This article deals with the psychological description of the sports career, including the history of the topic in Russian sport psychology before and during perestroika, two theoretical models of the sports career (synthetic and analytic), and conclusions drawn from the empirical research of sports careers of more than 200 Russian athletes representing different sports specializations and levels of achievement. Seven predictable crises of elite sports careers are considered from the perspective of typical problems and difficulties of athletes in each crisis, general symptoms and possible circumstances that reinforce crisis symptoms, ways to resolve a crisis, the influence of a crisis on sport performance, forms of "payment" for failure to resolve crises, and ways of providing psychological assistance to athletes in crisis periods of the sports career.

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