2014

Retired Athletes in China
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1. Executive Summary

Starting from 1984, the first time that new China took part in the Olympic Games since it was established, China has made a great progress in sports undertaking. Nowadays, China is one of the greatest sporting nations in the world. However, as the number of registered athletes grows, the number of retired athletes also increases every year. It has become a big problem for both central government and local government on how to arrange those retired athletes who once devoted their youth to the country. In this report, the Chinese sports system and the current situation of retired athletes in China is going to be analyzed. Then, based on the current situation of China, a social enterprise, called Tian Xing Jian Sports Centre, is proposed in Guangxi Province as a trail to help the retired athletes re-employed and offering skilled and educated work force to the society. Some services are going to be offered to the retired athletes according to their own preferences and abilities, for example, the investment courses, low interest loan application, interest class and interpersonal skills trainings, aiming at helping athletes better integrate into the society after retirement. Finally, by conducting a SWOT analysis, proposing a financial plan and contingency plan, the feasibility of the idea of Tian Xing Jian Sports Centre is tested and it is believed that Tian Xing Jian Sports Centre is helpful in solving the problem of retired athletes in China.
2. Problem Analysis

With the rapid development of China, the competitive edge of China in the international sport field is raising and China has gradually climbed up to the top of medals tally. In 1988, China had got 4 medals from Seoul Olympics. In 2008, China won 100 medals including 51 gold medals at Beijing Olympics. It is found that China gets great development in the sports aspect. However, behind the glory, there have been many sacrifices from the athletes. The China athletes have to get into sport schools for intense trainings in a very young age (around 5 to 6 years old) and give up their academic education and even childhood. However, most of them cannot receive what they should deserve after retirement, even for those who had been the champions.

Take a former national weightlifting winner, Zou Chunlan as an example. She has been named as a disposable China athlete in a newspaper article. At the beginning of her sport life, Zou received assurance of her life-long living from her coach but then she got nothing after her retirement. She got obvious Adam's apple and beard as hormonal pills had been taken to boost her power for weightlifting. Together with her low educational level (only 65%-70% of the retired athletes can fulfill the primary school graduation) and limited skills, she can only work at bathhouse and face the challenges in the real world.

Doubtlessly, China’s system can squeeze more elites for grasping the medals at Olympic but at the same time, more “disposable athletes” are generated. Referring to China Sports Daily, almost 80% of 300,000 retired athletes in China are facing unemployment, disability and underprivileged. And many retired athletes are
suffering from injury and health illness brought by the harsh trainings. 45% of the retired athletes cannot get placement from the government. 47% of the athletes in sport teams did not even get an official recognition, which means they cannot enjoy social or medical insurance after retirement.

It is obvious that the problem of retired athletes’ settlement is in severe condition in Mainland China. These are ringing the alarm of public. A Social Enterprise named as Tian Xing Jian Sports Centre will be proposed to act as a platform for those retired athletes to strengthen themselves and rejoin the workforce.

2.1 The Sports System in China

The sports system practicing by China is called, ‘the National System’. The system views the national interest as the destination. Therefore the system holds the idea of using the resources from all over the country to conquer one or several specific area rather than conquering all sports areas. In addition, in this system, government has all the controls over every issue, as the system is completely run by the government.

Under the system, athletes in china need to undergo harsh trainings as it is not easy to get into the National First Team, which is the dream of all the athletes. In order to become a member in the National First Team, athletes first need to be in the sports school, and then be selected to the district-level team, followed by the city-level team and the provincial team. After the provincial team, potential athletes would then be selected into the National Second team and if they are good enough, they would then be promoted to the National First team. Therefore, as an athlete in China, you need to be professional; however it is not that easy to become a professional. As data shows
that, ‘Every year, there are about 100,000 students graduate from “sports school”. And every year, only about 2,700 quotas in professional teams can be provided. The chance of being a professional is less than 3%.’ (Huang, Li Sheng), therefore the competition in China is really intense.

From the YouTube video, the situation in the China’s sports school is being presented. The video shows the harsh trainings that are faced by the children who entered the sports school at a very young age. The trainings in the sports school are mainly achievement-oriented which may bring some very stressful training to the children. Also, in the video, a foreign athlete commented on the China sports schools’ situation as ‘jails in 19th century’, which shows that some situations in the sports schools are really terrible.

**Advantages of the sports system**

As the system is ran by the government, the ultimate goals of the system can surely be reached effectively, since the government can ensure that the system is taking advantage from the country’s overall strength, like the government can use the most effective set of human, financial and material resources, to promote the development of Chinese competitive sports.

Besides, as the athletes need to go through a lot of selections, therefore the ability of the athletes in the National First Team can be guaranteed. With the high-quality athletes, they can surely increase China’s competitiveness and thus China can be able to achieve good results in international competitions. For example, in the 2008
Beijing Olympics, China won the most gold medal in the total which was wrote a new chapter in Olympic history.

Moreover, as this system contains lots of selections which produce high-quality athletes, it helps China to gain greater international influence in sports. As countries nowadays not only complete on hard power, but also on soft power, like the competitiveness in sports. Therefore by developing competitive sports, producing high-quality athletes and achieving significant results in international sports events, China’s international influence can be promoted.

**Disadvantages of the sports system**

As all the issues are arranged by the government, the sports institutions or organizations have to depend a lot on the government department. An approval from the government department is needed for getting the development funding, setting staff wages, assigning sports event of the athletes, getting constructions fee, etc. This may cause low working efficiency within the system. As one single issue need to go through several administrative processes, it may produce the problem of waste of time.

Besides, the athletes have limited mobility. According to the administrative division system management, athletes can achieve vertical mobility by hard work, but lateral mobility is nearly impossible. This restriction on the issue of free flow of talent has brought the problem of wasting human resources to train the athlete who is playing the sports which is actually not the most suitable for him. Also, it may also damage
the self-autonomy of the athletes, as they are not allow to choose the sports which they think is the most suitable for them.

Moreover, there is the problem of the retired athletes, which is the problem that would be focused in this report. As there is a huge amount of retired athletes, a lot of supportive services or arrangements are needed in order to sustain their living after their retirements. However, according to the government practice in nowadays, only a one-time payment would be given to the retired athletes who are not enough.

### 2.2 Current situation of retired Athletes

As all the training and selection activities are all under the Nationwide System, there are several general characters of retired athletes as followed.

**Low education**

Generally speaking, all the professional athletes in China are required to study in sport school in order to train them in a young and suitable age, but there are three different kinds of school in total for youngsters to start their sports career.

The first kind is the “whole concentration” (三集中) sports schools, in which students spend almost all their time, including their study, sports training and accommodation. This kind of school is convenient to manage, the training hour is abundant and fixed, and so athletes perform the best between the three kinds of school. This training pattern is well accepted in all over the country. Among district-level sports school, the proportion of “whole concentration” schools is about 50%, in city-level is nearly two thirds, and all the provincial sport schools are in this pattern.
Second one is the amateur sports school. Students attend primary schools and middle schools as usual, but go training in amateur sports school after class for 1 to 1.5 hours. The third kind of sports schools were held by typical primary schools or middle schools by adding athletes training scheme as one of the parts of their school curriculum. The performance of athletes from these two kinds of school is usually less satisfying than those from the “whole concentration” schools and better in academic aspect. But the first kind is still the mainstream of all.

While the “whole concentration” sports schools performing very well in Chinese sports system, it also makes some problems. The education is the biggest problem caused by the “whole concentration” sports schools. In these schools, students spend almost all of their time at school under a militarized management. They have a fixed timetable arranged by the school with little time to study and almost no time for entertainment. According to the survey made in Putian city, only 65%-70% of the students can fulfill the required primary school graduation.

**Material Condition after Retirement**

Athlete as a career has a high morbidity even in a scientific and safe training condition, the morbidity of athletes was more than 20% (in comparison, the morbidity of police is 6%). Normally the career life of athletes will stop if there are serious injured and even after the ending of sports career, sequels may also bring retired athletes into trouble. Moreover, under the Chinese sports system, unscientific training was used for times in order to get a better result in short term. There are cases like using the androgens to strengthen up female weightlifter or overweight training caused deformation of bones. Thus athletes always need a firm insurance for them to
make their life easier if this happens. But the current situation of welfare after retirement is rather poor to athletes. 45% of the retired athletes cannot get placement from the government, which they should get. 47% of the training athletes in sport teams did not even get an official recognition, which means they cannot enjoy any free social or medical insurance after retirement.

**Corruption**

The matter of corruption appears frequently in Chinese government, so as the administration of sports. When distributing the allocation to retired athletes, better jobs will be distributed by the leaders, normally in accordance to the relative relationship or benefit exchange. Most of the athletes do not come from rich families and because of that, they usually get a rather poor allocation after retirement.

### 2.3 Current Policies and Solutions

There are four main arrangements from government for the retired athletes.

**Coach**

If an athlete is very outstanding during his or her career such as Liu Guoliang, a famous table tennis player who are recruited as the coach of the China national table tennis team, he or she are very likely to be recruited as the coach for national team, provincial team, and etc. However, the vacancy for team coach is very limited and highly depends on the reputation and achievements. For most retired athletes, they may not have the opportunities to be a coach.

**Further Study**

Instead of being recruited as a coach, some athletes would choose to further study in
the universities or in professional training schools after retirement. However, further study requires a certain level of education. Since most of the athletes have very low education level, it would be difficult for them to study. In addition, the education fee would also be a big burden to them since most of the retired athletes do not have too much money.

Administrative Work

Another arrangement is to do some administrative work in sports institutions, social enterprise and public institutions. The administrative work requires some basic interpersonal skill and communication skill. Only a small number of retired athletes equipped with such skill and can do the job. Due to the long-term enclosed training, most athletes have difficulties in communicating with others and some of them even cannot write. To these athletes, administrative work may not be a good choice.

One-off Subsidy

Now, the most common way to arrange the retired athletes is to give one-off subsidy without any afterward guarantee. Mostly, the subsidy would range from 10,000 to 100,000 RMB which is highly depends on the achievement they earned during their career. One-off subsidy is easy for government to manage but it is not helpful to athletes. Without any training and skills, once they spend out the subsidy money, their life will change dramatically. Although some of them may have very high subsidy due to their great achievement, without any money management skills and knowledge, they will soon become poor. Therefore, one-off subsidy cannot solve the problem fundamentally.
3. Problem Solving

Based on the analysis above, with the goal of helping retired athletes integrate into the society and re-employed, a social enterprise, called Tian Xing Jian Sports Centre is proposed.

3.1 Introduction to the proposed business

Tian Xing Jian Sports Centre (天行健体育中心) is a social enterprise aiming at helping retired athletes re-employed in order to improve their living situation after retirement.

“Tian Xing Jian” comes from a famous Chinese saying from <Book of Changes> 《周易》: “天行健,君子以自强不息” which means the nature runs lively, humans should also be determined and positive. This positive meaning can encourage and inspire retired athletes, especially those ones in bad situation, to be hopeful again and change their situation by their own hands.

Tian Xing Jian Sports Centre serves as a job training and intermediary center. Tian Xing Jian retrains athletes with social knowledge and skill. The short-term goal of it is improving the life of retired athletes. And the long-term goal is to increase skilled and educated work force in China.

3.2 Marketing Mix Variables

Product

A range of services is going to be provided in the center for those retired athletes who are registered as the members. Firstly, for the financial aspect, grants will be gathered
from the foundation for those in urgent need. After the retirement of the athletes, they can receive a sum of money or compensation from the government and their department. However, the amount of the money is far from adequate to maintain the long term living of the retired athlete, and together with that it is difficult for them to find a job with a stable income afterwards. It is necessary to provide financial aid for the members. Also, helping the members to apply for loan in low interest rate from bank will also be done by the center.

Financial planning and investment of the members is going to be advised by the center. Financial planners will be provided for the members so as to assist them to manage their own savings well. When they can reserve a certain amount of capital after a period of time, they can support their long-term living easier and even run a small-scale business themselves.

Temporary settlement is going to be offered. After their retirement, they need a transition in order to adapt to the society. The center will act as a platform for members by hiring them so that they can experience the daily operation in a computer. At the same time, more helpers are available for center as only four people will be hired as the fixed full time staff and more helpers will be needed for works such as assistance for the interest classes provided for public.

Training course is integral for strengthening retired athlete’s skills and ability. As they are graduated from sports schools, all they had received is sports training. In other words, they have lack of skills required in workplace. A wide variety of training courses should be arranged for members. Language training is the first step. Most of the retired athletes got not much about academic education and only know Mandarin,
but to seek a job opportunity, use of other languages such as English is indispensible. In the language training course, basic language knowledge will be taught and in-class speech will be done by the members to practice speaking skills.

Apart from the languages, their interpersonal skills are also needed to train up. As there were little chances for them to interact or communicate with others and they seldom got group discussion in sport school. Interpersonal skills training will be offered for members. Social skills including communication skills we use in daily life for interaction will be taught. Learning these interpersonal skills can allow them to communicate and cooperate with others from society in a more efficient way.

Basic computer knowledge and word processing skills are essential if members want to be officers or run a business afterwards. It is not surprising that those retired athletes have never used the computer and understand nothing about the digital world. So, teaching basic computer knowledge to them is a must. Computer rooms will be provided for members to learn the operation of some fundamental software and how to browse online through different websites.

Trainings of specific skills will be available depending on their willingness towards their future career. For example, trainings of haircutting will be offered if the members want to be hair-stylists or run hair salons.

After receiving a range of training from the center, preparing for job seeking will be done. Regarding to their limited educational level, assistants will be recruited for helping to write up comprehensive and standardize individual personal profile for
every retired athlete. After getting their own profile, members can start to send to different companies to seek for working opportunities.

The members can get job allocation by the center. There are three main types of job including PE teacher, speaker for sharing talks and coach. Members will be mostly sending to the primary schools or secondary schools in rural area as the demand of PE teachers in rural area is relatively high because people are not willing to work at rural area. When the demand is higher, the working opportunities for the members will also be higher. For those who are more successful, they can be invited to the universities or high schools to be the speakers for sharing their experience with the students. Moreover, most of the members have received specific sport skill and training. They are capable enough to be coaches in sport schools. Through the cooperation with sport schools, it is hoped that the chances of being coaches can be got for the members. The members can also be hired by the center to be the coaches of interest classes provided for the public.

Last but not the least, psychological counseling is significant for those members who suffer from depression and shadows because of the failure and rigorous trainings. Mental counseling can relieve their pressure and help them to turn a new leaf of life. Also, regular meetings with counselors will be arranged for the members in order to follow up their status.

**Price**

Pricing strategies will be applied to set a range of charge and fee. First of all, 5% commission will be charged of the members’ every monthly salary in their first year.
after rejoining the workforce. To ensure the interest of both parties (retired athletes and center), a contract should be signed before members starting their career to make a promise about all of the charge and fee.

As the pervious part stated, there will be several service from center including CV writing, job allocation and helping to apply for loan with low interest. Procedure fee will be set to charge members when they using the services. Also, if members want to join the training courses provide by center, they need to pay the courses fee. As center invites professionals and experts to serve the members, a certain amount of money will be given for those professionals as salary.

Some sports interest classes will be opened for public. Classes will be formed by different levels including young age, adult age and old age. These public classes will be taught by the members. To provide salary for the members and earn income for the center, the participants of interest classes will be charged.

Rewards will be required when sending a member as a guest for sharing talks in colleges. The rewards from colleges will be the salary for the member and revenue for the center.

**Place**

Tian Xing Jian Sports Centre is proposed to be located at Nanning, Guangxi Province (廣西省，南寧市).

Guangxi provincial sports teams contribute a lot to the national sports achievements.
From 1977 to 1985, athletes from Guangxi won 30 gold medals in international games, 42 in Asia and 245 in China. There are many famous athletes examples like Li Ning, etc.. However, Guangxi is not a very developed province in China especially in economy. According to the data provided by Chinese government, by calculation, Guangxi contributed only 2.52% of the GDP in China in 2013. Considering the taxation, as a result, the allowance for sports program is not enough to provide a comfortable retirement for athletes. The basic one-off subsidy for retired athletes in Guangxi starts from 5,000 RMB.

Nanning is the capital city of Guangxi. Nanning has a convenient transportation including a railway junction for the Nanning-Kunming and Hunan-Guangxi Railways. In November 2008 construction of a high speed railway from Nanning to Guangzhou began. Nanning has a warm, monsoon-influenced humid subtropical climate, with an annual mean temperature of 21.82 °C (71.3 °F).

**Entity shop** is going to be used as the distribution channel of Tian Xing Jian Sports, which means that an entity shop is going to be rented. Because the customers are retired athletes, for their convenience, Tian Xing Jian Sports Centre will be located in a rather near distance from Guangxi Sports School, West of Gongyuan Road, the east of Renmin Road Beiyili and the south of Zhonghua Road of Xingning District.

According to the housing information of this district, we can rent under 90 square meters at about 3,000 RMB per month within a distance of 2 kilometers from the Guangxi Sports School.
Promotion

Promotion works will be done on two sides, the side of retired athletes and the side of companies. As on one side, the retired athletes with unique backgrounds and skill are searching for job opportunities, and on the other side, the companies are looking for talents. Our center will therefore work with both parties aiming to reach a win-win situation by matching the right people with the right jobs.

For the promotions that will be carried out to the athletes and public, successful examples would be shown so as to tell the athletes that they can also be successful in other fields. From the successful examples of Adecco, a company which has the same objectives with our center, we can found that a water polo athlete can now became a marketing specialist. Besides using successful examples, traditional promotion strategy, like promoting through TV, newspaper and advertisement would also be used. To attract more people, the advertising techniques, like celebrities appeal would be used. For example, Tian Liang (田亮) and Li Ning (李寧) might be invited to promote our services.

For the promotions targeting the companies, the benefits of hiring retired athletes would be stated. The characteristics of the retired athletes, like good attitude, team spirit, ability to plan, prioritize and organize projects and good discipline, would be presented in the persuasive promotions. After gaining access to the promotions, the companies are expected to have a better understanding towards the retired athletes. In order to provide further information to the companies, the companies who have partnership with the center will be allowed to gain access to the collection of resumes
of the retired athletes. Therefore companies can choose the one who they think is the most suitable to work in their companies.

**Stakeholders**

There are five main stakeholders of Tian Xing Jian Sports Centre. They are the retired athletes, the general public partners, the management team, the sponsors as well as the government.

As for the retired athletes, what they care most is whether the company can help them solve the problem in an economic way. However, what the general public and partners care is whether they can get benefits from the service we provide. As the management team, what they care is the success of the business. Since most of the money comes from the sponsorship, it requires Tian Xing Jian Sports Centre to maintain a good image and reputation to retain the sponsorship. Finally, what the government care is the legal aspect of the business, for example, whether the company have a legal license for operating.
### 3.3 SWOT Analysis

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<tr>
<th>Strengths</th>
<th>Weaknesses</th>
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<tr>
<td>• Good image --- solving social problems</td>
<td>• Limited source of capital</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Comprehensive services --- variety of choices</td>
<td>• Weak bargaining power towards government</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Customized services</td>
<td>• Non-official certified</td>
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<table>
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<tr>
<th>Opportunities</th>
<th>Threats</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Growing social awareness</td>
<td>• Undeveloped industry</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Positive government policies</td>
<td>• Government interventions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Large amount of potential customers</td>
<td></td>
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</table>

Since Tian Xing Jian Sports Centre is established to solve the social problems, one of the strengths for the business is to have a good image. In addition, the company is providing comprehensive services by providing a variety of choices and customized the services. However, it may be difficult for Tian Xing Jian Sports Centre to generate too much money and they have a weak barging power toward government because once the business is proposed and asked government for capital, the government may think it is a deny of the current work of the government. Thus, it will be difficult for the company to ask government to help solve the financial problems. Although it is difficult, there is still some opportunities in the industry, since the social awareness to the problem is growing and government is also trying to solve the problem in a positively way instead of neglecting it. In addition, there are a large number of athletes retired every year, which means that there are a lot of potential customers to the business. Finally, as an undeveloped industry, there may not have any regulations
and laws to regulate the behavior of different competitors. The government may also intervene the business.

3.4 Implementation

Currently, there are four departments in the proposed business, Executive, Public Relationship, Marketing and Operating Committee.

Executive leadership is actually the leader of the organization and mainly responsibility for the general management, key decision making and working as the legal person of the organization. Publication Relationship department is mainly focus on the relationship management with different stakeholders and establish the public trust for the company. As an important department, marketing is mainly in charge of applying the marketing strategies, maintaining the customer relationship as well as do the promotions. Finally, operating committee is responsible for the daily operation and deal with the accounting things.
### 3.5 Financial plan

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<th>Revenues:</th>
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<td>Commission</td>
<td>48,000 (40<em>12</em>2000*5%)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Procedure fee</td>
<td>4,000 (40*100)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Training courses (to retired athletes)</td>
<td>20,000 (40*500)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interest classes (to public)</td>
<td>6,000 (60*100)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Charge of providing speakers</td>
<td>12,000 (500<em>12</em>2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Others (funds, sponsorship and etc.)</td>
<td>200,000</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Total Revenues</strong></td>
<td><strong>290,000</strong></td>
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<table>
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<th>Expenses:</th>
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<tr>
<td>Rent Expense</td>
<td>24,000 (2,000*12)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Salaries Expense</td>
<td>96,000 (4<em>2,000</em>12)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Insurance Expense</td>
<td>20,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other Expense (e.g. operation, ads)</td>
<td>130,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total Expenses</strong></td>
<td><strong>270,000</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Net Income</strong></td>
<td><strong>20,000</strong></td>
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3.6 Contingency Plan

In the following plan, situations that might happen would be considered and preventions or solutions will also be provided so as to avoid or solve the problems.

After the establishment of the center, the situation of loss of key person might be faced. When a key person in the center decides to leave because of health problem or retirement, it may affect the operation of the center. Therefore, in order to minimize the loss of the center, insurance would be provided to the key person. Also, managers would identify potential successors or leaders from time to time, so there would be people able to take up the work of the key person once they decided to leave. Cross-trainings, referring to the cross-team or cross-department trainings, would be provided to the worker so that they can know more about the operation of the center and, again, being able to take up the work of the key person once they decided to leave.

When encountering deficit, the situation when the expenses is higher than the revenue, promotion and operation cost would be cut down. As the center is facing difficulties to support the operation, service which is the most successful would be concentrated and the center would be specialized in it. As that service is probably the most well-known service, therefore less promotion cost and human resources are needed.

As a lot of personal data of the clients is handled by the center, the problem of losing data will eventually lead to seriously problem, like information security and the credibility of the center. Therefore, back-up and up-date of the security system would be carried out on a regulate basic. I.T. expert would also be hired so that advises and
suggestions regarding the security system would be available. However, if the situation really happens, a statement of apology would be released within one day and the security system would be up-dated and re-established within 48 hours.
4. Reference


中國運動員自小離家殘酷地獄集訓 嚴苛像 19 世紀監獄 屈手腳狂哭，retrieved from: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qkLZRYvVBEI

Bring elite athletes together with great companies, retrieved from: http://athlete.adecco.com/

5. Appendix

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<th>Timeline</th>
<th>Goals</th>
<th>Actions</th>
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| Short-term    | Brand awareness and market presence | Advertisements  
|               |                                 | • TV & Newspaper  
|               |                                 | • Poster, banner and leaflets  
|               |                                 | Free trail  |
| Medium-term   | Customer base and better organized | • Through word of mouth  
|               |                                 | • Social activities and events to promote the successful examples  |
| Long-term     | Reputation and become the top choice of retired athletes | Long-term contract with different institutions such as banks, schools and sports teams. |