more resources, please visit:

IOC Life Skills page: <http://www.olympic.org/ioc-athlete-career-programme?tab=life-skills>

This page lists resources on public speaking and media relations, time management, goal-setting, problem solving and planners.

4. HOW DO I FIND A JOB AND WHAT TOOLS DO I NEED?

Finding employment often occurs via connections and contacts you have made and people you know. This is what is meant by the term 'networking' – you build a collection of contacts in order to increase your options and choices in a variety of fields. When you are pursuing a job, work experience can be a key factor.



There are a few basic tools that can help you in obtaining employment....

Know how to prepare a Curriculum Vitae (CV) / Resume

- A CV lists your work and academic experience and any other qualifications or skills which make you suitable for employment. A good CV explains who you are briefly, and precisely. It is designed to show that you fit the job you are applying for.
- In most CVs, you are expected to provide your full name and contact information, such as phone number and email. In some countries, it is normal to include a picture of yourself, and to list your nationality and birthdate on your CV. However, in other countries, this would be considered unprofessional.
- Do the research into the standards of the country you are applying for work in. Business practices vary from place to place.
- Some job postings will ask that you list references (former employees or other contacts who can confirm your character and level of skill), or else your salary history (how much you have earned at your past jobs). Unless you are specifically asked to include these in your CV by the job posting, it is better to leave them out.
- Most CVs begin with a list of your relevant work experience, work that is related to the job you are applying for. Then you should list your academic qualifications and skills. Make it clear that you are, or have been, an athlete. Explain how this has provided you with skills that you can use in the workplace.
- Before you send your CV anywhere, proofread it. Then, proofread it again! Employers are often turned off by basic spelling or other errors. Have someone you know review your CV and give you their opinion. Be prepared to take criticism. Use your contacts to find the person you know in your chosen field to give you their opinion of your CV. Be ready to make changes.

Know how to prepare for a job interview

One of the most exciting, but also nerve-wracking experiences, can be getting a call back from a potential employer. If it is for a job that you really want, you may feel nervous. Being asked for an interview means that you are being considered as one of several candidates for a job. Your CV has been successful in getting you noticed

An interview can take place in person, on a conference call, or even via Skype. If your interview is taking place in person, dress appropriately for the kind of job it is. One basic rule for an interview is not to be late. Be on location for the meeting or ready for the call about 10-15 minutes before it has been scheduled to happen. This is enough time that you will not feel rushed when the interview begins. Being calm and confident will probably help your interview better than being flustered or stressed

Know about the background of the company, business, or organisation to which you are applying, as well as the position you are interested in. Research ahead of time and think of relevant questions you can ask, if you are given the opportunity in the interview

They may ask about your strengths and weaknesses. Be ready to give short, precise examples of both, and in the case of weaknesses, explain your strategy for dealing with the weakness

They may ask what kind of salary you are expecting. If you do not already know what an appropriate salary would be from previous work exposure or experience in the same field, be sure that you have researched this



Photo: monster.com

Make your history as an athlete a dynamic part of your interview. Keep it short, simple and powerful

For more resources, please visit:

IOC Employment page: <http://www.olympic.org/ioc-athlete-career-programme?tab=employment>

This page has resources about preparing CVs, interviews, work experience and more.

5. SPORTS CAREER ASSISTANCE PROGRAMS

The growth of high-level competitive sports in size and popularity has, to some extent coincided with a growing interest in career assistance, and more particularly, pre-retirement programs for elite athletes. Several career assistance programs have been designed in countries around the world to help resolve the conflict that many athletes face in having to choose between pursuing their sporting and post-athletic career goals.

Programs are generally run by the National Olympic Committee, by a national sports governing body or by a specific sport federation, by an independent organisation linked to the setting of sport, or by an academic institution. Most programs address the needs for both professional and amateur elite athletes.

Sports career assistance programs vary in format and may include workshops, seminars, educational modules as well as individual counselling. These formats are directed at presenting information, at educating, at providing guidance, or at skill-learning.

The major topics covered in most programs include:

1. Social aspects – quality of relationships (eg. family, friends) in the context of sport and of an academic/professional occupation
2. Aspects relevant to a balanced style of living – self-image, self-esteem and self-identity, social roles, responsibilities and priorities, participation in leisure activities
3. Personal management skills – education, academic skills, skills required by professional occupation, financial planning, skills transferable from the athletic career, coping skills
4. Vocational and professional occupation – vocational guidance, soliciting (eg. resume, interview), knowledge of the job market, networking and career advice
5. Aspects relevant to career retirement – such as possible advantages of retirement, perceived an expected problems related to retirement, physical/psychological aspects of retirement and decreased levels of athletic activity

Recommendations for implementing a sports career assistance program

The first objective is to define the general objective of the sports career assistance program. A general aim could be to assist and guide athletes, via multi-formats (eg. one-on-one or group counselling, written information, skills enhancement programs) to manage and cope with transitions, and their related causes and consequences, in such a way that they are able to achieve well-being, as well as maximise their potential in their different spheres of daily life (eg. psychosocial, athletic, educational).

A second point in the development of a sports career assistance program is related to the organisational context of such a program. It is important to consider the characteristics of the targeted sport (eg. type of sport, nature of the competitive events in which athletes participate), and in the structural aspects of the program (eg. group size, program format, program scheduling, required or voluntary participation).

Third, the actual content and management of a sports career assistance program should touch the topics outlined earlier, with particular attention for athletes' social environment. Attention should be paid to the way in which the program is brought to athletes. Program leaders should understand the make-up of the participating group of athletes, anticipate potential problems, manage athletes' emotional reactions, skilfully use the diversity among participants as a facilitating instrument in group discussions, and so forth.

Example from one of the big nations of such a program???

6. ATHLETE CAREER TRANSITIONS

Within a sports career itself, each athlete experiences several transitions. From beginner, to intensive training, to elite-level participation, and finally, retirement. At each of these stages, special attention should be paid to the extra demands placed on the athlete and how they manage the transition.

Since sports career transitions are predictable in the course of the sports career, in-depth knowledge of the peculiarities of each transition is essential. The following recommendations should be taken into account by coaches, parents, psychologists, and those individuals and organisations involved in competitive sport.

Beginning Stage

The beginning of sports specialisation is characterised by adjustments to the demands of the sport, coach, sport group, and new lifestyle. Young athletes must ensure the right choice of sport and show abilities to learn sport techniques.

- Provide young athletes with information on the specifics of training in a given sport
- Create a comfortable, supportive atmosphere within and around the sport group
- Use developmentally appropriate methods of training
- Enhance young athletes' interest for the sport
- Encourage them, regardless of success or failure
- Reward effort
- Give social support in competition, especially in cases of failure

Transition to intensive training in the chosen kind of sport

In the transition to intensive training in the chosen kind of sport, athletes should adjust to the new regime of training loads, improve their techniques and tactical skills, and attempt to achieve stable results in competition.

- Do not over-emphasise the importance of the training process
- Move forward gradually and smoothly, in order to prevent injuries and overtraining
- Teach athletes the basics of psychological preparation to competition
- Assist them in combining sports, school, and other activities in the best way possible

Transition to high-achievement and adult sport

Transition to high-achievement sports and adult sports is characterised by the athlete's attempt at finding his/her own individual way in sport, at coping with the pressure of selection for important competitions, at gaining respect within a team, as well as from opponents, officials and other sports professionals. It is critical for the athlete to change his/her lifestyle at this point in favour of achieving high-level performance.

- This transition is the most difficult one for athletes, as it is linked not only to the sport maturity of the athlete, but also to his/her psychological maturity
- The main focus should be the cooperation with the athlete. Coaches and sport psychologists should advise the athlete, as well as providing them with the opportunity for independent decision making

Transition to elite-level

Transition to elite-level sport is characterised by the need to adapt to the specialised requirements and pressures of 'professional' sport, to competitions with equally strong opponents, to individualised and independent training regimes.

?Add in recommendations

Transition from the culmination to the end of a sports career

Transition from the culmination to the end of the sporting career is characterised by the necessity to search for additional self-resources in order to maintain high levels of achievement and preparation to leaving sport.

- Athletes become more reserved and anxious, and may need social support, expert advice and counselling, including assistance in searching for a new career

Termination of the sports career

Finally, the termination of the sporting career is characterised by leaving sport and by a transition to another career, by the need to adjust to a new status, lifestyle, and social networks.

- The athlete's support group should help the athlete to find a new career and to integrate in as best as possible in their (new) social environments
- Support provided by sports organisations is essential

Add in current athlete experiences

7. LIFE AFTER SPORT

Identity & self-esteem

Problems in retirement are often associated with a loss of identity and diminished self-esteem. Many athletes end up dependent on sport for identity and gauge their self-worth by their ability as an athlete.

Many athletes do not feel that they have accomplished everything that they had set out to achieve in the sport if they are plagued by injury or are cut from teams and forced to end their careers. Such events often results in difficult transitions. A sense of accomplishment at having reached the goals that they set out for themselves in the sporting area allows for an easier transition as the athlete feels that their athletic experience was positive, and that they are ready to tackle new challenges.

Personal management skills

Having good personal management skills is crucial for successful career transition. During their career athletes may have had little choice about training schedules and the competition in which they participated, these were decisions made by their coach. The coaching staff can both teach athletes personal management skills as well as support them.

Although the system looks after athletes while they compete, they often offer little support to athletes during the retirement process. Support systems, if available, often just help with employment and fail to recognize the need for emotional support.

Transferable skills and successful career transition

Athletes that have a successful transition are able to capitalize on transferable skills. Athletes, regardless of competition level, will have learned very valuable lessons through sport that will be valuable in other settings. When athletes realize they already have the skills and characteristics to make them successful in non-athletic areas, they become empowered.

Awareness of transferable skills

One of the main barriers to using transferable skills may be that athletes are simply not aware of them. Increasing athletes' awareness of their ability to transfer skills from sport to other areas of their life may be enough to affect adjustment to career transition. Teaching athletes about skill transfer increases their confidence in their own ability to start a new career and may improve their ability to use their skills in different settings.

Athletes may find that increasing awareness of their skills may help improve their athletic career by increasing their understanding of the role certain skills play in athletic performance. Athletes who have an increased understanding of the skills they have acquired through sport will be better able to explain these skills to future employers and outline how these skills will be useful in a non-athletic career.

Add examples from former elite floorball players

8. RESOURCES

International Olympic Committee—www.olympic.org

IOC Athletes Kit—<http://www.olympic.org/athleteskit>

IOC Athlete MOOCs— <http://onlinecourse.olympic.org>

IOC Education—<http://www.olympic.org/introduction-education>

How to balance sport & education—<http://www.olympic.org/how-to-balance-sport-and-education>

IOC Life Skills—<http://www.olympic.org/ioc-athlete-career-programme?tab=life-skills>

IOC Employment—<http://www.olympic.org/ioc-athlete-career-programme?tab=employment>

Other sources

FEPSAC—European Federation of Sport Psychology

Journal of Excellence

www.thesportinmind.com

Singapore Sports Council

Australian Sports Commission

IFMA—International Federation of Muaythai Amateur