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HIPOTELS Talks brings together six leading sports figures to explore what lies behind talent

Álex Abrines, Virginia Torrecilla, Joan Toni Moreno, Àngels Moreno, Álex Sánchez Palomero and Nuria Iturrioz take centre stage at the first HIPOTELS Talks at the HIPOTELS Convention Center



Palma, 29 de september 2026 – Talent may be the starting point, but talent alone does not define a sporting career. Behind every result lie discipline, hard work and sacrifice, but also defeats, doubts, mental health, family and the people who support athletes along the way.

This was one of the key reflections to emerge from the first HIPOTELS Talks, held at the HIPOTELS Convention Center under the title "***What makes an athlete?***" Moderated by journalist Xisco Umbert, the event brought together Álex Abrines, Virginia Torrecilla, Joan Toni Moreno, Àngels Moreno, Álex Sánchez Palomero and Nuria Iturrioz — six athletes from different disciplines and with very different careers — to share the stories that usually remain beyond the scoreboard.

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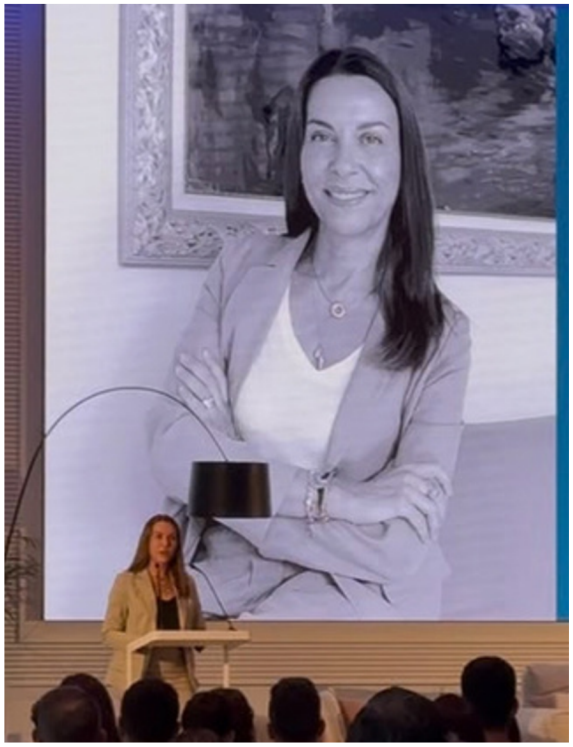

María Antonia Llull, Vice-President of HIPOTELS Hotels & Resorts, opened the event by explaining the purpose behind HIPOTELS Talks: to create a space for conversation, listening and learning from experiences that can make a meaningful contribution to society.

"*HIPOTELS is a Mallorcan company, born here and deeply connected to this island. We believe that being part of a community means more than simply carrying out our business activity: it means staying close to people, listening and contributing to the society of which we are part. This is the idea behind HIPOTELS Talks,*" she said.

Llull also highlighted HIPOTELS' long-standing relationship with sport and its ability to show younger generations a reality far removed from immediacy: behind every achievement lie perseverance, preparation and difficult moments.

The effort behind the result

The experiences shared by the six participants showed that there is no single path to becoming a professional athlete.

Virginia Torrecilla began playing football surrounded by boys older than herself. Álex Abrines wanted to play football before finding his place in basketball. Joan Toni Moreno tried different disciplines before discovering canoeing, while his sister Àngels found her way into the sport almost by chance. Nuria Iturrioz explored several sports before focusing on golf, while Álex Sánchez Palomero found in sport a way to rebuild his path after the accident he suffered at the age of 17.

Different journeys with much in common: training, studying, travelling, difficult decisions and countless hours of work that are rarely visible when competition begins. Sánchez Palomero summed up those demands by describing elite sport as "*very demanding and very tough*", adding that reaching the highest level means committing fully, even when there is never any guarantee of success.

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Mental health: learning to ask for help

Mental health was a central part of the conversation.

Álex Abrines spoke openly about the period when he developed an aversion to basketball and the importance of receiving professional help. Virginia Torrecilla reflected on her experience after being diagnosed with a brain tumour and the subsequent road accident involving her mother. Joan Toni Moreno spoke about the pressure he experienced during his time in artistic gymnastics.

Their different experiences converged around one idea: asking for help is also part of an athlete's preparation.

"*Working with a psychologist is just another part of the process. There is nothing wrong with it,*" said Àngels Moreno. Nuria Iturrioz echoed this idea, noting that when sport occupies such a significant part of your life, personal wellbeing inevitably becomes part of performance too.

The conversation therefore explored an increasingly important aspect of professional sport: learning to manage pressure, expectations, defeat and public exposure without separating the athlete from the person.

Winning, losing and starting again

What happens when a competition ends? How do athletes learn to live with defeat?

Abrines acknowledged that, at one stage in his career, he carried defeats on the court into his personal life. Over time, he learned to draw a line between the two: "*Whether you win or lose, you have to leave it at the arena and be able to go home*."

Nuria Iturrioz, meanwhile, explained how she tries to turn the frustration of defeat into energy for the next competition.

The event therefore focused not only on the ability to win, but also on something less visible: learning to lose, get back up and start again.



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Women continue to face greater barriers

HIPOTELS Talks also addressed the inequalities that still exist between men and women in professional sport.

Virginia Torrecilla reflected on how much women's football has changed since she began playing, while acknowledging that there is still progress to be made. Nuria Iturrioz highlighted the financial disparities that persist even at the highest levels of competition, while Àngels Moreno explained how certain disciplines have made progress towards greater equality.

Their experiences showed that the increased visibility achieved by women's sport in recent years continues to coexist with differences in opportunities, financial conditions and access to competition.

What remains beyond the medals

Virginia Torrecilla summed it up this way: "*I have the trophies in the cabinet, but above all, what stays with you are the people you have surrounded yourself with. That is the most beautiful thing about sport.*"

A reflection that captures the spirit of this first edition of HIPOTELS Talks: talent matters, but an athlete is shaped by hard work, perseverance, the ability to get back up and, above all, by the people who accompany them before, during and after competition.

As María Antonia Llull said when opening the event: "*The best stories begin with a good conversation.*"

About Hipotels Hotels & Resorts

For over 50 years, Hipotels has played a leading role in Mallorca's tourism development, becoming one of the island's hotel chains with the largest number of rooms.

Founded by Joan Llull, the group reflects his vision and character through a careful expansion strategy in destinations such as Mallorca, Cádiz, Lanzarote, and Cancún. With a hotel portfolio in constant renewal, this development model has allowed the company to maintain a close management style based on long-term relationships with both guests and employees.

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