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ATHLETE365 MENTORING: Q&A WITH PAOLO SINGH (FRA)

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The International Olympic Committee recently opened the application process for the second edition of its hugely successful Athlete365 Mentoring programme.

The initiative matches athletes who are still competing, who recently finished their sporting career, or who are already in a workplace environment, with mentors from the Worldwide Olympic Partners or wider Olympic Movement, to help guide the athlete's transition into a career beyond sport.

UIPM News caught up with 26-year-old pentathlete Paolo Singh of France, who was part of the first intake of Athlete365 Mentoring, to discuss how it works and how he benefited from the mentorship.

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How did you learn about the programme and was it difficult to apply? How did you make the decision to apply?

If I remember correctly, I learned of the programme through the UIPM Instagram feed, and I applied because it seemed really interesting. It was fairly easy to apply, thanks to the site, with my motivation and basic profile.

What were your expectations from the programme and what does mentoring mean to you?

I really didn't know what to expect from the programme, some kind of assistance in my career. It's been helpful to receive advice and share the challenges I face.

For me, mentoring is simply sharing advice and experience from someone who been through it, to usually a younger person who needs help. In this case a retired world-class athlete is a source of inspiration and wisdom to us younger competing athletes.

Who was your mentor and how was the program structured?

My mentor now works at a global consulting company, and competed at the highest level in his sport, eventually wining an Olympic medal. His name is Matthew Deakin, a gold medallist in rowing in the Athens Olympics in 2004, competing for USA.

The programme was roughly six months, with meetings when the athlete needed it, usually one every six weeks or so.

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How did the process help you? Did it help to develop new perspectives and skills?

The first thing is the meetings were in English, which might be a minor detail, but for me it was a great opportunity to speak another language. I exposed my "problems" to my mentor: balancing training/life, making a living, the transition to the next career after sports.

All in all, it really is a huge inspiration to learn from a champion who has been there and understands what you are going through.

I finished the programme with my mentor offering me to reach out any time. I'm happy to have learned so much, about me and about my career beyond sports.

Why do you think such programmes are important for athletes?

I think it's hugely important, firstly to get some help from experienced people from any field, and secondly to prepare the transition to the next career after sports.

It really matters, and helps you to focus better on the present, knowing that tomorrow will be alright. I would strongly recommend this opportunity to all fellow pentathletes.

Do you have suggestions on how athletes can be helped more?

Maybe the UIPM could set up the same kind of programme. The tricky part is that everyone is different, so each person has to find what works for them. But I would like to thank the Athlete365 team, they are doing such crucial work, and UIPM.

- For more information on Athlete365 Mentoring and full details on how to apply, [click here](#).