

## FACE OFF FOMO

Commit to the life of a pro athlete and you'll wave goodbye to drinks with mates, family weddings and rite-of-passage gap year travels. 'I've been training since my early teens, so I missed a lot of those defining moments growing up,' remembers Rowan. 'All my school friends would hang out in a big group, and when I wasn't training and *could* join in, they had inside jokes and shared memories that I wasn't part of. I've got much better at dealing with it, but even now – with all the travel and opportunities I have – I find myself envious of my peers' more consistent lives. They have regular jobs and plan their time, whereas I can't even commit to a one-day music festival because I don't know my schedule in advance.'

Aimee also struggled with the disconnect from home. 'I was in New Zealand for training, going up a windy, freezing mountain. It was summer at home and seeing a picture of my friends on a night out or my family having a barbecue would make me long to be there,' she explains. How does she deal? 'I remind myself that I care about my sport so much that I'm prepared to miss out; that my snowboarding peers are my family away from home and catching up with everyone in the UK will be all the sweeter when I return.' For Rowan, honing in on a few key relationships has been a game changer. 'Focusing on my five best friends rather than different big groups helps me be more present when I'm away.' Whether work's keeping you busy or money worries are making you miss out, keep coming back to what's important to you and be more engaged with what you *are* doing – rather than what you're not.



## FIGHT REJECTION WITH RESILIENCE

Not being picked: one of the most universally stinging experiences a person can go through, whether that's smarting after learning via Instagram stories that your friends are out for dinner without you, or missing out on a spot in the squad. 'If you're not picked to represent your team, or as the person a brand wants to sponsor, there's no hiding from the very real sense that you are substandard,' Rowan says. 'I used to be so annoyed when someone in my team got an opportunity instead of me,' she says. Now? 'I've learned that not being chosen doesn't make me any less of a person.' Andy Lane, professor of sport psychology at the University of Wolverhampton, rates her response. 'Rejection is all part of being in a competitive environment, but when athletes invest all their self-esteem in their sport, this can devastate them,' he says. And it's just as true when people do the same with jobs or relationships. 'You can be an elite athlete, but it shouldn't be your only "thing",' adds Professor Lane. You might be a daughter, a friend, someone who, say, likes going to galleries or gigs on a Friday night. You are worth more than your competitive success. **EW 12**

## THE SPORT PSYCH'S GUIDE TO LIFE

*Dr Peter Olusoga, senior lecturer in sports psychology and coaching at Sheffield Hallam University, on handling setbacks like a champ*

### SCENARIO

You trained for 12 weeks to get a half marathon PB, only to miss it by minutes

### PSYCH

Be angry or miserable if you need to be – but with a time limit. Once you're ready to get back to work, analyse your performance to work out what happened. Can you alter your nutrition, hydration or pacing? Use your conclusions to inform your new strategy. Noting your successes during the race is useful for confidence, too – maybe your mental strategy worked well, or you maintained form during that killer hill.

### SCENARIO

You're forever setting goals, but lose motivation weeks in

### PSYCH

The problem may be that your ambition is scattered; focus on two or three goals instead. They need to be flexible, too. Injuries, illness, work – life happens. You may also need to switch the way you frame them. Outcomes aren't always within your control – you could ace a job interview, but a more experienced candidate lands the role. Reflect on what you value and commit to actions that move you closer to that.

### SCENARIO

You've been made redundant

### PSYCH

Reflect on your identity outside this role. Regularly taking stock of who you are and what you bring outside of your job is essential psychological maintenance. Who are you in the eyes of your family? What's your role in your local community? Just as an athlete is much more than their job, so are you. Yes, there are bills to pay. But, invest in your own interests alongside looking for a new job and you'll be in a better place to handle it.