



## WOA launches landmark Olympian health study

**Bangkok, Thailand; 19 April 2018**

World Olympians Association has launched the largest ever global study that will analyse the long-term health issues of Olympians. The study is supported by the IOC Medical and Scientific Commission, the IOC Athletes' Commission and the IOC Athletes' Entourage Commission.

Joining WOA President Joël Bouzou OLY at SportAccord 2018 in Bangkok to announce the launch today were International Ski Federation (FIS) Secretary General Sarah Lewis OLY and World Rowing (FISA) President Jean-Christophe Rolland OLY, the first two Olympians to complete the health study. More than 10,000 Olympians, who no longer compete at an Olympic level, are being targeted to take part in the study. The study is being promoted to all International Federations at the GAISF General Assembly tomorrow.

As part of WOA's strategic priority to support Olympians through life transition, the health study will generate new knowledge on the long-term musculoskeletal and overall general health of Olympians and identify the risk factors associated with elite-level sport in this area.

Dr Debbie Palmer OLY, an associate professor and researcher in sports injury and illness prevention at Edinburgh Napier University, is leading the study. Dr Palmer competed in short track speed skating for Great Britain at three Olympic Winter Games and has previously carried out research for the International Olympic Committee as part of the IOC's Scientific and Medical Research group.

The study is an international collaboration between Edinburgh Napier University; the Oslo Sports Trauma Research Centre; University of Nottingham; Arthritis Research UK, Centre for Sport, Exercise and Osteoarthritis; University of Calgary, University of Alberta; the IOC Medical and Scientific Department; and the Institute for Sport, Exercise and Health, London.

**WOA President, Joël Bouzou OLY**, said:

“We are proud to launch WOA’s Olympian health study, which will greatly enhance the limited existing knowledge of the long-term health impact on Olympians. Our aim is to use this analysis to inform evidence-based recommendations and best-practice guidelines to benefit Olympians and other elite athletes. I would like to thank Dr Debbie Palmer for leading this vital piece of research and IF leaders Sarah Lewis and Jean-Christophe Rolland for helping to share the important message of this study to Olympians worldwide.”

**Olympic Champion and World Rowing President, Jean-Christophe Rolland OLY**, said:

“Much is made of the need to push Olympians to their limit in the pursuit of glory, but as they transition from elite competition to their post-athletic careers their physical health has to be of the utmost importance. Olympians push their bodies to extremes and little is known about the long-term effects, but through this study we will be able to gather ground-breaking data that will help to model Olympians’ health and help them as they transition into later life. I am so proud to be backing this initiative – it is truly incredibly important work that the World Olympians Association is doing.”

**Three-time Olympian, Dr Debbie Palmer OLY, who is leading the research project**, added:

“Elite athletes are known to be exposed to high impact training and competition loads, leading to increased physiological demands that can be associated with a heightened risk of injury. This study seeks to better understand what those risks are and how they can be mitigated. By encouraging as many Olympians as possible to participate we will build a better picture of post-retirement life for those who have competed at the highest levels of sport and hopefully greatly increase the body of knowledge in this area.”

-ENDS-

### **Notes to Editors**

Olympians can register their interest to take part in this research project [HERE](#)

### **Images**

Please find attached an image of WOA President Joël Bouzou OLY with International Ski Federation (FIS) Secretary General Sarah Lewis OLY and World Rowing (FISA) President Jean-Christophe Rolland OLY

### **About World Olympians Association**

WOA is the member organisation for the more than 120,000 Olympians worldwide. WOA’s remit is to work for the benefit of all Olympians at all stages of their lives, empowering them to serve society and help make the world a better place. With 148 member National Olympians Associations spread across all five continents, WOA provides support to Olympian-run events and projects based on the Olympic ideals laid down by the founder of the modern Olympic Games, Pierre de Coubertin.

**For more information**

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