

## Psychological Effects of Sports on an Athlete's Mental Health

Trevor Berk, Jordan Martin, Devin McCorkle, Travis Pullan, Colby Teague

University of Mount Olive

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Dr. Anthony Franklin

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The objective of our project is to highlight major key factors to the mental aspect of athletes. In the project, we will answer questions like what tendencies do athletes create in high-pressure situations? Our research will explain how those tendencies affect the athlete's performance. We will do a deep search on what psychological effects an athlete grows through during sports injuries and how that can affect their mental health.. Athletes tend to rush the rehabilitation process to get back in the action as soon as possible, but why? Our research will explain why these athletes are in such a rush to get back on the field, court, wrestling mat, and track. Are these athletes obsessed with perfection to the point of risking a major injury? Do balancing sports and school work have a serious impact on student-athletes? Our research will look at the depression crisis that is going on at the universities.

Mental health is an important topic that has recently been a topic of discussion among athletes. First, what is mental health? Mental health is the condition of a person's regard for their psychological well-being. But how is someone's mental health affected while playing sports from an amateur level to a professional level? Every athlete has their own limits that differentiate from sport to sport, person to person. "It depends on what has been the athlete's preparation within his or her sports history. If the athlete has not been emotionally prepared to understand that within the sport it is normal to lose or win, this may affect him/her if he/she does not know how to manage emotions (Sport Psychology, 2022)." when a coach or parent is preparing an athlete for the next level, the coach also needs to prepare the athlete for stress management. As young student-athletes grow up and move to the next grade and then move to the next stage in their lives, they are obligated to certain responsibilities that normal students do not have.

Through high school the workload is tolerable, and every sports team has athletes that are known for their ability. Once those athletes make it to the college level the workload goes up.

College student-athletes are expected to complete every paper and every assignment on time while striving for perfection within their sport. Top-level athletes coming out of high school tend to struggle with no longer being able to dominate like high school and are no longer in the limelight.

A 2019 NCAA survey found about 30% of participating female student-athletes felt "difficulties were piling up so high" that they felt that they couldn't overcome the difficulties. The 2019 survey also showed that 25% of males felt the same way. Not only are student-athletes faced with school work, practice, and traveling they are also faced with the chance of injuries. Injuries are an athlete's biggest fear. athletes fear missing 1 game or a whole season. But the biggest fear of an injury is the potential injury that could end the athlete's sports career. The athletes that do suffer from injury present a risk of post-traumatic stress that causes depression and anxiety. Coming back from a sports injury is a tedious process that requires a special focus. The road to recovery requires a consistent rehab schedule that gradually builds with time. Depending on the injury, the process can be quick or long, but the athlete needs to be determined to show up to every rehab session while continuing to maintain good grades. The issue is when an athlete suffers from an injury the athletes will tend to slack off in the classroom. Some athletes believe that there is no point for school if the athlete cant compete. But once an athlete is able to come back, the athlete may struggle to get back to the original form. An athlete that comes back from an ACL injury is known to favor that knee without trying. I personally know the feeling of suffering from an ACL injury, and I can say that even after 3 years I am still showing signs of an old knee injury. Injury can derail an athlete from the main goal of college, which is graduating with a degree. I struggled with motivation after my knee injury ended my football season my senior year.

One of the articles I have chosen to put in our literature review focuses on healing imagery and pain-management. The use of healing imagery and pain-management imagery can help an athlete get over an injury. Many skills are taught and learned in order to cope and successfully heal in a healthy manner. Some skills that athletes are taught include time management, responsibility, and control. Skills for overcoming an injury is not often talked about when teaching an athlete to be successful; however, the help of sport psychology allows an athlete to elevate their athletic ability by focusing on their performance and rehabilitation in order to get over an injury and it eases their mental state.

The use of sport psychology allows medical professionals and athletic trainers to provide and guide an athlete along the healing process. Sport psychology provides different techniques that allow many athletes to have a strong comeback when getting over an injury. Many techniques involved use imagery. Imagery can be used in many ways to help an athlete's mindset and it pushes them to recover from an injury successfully.

Imagery is a very useful technique in the healing process. There are two types of imagery that benefit athletes, healing imagery and pain-management imagery. Healing imagery allows an athlete to picture the body healing and it puts a positive note in their head of getting better, which allows them to perform better than before. Pain-management imagery allows an individual to be more aware of what is painful and what is hurting within their body. Overall, combining healing imagery and pain-management imagery allows many athletes to heal quicker and more effectively. If it weren't for these techniques, the world of healing would be much more difficult, and many athletes would not be able to continue playing the sport they love the most.

Returning to a sport the proper way is a topic that should be discussed more when it comes to an athlete's mental state. The main point discussed in this article deals with returning to a sport after a post-injury. As a competitive athlete, it sucks to be injured. Being a competitive athlete and you have experienced being injured over and over again is like feeling a pain that is long-term and you have to trust the process of the path to full recovery. An issue that should be addressed more is when coaches and parents tell you "Just walk it off, you will be fine."

Many coaches and parents are unaware of how severe their athlete's injury could be and they push them to keep playing through pain. However, pushing an athlete to continue playing through pain can be detrimental and may cause the injury to be more severe or even cause an athlete to lose their athletic career. Being injured over a course of time can also cause an athlete to pick up a bad habit. A common bad habit an athlete could pick up while being injured is depression. Athletes experience depression because they are not able to compete with their team and they have to sit on the sideline and just watch. Having to sit on the sidelines and watch your teammates play can cause a negative approach to one's mental state. As the season goes by and an athlete is injured and cannot play, it builds on to the depression and some athletes begin to wonder if they will ever play again. With that being said, coaches and parents should do a better job with communicating with their athletes and take in consideration what their athlete is feeling.

Overall, it is very important that coaches and parents are educated on the importance of an athlete's recovery and performance. If coaches and parents continue to push their athletes while injured and not knowing how severe it is, it will mentally and physically break them down and they will not be able to fully recover or even come back from their injury.

The research problem we are trying to figure out is the psychological effects playing sports has on an athlete's mental health. We are trying to figure out the positives and negatives to someone playing sports and how it relates to their mental health because it can go to both sides positive and negative. Mental health is serious to every human on earth, but why do athletes, mainly looking at college athletes, struggle with mental health? Our research problem getting to the sure of the built-up stress athletes put themselves through. Figuring out why athletes tend to feel desperate while studying in school or even if the athlete is not a student but has to stay focused year-round. When does the athlete start to lose motivation depending on the sport? Each sport has its own threshold that athletes reach before feeling the pressure.

I have personally seen on many occasions playing sports make a person's mental health improve while also on many occasions seeing an athlete's mental health get worse and start to cause problems. We are researching the problem of these psychological effects of sports that are making those positive and negative impacts and why that is. Why does sports take a toll on a person's mental health and how does that affect them psychologically? The problem we are truly facing is how some people can be benefitted psychologically from sports and some not and why exactly that is where we will dive deeper with many reasons that can affect a person psychologically and their mental health.

The methodology approach we are trying to figure out includes qualitative and quantitative methods. The qualitative method part can include us as a team going around campus and having many athlete's fill out a questionnaire on mental health or we do small interviews in private and keep all of our findings confidential. The quantitative method approach allows us as a team to gather all the information we have got from many athlete's on campus and put them in a numerical way that would show the percentages of male and female athletes and how they deal

with their mental health on a daily basis such as being a student versus being an athlete. Other findings we can include in our percentages involve what psychological effects playing the individual sport have on their mental health and how they deal with it each day they go to practice.

In this paper, we will propose a variety of questions. These questions consist of What is the role of inner motivation to get success in sports? How does a player develop self-motivation to use while on the field? What are the major drawbacks of confidence in a player? Role of a coach/ mentor in developing self-confidence in a player? Lastly, how a good score or goal could change a player's mindset and confidence level as a sportsman? Throughout this paper we will discuss the research that took place to answer these hard-hitting questions, along with where we found our research.

When answering the questions that our group has strategically selected, we will be accessing and using resources that can be found at The Moye Library, which is located here at the University of Mount Olive. If we can not find the answer to a specific question through the resources at Moye, we will take to the internet to view other research dissertations to cross-reference and provide the most accurate answer possible.

We chose these questions specifically because as athletes, we know the struggles that go into the mental preparation of performing in front of a crowd and our coaches. So, we decided to take a deeper dive in hopes to find answers that not only we can use to better ourselves and our teammates, but provide with other athletes on campus to ensure that Mount Olive has the best possible athletes!

The group would like to accomplish a variety of goals with our research. The main points consist of what psychological effects have to do with an Athlete's mentality and/or mental health. In a more simplistic format we want to find the key mental issues with the increase or decrease of an athlete's performance. Based on their mental health, what specific things are damaging or improving the athlete's level of performance. We want to find out what negative effects anxiety, depression, loneliness, perception & lack of confidence have on an athlete's game. We also will find what positive effects social status, confidence, self efficacy & self control have on an athletes performance. Once we create a result statistic for negative effects, it would be ideal to track these positive effects alongside. Therefore we are able to compare and contrast these two areas and give a very understandable showing of what goes on behind the eyes of an athlete and how it is affecting them in all aspects of performance, mentality & mental health.

A text our group decided to analyze for our presentation is titled "Sports psychology' a crucial ingredient for athletes' success: conceptual view". In this peer reviewed document, the authors Kumar, Parsanjeet; Shirotriya, Awadhesh Kr. Will discuss how the way an athlete perceives or views the practice of sports psychology could greatly impact his performance in a positive or negative manner. Kumar and Shirotriya go on to state that Traditionally athletes who dedicate their life to sports must first dedicate an enormous amount of time and preparation into their physical conditioning and technical skills.

This is further discussed by going into vast detail upon the vast importance and attention required to properly psychically prepare and how often great athletes will overlook this feat. From this the diversity, unpredictability and intensity of sport will cause even the greatest of athletes to crumble under the pressure presented.



From this the authors create a building point in which states that the human mind is complex with people learning and developing at different speeds. Psychological skills will be an inherent ability for some to control their state under pressure and maintain focus during extreme circumstances of uncertainty. The authors conclude the text by discussing how Sports psychology is striving hard to investigate athletic performance, to stabilize it to improve sports performance by seeking an appropriate balance between physiological and psychological dimensions of performance!

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