

COPING WITH THE DEMANDS OF BEING A COLLEGIATE STUDENT-  
ATHLETE: AN EXPLORATORY INVESTIGATION COUPLED WITH A SET OF  
PROCEDURAL GUIDELINES FOR ATHLETIC DEPARTMENT PERSONNEL AND  
RELATED SERVICES PROVIDERS

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## ABSTRACT

Research in sport psychology has identified some general reactions of collegiate student-athletes when meeting the academic requirements and sport performance demands of their institutions. Despite such awareness, limited information has been reported regarding: (a) the extent to which the day to day and longer range demands are considered as problematic and stressful for collegiate student-athletes; (b) how student-athletes cope with these situations; and (c) student-athletes' views on being provided support in managing their role as student and athlete. In an effort to obtain a more in depth understanding of these issues, a survey was created and distributed electronically to 550 student-athletes enrolled at an NCAA Division-1 college in Pennsylvania, with data being collected and used from 231 participants. Data for the entire sample was analyzed to identify areas of sport, school, and life that respondents found stressful, along with the coping mechanisms they used in their self management as student-athletes. Data was then analyzed based on gender, year in college, and sport. Out of the fifteen items included in the survey, twelve were rated as stressful by more than half of the participants. Although many items were rated as stressful, 5 out of the 12 items received moderate to extreme stress ratings. Specifically, not meeting their own expectations and grades received the highest stress ratings followed by pressure to win, balancing sport and academic demands, and being nervous before or during competition. In order to help manage these stressors, a majority of the student-athletes reported that they spend time with friends, take a break, exercise, and ask friends and family for advice, suggesting that they utilize both problem-focused and emotion-focused coping skills. Responses from the survey were used to create a set of guidelines for athletic department personnel and other

professionals working with collegiate student-athletes in an effort to increase their understanding of stress and coping and how to further proceed in learning how to balance sport and academic demands.

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## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION AND OVERVIEW

#### Abstract

This dissertation is an exploratory investigation considering the stressors collegiate student-athletes face and the coping mechanisms they use to manage these stressors. Student-athletes from a Division-1 college in Pennsylvania participated in this study, through survey distribution. Athletes' views on seeking help to manage these stressors and any support they have received in the past was also explored. Researchers have highlighted the dual-role of student and athlete and the challenges related to meeting the academic demands of their institution as well as the practice and performance demands of their sport teams. Despite this awareness, additional information is needed regarding the degree to which such demands are stressful, the ways in which student athletes cope with these stressors, and their views on receiving support in managing their role as a student-athlete. This chapter discusses the specific stressors student-athletes experience, the impact these stressors can have on their emotional and physical health, the role of coping in managing these stressors, and the tendency of student-athletes to not seek help when needed. Finally, the task of this dissertation is described as well as the

potential value of increased awareness of student-athletes' needs as well as the coping mechanisms that they use.

### Introduction

Everyone experiences stress in their life whether it be related to work, school, family, health, sport, or some other experience or event. While we attempt to manage these situations, stress is unique to each person and setting and often means different things to different people (Humphrey, Yow, & Bowden, 2000). In recent years, researchers have given increased attention to the stress elite athlete's face and how they cope with competition and athletic demands (Gould, Finch, & Jackson, 1993). As a result, researchers have called for the continued study of stress and coping with different subgroups of athletes using various methodology (Crocker, Kowalski, & Graham, 1998; Giacobbi, Lynn, Wetherington, Jenkins, Bodendorf, & Langley, 2004; Gould et al, 1993). Previous studies have consisted of relatively small sample sizes, have focused on a limited number of sports, and have predominantly used a case study approach. While various stressors have been identified which seem to affect student-athletes, further research is needed on the degree to which stress is experienced by athletes and the most commonly used coping strategies.

Psychologists have identified collegiate student-athletes as a population that faces unique challenges over and above the challenges that non-athletes face (Martens & Lee, 1998; Ward et al, 2005). Specific athletic demands can include practice, strength and conditioning training, travel, competition, and injury prevention and rehabilitation (Ward et al, 2005). Balancing these demands with academic expectations and responsibilities

can be stressful. Some athletes also battle eating disorders, alcohol and substance abuse, as well as anxiety and depression (Ward et al, 2005). Research has assessed prevalence rates of eating disorders for elite female student-athletes and found rates of nearly 8% for bulimia and 1.5% for anorexia (Hausenblaus & McNally, 2004; Petrie & Stoeber, 1993). Studies have also looked at prevalence rates of alcohol consumption for collegiate student-athletes which have ranged from 80 to 90% (Anderson, Albrect, & McKeag, 1993; National Collegiate Athletic Association, NCAA, 1997).

Athlete success in college and their emotional well-being can be linked to success in their sport (Fletcher, Benshoff, & Richburg, 2003). Athletes can experience significant disappointment when they do not perform up to their potential, lose an important game, sustain an injury, and do not make the team or lose a starting position. In addition to these performance pressures, collegiate athletes must meet the requirements of the NCAA and their respective schools (Fletcher et al, 2003). They need to take certain course requirements, maintain full-time student status, and earn a minimum grade point average. Student-athletes also need to follow the policies and procedures set forth by the college and university they attend while managing the stereotypes professors, staff, and other students may hold regarding student-athletes including “dumb jocks”, “overprivileged”, “lazy”, and “motivated to be at school in order to play his or her sport” (Fletcher et al, 2003, p.36). On the other hand, some professors may give student-athletes preferential treatment because of their athlete status, leading other students to resent this treatment.

Student-athletes must also manage their role, relationships, and status as a member of a sport team. According to Fletcher et al (2003), there are two types of teams: interactive and coactive. Interactive team members, such as those who are members of

basketball, football, volleyball, and softball teams work to produce team performance outcomes. Whereas coactive teams such as tennis, golf, and diving, focus on the sum of individual performance outcomes which make up the performance outcome of the team (Fletcher et al, 2003; Widmeyer & Williams, 1991). Student-athletes have to manage the group dynamics of their team including the team's norms, leadership, roles (captain, pitcher, running back, scapegoat), and communication among athletes and their coaches. Female student-athletes also face unique challenges. They are more likely than males to struggle with eating disorders or weight management (Fletcher et al, 2003). They can face negative stereotypes or beliefs about women who play sports and often have limited career possibilities in sport post graduation (Fletcher et al, 2003; Miller & Heinrich, 2001).

Research conducted by Wilson & Pritchard (2005) compared sources of stress in freshman collegiate student-athletes versus non-athletes. Survey results indicated that student-athletes reported more stress than non-athletes in the following areas: having various responsibilities, not getting enough sleep, having heavy demands from extracurricular activities, and dealing with conflicts with significant others in their life (Wilson & Pritchard, 2005). Interviews conducted by Humphries et al (2000) found that almost half of the male athletes and slightly more than half of the female athletes they interviewed indicated that stresses particularly associated with sport participation including the pressure to win, excessive anxiety, frustration conflict, irritation, and fear significantly affected their mental and emotional health. Alternatively, Kimball & Freysinger (2003) investigated sport participation of collegiate student-athletes and found that while sport participation was distressing, it was also a source of positive stress and a

means of coping. They found that stress as a student-athlete is experienced both negatively and positively and changes across situations and time.

Humphries et al (2000) solicited the input of athletes, coaches, and athletic administrators and identified four consequences of stress among athletes: “impact on mental/emotional health, impact on physical health, negative impact on athletic performance, and negative impact on academic performance” (p.43). Additional research has also suggested that college athletes who experience high levels of stress are more likely to practice bad health habits (Shirka, 1997) and experience psychological problems such as lower self-esteem and anxiety (Hudd, Dumlao, Erdmann-Sager, Murray, Phan, Soukas, & Yokozuka, 2000). Student-athletes also report physical concerns such as fatigue, headaches, and digestive problems (Humphries et al, 2000). As a result of the potential physical and emotional consequences stress can have on student-athletes, it is important to continue to explore the various stressors that are experienced and how individuals are, or are not, able to cope with these demands.

Many factors in the environment and the person must combine to generate stress and its effects (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984). Psychological stress can be defined as a relationship between the person and the environment that is appraised by the person as taxing or exceeding his or her resources and endangering his or her well-being (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984). Two critical processes that mediate the person-environment relationship are cognitive appraisal and coping. Lazarus and Folkman (1984) define cognitive appraisal as “an evaluative process that determines why and to what extent a particular transaction or series of transactions between the person and the environment is stressful” (p.19). Coping is defined as “the process through which the individual manages

the demands of the person-environment relationship that are appraised as stressful and the emotions they generate” (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984, p.19). This process-oriented definition is concerned with what the person actually thinks or does as opposed to what the person usually does. Focus is placed on the specific context in which the coping thoughts and actions are directed as well as the change in these thoughts and actions (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984). Coping is seen as a shifting process in which one form of coping must be relied on more heavily at one time while another form of coping is needed at another time. As a result, there is a need for information about what coping patterns are used and under what conditions.

Previous research has suggested that 10% to 15% of student-athletes suffer from distress that warrants clinical attention (Hinkle, 1994; Murray, 1997). Research has found positive effects of interventions such as goal setting, relaxation, and imagery on athletic performance (Maniar et al, 2001; Meyers, Whelan, & Murphy, 1996; Vealy, 1994). However, student-athletes have been hesitant to utilize sport psychology services and therefore do not take advantage of these interventions. Compared to non-athletes, collegiate student-athletes tend to underutilize mental health services (Bergandi & Wittig, 1984; Pinkerton, Hinz, & Barrow, 1989). They are reportedly more likely to seek help and guidance from family, friends, and coaches. Various explanations have been provided as to why student-athletes do not take advantage of counseling or support services including: they see seeking help as a sign of weakness, having to see a counselor may weaken their coaches and teammates confidence in them, and/or it may affect their overall image (Watson, 2005). Student-athletes may also feel uncomfortable seeking help outside of the athletic department (Greenspan and Anderson, 1995). They may believe

service providers will not understand the needs, concerns, and pressures that they face as student-athletes (Greenspan & Anderson, 1995; Maniar et al, 2001). In addition, student-athletes tend to have a narrow view of what counseling or support services can entail. For example, Maniar et al (2001) found that student-athletes expect counseling to be mainly focused on pathological issues. It will be important to increase student-athletes knowledge of the benefits and type of services that can be provided. In addition, it is important to understand athletes' needs and expectations so that counselors, psychologists, and athletic departments can structure the services they provide to better meet the student-athletes needs.

The task of this dissertation was to assess the perceived stressors and coping mechanisms utilized by collegiate student-athletes at a Division 1 college in Pennsylvania. Student-athletes were asked to provide information, through survey instrumentation, about the stressors they face as student-athletes, how stressful they perceive these stressors to be, and the coping mechanisms they use. The athletes' views on seeking help to manage these stressors were assessed. It was anticipated that such a survey would provide information regarding pressures related to making the team, winning, meeting own and others expectations, managing their relationship with their coach, nervousness before and during competition, balancing sport and academic demands, missing classes, grades, finances, overall enjoyment of the sport, perceptions of others, and maintaining a social life. Additionally, the coping mechanisms that student-athletes use were assessed. Results of the survey were used to analyze areas of stress faced by the majority of student-athletes and the commonly used coping mechanisms that were endorsed. This information will contribute to the understanding of student-athletes'

experience at this Division 1 college and the implications of the findings as it relates to the college, athletic department, and related personnel.

An exploratory investigation about stressors male and female student-athletes experience across sport, age, and year in college is relevant to the field of sport and professional psychology because student-athletes are a population at-risk for emotional and physical problems related to the multiple stressors occurring in their lives as a result of being a student-athlete. The results of this investigation may help inform sport psychologists, athletic departments, and related personnel about the needs of this population as it relates to a particular collegiate setting. Student-athlete opinions of counseling services can help inform professionals about the possible need to reach out to student-athletes in various ways, possibly through work with individual sport teams. Taking into consideration the results of the survey, guidelines were created for the athletic department and related services personnel for how they can further proceed in helping student-athletes balance sport and academic demands.

### Summary

Collegiate student-athletes are faced with meeting the academic demands of their institution as well as the practice and performance demands of their sport teams. As a result of this dual role of student and athlete, these individuals experience unique stressors related to extensive time demands, pressure to perform, managing relationships, and meeting academic expectations (Fletcher et al, 2003; Humphrey et al, 2000). These stressors can have both a physical and emotional impact leading to problems such as fatigue, headaches, digestive problems, lower self-esteem, and anxiety. Despite the



awareness of the stressors student-athletes face, there is limited information regarding the extent to which these demands are stressful, the common ways student-athletes reportedly cope with these stressors, and their views on the need to receive support in managing their role as a student and athlete. Previous studies have also focused on a limited number of sport teams and have predominantly used a case study approach. As a result of the impact stress can have on student-athletes, it is important to continue to study stress and its affect on athletes. It is also important for the athletic department and related personnel to work closely with coaches and athletes to determine the needs of student-athletes and how these needs can be addressed.

## CHAPTER II

### REVIEW OF RELEVANT LITERATURE

#### ABSTRACT

This chapter reviews the history of the stress concept and presents a definition of psychological stress and the physical and emotional impact it can have on individuals, particularly student-athletes. Cognitive appraisal, a concept which has been firmly entrenched in research and theory on stress and coping, is also described. Lazarus & Folkman's (1984) transactional stress approach and coping process is presented along with the functions of coping, specifically problem-focused and emotion-focused coping. The impact of resources and constraints on the ability to cope is also explored. Specific sources of stress related to student-athletes, such as pressure to perform, competitive anxiety and doubt, time constraints, and conflict with coaches are presented along with the effect these stressors can have on student-athletes. The use of various coping strategies, the need for support, and the reported underutilization of counseling and sport psychology services is discussed. Finally, the application of a program planning and evaluation framework to create guidelines for individuals working with student-athletes as well as programs created to meet athletes' needs is presented.

## History of the Stress Concept

The term stress was first used as early as the 14<sup>th</sup> century to mean hardship, adversity, or affliction (cf. Lumsden, 1981, p.2). Hooke, in the 17<sup>th</sup> century, used stress in the context of the physical sciences, to mean the “ratio of the internal force to the area over which the force acted” (cited in Hinkle, 1977; p.2). Walter Cannon in 1932 considered stress a disturbance of homeostasis under conditions such as cold, lack of oxygen, low blood pressure and spoke of stress as being something that could be measured (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984). In 1936, Hans Selye used the term stress to mean a set of bodily defenses against any form of noxious stimulus which he termed the General Adaptation Syndrome (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984). At this time stress was described not as an environmental demand, but a physiological set of reactions and processes created by the demand. Hans Selye helped spread the interest in the concept of stress from physiology to psychology. Wolf also played an important role in the evolution of the concept of stress. Wolf (1953) saw stress as a reaction of an organism and emphasized that stress is a “dynamic state” that involves adapting to demands (p.3). This view of a dynamic state leads to other aspects of stress, including coping and the costs and benefits associated with it (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984).

Stress, for a period of time, was considered an organizing framework for thinking about psychopathology. One of the earliest applications of the term was found in a book about World War II by Grinker and Spiegel (1945) entitled *Men Under Stress*. Focus was placed on the effect of stress on the functioning of soldiers during combat. Risk of injury or death was explored as soldiers would become immobilized or panicked during critical moments (as cited in Lazarus & Folkman, 1984). Many studies were also directed at the

effects of stress on adrenal-cortical hormones and on skilled performance during the Korean War. The dominant view was that “stress or anxiety resulted in the impairment of skilled performance either by excessively heightening drive tension or by creating interference or distraction” (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984, p.7). Individual differences in response to stress have also been explored. Research has found that people differ in their optimal level of arousal as well as the way they cope with demands (Lazarus & Erikson, 1952). Since the 1960s, researchers have recognized that while stress is inevitable, it is coping that makes the difference in adaptational outcome (Haan, 1977; Lazarus 1966; Lazarus & Folkman, 1984; Murphy & Moriarty, 1976; Pearlin & Schooler, 1978). The realization of the importance of person factors such as motivation and coping led to changes in the formulation of the stress concept. Lazarus (1966) emphasized the role of coping through his book *Psychological Stress and the Coping Process*. More recently, focus has been placed on stress associated with transitions and social change (ex. retirement, widowhood, child development), stress and illness, and the impact of environmental resources and social and physical demands.

### Definition of Stress

While research has been conducted on the stress concept, an accepted universal definition of stress has yet to be determined. According to Lazarus & Folkman (1984), stress has been most commonly defined by psychologists simply as “a stimulus”. Stress stimuli are considered to be events that impinge on the person and are also known as stressors. Lazarus and Cohen (1977) highlight three main types of stressors or stress stimuli: 1) Major changes that are often cataclysmic and affect a large number of people.

This can include natural disasters such as earthquakes or man-made disasters such as war and terrorism; 2) Major changes that affect one or a few people. This can include events such as the death of a loved one, a life-threatening illness, giving birth, or getting a divorce; and 3) Daily hassles. This can include having too many responsibilities, feeling lonely, having an argument with a friend, having your car breakdown, etc.

In a report on Stress and Human Health by Elliott & Eisdorfer (1982), four types of stressors differing in duration are outlined: 1) Acute, time-limited stressors such as going on a rollercoaster or waiting for surgery; 2) Stressor sequences which are “series of events that occur over an extended period of time as the result of an initiating event such as job loss, divorce, or bereavement” (p.14); 3) Chronic intermittent stressors which may occur once a day, once a week, or once a month such as visiting a sick relative; and 4) Chronic stressors which persist continuously for a long period of time such as job stress or a permanent disability or injury. While it is helpful to look at groups or categories of stressors, it is important to keep in mind that there are individual differences and reactions to stressors. The stimulus-response approach looks at the stimulus or stressor as well as the response of the person. Stimulus-response approaches ask the crucial questions of “what it is about the stimulus that produces a particular stress response, and what it is about the response that indicated a particular stressor. It is the observed stimulus-responses relationship, not stimulus or response, that defines stress” (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984, p.15). Therefore a stimulus is a stressor when it produces a stressful behavioral or physiological response, and a response is stressful when it is produced by a demand, threat, or load.

Many factors in the environment and the person must combine to generate stress and its effects. Lazarus & Folkman's (1984) define psychological stress as a relationship between the person and the environment that is appraised by the person as taxing or exceeding his or her resources and endangering his or her well-being. This is the definition which is used for this dissertation. Two critical processes that mediate the person-environment relationship are cognitive appraisal and coping.

### Cognitive Appraisal

Lazarus and Folkman (1984) define cognitive appraisal as “an evaluative process that determines why and to what extent a particular transaction or series of transactions between the person and the environment is stressful” (p.19). There are certain demands and pressures that produce stress in many people (ex. the death of a loved one, the loss of a job), but there are also individual differences in people's reaction to the stress. People differ in their sensitivity to certain types of events and their interpretations of these events. Some individuals may respond with anxiety, or anger, or feel challenged instead of threatened. In order to understand individual variations, the cognitive processes that intervene between the encounter and reaction need to be explored (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984). Cognitive appraisal is the “process of categorizing an encounter, and its various facets, with respect to its significance for well-being” (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984, p.31). A person's evaluation of an event will affect the consequent decision-making process. A growing number of researchers are including cognitive appraisal in their theory, as opposed to previous research that was not focused on the cognitive piece but focused on

the drive-reinforcement model and arousal or activation. Levine, Weinberg, & Ursin (1978), highlight the role of cognitive appraisal;

“It appears that it is not just the stimuli or physical environment per se that determines the physiological response, but the individual’s evaluation of these stimuli. This may be regarded as a filter or gathering function. Thus, if the organism evaluates the situation as threatening and uncertain, there will be a continuing high level of activation. However, if the organism evaluates the situation as being safe and one in which he can master the probable events, the resulting physiological response will be diminished, if not absent, even though the situation itself had been extremely threatening.” (p.6)

A distinction has been made between primary appraisal which asks the questions, “Am I in trouble or being benefited, now or in the future, and in what way?” and secondary appraisal which is concerned with “What if anything can be done about it” (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984, p.31). Primary appraisal can be broken down into three categories: irrelevant, benign-positive, and stressful. When an encounter with the environment has no implication for the individual’s well-being, it falls under the category of irrelevant appraisal. The individual has no investment in the outcome and there is nothing perceived to be gained or lost in the transaction. A benign-positive appraisal occurs when the outcome of an encounter is seen as positive and in some way enhances the well-being of the individual. A stress appraisal can include harm or loss, threat, and challenge (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984). In the case of harm or loss, there has already been some damage sustained to the individual, such as an illness or injury, the loss of a loved one, or damage to a person’s self-esteem. Threat includes anticipated harm or loss which has not taken place yet and is often associated with anxiety and fear. Threat permits anticipatory coping and the working through of some difficulties in advance. Challenge focuses on the potential for growth from an encounter and is associated with pleasurable emotions such as excitement (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984). These categories are not

mutually exclusive with certain encounters or situations often being appraised as more than one (ex. as both a challenge and a threat).

Secondary appraisal involves the evaluation of what can be done to manage the situation. It is an important feature of every stressful encounter because the outcome of the situation depends on what, if anything, can be done. Secondary appraisal is “ a complex evaluative process that takes into account which coping options are available, the likelihood that a given coping option will accomplish what it is supposed to, and the likelihood that one can apply a particular strategy or set of strategies effectively” (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984, p.35). Secondary and primary appraisals interact with each other in determining the degree of stress and the type of emotional reaction. For instance, if a person is not able to deal with a demand, stress will be relatively great since the harm cannot be prevented or overcome. Reappraisal refers to a change in the appraisal of a situation on the basis of new information from the environment. Effort may be made to reinterpret the past more positively or to deal with present threats by viewing them as less damaging (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984).

Overall, the concept of cognitive appraisal has been firmly entrenched in research and theory on stress and coping. Vulnerability is also used in the study of psychological stress and human adaptation. Vulnerability is conceptualized as the adequacy of the individual’s resources to deal with demands. According to Lazarus & Folkman (1984), a deficiency in resources makes a person psychologically vulnerable only when the deficit is something that matters. Therefore, vulnerability can be thought of as a potential threat that becomes an active threat only when the deficit is valued. Additional factors that affect cognitive appraisal include commitments and beliefs. Commitments are an



expression of what is important to a person and can guide people into or away from situations that threatened, harm, or benefit them. Beliefs, preexisting notions about reality, also determine how a person evaluates what is happening (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984). Beliefs about personal control are particularly relevant to stress theory. Beliefs about personal control have to do with confidence and feelings of mastery. There are general beliefs, which are concerned with the extent to which people assume they can control events and outcomes of importance and, situational control, which refers to the extent to which a person believes that he or she can shape or influence a particular stressful person-environment relationship (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984). In general, people avoid threatening situations they believe will exceed their coping skills. A person's belief in one's ability to control an event also influences how the event is appraised. If the appraisal of an encounter is to lead to adaptive coping, the appraisal must be realistic and evaluate coping options in relation to the actual demands of the environment and his or her coping resources (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984).

### Coping

The concept of coping has played an important role in psychology. Coping is a focus of many psychotherapies and educational programs which include the development of coping skills as one of their goals. The concept of coping is found in 2 different research literatures, one derived from the tradition of animal experimentation and the other from psychoanalytic ego psychology. Within the animal model, coping is frequently defined as "acts that control aversive environmental conditions, thereby lowering psychophysiological disturbance" (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984, p.118).

According to the psychoanalytic ego psychology model, coping is defined as realistic and flexible thoughts and acts that solve problems and thereby reduce stress. The main difference between these models is that the latter focuses on ways of perceiving and thinking about the person's relationship with the environment and less focus is placed on behavior as in the animal model (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984).

The psychoanalytic ego psychology which has dominated coping theory has also dominated coping measurement. Focus has been placed on classifying individuals in order to make predictions about how they will cope with stressful encounters (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984). A distinction has been made between coping traits and styles. A coping style refers to broad, pervasive, and encompassing ways of relating to particular types of people such as the friendly or hostile, the controlling or the permissive, or the particular types of situations such as ambiguous or clear, and temporary or chronic as examples (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984). Traits are properties of people that dispose them to react in certain ways in given situations and are usually narrower in scope (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984).

Lazarus and Folkman (1984) highlight limitations of these traditional approaches to coping. The four main concerns are: 1) the treatment of coping as a structural trait or style; 2) the failure to distinguish coping from automatized adaptive behavior; 3) the confounding of coping with outcome; and 4) the equation of coping with mastery (p.128). Lazarus and Folkman (1984) believe that trait conceptualization and measure of coping underestimate the complexity of actual coping efforts. Coping is seen as a complex mixture of thoughts and behaviors, with an array of strategies being used. This view goes beyond the focus and measurement of stable traits. Lazarus and Folkman (1984) make a

distinction between coping and automatized adaptive behavior with coping implying effort while automatized behavior does not. Initially, when a situation is novel, responses are not likely automatic and can involve some type of coping. As the situation is encountered more frequently, the responses become increasingly automatized through the learning process and coping is no longer needed. Thirdly, coping is often tied to outcome. For example, saying that a person coped with a situation suggests that the demands were successfully overcome. Lazarus and Folkman (1984), propose that definitions of coping must include efforts to manage stressful demands, regardless of outcome. Finally, coping should not only be equated with mastery over the environment. There are some situations or sources of stress that cannot be mastered. Coping that can be concerned with managing emotions and maintaining self-esteem can be just as important.

Coping is described by researchers from different theoretical perspectives as “cognitive, affective, and behavioral efforts to manage specific internal and external demands” (Crocker, Kowalski & Graham, 1998; Endler et al, 1993; Holt & Hogg, 2002, p.252; Lazarus, 1991). The conceptual framework for the present dissertation is based on the transactional process perspective (Aldwin, 2004; Lazarus & Folkman, 1984). The theory states that situational appraisals are key determinants of a person’s emotional reactions and coping responses (Giacobbi et al, 2004). Taken from this approach, coping is a function of the person and the environment and is defined as “constantly changing cognitive and behavioral efforts to manage specific external and/or internal demands that are appraised as taxing or exceeding the resources of the person” (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984, p.141). This process-oriented definition is concerned with what the person actually thinks or does as opposed to what the person usually does. Focus is also placed on the

specific context in which the coping thoughts and actions are directed as well as the change in these thoughts and actions (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984). Coping is seen as a shifting process in which one form of coping must be relied on more heavily at one time while another form of coping is needed at another time. How individuals cope with situations can alter their environment or their perception of how controllable the environment is (Aldwin, 1994). Therefore, the environment may also play a role in shaping the coping strategies used (Holt & Hogg, 2002).

### Coping Functions

Two coping functions that are prominent in the literature are problem-focused coping and emotion-focused coping. Problem-focused coping is directed at managing or altering problems causing distress. This is often used when conditions are appraised as amenable to change. Problem-focused coping involve efforts directed at defining the problem, generating alternative solutions, weighing costs and benefits of these alternatives, and then choosing one and acting accordingly (Holt & Hogg, 2002; Lazarus & Folkman, 1984). Emotion-focused coping is directed at regulating the emotional response to the problem. Emotion-focused forms of coping are more likely to occur when a person appraises that nothing can be done to modify harmful or challenging environmental conditions (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984). Several forms of emotion-focused coping are found in the literature. One form is focused on cognitive processes directed at lessening emotional distress through the use of strategies such as avoidance, minimization, distancing, selective attention, and making positive comparisons (Holt & Hogg, 2002; Lazarus & Folkman, 1984). Another form of emotion-focused coping is

directed at increasing emotional distress. This is often associated with those individuals who first need to feel worse before they can feel better. These individuals tend to engage in self-blame or some other form of self-punishment. Others deliberately increase their emotional distress in order to mobilize themselves for action, such as athletes who may “psych themselves up” for competition (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984). In addition, individuals may change the way an encounter is viewed by changing the meaning of the situation. For example, ‘I didn’t really want to start the game anyway. It’s better to come off the bench.’ Behavioral strategies are also used such as engaging in exercise, meditating, having a drink, venting anger, and seeking emotional support (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984). Forms of emotion-focused coping are often used to maintain hope and optimism.

### Coping Resources and Constraints

The ways in which people cope also depend on the resources that are available to them and the constraints that inhibit the use of these resources. While it would be nearly impossible to list all of the resources people draw upon in order to cope with a variety of demands, Lazarus and Folkman (1984), identify major categories of resources. One such category is health and energy. Individuals who are sick, tired, and have less energy to expend will have more difficulty utilizing coping efforts. Therefore, it is easier to cope when one is healthy and feeling well. Viewing oneself positively is also regarded as an important psychological resource for coping. “Hope can be encouraged by the generalized belief that outcomes are controllable, that one has the power to affect such outcomes, that a particular person or program is efficacious, or by positive beliefs about

justice, free will, or God. Hope can exist only when such beliefs make a positive outcome seem possible, if not probable” (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984, p.159). Problem-solving skills are also important resources for coping. Problem-solving skills include the ability to search for information, analyze a situation in order to identify the problem and generate courses of action, weigh the alternatives with respect to outcomes, and select and implement an appropriate plan of action. Social skills, the ability to communicate with others in ways that are socially appropriate and effective, is also a coping resource. Social skills facilitate problem-solving and increases the ability to turn to others for support (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984). The social support received from others, which can be emotional, informational and/or tangible, is also an important resource as well as material resources such as money. Those who have monetary resources frequently have greater coping resources or options available to them.

In addition to looking at the importance of resources, it is also necessary to look at the constraints that exist which can impede the utilization of these coping resources. Personal constraints, such as cultural values or beliefs, can serve to inhibit the use of resources (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984). For example, individuals who have social support available to them but are unable to use them because of how they view this support. They may decline help because they see it as implying that they are needy or helpless. Environmental constraints, especially material resources such as money, may also prohibit an individual from utilizing a needed or valuable resource. The level of threat a person experiences can also play a role in coping. According to Lazarus and Folkman (1984), the extent to which a person feels threatened is in part a function of his or her evaluation of the coping resources available in a particular situation. Therefore, the level

of threat, whether it be minimal or extreme, influences the extent to which available resources can be used for coping (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984). It is important to keep in mind that coping resources are usually not constant over time. They are likely to fluctuate based on experience and time.

### Treatment of Stress

Several theories or approaches exist that apply to the treatment or management of stress including dynamic, behavioral, and cognitive. Dynamic approaches which have originated from Freudian psychoanalysis are concerned with how counterproductive coping solutions which originated earlier in life continue in the present (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984). Treatment is focused on helping the individual discover the origins of poor coping and how to acquire more effective coping strategies. Behavioral approaches emphasize some form of conditioning. The belief is that neutral cues in the environment generate anxiety and avoidant coping responses become habitual reactions because they reduce anxiety (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984, p.339). Treatment is focused on exposing the sources of anxiety and deconditioning them so that more adaptive ways of coping can be learned. In more recent years, focus has been placed on cognitive-behavioral approaches. One of the earlier cognitive-behavioral approaches, rational-emotive therapy, views the individual's conception of a situation as more important in determining the person's reaction (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984). Therapy is focused on helping the client give up irrational beliefs and think more constructively. Beck's cognitive-behavioral therapy focuses on negative and distorted beliefs again with the focus being on replacing these maladaptive thoughts (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984). Finally, Meichenbaum emphasizes

cognitive restructuring and views an individual's distress as coming from faulty ways of viewing troubling events. The stress inoculation training which he proposes is focused on increasing awareness of negative self-statements and learning new problem-solving and coping skills (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984). In addition to these approaches specific strategies such as relaxation techniques, use of imagery, meditation, biofeedback, and behavior modification have been recommended to help manage stress and increase an individual's overall well-being (Humphrey, Yow, & Bowden, 2000). The use of humor along with a healthy diet can also have a positive impact (Humphrey et al, 2000).

#### Effect of Stress on Athletes

Wide-spread interest and participation in sport at all levels has led to an increase in the research of the psychological well-being of athletes (Storch, Storch, Killiany, & Roberti, 2005). Two schools of thought have emerged regarding athletic participation as it relates to stress. One school of thought highlights that involvement in recreational sports during childhood and adolescence has a number of benefits including improved self-esteem, body image, general mental health, and decreased levels of social anxiety, depression, stress, and diabetes (International Society of Sport Psychology, 1992; Ryska, 2002; Steiner, McQuivey, Pavelski, Pitts, & Kramer, 2000). The second school of thought focuses on the additional stressors associated with playing sports at the collegiate level. These additional stressors include increased competition, negotiating relationships with teammates and coaches, a decrease in social interactions as a result of athletic commitments, and performance anxiety (Richards & Aries, 1999; Storch et al, 2005).



According to Kimball and Freysinger (2003), sport participation can have important positive developmental consequences for physical maturation, personal and social identity, opportunities for learning and developing skills, and recognition for commitment and achievement. Despite these benefits, it can also be a source of stress for collegiate athletes. Stressors indicated by interviewed athletes included feeling a lack of control over a situation, stereotypes and perceptions of others, lack of a sense of competence, and having a limited social network (Kimball & Freysinger, 2003). In order to explore the relationship between stress and collegiate sport participation, the authors interviewed 14 student-athletes during or close to their competitive season. Findings indicate that “while the sport participation of collegiate student-athletes was indeed distressing, it was also a source of positive stress and a means of coping, and that student-athletes constantly negotiate the distress their sport participation engenders” (Kimball & Freysinger, 2003, p.134). This is consistent with Lazarus’ view that stress is a transactional process.

Additional studies have found that collegiate student-athletes who experience high levels of stress are more likely to practice bad health habits (Hudd et al., 2000) and to report physical health concerns including lack of sleep, fatigue, headaches, and digestive problems (Humphrey et al, 2000). Storch et al (2005) looked at the rates of psychosocial maladjustment in a sample of intercollegiate athletes and non-athletes from a public university in the southeast. They found that elite collegiate female athletes experience elevated levels of depressive symptoms and social anxiety and perceive themselves as having less social supports than female non-athletes. Stress can also lead to athlete burn-out (Goodger, Gorely, Lavalley, & Harwood, 2007). Burnout, first

conceptualized by Maslach and Jackson (1984), is comprised of three dimensions: emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and reduced performance accomplishment. Raedke, Lunney, & Venables (2002) developed a sport or athlete-specific version and defined burnout as “a withdrawal from [sport] noted by a reduced sense of accomplishment, devaluation/resentment of sport, and physical/psychological exhaustion” (p.181).

### Sources of Stress

Previous research suggests that while each sport is unique and has its own set of circumstances, athletes who differ in sport, age, ability, and experience share some common sources of competitive stress (Gould, 1993; James & Collins, 1997). One common source is related to self-evaluation (being concerned with what others think, not wanting to perform poorly or to let others down). James and Collins (1997) suggest that a larger process related to self evaluation, self presentation, also contributes to the stress athletes experience. Self presentation refers to an individuals attempt to control the impressions others form of them. Additional stressors athletes may experience include: extensive time demands placed upon them, injuries, conflict with coaches, pressure to win, and academic demands including tests, assignments, missing classes because of travel and making up assignments (Humphrey et al, 2000; Wilson & Pritchard, 2005).

James and Collins (1997) interviewed 20 athletes from various sports ranging in age from 17 to 31 years who participated from the club level to the national and international level. Sources of stress that were found included significant others (coach pressure, relationships with teammates, parental demands, wanting to perform well in

front of significant others), social evaluation and self-presentational concerns, competitive anxiety and doubt (nervousness and worry about performance), perceived readiness (not feelings adequately prepared), nature of the competition (level and importance of competition), environmental demands (weather, condition of playing surface/venue), not performing to required standard (not meeting performance goals, making mistakes), fatigue and getting injured (James & Collins, 1997).

Gould, Jackson, & Finch (1993) also investigated the sources of stress experienced by 17 national champion figure skaters who held their titles between 1985 and 1990. The definition of stress that they used was taken from a previous study conducted by Scanlan, Stein, & Ravizza (1991): “When we discuss stress or pressure now, I am referring to the negative emotions, feelings, and thoughts that you might have had with respect to your skating experience. These would include feelings of apprehension, anxiety, muscle tension, nervousness, physical reactions (such as butterflies in the stomach, shaking, or nervous sweating), thoughts centered on worry and self-doubt, and negative statements to yourself” (p.105). The skaters were asked to identify sources of stress both before becoming a national champion figure skater and after this accomplishment. Six general dimensions of stress were revealed: high performance expectations and standards, demands on resources (time demands, media exposure, financial stress, undesirable training situations), competitive anxiety and doubt (fear of failure, lack of self-confidence), significant other stressors (conflict with coach, problems with partner, stress on family and friends), physical demands on body, and miscellaneous sources of stress (struggle for identity and independence, decision to skate in one or two events) (Gould et al, 1993). Reported sources of stress were similar both

before and after becoming a national champion, with more stress related to expectations after becoming a national champion figure skater.

Holt and Hogg (2002) used a case study approach to identify and examine soccer players' perceptions of sources of stress and coping strategies prior to the 1999 soccer world cup finals. Seven of the 21 members of the women's national soccer team participated and four main categories of stressors were found: communication with coaches, demands of the sport, competitive stressors (anxiety, pressure to perform, fear of making mistakes, fear of being cut, being ready to play off the bench) and distractions such as fatigue and other opponents (Holt & Hogg, 2002).

Giacobbi, Lynn, Wetherington, Jenkins, Bodendorf, & Langley (2004) interviewed five female first-year university swimmers on three separate occasions during their freshman year of college in order to examine the sources of stress and coping responses these athletes experience. Sources of stress that were reported resulted in the emergence of five dimensions of stress: training intensity, high performance expectations, interpersonal relationships (ex. relationships with coaches and teammates), being away from home, and academics (transition to university academic demands and balancing sport with academics). While the above mentioned studies have looked at sources of stress and coping efforts, a need exists for the study of a larger sample of student-athletes from various sports teams, including looking at the coping mechanisms that are used.

#### Athletes Use of Coping Strategies

Holt & Hogg (2002) examined soccer players' perceptions of coping strategies used prior to the 1999 soccer world cup finals. Four main coping strategies were

reportedly used: reappraising (positive self-talk, problem-solve after a mistake, and recalling past successful performance and accomplishments), use of social support (encouragement from teammates, support from family members and past coaches), performance behaviors (communication on the field, good warm-up in preparation), and blocking (ignoring irrelevant distractions and focusing on the game) (Holt & Hogg, 2002). General coping responses used by the freshman athletes in the Giacobbi at al (2004) study included social support (from family and teammates), active cognitive efforts (focus on task, positive reinterpretation, and gaining insight), emotional release (venting, humor), and religion. Tracey and Corlett (1995) interviewed first-year university track and field athletes and found that students relied on time management, organizational skills, and support from their teammates as important responses to stress.

Rosenfeld and Richman (1997) presented a model of social support which they define as behaviors perceived by a recipient to enhance well-being. The model consists of four components: the recipient of support, the support provider, the interactional social exchange process between the recipient and provider, and outcomes of the exchange process. Types of support that are provided include: tangible (assistance with completing a task), informational, and emotional (Rosenfeld & Richman, 1997). Researchers have shown that social support is related to athlete satisfaction, group cohesion, and the ability to adapt to challenges (Petrie & Stoeber, 1997; Rosenfeld & Richman, 1997; Tracey & Corlett, 1995).

Crocker & Graham (1995) examined how competitive athletes cope with stress, relationships between coping and negative and positive affect, and gender differences in coping and affect in competitive athletes. The sample consisted of 235 athletes (123 men

and 112 women) with a mean age of 20.4 years. Thirty-seven national/junior national, 27 provincial, 162 university, and 10 regional athletes were included in the study. In addition to completing a coping scale questionnaire and the Positive Affect and Negative Affect Schedule (PANAS: Watson, Clark, & Tellegen, 1988), each athlete was asked to recall a recent athletic situation from practice or a game situation in which the athlete experiences “performance difficulties” or “felt under pressure to perform”. The participants wrote a description of the situation and an assessment of their performance goal incongruence. The results showed that participants used primarily problem-focused coping strategies such as increasing effort, planning, active coping, and suppression of competing activities. Findings also indicated that females reported higher levels of seeking social support for emotional reasons (Crocker & Graham, 1995). In terms of affect, positive affect was positively related to problem-focused coping strategies such as active coping, planning, effort, and suppression of competing activities. Positive affect was negatively related to wishful thinking and behavioral disengagement. Negative affect or “a measure of general subjective distress” was positively related to wishful thinking, self-blame, behavioral disengagement, venting of emotions, as instrumental and emotion-focused support (Crocker & Graham, 1995, p.334).

Research is limited when it comes to looking at the similarities and differences in the way men and women athletes cope with stress. In a small study conducted by Madden et al (1989) that consisted of 9 female cross-country runners, researchers found evidence that female cross-country runners use more emotional responses in reaction to injury. Studies from community populations have shown that women are more likely to seek

social support and to use emotion-focused strategies than are men (Carver et al, 1989; Ptacek, Smith, & Zanas, 1992).

### Athletes Use of Counseling and Sport Psychology Services

According to researchers who have assessed and otherwise considered the needs of student-athletes, approximately 10% of American college student-athletes deal with issues and situations that are significant enough to warrant the need for psychological services as a result of their student-athlete role (Hinkle, 1994; Watson, 2005). Along with the academic demands of the college experiences, student athletes also have to meet the demands of their sport which often includes the stress of performing as well as time management concerns (Watson, 2005). Student-athletes can spend in excess of 20 hours a week involved in practice and competition which can be too challenging for some athletes making them more susceptible to stress (Watson, 2005).

Instead of using counseling services, student-athletes have traditionally chosen to seek help from individuals such as their coaches, teammates, family and friends (Selby, Weinstein, & Bird, 1990). In the athletic environment, focus is often on resiliency and self-reliance. The good of the team and an individual's athletic performance can take precedence over other problems which may contribute to the resistance of counseling and sport psychology services (Watson, 2005).

Intercollegiate athletes report a desire for counseling to address the following areas: time management, stress, burnout, fear of failure, anxiety, depression and performance related issues (Murray, 1997). Despite this expressed need, student-athletes greatly underutilize school counseling and mental health services when compared to non-

athletes (Bergandi & Wittig, 1984; Maniar, Curry, Sommers-Flanagan, & Walsh, 2001; Pinkerton, Hinz, & Barrow, 1989; Storch et al, 2005). They are reportedly more likely to seek help and guidance from family, friends, and coaches. Some researchers believe athletes may be uncomfortable seeking help from service providers who they feel may not understand their unique needs and concerns (Greenspan & Anderson, 1995; Maniar et al, 2001). Another explanation offered focuses on the coaching staff and athletic personnel who are often times not well trained in recognizing signs of psychological distress or may see this distress as a sign of weakness (Storch et al, 2005).

A study conducted by Watson (2005) considered student-athletes and non-athletes attitudes toward help-seeking behavior and expectations about counseling. According to Watson (2005), individuals who are more willing to seek help for their problems “experience better adjustment and fewer emotional and behavioral problems” (p.442). Therefore, attitudes toward seeking help may be a central aspect of the change process. Two hundred and sixty-seven undergraduate students enrolled at a NCAA Division IA Southeastern university participated in the study, 135 of these participants were student-athletes. Participants completed the *Expectations About Counseling – Brief Form* and the *Attitudes Toward Seeking Professional Psychological Help Scale*. Results from this sample indicate that student-athletes have less positive attitudes toward help-seeking behavior than their non-athlete peers (Watson, 2005). The most common responses for not seeking help were: there was no need, personal discomfort, perception of others, and time (Watson, 2006).

Research has also indicated that athletes are reluctant to utilize sport psychological services, perceiving this service to be for athletes with “psychological



problems” (Ravissa, 1988; Van Raalte, Brewer, Brewer, & Linder, 1993). Factors that may contribute to whether athletes take advantage of sport psychology and consultation services: a) the consultants title, b) language used to describe treatments or interventions, c) rationales given for using the interventions, d) previous exposure or experience, e) whether a specific intervention has been recommended by a coach or significant other, f) and factors such as the athlete’s cultural background, gender, and involvement in team or individual sports (Maniar et al, 2001).

A study conducted by Maniar et al (2001) evaluated 60 NCAA Division I student-athletes willingness to seek help from various sport-titled and non sport-titled individuals and their preference of interventions. They developed the Athlete Preference Questionnaire (APQ) and asked participants to complete the questionnaire after reading three scenarios (a performance slump, recovery from an injury, and desire to perform more optimally). The rationale for developing the three scenarios was to “investigate whether athlete preference varied depending on the presenting problem” (Maniar et al, 2001, p. 208). They found that athletes indicated a preference for sport-title professionals (performance enhancement specialist, sport counselor, and sport psychologist) over ratings for counselor and clinical psychologist. However, participants rated consulting a coach or family/friend higher than professionals. When looking at preferences for treatment/interventions, goal-setting was most preferred followed closely by the use of imagery/visualization, relaxation training, and talking to someone in depth. These interventions were preferred over the use of hypnosis and medication (Maniar et al, 2001). Across all scenarios, participants were more willing to consult with their coaches than traditional mental health professionals or sport professionals. However, having a

title with “sport” attached to it appeared to increase athlete’s willingness to consult with a professional (Maniar et al, 2001).

### Program Planning and Evaluation

Maier’s (1996) *Resource Guide for Planning and Evaluating Human Services Programs* provides a framework, or set of skills, for designing, implementing, and evaluating programs which add value to individuals in human service organizations. Human service programs exist in many forms and are diverse in terms of the people who are served. Despite these differences, a common core of principles and procedures are applicable across program types and settings (Maier, 1996). The process of program planning and evaluation can be applied to the target population of collegiate student-athletes and includes the gathering, analyzing, interpreting, and use of information to increase the likelihood that valuable programs will be provided. The four major tasks of this process include: the Clarification phase which is concerned with clarifying the situation through specifying the target population, determining their needs, and delineating the relevant context; the Design phase which documents essential design elements such as purpose, goals, program components and activities, personnel, development and implementation schedule, budget, and program evaluation plan; the Implementation phase which includes a review of the program design, facilitation of the program implementation, and monitoring of the program; and finally the Evaluation phase which allows for judgments to be made about the value of the program (Maier, 1996). This model can be used in devising guidelines for personnel working with student-athletes in order to help meet their needs.

The NCAA Foundation and the Division 1A Athletics Directors' Association created the CHAMPS/Life Skills Program in 1991 in order to help support student-athlete development and to enhance the quality of their student-athlete experience. Participants in the program are provided with materials and resources that support an athlete's development in five areas: academics, athletics, personal development, career development, and commitment to services (NCAA, 2004). The program includes a needs assessment that assists in determining the student-athletes needs as well as providing resources in order to help address these needs. Academic resources focus on issues such as study skills, goal setting, time management, academic advising, and scholarship applications. Career development focuses on the job search process as well as developmental issues while the Athletic component focuses on support programs, leadership, and coaching and evaluations. The Personal development component provides resources related to nutrition, stress management, alcohol choices and addictive behavior, diversity, and violence prevention. Finally, Service Commitment focuses on mentoring, peer counseling, and working within the community (NCAA, 2004). Student Services for Athletes (SSA) is another program sponsored by the Center for Counseling and Student Development that is geared toward providing student services to athletes at times and locations that are convenient for them (Jordan & Denson, 1990). The SSA provides direct service to athletes including academic monitoring, personal counseling, workshops related to the transition into and out of college, and serves as a liaison between student-athletes, coaches, faculty, and staff (Jordan & Denson, 1990). It is important to continually look at the stressors student-athletes experience so that programs and services can continue to be created and improved upon.

## Summary

The term stress, first used as early as the 14<sup>th</sup> century, continues to evolve today. While stress has been associated with many situations including every day demands, illness, transitions, and change, an accepted unifying definition of the concept has not been achieved. For the purpose of this study, psychological stress is defined as a relationship between the person and the environment that is appraised as taxing or exceeding the person's resources and endangering his or her well-being (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984). The two critical processes that mediate this person-environment relationship are cognitive appraisal and coping.

The transactional process model of stress and coping (Lazarus, 1999; Lazarus & Folkman, 1984) has become widely accepted. The theory states that situational appraisals are key determinants of a person's emotional reactions and coping responses. People appraise situations as being relevant or irrelevant to their well-being, goals, motives, values, and beliefs (primary appraisal). Stress is perceived when an individual's goals and motives are threatened. Secondary appraisals are then made that focus on what can be done in response and the individual weighs his or her coping options with regard to the situation (Giacobbi et al, 2004; Lazarus & Folkman, 1984). Events appraised as controllable are associated with coping efforts aimed at resolving the situation (problem-focused coping) while events perceived as outside of one's control require coping efforts that are intended to alter one's reactions or interpretations of the situation (emotion-focused coping) (Giacobbi et al, 2004). The transactional process model views the stress and coping process as dynamic. Therefore, as situations and sources of stress change, coping responses change and evolve.

Collegiate student-athletes have been identified as a population that faces unique challenges both athletically and academically (Martens & Lee, 1998; Ward et al, 2005). Extensive time demands, injuries, conflict with coaches, pressure to win, anxiety, and academic requirements all contribute to the demands they face (Humphrey et al 2000; Wilson & Pritchard, 2005). Studies have found that student-athletes who experience high levels of stress are more likely to practice bad health habits (Hudd et al., 2000) and to report physical health concerns including lack of sleep, fatigue, headaches, and digestive problems as well as the potential for burnout (Humphrey et al, 2000).

According to researchers who have looked at the needs of student-athletes, approximately 10% of American collegiate student-athletes deal with issues and situations that are significant enough to warrant the need for psychological services as a result of their student-athlete role (Ferrante, Etzel, & Lantz, 1996; Hinkle, 1994; Watson, 2005). Along with the academic demands of the college experiences, student athletes also have to meet the demands of their sport which often includes the stress of performing as well as time management concerns (Watson, 2005). Student-athletes can spend in excess of 20 hours a week involved in practice and competition which can be very challenging for some athletes making them more susceptible to stress (Watson, 2005).

Instead of using counseling services, student-athletes have traditionally chosen to seek help from individuals such as their coaches, teammates, family and friends (Selby, Weinstein, & Bird, 1990). In the athletic environment focus is often on resiliency and self-reliance. The good of the team and an individual's athletic performance can take precedence over other problems which may contribute to the resistance of counseling and sport psychology services (Etzel, 1989; Watson, 2005). Assistance to student-athletes

may need to be provided through programs or services offered through the athletic department which can focus on reducing stress and managing their role as a student and an athlete.

## CHAPTER III

### METHOD OF INVESTIGATION

#### Abstract

This chapter provides an overview of survey research and a description of the participants, procedures, and instrument used for this dissertation. The benefits and limitations of using the internet to collect information are presented along with the ethical principles of conducting research with human subjects. One of the first steps of survey research is to develop a concept or question to be explored. In this chapter, the survey question is presented along with a description of the survey topic. A program planning and evaluation framework is used to present a description of the participants, the college from which they attend, the procedures of the study, and the survey instrument. Finally, a discussion of the manner in which data will be analyzed is provided.

### Survey Research: An Empirical Study Approach

Survey research was conducted as part of an exploratory study examining collegiate student-athletes perceptions of the stress they experience as a result of the academic and athletic demands placed upon them. Survey research is a type of quantitative, non-experimental approach that uses questionnaires and interviews to obtain information regarding perceptions of a specific sample of subjects (Ary, Jacobs, & Razavieh, 2002). A cross-sectional survey which allowed for the examination of the perceptions and attitudes of a sample of student-athletes at one point in time was used for this dissertation (Ary et al, 2002). As a result, exploratory information regarding the stressors student-athletes experience, the extent to which these stressors are stressful, and the coping skills used was obtained. The information obtained from this survey will be used to create guidelines for personnel who work with student-athletes as well as provide direction for further exploration.

### Internet Survey Research

An electronic survey is defined as one in which a computer plays a major role in the delivery of the survey to potential respondents and the collection of survey data (Jansen, Corlye, & Jansen, 2007). E-mail-based surveys are delivered through electronic mail applications over the internet and are generally seen as being delivered more quickly than traditional paper-and-pencil surveys. E-mail surveys provide the researcher with the ability to reach large numbers of potential respondents quickly and relatively cheaply, and to receive completed surveys in a short amount of time (Jansen et al, 2007). Three



most common reasons for using an e-survey as opposed to a paper-and-pencil are: decreased costs, faster response times, and increased response rates.

The first academic surveys administered through the internet occurred in 1995 (Birnham, 2004). Since this time, research studies conducted via the internet have increased exponentially. Recruitment of subjects can be done through postings on web sites, postings to online communities, and e-mail (Roberts, 2007). The internet allows access to a wide variety of subjects including specialized populations, such as athletes. The large sample sizes enabled by Internet research can also provide the researcher with increased statistical power (Roberts, 2007). It can also reduce the time and cost associated with the recruitment of subjects. The use of an electronic survey removes the need for a physical laboratory and the continued presence of a researcher. The voluntary nature of participation is also enhanced. “Removed from the demand characteristics associated with the researcher’s presence, individuals are free to decide whether or not they wish to participate, and can participate at their own leisure” (Roberts, 2007, p.21). It is also easier to withdraw consent or discontinue participation when in your own environment.

Programs are now available to send out surveys to large groups of subjects simultaneously. The costs of administering electronic surveys are centered on the fixed costs of hardware, software, and programming (Roberts, 2007). However, the variable costs of printing, sending surveys, and collection are much greater for non- electronic research (Roberts, 2007). Online research can also reduce errors associated with survey completion and data entry, with automated data entry removing the errors associated with

manual data entry (Roberts, 2007). The time and resources associated with data entry can also be reduced.

Limitations of e-mail surveys have also been reported including: smaller number of potential respondents due to the lack of access of some participants to a computer or internet; differences in technological comfort among participants; and confidentiality concerns (Roberts, 2007). Limited generalizability of findings to the general population, potential for lower response rates, and lack of control over the research setting are also cited as limitations associated with electronic surveys (Roberts, 2007). Research participants may also be subject to distractions in their environment (interruptions, phone calls, etc) and may engage in other activities while completing the survey (completing homework, talking on the phone) which can impact their attention to the task (Roberts, 2007). Sample biases also frequently exist with internet research based on the lack of a random sample. The possibility of multiple submissions by a respondent or interaction among participants may also impact findings (Reips, 2002).

The Belmont report outlines major ethical principles for conducting research on human subjects (National Institutes of Health, 2004). The online application of these principles requires researchers to ensure the confidentiality, security, privacy, and informed consent of participants (Gurau, 2007). Information regarding the identity of the researcher, the purpose of the study, the use of the data collected, and the researchers contact information needs to be provided. A clear statement also needs to be made in regards to the protection of participants' privacy as well as the presentation of the advantages and disadvantages related to participation (Gurau, 2007). It is also important to consider whether the population of interest can be captured through electronic means.

Electronic surveys can be ideal for specialized or hidden populations, especially when participants are known to have e-mail and internet access (Roberts, 2007). The skills and knowledge of the researcher must also be considered.

According to Ary et al (2002), one of the first steps of survey research is to develop a concept or question to be explored. For this dissertation, the research question consists of three parts. “What do student-athletes perceive as being stressful, to what extent are these situations and demands stressful, and what coping skills do they report using to manage these stressors?” The results from the survey will help answer this question as it relates to student-athletes from this Division 1 College. While the information obtained will be specific to these athletes and this particular college setting, the results can further inform researchers and those working with athletes about how student-athletes from a variety of sports perceive the stressors they experience and the reported ways they are coping with these demands. Sports psychologists and professionals may also be able to use this information to better provide knowledge, skills, and abilities relevant to reducing and managing stress related to the academic and athletic demands student-athletes experience. The research question specified above is being used as part of a needs assessment evaluating student-athlete stressors and coping skills through a program planning and evaluation framework. Table 1 located on the following page outlines the current state of affairs and desired state of affairs as they relate to the research question. Results of the survey will be used to design guidelines for personnel working with student-athletes in order to meet these needs.

Table 1  
Structure of Needs

Current State of Affairs (CSA)	Desired State of Affairs (DSA)
1. Limited knowledge regarding what student-athletes at the Division 1 college perceive as being stressful.	1. Knowledge regarding the specific stressors that the student-athletes at the Division 1 perceive as stressful.
2. Limited knowledge of the extent to which identified stressors are stressful.	2. Specific knowledge about the stressors student-athletes experience as being the most stressful.
3. Limited knowledge regarding the coping mechanisms used by the student-athletes.	3. Knowledge about the coping mechanisms student-athletes use to manage these stressors.

Using the program planning and evaluation framework presented by Maher (1997), when conducting a needs assessment is it important to describe the target population or participants in the study as well as the organization from which the target population is a member. It is also necessary to describe the needs of the target population, in this case the student-athletes at a Division 1 school who participated in the survey research, and the current and desired state of affairs. A description of the assessment procedures and instrument must also be provided (Maher, 1997). Following is a description of the participants, assessment procedures, and survey used for this dissertation.

## Participants

The participants in this study were male and female student-athletes at a private Division-1 College in Pennsylvania. The survey was sent out to all 550 student-athletes enrolled at this college. Two hundred fifty-one student-athletes gave their consent to participate in the study (125 males and 123 females). Twenty of these participants did not complete majority of the survey and as a result were excluded from the sample. Therefore, data was collected from 231 student-athletes. Of these student-athletes, 33.5% were freshman, 23.4% were sophomores, 24.2% were juniors, and 18.6% were seniors. Participants ranged in age from 17 to 23 years ( $M=19.8$ ). Of the 132 participants who indicated their ethnicity, 90% were Caucasian, 6% African American, 1.5% Hispanic, .8% Asian, and .8% Russian. These statistics are only representative of slightly over a half of the participants, since 120 participants chose not to answer the optional question regarding their ethnicity. Therefore, the statistics regarding ethnicity should be interpreted with caution. Please refer to Table 2 for a description of the percentages of student-athletes participating from each sport.

Table 2  
Percentage of Responses by Sport

<b>Sport</b>	<b>% of Sample</b>	<b>Responses By Sport</b> Numerator - # who responded Denominator –total # players on team	<b>Response % by Sport</b>
Baseball	5.7%	14/33	42%
Basketball	4.8%	12/27	44%
Cross Country	5.7%	14/23	61%
Fencing	2.0%	5/18	28%
Field Hockey	6.1%	15/24	62%
Football	13.7%	34/99	34%
Golf	2.0%	5/11	45%
Lacrosse	12.1%	30/58	52%
Soccer	14.5%	36/53	67%
Softball	5.2%	13/19	68%
Swimming/Diving	14.1%	35/59	59%
Track and Field	16.9%	42/90	47%
Volleyball	3.2%	8/15	53%
Tennis	4.0%	10/21	48%

All participants in the study are student-athletes from a Division-1 school in Pennsylvania. There are approximately 2,380 students who attend this college, with 54% of the student body being male and 46% female. Seventy-four percent of these students are Caucasian, 6.4% are International, 4.9% are African-American, 4.8% are Hispanic American, 3.1% are Asian, and 1% American Indian. There are also students who have not specified their ethnicity (6.9%). Of the 2,380 students, 550 are student-athletes. There are 23 varsity sports teams encompassing 14 different sports with 11 men's teams, 11 women's teams, and 1 co-ed team. All student-athletes from the varsity sport teams were asked to participate.

## Procedures

Consent and approval to conduct this study with the Division 1 College's student-athletes was first obtained from the athletic director at the college. The Rutgers University Institutional Review Board (IRB) as well as the head of the Institutional Review Board at this college approved procedures for the investigation prior to initiating the study. The names and e-mail addresses for each athlete were obtained from the athletic director. These names were checked with the roster lists for each sport on the college website. In order to increase the possibility of a larger response rate, the athletic director recommended that the survey be distributed through e-mail and come from the e-mail account of the athletic director. A letter was created to be sent along with the e-mail describing the survey and requesting the student-athletes participation (Appendix A). The survey was then placed online through a professional company and a link directly to the survey was placed in the e-mail. The athletic directors e-mail address was used to distribute the survey which was sent out to all 550 student-athletes in the beginning of March 2007. Approximately two weeks after the initial survey e-mail, a second e-mail request was sent to serve as a reminder for those student-athletes who had not yet responded. Participants were allowed as much time as needed to complete the survey, but a timeframe of 10-15 minutes was presented through the consent form in order to give the student-athletes an idea of how long the survey could take to complete. The participant's responses were collected through the company, Survey Monkey. Individual's responses were kept confidential and only the researcher has access to the responses through the electronic software.

### Instrument

A survey was designed to assess the stressors student-athletes experience, the extent to which they view each stressor or item as stressful, and the coping techniques they use to manage their role as a student and athlete. Before creating this survey, instruments that have already been designed were reviewed. The Survey of Recent Life Experiences developed by Kohn, Lafreniere, and Gurevich (1990) was consulted but determined to be too broad and general, with many of the items not being relevant to the student-athlete experience. Holmes and Rahe's (1967) Social Readjustment Scale was also reviewed. This scale also was too broad consisting of stressors such as natural disasters, moving, and retirement and not relevant for this population. The Ways of Coping Scale developed by Lazarus & Folkman (1988) is one of the most widely used coping measures and was reviewed for its application for this study. A pre-established measure of coping was not utilized in consideration of time constraints of participants. However, certain coping mechanisms described in the literature and used in The Ways of Coping Scale that are relevant for collegiate-student athletes were used including: *keeping feelings to self, focus efforts on a solution, asking friends/family for advice, and refuse or avoid thinking about it* (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984; Sorlie & Sexton, 2001).

Appendix B depicts the survey instrument designed and utilized for this dissertation. Before beginning the survey, the consent to participate in the study was obtained for each student-athlete. The consent form explains the purpose of the study, the voluntary nature of participation, potential benefits and risks of completing the survey, the approximate time required to complete the survey, the anonymity of responses, and



the contact information for the researcher and the Rutgers University IRB for any questions regarding rights as a research subject or to obtain results of the study.

If a participant indicates that he or she does not give consent, the individual is thanked for his or her time and the administration of the survey does not continue. For those students who do give their consent, the first page of the survey is presented.

At the beginning of the survey participants are asked to provide the following demographic information: age, gender, ethnicity (optional), year in college, and sport(s) played. The number of years they have been playing their sport was also elicited. Following the demographic information, the fifteen stressors were presented. For each of these stressors, participants were asked to indicate whether or not they view the 15 items as stressful and how distressing each item is using a scale from 0 (Not at all) to 6 (Extremely). The following is a list of the stressors included in the survey: Making the team, Getting enough playing time, Pressure to win, Not meeting own expectations, Not meeting parents' expectations, Relationship with coach, Finances, Being nervous before or during competition, Balancing sport and academic demands, Missing classes because of travel, Grades, Not enjoying competition as much as before, Lack of control over schedule, Perceptions of others- stereotypes, and Social Life.

Next, participants were asked to indicate which coping strategies they use to help manage the stressors related to being a student-athlete. The following is a list of coping strategies that were provided: Relaxation techniques, Taking a break, Asking friends/family for advice, Focus efforts on a solution, Refuse/Avoid thinking about stressor, Keeping feelings to self, Spend time with friends, Do things for others, Exercise,

Eat, and Drink. The participants were then asked to indicate any other coping strategies not outlined in the survey but that are helpful in managing stress.

The final five questions of the survey required an open-ended response and were used to elicit additional information about stress, services, and any previous support the participants have received. Space was provided for the student-athletes to indicate other stressors that had not been identified by the survey and to provide a stress rating.

Participants were then asked to indicate whether they have received counseling services or some other type of support (re. time management, performance) and whether or not the support was helpful. Finally, the participants were asked whether they would be interested in receiving counseling if offered by their team and if they would like a copy of guidelines for balancing sport and academic to be sent to them for their participation.

According to Ary et al (2002), surveys do not require complex statistical analyses. Therefore, the data collected from the survey will be analyzed through descriptive statistical methods, particularly the use of frequency and percentage responses. This is the first administration of this particular survey. Therefore, the initial data may be considered a field-test, as validity and reliability data have not been obtained. The information gathered from this exploratory study is part of a needs assessment which will be used to devise guidelines for personnel working with student-athletes.

### Summary

This dissertation was conducted in an attempt to gain a better understanding of the stressors collegiate student-athletes experience, how stressful they perceive these stressors to be, and the coping mechanisms they use to manage their role as a student-

athlete. Existing research has predominantly looked at athletes from select sports such as figure skating, soccer, or swimming and has typically consisted of smaller sample sizes. While this research has helped to identify the stressors that can impact student-athletes, further information is needed on the degree to which stress is experienced by athletes from a variety of sports and the coping strategies that are used. Previous literature has also identified student-athletes as a population who, because of the demands placed upon them, are more likely to practice bad health habits and to report physical health concerns. Despite this, student-athletes reportedly tend to underutilize counseling and support services. In order to further look at this, information regarding support services that participants have received, including counseling experiences, was elicited through the survey.

The survey was developed to answer the research question: “What do student-athletes perceive as being stressful, to what extent are these situations and demands stressful, and what coping skills do they report using to manage these stressors?” The support and approval of the Division 1 College’s athletic director and the IRB was obtained prior to the survey distribution. Participants consisted of student-athletes from the Division 1 College who represented 23 different sport teams from 14 sports. The survey was sent electronically with the endorsement and request to participate from the athletic director. The survey was designed based on sport psychology literature, review of stress and coping assessment measures, and the personal experience of the author. Data analysis will be conducted through descriptive statistical methods with the use of frequencies and response percentages. This information will help better clarify the needs of student-athletes so that guidelines can be created in an effort to address these needs.

## CHAPTER IV

### DATA ANALYSIS

#### Abstract

This chapter presents an analysis of the data obtained from the survey. First, the response rate for this study along with adequate response rates for e-mail and hard-copy mailed surveys are discussed. The internet-based research company used to distribute, collect, and analyze the data is then presented. A description of how the data was calculated along with an explanation of how responses to open-ended questions are summarized is included. The rest of the chapter describes the data and information collected from the survey. Data for the entire sample was first analyzed to examine the items participants find stressful and the coping mechanisms they use to help manage these stressors. Data was then separated based on gender, year in college, and sport played for further examination. The results were placed into the following tables: Tables 3-5 include data for the entire sample; Tables 6-11 refer to data obtained from male and female student-athletes; Tables 12-23 include data results for freshman, sophomore, junior, and senior student-athletes; and Tables 24-67 refer to data results from student-athletes for each sport. Finally, information obtained from open-ended responses related to stressors and coping mechanisms not included in the survey are summarized along

with an overview of the support services participants have utilized in order to help manage their role as a student-athlete.

## Method

### *Response Rate*

A response rate is determined by the percentage of participants who respond to a survey. While we can not expect full participation in voluntary studies, researchers aim to have as high a response rate as possible. A higher response rate is associated with results being more representative of the target population. There has been debate on whether response rates for e-mail surveys are lower or higher than hard-copy mailed surveys. Recent data has shown that among published studies, the response rates are as high, or higher, than traditional mail surveys (Baruch, 2008). Despite this, the average response rate for survey questionnaires used as the basis for published academic studies has declined from 64.4 percent to 48.4 percent from 1975 to 1995 (Baruch, 1999). While there is no widely accepted standard for how large a response rate should be, differences in acceptable response rates have been outlined by the University of Texas (2007). An adequate or average response rate for mailed surveys is considered to be 50 while an average response rate for an e-mail survey is 40.

This survey was distributed electronically to 550 student-athletes from a Division 1- Patriot League College in Pennsylvania during March 2007. Although 251 participants gave their consent to participate in the study, twenty of these participants did not complete the entire first half of the survey. As a result, these participants were excluded from the sample making the final total of participants at 231. Therefore, the response rate

for the completion of this survey is 42%. This response rate is consistent with the average rate for electronic survey distribution.

### *Conversion of Results*

The internet-based research company, Survey Monkey (<http://www.surveymonkey.com>), was used for the creation, distribution, and collection of survey results for this study. Survey monkey includes a feature in which survey results may be analyzed through their program or converted into an excel file for further data analysis. Since all of the participants responded through this internet-based company, analysis was completed through the survey monkey program. Data for the entire sample was first analyzed to examine the items student-athletes find stressful and the coping mechanisms they use to help manage these stressors. The data was then separated based on gender, year in college, and sport played in order to further examine smaller subgroups of athletes to determine additional relationships and findings. Male and female student-athlete responses were first separated to examine whether differences exist between male and female student-athletes in terms of what they view as stressful and the coping mechanisms they endorse. Data was then separated based on year in college in order to determine whether differences exist between freshman, sophomore, junior, and senior participants. Finally, participant responses were separated based on sport played and included the following subgroups: baseball, basketball, cross country, fencing, field hockey, football, golf, lacrosse, soccer, softball, swimming/diving, tennis, track and field, and volleyball in order to determine whether any differences exist in terms of stressors and coping mechanisms.

### *Data Calculation*

Data for this study was calculated by recording the number and percentage of responses for each survey item. For the first 15 items, respondents were asked to indicate whether the item was, or was not stressful, by responding “yes” or “no”. The number of “yes” and “no” responses were added and the percentage of each was calculated. For each of the 15 stressors, respondents were asked to rate the stressors using the following ratings: *Not at all* (0), *Somewhat* (1-2), *Moderately* (3-4), and *Extremely* (5-6). The number of responses for each item rating was totaled and a percentage calculated. The participants were then asked to indicate which of 11 coping mechanisms they use to help manage these stressors. Again, the number of responses for each coping mechanism was added and a percentage was calculated. Participants interest in receiving counseling services, whether they have had any previous support and/or counseling experiences to help manage life as a student-athlete, and whether they would be interested in receiving guidelines for balancing sport and academics was also elicited. For these questions, respondents provided either a “yes” or “no” response. These responses were totaled and a percentage calculated. All of the above information was analyzed in order to provide information regarding frequencies of responses and for further examination and comparison between groups. All data was placed into tables for review and discussion.

Three open-ended questions were also included in the survey. These questions sought additional information about stressors and coping mechanisms that were not included in the survey. Specific types of help and/or support that participants have received to manage their role as a student-athletes was also elicited through an open-

ended response format. The responses to the open-ended questions were reviewed, consolidated, and summarized.

### *Exclusion of Data*

Two hundred and fifty-one participants gave their consent to participate in the study. Twenty of these participants completed less than 80% of the survey and were therefore excluded from the sample. The remaining 231 participants completed all of the closed-ended responses related to stress and coping and were therefore included in the data analysis.

### Results of Analysis

Data obtained from this survey distribution is presented in tabular form and includes the total number and percentage of responses for each question pertaining to stressors faced by student-athletes and the coping mechanisms they use to manage these stressors. Tables 3-5 include data for the entire sample; Tables 6-8 refer to data for male student-athletes; Tables 9-11 refer to data for female student-athletes; Tables 12-14 include data results for freshman student-athletes; Tables 15-17 include data results for sophomore student-athletes; Tables 18-20 include data for junior student-athletes; and Tables 21-23 include data for senior student-athletes. Finally, Tables 24-67, refer to data results from student-athletes for each sport.



### *Overall Sample*

A total of 231 participants completed this survey. Table 3 shows the number of participants that rated each of the 15 stressors as stressful. Looking at the table, the number in brackets shows the number of participants choosing each option. The percentage of participants choosing a “yes” or “no” response is also calculated and represented in the table. Of the 15 stressors presented, 12 were endorsed as being stressful by over half of the participants. *Not Meeting Own Expectations* (94.8%), *Balancing Sport and Academic Demands* (90%), and *Grades* (90%) were all endorsed by approximately 90% or more of the student-athletes participating in the study. *Pressure to Win* (85.3%) and *Being Nervous Before or During Competition* (83.6%) were endorsed by over 80% of the participants. Sixty percent or more of the participants endorsed *Relationship with Coach* (65.4%), *Getting Enough Playing Time* (64.7%), and *Lack of Control over Schedule* (60.3%) as stressful. Finally, *Social Life* (57.8%), *Missing Class Because of Travel* (56.9%), *Finances* (52.2%), and *Not Enjoying Competition as Much as Before* (50.9%) were endorsed by over 50% of student-athletes. Items that majority of the participants do not see as stressful include *Not Meeting Parent’s Expectations* (41.8%), *Making the Team* (29%), and *Perceptions of Others, Stereotypes* (19.5%).

Table 3  
 Student-Athletes Perception of Stressors (Total Respondents = 231)

Stressors	Yes	No
1. Making the Team	29% (67)	71% (164)
2. Getting Enough Playing Time	64.7% (150)	35.3% (82)
3. Pressure to Win	85.3% (198)	14.7% (34)
4. Not Meeting Own Expectations	94.8% (220)	5.2% (12)
5. Not Meeting Parent's Expectations	41.8% (97)	58.2% (135)
6. Relationship with Coach	65.4% (151)	34.6% (80)
7. Finances	52.2% (121)	47.8% (111)
8. Being Nervous Before or During Competition	83.6% (193)	16.5% (38)
9. Balancing Sport and Academic Demands	89.7% (208)	10.3% (24)
10. Missing Classes Because of Travel	56.9% (132)	43.1% (100)
11. Grades	90% (208)	10.8% (25)
12. Not Enjoying Competition as Much as Before	50.9% (118)	49.1% (114)
13. Lack of Control Over My Schedule	60.3% (140)	39.7% (92)
14. Perceptions of Others, Stereotypes	19.5% (45)	80.5% (186)
15. Social Life	57.8% (134)	42.2% (98)

Table 4 depicts the stress ratings for all 15 stressors. For each item, a percentage is bolded to highlight the rating that was endorsed by the largest percentage of participants. Ratings within the Moderate (stress ratings of 3-4) to Extremely stressful (stress rating of 5-6) range will be discussed further. Of note, despite certain items being endorsed as stressful by over 50% of the participants as shown in Table 3, a number of these stressors received a stress rating of *Not at All* and *Somewhat* by respondents. For example, while *Getting Enough Playing Time* was endorsed as stressful by approximately 60% of the participants, a large number of respondents gave this stressor a lower stress rating. Since there are some stressors that are more stressful than others and have a greater impact, focus will be placed on stressors that received a rating in the Moderate and Extremely stressful range.

As shown in Table 4, participants rated *Not Meeting Own Expectations* and *Grades* as being the most stressful of all of the 15 items. Approximately 58% of the

student-athletes rated *Not Meeting Own Expectations* as extremely stressful, with the most frequently endorsed rating being a 5. Specific expectations are not specified in this survey, but can be associated with both sport and academic demands. In addition, over 44% of participants rated *Grades* as being extremely stressful and 36% rated this item as moderately stressful. Therefore, approximately 80% of student-athletes indicated that meeting academic expectations is an area of concern and stress for them. Three other stressors were also rated as being moderately stressful by participants. The most frequent stress rating for *Pressure to Win* and *Balancing Sport and Academic Demands* was a 4. *Being Nervous Before or During Competition* was also rated in the moderately stressful range with 3 being the most frequently endorsed rating.

Table 4  
Student-Athlete Stress Ratings (Total = 231)

Stressors	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
1. Making the Team	60.2% (139)	12.1% (28)	8.2% (19)	6.9% (16)	9.1% (21)	3% (7)	2.2% (5)
2. Getting Enough Playing Time	29% (67)	8.7% (20)	17.3% (40)	10.4% (24)	15.6% (36)	13.9% (32)	5.6% (13)
3. Pressure to Win	9.5% (22)	6.5% (15)	13.4% (31)	16.0% (37)	23.8% (55)	19.5% (45)	12.6% (29)
4. Not Meeting Own Expectations	3.9% (9)	1.3% (3)	4.3% (10)	14.7% (34)	18.6% (43)	30.7% (71)	27.7% (64)
5. No Meeting Parent's Expectations	46.3% (107)	10.3% (25)	11.7% (27)	10.4% (24)	8.7% (20)	6.9% (16)	6.5% (15)
6. Relationship with Coach	26% (60)	13.4% (31)	12.6% (29)	15.2% (35)	13.4% (31)	11.7% (27)	7.8% (18)
7. Finances	34.2% (79)	14.3% (33)	10.8% (25)	7.8% (18)	13.4% (31)	12.6% (29)	7.8% (18)
8. Being Nervous Before or During Competition	12.1% (28)	9.5% (22)	16.5% (38)	19.9% (46)	18.2% (42)	16.9% (39)	9.1% (21)
9. Balancing Sport and Academic Demands	7.8% (18)	3.9% (9)	10.4% (24)	18.2% (42)	22.5% (52)	18.6% (43)	19.1% (44)
10. Missing Classes Because of Travel	28.6% (66)	20.4% (47)	16.5% (38)	14.7% (34)	9.5% (22)	7.8% (18)	3.0% (7)
11. Grades	7.4% (17)	3.9% (9)	8.2% (19)	14.3% (33)	22.5% (52)	22.1% (51)	22.5% (52)
12. Not Enjoying Competition as Much	42% (97)	6.5% (15)	15.2% (35)	10.8% (25)	10.4% (24)	9.1% (21)	6.1% (14)
13. Lack of Control Over My Schedule	27.3% (63)	10.4% (24)	16% (37)	19.9% (46)	13.0% (30)	10% (23)	3.9% (9)
14. Perceptions of Others, Stereotypes	66.7% (154)	14.3% (33)	6.5% (15)	5.2% (12)	2.2% (5)	3.5% (8)	1.7% (4)
15. Social Life	32.9% (76)	14.3% (33)	19.5% (45)	15.6% (36)	13.0% (30)	3.5% (8)	2.2% (5)

0 = Not at All; 1-2 = Somewhat; 3-4 = Moderately; 5-6 = Extremely

Of the 231 participants who completed the survey, 166 participants (71.9%) endorsed *Spending Time with Friends* as a coping strategy they use to help manage stress (Table 5). Taking a Break was endorsed by 157 participants (68%) while *Exercising* and *Asking Friends/Family for Advice* were endorsed by 130 (56.3%) and 128 (55.4%) of the student-athletes respectively. The remaining strategies were endorsed by

less than 50% of participants. Of note, the coping strategies that were the least frequently endorsed as being used to manage stress were *Drinking* (19.5%), *Doing Things for Others* (23.4%), and *Refuse/Avoid Thinking about Stressors* (25.5%). These strategies were reportedly used by less than one quarter of the student-athletes who participated in the study. Table 5 shows the coping strategies that were included in the survey, the number of student-athletes who endorsed each strategy, and the overall response percentage.

Table 5  
Coping Strategies Used to Manage Stressors

<b>Coping Strategies</b>	<b>Response Percent</b>	<b>Response Count</b>
Spend Time with Friends	71.9%	166
Taking a Break	68%	157
Exercise	56.3%	130
Asking Friends/Family for Advice	55.4%	128
Relaxation Techniques	35.9%	83
Eat	34.2%	79
Focus Efforts on a Solution	33.3%	77
Keep Feelings to Self	30.3%	70
Refuse/Avoid Thinking about Stressor	25.5%	59
Do Things for Others	23.4%	54
Drink	19.5%	45

### *Summary*

Data from 231 participants were collected and analyzed for this study. Out of the 15 stressors included in the survey, 12 were endorsed as being stressful by more than 50% of the participants. Of these 12 stressors, 5 were rated in the moderate to extreme range. *Not Meeting Own Expectations* and *Grades* were both rated as extremely stressful by participants, indicating that these two items are the most distressing for the student-athletes who completed this survey. *Pressure to Win*, *Balancing Sport and Academic Demands*, and *Being Nervous Before or During Competition* were all rated in the

moderately stressful range by majority of the participants. *Pressure to Win* and *Balancing Sport and Academic Demands* received several ratings in the moderate to extreme range. *Being Nervous Before or During Competition* received a variety of ratings from not at all to extremely, with a large number of athletes seeing this as a significant stressor.

Participants also endorsed several coping strategies that are used to help manage these stressors including *Spending Time with Friends*, *Taking a Break*, *Exercising*, and *Asking Friends/Family for Advice*. These strategies were all endorsed by more than half of the participants who completed this survey. The utilization of social support from friends and family is reportedly a coping strategy used by many student-athletes, highlighting the importance of a good support system for these athletes.

### *Gender*

In order to examine whether differences exist between male and female athletes, data was separated based on gender. One hundred twenty-five male student-athletes consented to participate in the study. Of these participants, 42 were freshman, 28 were sophomores, 30 were juniors, 24 were seniors, and one indicated, Other. Below is a table showing the break down of male participants by sport. *Football* had the most participants represented, with 34 athletes completing the survey. *Track and Field*, *Swimming and Diving*, and *Soccer* were next with 19 and 17 athletes from each sport responding. As expected, there were more participants represented from sports with larger student-athlete rosters. Stress ratings for each sport will be examined in a later portion of the data analysis, but it is helpful to know the number of male student-athletes represented in each sport.

Table 6  
Male Student-Athletes – Sports Played

<b>Sport Played</b>	<b>Response Percent</b>	<b># of Athletes per Sport</b>
Baseball	11.2%	14
Basketball	3.2%	4
Cross Country	4.8%	6
Fencing	1.6%	2
Football	27.2%	34
Golf	4%	5
Lacrosse	10.4%	13
Soccer	13.6%	17
Swimming and Diving	13.6%	17
Track and Field	15.2%	19
Tennis	2.4%	3

The stressors male student-athletes perceive as being stressful are highlighted in Table 7. Although 125 student-athletes gave their consent to participate, 12 did not complete all of the necessary items of the survey. As a result, data from the remaining 113 participants were used for this analysis. Of the 113 male participants, over 90% rated *Not Meeting Own Expectations* (92%) and *Balancing Sport and Academic Demands* (90.3%) as being stressful. *Grades* were also endorsed by 86.7% of the participants. *Pressure to Win* (79.6%) and *Being Nervous Before or During Competition* (77.9%) were endorsed by over 75% of male student-athletes. When compared to the overall sample, fewer participants endorsed *Missing Classes Because of Travel* and *Not Enjoying Competition as Much as Before* as being stressful, indicating that these items may not have as much of an impact on male student-athletes.

Table 7  
Male Student-Athletes Perception of Stressors

Stressors	Yes	No
1. Making the Team	28.3% (32)	71.7% (81)
2. Getting Enough Playing Time	62.3% (71)	37.7% (43)
3. Pressure to Win	78.9% (90)	21.1% (24)
4. Not Meeting Own Expectations	91.2% (104)	8.8% (10)
5. Not Meeting Parent's Expectations	41.2% (47)	58.8% (67)
6. Relationship with Coach	55.8% (63)	44.2% (50)
7. Finances	53.5% (61)	46.5% (53)
8. Being Nervous Before or During Competition	77.9% (88)	22.1% (25)
9. Balancing Sport and Academic Demands	89.5% (102)	10.5% (12)
10. Missing Classes Because of Travel	46% (52)	54% (61)
11. Grades	85.2% (98)	14.8% (17)
12. Not Enjoying Competition as Much as Before	47.4% (54)	52.6% (60)
13. Lack of Control Over My Schedule	57.9% (66)	42.1% (48)
14. Perceptions of Others, Stereotypes	15.9% (18)	84.1% (95)
15. Social Life	52.6% (60)	47.4% (54)

Table 8 shows male participants stress ratings for each of the 15 stressors. *Not Meeting Own Expectations*, *Grades*, and *Balancing Sport and Academic Demands* were all rated in the extremely stressful range. Approximately 53% of the male student-athletes rated *Not Meeting Own Expectations* as extremely stressful, with the most frequently endorsed rating being a 5. Forty-three percent rated *Grades* in the extremely stressful range with 6 being the most frequently endorsed rating. Finally, *Balancing Sport and Academic Demands* was rated as extremely stressful by 42.4% of the male participants with an equal number of participants giving a rating of both 5 and 6. Looking at the data from Table 7 and Table 8, a higher stress rated is associated with a higher percentage of participants endorsing these items as stressful. Therefore, the more participants who endorse an item as stressful, the more likely the item was to receive a stress rating in the moderate to extremely stressful range. *Pressure to Win* and *Being Nervous Before or During Competition* were also endorsed by majority of participants and were both rated



in the moderately stressful range. The most frequently endorsed stress rating for *Pressure to Win* was 4 and *Being Nervous Before or During Competition* was 3.

Table 8  
Male Student-Athlete Stress Ratings

Stressors	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
1. Making the Team	61.1% (69)	12.4% (14)	7.1% (8)	8% (9)	8% (9)	2.7% (3)	2.7% (3)
2. Getting Enough Playing Time	31% (35)	8% (9)	14.2% (16)	13.3% (15)	11.5% (13)	13.3% (15)	8.8% (10)
3. Pressure to Win	17.7% (20)	5.3% (6)	12.4% (14)	12.4% (14)	21.2% (24)	15.9% (18)	15.9% (18)
4. Not Meeting Own Expectations	7.1% (8)	0% (0)	6.2% (7)	15.9% (18)	18.6% (21)	27.4% (31)	25.7% (29)
5. Not Meeting Parent's Expectations	45.1% (51)	13.3% (15)	8.8% (10)	8.8% (10)	8.8% (10)	8% (9)	7.1% (8)
6. Relationship with Coach	32.7% (37)	12.4% (14)	10.6% (12)	15.9% (18)	8% (9)	11.5% (13)	8.8% (10)
7. Finances	30.1% (34)	14.2% (16)	12.4% (14)	6.2% (7)	13.3% (15)	14.2% (16)	10.6% (12)
8. Being Nervous Before or During Competition	15.9% (18)	11.5% (13)	15.9% (18)	22.1% (25)	17.7% (20)	11.5% (13)	8% (9)
9. Balancing Sport and Academic Demands	8.8% (10)	1.8% (2)	11.5% (13)	16.8% (19)	18.6% (21)	21.2% (24)	21.2% (24)
10. Missing Classes Because of Travel	39.8% (45)	19.5% (22)	11.5% (13)	13.3% (15)	7.1% (8)	4.4% (5)	4.4% (5)
11. Grades	8.8% (10)	3.5% (4)	10.6% (12)	15.9% (18)	17.7% (20)	21.2% (24)	22.1% (25)
12. Not Enjoying Competition as Much	45.1% (51)	6.2% (7)	14.2% (16)	10.6% (12)	11.5% (13)	7.1% (8)	5.3% (6)
13. Lack of Control Over My Schedule	26.5% (30)	12.4% (14)	15.9% (18)	20.4% (23)	9.7% (11)	9.7% (11)	5.3% (6)
14. Perceptions of Others, Stereotypes	63.7% (72)	19.5% (22)	3.5% (4)	5.3% (6)	0.9% (1)	3.5% (4)	3.5% (4)
15. Social Life	32.7% (37)	18.6% (21)	21.2% (24)	11.5% (13)	12.4% (14)	1.8% (2)	3.5% (4)

0 = Not at All; 1-2 = Somewhat; 3-4 = Moderately; 5-6 = Extremely

Table 9 highlights the coping strategies male participants endorsed as using to manage the stressors associated with being a student-athlete. Of the 113 male

participants, 69.9% endorsed *Spending Time with Friends* as the coping strategy most often used to manage stress. Closely behind Spending Time with Friends is *Taking a Break*, with 68.1% endorsing this coping strategy. The only other coping strategy indicated by over half of the participants was *Exercise*. Approximately 54.9% of the male student-athletes endorsed *Exercise* as a coping strategy used to manage stress. Of note, *Drinking* was endorsed the least with only 22.1% using *Drinking* as a way to cope with stress. Although previous literature has indicated a high prevalence rate of alcohol consumption for collegiate student-athletes, majority of the participants in this study did not view or endorse drinking as a coping strategy.

Table 9  
Coping Strategies Used to Manage Stressors (Male Participants)

<b>Coping Strategies</b>	<b>Response Percent</b>	<b>Response Count</b>
Spend Time with Friends	69.9%	79
Taking a Break	68.1%	77
Exercise	54.9%	62
Asking Friends/Family for Advice	45.1%	51
Relaxation Techniques	38.1%	43
Keep Feelings to Self	37.2%	42
Focus Efforts on a Solution	31%	35
Eat	26.5%	30
Do Things for Others	25.7%	29
Refuse/Avoid Thinking about Stressor	23.9%	27
Drink	22.1%	25

In comparison, one hundred twenty-three female student-athletes participated in the study. Of these participants, 41 were freshman, 30 were sophomores, 30 were juniors, and 22 were seniors. Below is a table showing the break down of female participants by sport. *Track and Field* had the most participants represented, with 23 athletes completing the survey. *Soccer*, *Swimming and Diving*, and *Lacrosse* were next with 19, 18, and 17

athletes from each sport responding. Again the same trend was found as with the male student-athletes, with more female participants represented from sports with larger roster totals.

Table 10  
Female Student-Athletes – Sports Played

<b>Sport Played</b>	<b>Response Percent</b>	<b># of Athletes per Sport</b>
Basketball	6.5%	8
Cross Country	6.5%	8
Fencing	2.4%	3
Field Hockey	12.2%	15
Lacrosse	13.8%	17
Soccer	15.4%	19
Softball	10.6%	13
Swimming and Diving	14.6%	18
Track and Field	18.7%	23
Volleyball	6.5%	8
Tennis	5.7%	7

Table 11 highlights the stressors female student-athletes view as being stressful. Although 123 participants gave their consent, 5 of these participants did not rate all of the stress items. Therefore, 118 student-athletes were used for this data analysis. Of the 118 female participants, over 90% rated *Not Meeting Own Expectations* (98.3%), *Grades* (93.2%), and *Pressure to Win* (91.5%) as being stressful. *Balancing Sport and Academic Demands* (89.8%) and *Being Nervous Before or During Competition* (89%) were endorsed by 89% of the participants. Of note, 74.6% of female participants rated their *Relationship with Coach* as stressful for them. This is considerably larger than the male participants, with only 55.8% indicating that this relationship is stressful. *Pressure to Win* and *Being Nervous Before or During Competition* was also rated as stressful by more female participants (91.5%, 89%) than male participants (79.6%, 77.9%).

Table 11  
Female Student-Athletes Perception of Stressors

Stressors	Yes	No
1. Making the Team	29.7% (35)	70.3% (83)
2. Getting Enough Playing Time	66.9% (79)	33.1% (39)
3. Pressure to Win	91.5% (108)	8.5% (10)
4. Not Meeting Own Expectations	98.3% (116)	1.7% (2)
5. Not Meeting Parent's Expectations	42.4% (50)	57.6% (68)
6. Relationship with Coach	74.6% (88)	25.4% (30)
7. Finances	50.8% (60)	49.2% (58)
8. Being Nervous Before or During Competition	89% (105)	11% (13)
9. Balancing Sport and Academic Demands	89.8% (106)	10.2% (12)
10. Missing Classes Because of Travel	67.2% (80)	32.8% (39)
11. Grades	93.2% (110)	6.8% (8)
12. Not Enjoying Competition as Much as Before	54.2% (64)	45.8% (54)
13. Lack of Control Over My Schedule	62.7% (74)	37.3% (44)
14. Perceptions of Others, Stereotypes	22.9% (27)	77.1% (91)
15. Social Life	62.7% (74)	37.3% (44)

Table 12 depicts the female participants stress ratings for each of the 15 stressors. *Not Meeting Own Expectations* and *Being Nervous Before or During Competition* were rated in the extremely stressful range. Approximately 63% of the female student-athletes rated *Not Meeting Own Expectations* as extremely stressful, with the most frequently endorsed rating being a 5. Thirty-two percent rated *Being Nervous Before or During Competition* in the extremely stressful range with 5 being the most frequently endorsed rating. Of note, even though *Being Nervous Before or During Competition* was the fifth highest item endorsed as stressful, it received the second highest stress rating, indicating that this item can be very stressful for participants who view being nervous as a stressor. *Grades*, *Balancing Sport and Academic Demands*, and *Pressure to Win* were all rated in the moderately stressful range. The most frequently endorsed rating for *Grades* was a 4. A number of student-athletes also provided ratings in the extremely stressful range for

this item. Approximately 45% of the participants rated *Balancing Sport and Academic Demands* and *Pressure to Win* as moderately stressful with 4 being the most frequently endorsed stress rating.

Table 12  
Female Student-Athlete Stress Ratings

Stressors	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
1. Making the Team	59.3% (70)	11.9% (14)	9.3% (11)	5.9% (7)	10.2% (12)	3.4% (4)	1.7% (2)
2. Getting Enough Playing Time	27.1% (32)	9.3% (11)	20.3% (24)	7.6% (9)	19.5% (23)	14.4% (17)	2.5% (3)
3. Pressure to Win	1.7% (2)	7.6% (9)	14.4% (17)	19.5% (23)	26.3% (31)	22.9% (27)	9.3% (11)
4. Not Meeting Own Expectations	0.8% (1)	2.5% (3)	2.5% (3)	13.6% (16)	18.6% (22)	33.9% (40)	29.7% (35)
5. Not Meeting Parent's Expectations	47.5% (56)	8.5% (10)	14.4% (17)	11.9% (14)	8.5% (10)	5.9% (7)	5.9% (7)
6. Relationship with Coach	19.5% (23)	14.4% (17)	14.4% (17)	14.4% (17)	18.6% (22)	11.9% (14)	6.8% (8)
7. Finances	38.1% (45)	14.4% (17)	9.3% (11)	9.3% (11)	13.6% (16)	11% (13)	5.1% (6)
8. Being Nervous Before or During Competition	8.5% (10)	7.6% (9)	16.9% (20)	17.8% (21)	18.6% (22)	22% (26)	10.2% (12)
9. Balancing Sport and Academic Demands	6.8% (8)	5.9% (7)	9.3% (11)	19.5% (23)	26.3% (31)	16.1% (19)	16.9% (20)
10. Missing Classes Because of Travel	17.8% (21)	21.2% (25)	21.2% (25)	16.1% (19)	11.9% (14)	11% (13)	1.7% (2)
11. Grades	5.9% (7)	4.2% (5)	5.9% (7)	12.7% (15)	27.1% (32)	22.9% (27)	22.9% (27)
12. Not Enjoying Competition as Much	39% (46)	6.8% (8)	16.1% (19)	11% (13)	9.3% (11)	11% (13)	6.8% (8)
13. Lack of Control Over My Schedule	28% (33)	8.5% (10)	16.1% (19)	19.5% (23)	16.1% (19)	10.2% (12)	2.5% (3)
14. Perceptions of Others, Stereotypes	69.5% (82)	9.3% (11)	9.3% (11)	5.1% (6)	3.4% (4)	3.4% (4)	0% (0)
15. Social Life	33.1% (39)	10.2% (12)	17.8% (21)	19.5% (23)	13.6% (16)	5.1% (6)	0.8% (1)

0 = Not at All; 1-2 = Somewhat; 3-4 = Moderately; 5-6 = Extremely

Table 13 highlights the coping strategies female participants use to manage the stressors associated with being a student-athlete. Of the 123 female participants, 73.7%

endorsed *Spending Time with Friends* as a coping strategy used to manage stress. *Taking a Break* was endorsed by 67.8% of the participants. *Asking Friends/Family for Advice* was endorsed by 65.3% and *Exercise* was endorsed by 57.6% of the female student-athletes. Compared to male student-athletes, more female athletes use the advice of friends and family as a way to manage stress. Looking further at coping strategies, *Eating* was endorsed by more female than male student-athletes, with 41.5% of females endorsing this strategy compared to 31% of males. Conversely, male participants endorsed *Keeping Feelings to Self* more often than female participants, with 37.2% and 23.7% respectively. Finally, as was seen with male participants, *Drinking* was endorsed the least with only 16.9% using drinking as a way to cope with stress.

Table 13  
Coping Strategies Used to Manage Stressors (Female Participants)

<b>Coping Strategies</b>	<b>Response Percent</b>	<b>Response Count</b>
Spend Time with Friends	73.7%	87
Taking a Break	67.8%	80
Asking Friends/Family for Advice	65.3%	77
Exercise	57.6%	68
Eat	41.5%	49
Focus Efforts on a Solution	35.6%	42
Relaxation Techniques	33.9%	40
Refuse/Avoid Thinking about Stressor	27.1%	32
Keep Feelings to Self	23.7%	28
Do Things for Other	21.2%	25
Drink	16.9%	20

### *Year in College*

In order to examine whether differences exist among athletes based on year in college, data was separated and broken into four categories: Freshman, Sophomores, Juniors, and Seniors. Looking first at the freshman participants, 75 freshman student-

athletes completed the survey. Of these participants, over 90% endorsed *Not Meeting Own Expectations* (93.3%) and *Balancing Sport and Academic Demands* (90.7%) as stressful. *Grades* (88%), *Pressure to Win* (86.7%), and *Being Nervous Before or During Competition* (85.3%) were endorsed by over 80% of the participants. Of note, 50.7% of freshman student-athletes endorsed *Not Meeting Parent's Expectations* as stressful. When comparing this to the overall sample, only 42% endorsed this item as stressful. One possible explanation for this result is that freshman student-athletes are more concerned about meeting their parents expectations because of the increased parental involvement associated with high school sports. Freshman athletes have recently made the transition to college and may be more concerned about meeting, not only their own, but their family's expectations as they make this transition.

Table 14  
Freshman Student-Athletes Perception of Stressors

Stressors	Yes	No
1. Making the Team	37.3% (28)	62.7% (47)
2. Getting Enough Playing Time	65.3% (49)	34.7% (26)
3. Pressure to Win	85.5% (65)	14.5% (11)
4. Not Meeting Own Expectations	92.1% (70)	7.9% (6)
5. Not Meeting Parent's Expectations	50.7% (38)	49.3% (37)
6. Relationship with Coach	62.7% (47)	37.3% (28)
7. Finances	52.6% (40)	47.4% (36)
8. Being Nervous Before or During Competition	85.3% (64)	14.7% (11)
9. Balancing Sport and Academic Demands	90.7% (68)	9.3% (7)
10. Missing Classes Because of Travel	57.9% (44)	42.1% (32)
11. Grades	86.8% (66)	13.2% (10)
12. Not Enjoying Competition as Much as Before	48.7% (37)	51.3% (39)
13. Lack of Control Over My Schedule	60.5% (46)	39.5% (30)
14. Perceptions of Others, Stereotypes	18.7% (14)	81.3% (61)
15. Social Life	66.7% (50)	33.3% (25)

Table 15 shows freshman student-athletes stress ratings for each of the 15 stressors. *Not Meeting Own Expectations*, *Grades*, and *Balancing Sport and Academic Demands* were rated in the extremely stressful range. Approximately 54% of the freshman student-athletes rated *Not Meeting Own Expectations* as extremely stressful, with the most frequently endorsed rating being a 5. Fifty-one percent rated *Grades* in the extremely stressful range with 6 being the most frequently endorsed rating. Forty-five percent of the participants rated *Balancing Sport and Academic Demands* as extremely stressful with 5 being the most frequently endorsed rating. *Pressure to Win* was the only item rated in the moderately stressful range by majority of participants. Forty-four percent of the freshman participants provided a stress rating in the moderate range with the most frequently endorsed rating being a 4. Of note, *Being Nervous Before or During Competition* was endorsed by several respondents in the moderate range although the most frequently endorsed rating for this item was a 2.



Table 15  
Freshman Student-Athletes Stress Ratings

Stressors	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
1. Making the Team	52% (39)	12% (9)	9.3% (7)	9.3% (7)	10.7% (8)	4.0% (3)	5.3% (4)
2. Getting Enough Playing Time	26.7% (20)	5.3% (4)	18.7% (14)	13.3% (10)	18.7% (14)	16% (12)	2.7% (2)
3. Pressure to Win	10.7% (8)	8% (6)	13.3% (10)	17.3% (13)	26.7% (20)	16% (12)	9.3% (7)
4. Not Meeting Own Expectations	4% (3)	2.7% (2)	8% (6)	16% (12)	17.3% (13)	32% (24)	22.7% (17)
5. Not Meeting Parent's Expectations	40% (30)	8% (6)	13.3% (10)	6.7% (5)	12% (9)	12% (9)	9.3% (7)
6. Relationship with Coach	32% (24)	16% (12)	12% (9)	12% (9)	10.7% (8)	9.3% (7)	8% (6)
7. Finances	32% (24)	20% (15)	8% (6)	10.7% (8)	10.7% (8)	14.7% (11)	5.3% (4)
8. Being Nervous Before or During Competition	12% (9)	10.7% (8)	21.3% (16)	13.3% (10)	20% (15)	16% (12)	9.3% (7)
9. Balancing Sport and Academic Demands	6.7% (5)	1.3% (1)	13.3% (10)	13.3% (10)	20% (15)	24% (18)	21.3% (16)
10. Missing Classes Because of Travel	30.7% (23)	21.3% (16)	16% (12)	16% (12)	10.7% (8)	5.3% (4)	0% (0)
11. Grades	9.3% (7)	2.7% (2)	5.3% (4)	13.3% (10)	20% (15)	24% (18)	26.7% (20)
12. Not Enjoying Competition as Much	48% (36)	4% (3)	13.3% (10)	10.7% (8)	9.3% (7)	8% (6)	6.7% (5)
13. Lack of Control Over My Schedule	29.3% (22)	13.3% (10)	14.7% (11)	17.3% (13)	12% (9)	12% (9)	2.7% (2)
14. Perceptions of Others, Stereotypes	68% (51)	14.7% (11)	6.7% (5)	4% (3)	1.3% (1)	4% (3)	1.3% (1)
15. Social Life	28% (21)	13.3% (10)	17.3% (13)	21.3% (16)	12% (9)	5.3% (4)	2.7% (2)

0 = Not at All; 1-2 = Somewhat; 3-4 = Moderately; 5-6 = Extremely

Table 16 highlights the coping strategies freshman participants endorsed as being used to help manage the stressors associated with being a student-athlete. Of the 75 freshman participants, 66.7% endorsed *Spending Time with Friends* and *Taking a Break* as coping strategies they use to manage stress. These were the only two coping strategies endorsed by over 50% of the participants. *Exercise* was the next strategy most frequently

endorsed by 48% of the student-athletes. The coping strategies least often used were *Drinking* (17.3%) and *Doing Things for Others* (22.7%).

Table 16  
Coping Strategies Used to Manage Stressors (Freshman Student-Athletes)

<b>Coping Strategies</b>	<b>Response Percent</b>	<b>Response Count</b>
Spend Time with Friends	66.7%	50
Taking a Break	66.7%	50
Exercise	48%	36
Asking Friends/Family for Advice	45.3%	34
Focus Efforts on a Solution	37.3%	28
Relaxation Techniques	37.3%	28
Eat	33.3%	25
Keep Feelings to Self	32%	24
Refuse/Avoid Thinking about Stressor	30.7%	23
Do Things for Other	22.7%	17
Drink	17.3%	13

### *Sophomores*

Table 17 depicts the stressors sophomore student-athletes perceive as being stressful. Fifty-five sophomore participants completed the survey. Of these participants, over 90% endorsed *Not Meeting Own Expectations* (98.2%), *Grades* (98.2%), and *Balancing Sport and Academic Demands* (94.5%) as being stressful. *Getting Enough Playing Time* (89.1%) and *Pressure to Win* (87.3%) were endorsed by over 80% of the participants. Of note, *Getting Enough Playing Time* was endorsed by a larger number of sophomore student-athletes compared to freshman athletes and the overall sample. This stressor appears to be more of a concern for sophomore participants, with only 7 student-athletes indicating that getting enough playing time was not stressful. Compared to the overall sample with 64.9% endorsing this stressor, sophomore participants have a much larger percentage at 89.1%. The possible expectation of increased playing time from

freshman to sophomore year may contribute to this finding. Finally, over 70% of the participants endorsed *Being Nervous Before or During Competition* (76.4%) and *Relationship with Coach* (70.9%) as stressful.

Table 17  
Sophomore Student-Athletes Perception of Stressors

Stressors	Yes	No
1. Making the Team	34.5% (19)	65.5% (36)
2. Getting Enough Playing Time	89.1% (49)	12.7% (7)
3. Pressure to Win	87.3% (48)	12.7% (7)
4. Not Meeting Own Expectations	98.2% (54)	1.8% (1)
5. Not Meeting Parent's Expectations	32.1% (18)	67.9% (38)
6. Relationship with Coach	70.9% (39)	29.1% (16)
7. Finances	50.9% (28)	49.1% (27)
8. Being Nervous Before or During Competition	76.4% (42)	23.6% (13)
9. Balancing Sport and Academic Demands	92.9% (52)	7.1% (4)
10. Missing Classes Because of Travel	52.7% (29)	47.3% (26)
11. Grades	96.4% (54)	3.6% (2)
12. Not Enjoying Competition as Much as Before	61.8% (34)	38.2% (21)
13. Lack of Control Over My Schedule	65.5% (36)	34.5% (19)
14. Perceptions of Others, Stereotypes	30.9% (17)	69.1% (38)
15. Social Life	64.3% (36)	35.7% (20)

Table 18 shows sophomore participants stress ratings for each of the 15 stressors. *Not Meeting Own Expectations*, *Pressure to Win*, *Grades*, and *Getting Enough Playing Time* were all rated in the extremely stressful range. Approximately 65% of the sophomore student-athletes rated *Not Meeting Own Expectations* as extremely stressful, with the most frequently endorsed rating being a 6. Fifty-three percent rated *Grades* in the extremely stressful range with 5 being the most frequently endorsed rating. Forty-three percent of the participants rated *Pressure to Win* as extremely stressful with 5 being the most frequently endorsed rating. Finally, approximately 34% endorsed *Getting Enough Playing Time* as being extremely stressful with 5 being the most frequent rating.

These four stressors were rated as the most stressful for sophomore student-athletes. Also receiving higher stress ratings were *Balancing Sport and Academic Demands*, *Being Nervous Before or During Competition*, and *Lack of Control Over My Schedule*. Of note, *Being Nervous Before or During Competition* and *Balancing Sport and Academic Demands* were endorsed by several respondents in both the moderate and extremely stressful range. These stressors were categorized under the moderately stressful range because a larger number of respondents rated this stressor in the moderate range when individual ratings were combined. Finally, participants rated *Lack of Control Over My Schedule* in the moderate range with the most frequently endorsed rating being a 4. While there were a wide variety of responses to this stressor, a number of student-athletes perceive lack of control of their schedule as being particularly stressful for them.

Table 18  
Sophomore Student-Athlete Stress Ratings

Stressors	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
1. Making the Team	58.2% (32)	14.5% (8)	9.1% (5)	5.5% (3)	9.1% (5)	1.8% (1)	1.8% (1)
2. Getting Enough Playing Time	12.7% (7)	5.5% (3)	20% (11)	9.1% (5)	18.2% (10)	21.8% (12)	12.7% (7)
3. Pressure to Win	7.3% (4)	7.3% (4)	16.4% (9)	9.1% (5)	20% (11)	27.3% (15)	16.4% (9)
4. Not Meeting Own Expectations	3.6% (2)	0% (0)	1.8% (1)	16.4% (9)	14.5% (8)	30.9% (17)	34.5% (19)
5. Not Meeting Parent's Expectations	50.9% (28)	16.4% (9)	9.1% (5)	9.1% (5)	7.3% (4)	3.6% (2)	3.6% (2)
6. Relationship with Coach	23.6% (13)	7.3% (4)	14.5% (8)	16.4% (9)	10.9% (6)	18.2% (10)	9.1% (5)
7. Finances	40% (22)	9.1% (5)	7.3% (4)	5.5% (3)	20% (11)	10.9% (6)	9.1% (5)
8. Being Nervous Before or During Competition	16.4% (9)	5.5% (3)	18.2% (10)	14.5% (8)	20% (11)	20% (11)	7.3% (4)
9. Balancing Sport and Academic Demands	5.5% (3)	1.8% (1)	10.9% (6)	14.5% (8)	27.3% (15)	20% (11)	21.8% (12)
10. Missing Classes Because of Travel	34.5% (19)	18.2% (10)	16.4% (9)	10.9% (6)	3.6% (2)	10.9% (6)	5.5% (3)
11. Grades	1.8% (1)	1.8% (1)	10.9% (6)	10.9% (6)	21.8% (12)	27.3% (15)	25.5% (14)
12. Not Enjoying Competition as Much	32.7% (18)	3.6% (2)	21.8% (12)	5.5% (3)	12.7% (7)	16.4% (9)	7.3% (4)
13. Lack of Control Over My Schedule	20% (11)	14.5% (8)	16.4% (9)	21.8% (12)	10.9% (6)	9.1% (5)	7.3% (4)
14. Perceptions of Others, Stereotypes	61.8% (34)	10.9% (6)	10.9% (6)	3.6% (2)	1.8% (1)	5.5% (3)	5.5% (3)
15. Social Life	25.5% (14)	18.2% (10)	25.5% (14)	12.7% (7)	10.9% (6)	3.6% (2)	5.5% (3)

0 = Not at All; 1-2 = Somewhat; 3-4 = Moderately; 5-6 = Extremely

Table 19 highlights the coping strategies sophomore participants endorsed as using to manage stressors associated with being a student-athlete. Of the 55 sophomore participants, 72.7% endorsed *Spending Time with Friends* as a coping strategy they use. *Taking a Break* was endorsed by 67.3% of the participants and 61.8% endorsed *Exercise* as a coping strategy used. Finally, *Asking Friends/Family for Advice* was endorsed by

56.4% of the sophomore student-athletes. Compared to freshman student-athletes, sophomore participants reportedly use more coping strategies to manage their role as a student-athlete. For example, *Spending Time with Friends* and *Taking a Break* were the only two coping strategies endorsed by more than 50% of the freshman participants compared to the four strategies that sophomores endorsed. The utilization of additional coping strategies may be associated with age and increased time spent as a student-athlete.

Table 19  
Coping Strategies Used to Manage Stressors (Sophomore Student-Athletes)

<b>Coping Strategies</b>	<b>Response Percent</b>	<b>Response Count</b>
Spend Time with Friends	72.7%	40
Taking a Break	67.3%	37
Exercise	61.8%	34
Asking Friends/Family for Advice	56.4%	31
Eat	32.7%	18
Keep Feelings to Self	30.9%	17
Relaxation Techniques	27.3%	15
Do Things for Other	27.3%	15
Focus Efforts on a Solution	23.6%	13
Drink	20%	11
Refuse/Avoid Thinking about Stressor	18.2%	10

### *Juniors*

Table 20 depicts the stressors student-athletes in their junior year perceive as being stressful. Fifty-seven juniors completed the survey. Of these participants, over 90% endorsed *Not Meeting Own Expectations* (94.7%) and *Grades* (93%) as being stressful. *Balancing Sport and Academic Demands* (89.5%), *Being Nervous Before or During Competition* (84.2%) and *Pressure to Win* (80.7%) were all endorsed by over 80% of the participants. There were also several stressors that were not considered stressful by majority of the student-athletes. In addition to the three stressors not endorsed by the

overall sample (*Making the Team, Not Meeting Parents Expectations, and Perceptions of Others, Stereotypes*), there were additional items that junior participants did not rate as being stressful. For example, *Getting Enough Playing Time, Finances, Not Enjoying Competition as Much As Before, and Social Life* were all endorsed by less than 50% of the respondents. Table 20 shows the ratings of each of the items.

Table 20  
Junior Student-Athletes Perception of Stressors

Stressors	Yes	No
1. Making the Team	17.5% (10)	82.5% (47)
2. Getting Enough Playing Time	43.9% (25)	56.1% (32)
3. Pressure to Win	80.7% (46)	19.3% (11)
4. Not Meeting Own Expectations	94.7% (54)	5.3% (3)
5. Not Meeting Parent's Expectations	45.6% (26)	54.4% (31)
6. Relationship with Coach	57.9% (33)	42.1% (24)
7. Finances	45.6% (26)	54.4% (31)
8. Being Nervous Before or During Competition	84.2% (48)	15.8% (9)
9. Balancing Sport and Academic Demands	89.5% (51)	10.5% (6)
10. Missing Classes Because of Travel	63.2% (36)	36.8% (21)
11. Grades	93.0% (53)	7% (4)
12. Not Enjoying Competition as Much as Before	42.1% (24)	57.9% (33)
13. Lack of Control Over My Schedule	56.1% (32)	43.9% (25)
14. Perceptions of Others, Stereotypes	14% (8)	86% (49)
15. Social Life	40.4% (23)	59.6% (34)

Table 21 depicts junior student-athletes' stress ratings for each of the 15 stressors. *Not Meeting Own Expectations* was the only stressor rated in the extremely stressful range. Approximately 53% of the junior participants rated this item as extremely stressful, with the most frequently endorsed rating being a 5. There were several stressors rated in the moderately stressful range. Forty-seven percent rated *Being Nervous Before or During Competition* in the moderately stressful range with 3 being the most frequently endorsed rating. *Pressure to Win* was also endorsed as moderately stressful by

approximately 45% of the junior participants with both 3 and 4 being the most frequently endorsed ratings. Approximately 42% endorsed *Grades* as moderately stressful. There were also several participants who rated *Grades* in the extremely stressful rating (41%), indicating that grades are an area of stress for many of the junior student-athletes.

*Balancing Sport and Academic Demands* was also endorsed as moderately stressful by approximately 40% of the junior participants with 3 being the most frequently endorsed rating. Finally, there were a variety of responses for *Lack of Control Over My Schedule*, including approximately 38% rating it in the moderately stressful range.

Table 21  
Junior Student-Athlete Stress Ratings

Stressors	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
1. Making the Team	70.2% (40)	12.3% (7)	5.3% (3)	3.5% (2)	7% (4)	1.8% (1)	0% (0)
2. Getting Enough Playing Time	49.1% (28)	12.3% (7)	8.8% (5)	7% (4)	12.3% (7)	5.3% (3)	5.3% (3)
3. Pressure to Win	12.3% (7)	3.5% (2)	12.3% (7)	22.8% (13)	22.8% (13)	15.8% (9)	10.5% (6)
4. Not Meeting Own Expectations	5.3% (3)	0% (0)	3.5% (2)	17.5% (10)	21.1% (12)	28.1% (16)	24.6% (14)
5. Not Meeting Parent's Expectations	45.6% (26)	8.8% (5)	8.8% (5)	12.3% (7)	8.8% (5)	7% (4)	8.8% (5)
6. Relationship with Coach	26.3% (15)	17.5% (10)	10.5% (6)	17.5% (10)	15.8% (9)	7% (4)	5.3% (3)
7. Finances	38.6% (22)	14% (8)	14% (8)	5.3% (3)	10.5% (6)	5.3% (3)	12.3% (7)
8. Being Nervous Before or During Competition	12.3% (7)	3.5% (2)	14% (8)	28.1% (16)	19.3% (11)	15.8% (9)	7% (4)
9. Balancing Sport and Academic Demands	10.5% (6)	7% (4)	8.8% (5)	22.8% (13)	17.5% (10)	14% (8)	19.3% (11)
10. Missing Classes Because of Travel	21.1% (12)	19.3% (11)	12.3% (7)	15.8% (9)	17.5% (10)	10.5% (6)	5.3% (3)
11. Grades	8.8% (5)	3.5% (2)	5.3% (3)	14% (8)	28.1% (16)	17.5% (10)	24.6% (14)
12. Not Enjoying Competition as Much	42.1% (24)	8.8% (5)	8.8% (5)	17.5% (10)	10.5% (6)	8.8% (5)	3.5% (2)
13. Lack of Control Over My Schedule	28.1% (16)	7% (4)	12.3% (7)	28.1% (16)	10.5% (6)	12.3% (7)	1.8% (1)



14. Perceptions of Others, Stereotypes	64.9% (37)	19.3% (11)	3.5% (2)	10.5% (6)	1.8% (1)	0% (0)	0% (0)
15. Social Life	49.1% (28)	17.5% (10)	14% (8)	8.8% (5)	7% (4)	3.5% (2)	0% (0)

0 = Not at All; 1-2 = Somewhat; 3-4 = Moderately; 5-6 = Extremely

Table 22 highlights the coping strategies junior participants use to manage the stressors associated with being a student-athlete. Of the 57 junior participants, 78.9% endorsed *Spending Time with Friends* and 70.2% endorsed *Taking a Break* as coping strategies used. *Asking Friends/Family for Advice* was endorsed by 68.4% and *Exercising* was indicated by 57.9% of the student-athletes. These coping strategies are consistent with the strategies endorsed by the sophomore participants in this study. *Drinking* was the coping strategy least likely to be used with only 8.8% of the junior participants endorsing this strategy.

Table 22  
Coping Strategies Used to Manage Stressors (Junior Student-Athletes)

<b>Coping Strategies</b>	<b>Response Percent</b>	<b>Response Count</b>
Spend Time with Friends	78.9%	45
Taking a Break	70.2%	40
Asking Friends/Family for Advice	68.4%	39
Exercise	57.9%	33
Relaxation Techniques	40.4%	23
Eat	33.3%	19
Focus Efforts on a Solution	33.3%	19
Refuse/Avoid Thinking about Stressor	29.8%	17
Keep Feelings to Self	28.1%	16
Do Things for Others	24.6%	14
Drink	8.8%	5

### *Seniors*

The stressors senior student-athletes perceive as being stressful are highlighted in Table 23. Forty-three seniors completed the survey. Of these participants, over 90%

endorsed *Not Meeting Own Expectations* (95.3%) and *Pressure to Win* (90.7%) as being stressful. Over 80% endorsed *Being Nervous Before or During Competition* (88.4%) and *Balancing Sport and Academic Demands* (83.7%) as being stressful. *Grades* (79.1%) and *Relationship with Coach* (74.4%) were indicated as being stressful by over 70% of the senior participants. Of note, *Balancing Sport and Academic Demands* are still challenging and stressful even for student-athletes in their senior year. The same stressors that were present and endorsed by freshman participants (*Not Meeting Own Expectations*, *Pressure to Win*, and *Being Nervous Before or During Competition*) are still endorsed by senior student-athletes, indicating that some stressors may remain constant throughout their collegiate career.

Table 23  
Senior Student-Athletes Perception of Stressors

Stressors	Yes	No
1. Making the Team	23.3% (10)	76.7% (33)
2. Getting Enough Playing Time	62.8% (27)	37.2% (16)
3. Pressure to Win	90.7% (39)	9.3% (4)
4. Not Meeting Own Expectations	95.3% (41)	4.7% (2)
5. Not Meeting Parent's Expectations	34.9% (15)	65.1% (28)
6. Relationship with Coach	74.4% (32)	25.6% (11)
7. Finances	60.5% (26)	39.5% (17)
8. Being Nervous Before or During Competition	88.4% (38)	11.6% (5)
9. Balancing Sport and Academic Demands	83.7% (36)	16.3% (7)
10. Missing Classes Because of Travel	51.2% (22)	48.8% (21)
11. Grades	79.1% (34)	20.9% (9)
12. Not Enjoying Competition as Much as Before	53.5% (23)	46.5% (20)
13. Lack of Control Over My Schedule	60.5% (26)	39.5% (17)
14. Perceptions of Others, Stereotypes	14% (6)	86% (37)
15. Social Life	55.8% (24)	44.2% (19)

Table 24 shows senior student-athletes stress ratings for each of the 15 stressors.

As was found with the junior participants, *Not Meeting Own Expectations* was the only

stressor rated in the extremely stressful range. Approximately 62% of the senior participants rated *Not Meeting Own Expectations* as extremely stressful, with the most frequently endorsed rating being a 5. There were also several stressors rated in the moderately stressful range. Approximately 53% percent rated *Balancing Sport and Academic Demands* in the moderately stressful range with 4 being the most frequently endorsed rating. *Being Nervous Before or During Competition* and *Grades* were also endorsed as moderately stressful by approximately 39% of the senior student-athletes. Approximately 35% of the student-athletes endorsed *Relationship with Coach* as being moderately stressful with 4 being the most frequently endorsed rating. This stress rating is unique to senior participants and may be a result of increased expectations of coaches for senior athletes or that the relationship with their coach will end at the conclusion of the season.

Table 24  
Senior Student-Athlete Stress Ratings

Stressors	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
1. Making the Team	62.8% (27)	9.3% (4)	9.3% (4)	9.3% (4)	9.3% (4)	4.7% (2)	0% (0)
2. Getting Enough Playing Time	25.6% (11)	14% (6)	23.3% (10)	11.6% (5)	11.6% (5)	11.6% (5)	2.3% (1)
3. Pressure to Win	4.7% (2)	7% (3)	11.6% (5)	14% (6)	25.6% (11)	20.9% (9)	16.3% (7)
4. Not Meeting Own Expectations	2.3% (1)	2.3% (1)	2.3% (1)	7% (3)	23.3% (10)	32.6% (14)	30.2% (13)
5. Not Meeting Parent's Expectations	51.2% (22)	11.6% (5)	16.3% (7)	16.3% (7)	4.7% (2)	2.3% (1)	2.3% (1)
6. Relationship with Coach	16.3% (7)	11.6% (5)	14% (6)	16.3% (7)	18.6% (9)	14% (6)	9.3% (4)
7. Finances	25.6% (11)	11.6% (5)	16.3% (7)	9.3% (4)	14% (6)	18.6% (8)	4.7% (2)
8. Being Nervous Before or During Competition	7% (3)	20.9% (9)	7% (3)	27.9% (12)	11.6% (5)	16.3% (7)	14% (6)
9. Balancing Sport and Academic Demands	9.3% (4)	7% (3)	4.7% (2)	25.6% (11)	27.9% (12)	14% (6)	11.6% (5)
10. Missing Classes Because of Travel	27.9% (12)	23.3% (10)	23.3% (10)	14% (6)	4.7% (2)	4.7% (2)	2.3% (1)
11. Grades	9.3% (4)	9.3% (4)	14% (6)	20.9% (9)	18.6% (8)	18.6% (8)	9.3% (4)
12. Not Enjoying Competition as Much	41.9% (18)	11.6% (5)	18.6% (8)	9.3% (4)	9.3% (4)	2.3% (1)	7% (3)
13. Lack of Control Over My Schedule	30.2% (13)	4.7% (2)	23.3% (10)	11.6% (5)	20.9% (9)	4.7% (2)	4.7% (2)
14. Perceptions of Others, Stereotypes	72.1% (31)	11.6% (5)	4.7% (2)	2.3% (1)	4.7% (2)	4.7% (2)	0% (0)
15. Social Life	30.2% (13)	7% (3)	20.9% (9)	18.6% (8)	25.6% (11)	0% (0)	0% (0)

0 = Not at All; 1-2 = Somewhat; 3-4 = Moderately; 5-6 = Extremely

Table 25 highlights the coping strategies senior participants use to manage the stressors associated with being a student-athlete. Of the 43 senior participants, 72.1% endorsed *Spending Time with Friends* as a strategy used to help manage stress. *Taking a Break* (67.4%) and *Exercising* (62.8%) were endorsed by over 60% of the student-athletes. Finally, *Asking Friends/Family for Advice* was indicated by 55.8% of the senior

student-athletes as a coping strategy used. These four coping strategies are consistent with those endorsed by both sophomore and junior participants.

Table 25  
Coping Strategies Used to Manage Stressors (Senior Student-Athletes)

<b>Coping Strategies</b>	<b>Response Percent</b>	<b>Response Count</b>
Spend Time with Friends	72.1%	31
Taking a Break	67.4%	29
Exercise	62.8%	27
Asking Friends/Family for Advice	55.8%	24
Eat	39.5%	17
Relaxation Techniques	37.2%	16
Focus Efforts on a Solution	37.2%	16
Drink	37.2%	16
Keep Feelings to Self	30.2%	13
Refuse/Avoid Thinking about Stressor	20.9%	9
Do Things for Others	18.6%	8

### *Summary*

By separating the data according to year in college, similarities and differences can be seen. Across all four years, over 90% of the student athletes rated *Not Meeting Own Expectations* as stressful with many endorsing this item in the extremely stressful range. Differences based on year were also found. Freshman participants were more likely to rate *Not Meeting Parents Expectations* as stressful compared to sophomore, junior, and senior participants. Majority of the sophomores participating in this study endorsed *Getting Enough Playing Time* as being stressful. The possible expectation of increased playing time from freshman to sophomore year may contribute to this finding. Sophomores also rated *Lack of Control Over My Schedule* in the moderately stressful range which was unique to this group. Junior student-athletes rated some of the stressors that freshman, sophomore, and senior student-athletes endorsed as not being stressful. For example, *Getting Enough Playing Time*, *Finances*, *Not Enjoying Competition as Much as*

*Before*, and *Social Life* were rated as stressful by less than 50% of the junior participants. Of note, *Balancing Sport and Academic Demands* was still seen as moderately stressful even for senior student-athletes, indicating that this remains a constant stressor for some participants. *Relationship with Coach* was also rated as moderately stressful by senior participants, a finding that was not seen for freshman, sophomore, and junior student-athletes. The relationship with the coach may change senior year and lead to an additional stressor that some student-athletes face. Also of note, the same stressors that were present and endorsed by freshman participants (*Not Meeting Own Expectations*, *Pressure to Win*, and *Being Nervous Before or During Competition*) were still endorsed by senior student-athletes, indicating that some stressors may remain constant throughout a student-athlete's collegiate career. Finally, only two coping strategies were endorsed by over 50% of the freshman participants, while four coping strategies were endorsed by sophomore, junior, and senior participants. The most frequently endorsed coping strategies were: *Spending Time with Friends*, *Taking a Break*, *Exercise*, and *Asking Friends/Family for Advice*.

### *Sport Played*

In order to examine whether differences exist among sports, data was separated and analyzed for each of the fourteen sports: Baseball, Basketball, Cross Country, Fencing, Field Hockey, Football, Golf, Lacrosse, Soccer, Softball, Swimming and Diving, Track and Field, Tennis, and Volleyball. Looking first at baseball participants, 14 student-athletes completed the survey. Of these participants, 100% endorsed *Not Meeting*

*Own Expectations* (100%) and *Pressure to Win* (100%) as being stressful. *Getting Enough Playing Time* (85.7%) and *Balancing Sport and Academic Demands* (80%) were endorsed by over 80% of the participants as stressful. Finally, over 75% of the baseball student-athletes endorsed *Relationship with Coach* (78.6%), *Being Nervous Before or During Competition* (78.6%), and *Grades* (78.6%) as being stressful. Of note, *Making the Team* (50%) was endorsed by half of the baseball participant. This is considerably higher than the overall sample, with only 29% endorsing this item as stressful. Table 26 shows the number and percentage of baseball student-athletes who endorse each item as stressful.

Table 26  
Baseball Student-Athletes Perception of Stressors (n=14)

Stressors	Yes	No
1. Making the Team	50% (7)	50% (7)
2. Getting Enough Playing Time	85.7% (12)	14.3% (2)
3. Pressure to Win	100% (14)	0% (0)
4. Not Meeting Own Expectations	100% (14)	0% (0)
5. Not Meeting Parent's Expectations	42.9% (6)	57.1% (8)
6. Relationship with Coach	78.6% (11)	21.4% (3)
7. Finances	50% (7)	50% (7)
8. Being Nervous Before or During Competition	78.6% (11)	21.4% (3)
9. Balancing Sport and Academic Demands	80% (12)	20% (3)
10. Missing Classes Because of Travel	35.7% (5)	64.3% (9)
11. Grades	78.6% (11)	21.4% (3)
12. Not Enjoying Competition as Much as Before	50% (7)	50% (7)
13. Lack of Control Over My Schedule	42.9% (6)	57.1% (8)
14. Perceptions of Others, Stereotypes	7.1% (1)	92.9% (13)
15. Social Life	50% (7)	50% (7)

Table 27 depicts the baseball student-athletes stress ratings for each of the 15 stressors. Several items were given a high stress rating. *Not Meeting Own Expectations*, *Balancing Sport and Academic Demands*, *Grades*, *Getting Enough Playing Time*, and *Relationship with Coach* were all rated in the extremely stressful range. Approximately

64% of the baseball student-athletes rated *Not Meeting Own Expectations* as extremely stressful, with the most frequently endorsed rating being a 6. Fifty percent rated *Balancing Sport and Academic Demands* in the extremely stressful range with 6 being the most frequently endorsed rating. Approximately 42% rated *Grades and Getting Enough Playing Time* as being extremely stressful. *Relationship with Coach* was endorsed by equal number of participants in both the moderate to extreme range, with a 3 and 5 rating being the most frequently endorsed. *Pressure to Win* and *Being Nervous Before or During Competition* were rated in the moderately stressful range. Approximately 57% of the participants rated *Pressure to Win* in the moderate range. The most frequently endorsed rating for *Being Nervous Before or During Competition* was a 3, also within the moderately stressful range.



Table 27  
Baseball Student-Athlete Stress Ratings

Stressors	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
1. Making the Team	35.7% (5)	21.4% (3)	7.1% (1)	0% (0)	14.3% (2)	14.3% (2)	7.1% (1)
2. Getting Enough Playing Time	7.1% (1)	7.1% (1)	28.6% (4)	0% (0)	14.3% (2)	35.7% (5)	7.1% (1)
3. Pressure to Win	0% (0)	0% (0)	21.4% (3)	28.6% (4)	28.6% (4)	14.3% (2)	14.3% (2)
4. Not Meeting Own Expectations	0% (0)	0% (0)	0% (0)	7.1% (1)	28.6% (4)	28.6% (4)	35.7% (5)
5. Not Meeting Parent's Expectations	35.7% (5)	28.6% (4)	14.3% (2)	0% (0)	7.1% (1)	0% (0)	14.3% (2)
6. Relationship with Coach	7.1% (1)	7.1% (1)	14.3% (2)	28.6% (4)	7.1% (1)	28.6% (4)	7.1% (1)
7. Finances	21.4% (3)	28.6% (4)	21.4% (3)	0% (0)	14.3% (2)	7.1% (1)	7.1% (1)
8. Being Nervous Before or During Competition	14.3% (2)	28.6% (4)	7.1% (1)	35.7% (5)	0% (0)	14.3% (2)	7.1% (1)
9. Balancing Sport and Academic Demands	14.3% (2)	0% (0)	14.3% (2)	7.1% (1)	14.3% (2)	21.4% (3)	28.6% (4)
10. Missing Classes Because of Travel	50% (7)	14.3% (2)	7.1% (1)	0% (0)	14.3% (2)	7.1% (1)	7.1% (1)
11. Grades	7.1% (1)	7.1% (1)	21.4% (3)	7.1% (1)	14.3% (2)	21.4% (3)	21.4% (3)
12. Not Enjoying Competition as Much	42.9% (6)	7.1% (1)	14.3% (2)	21.4% (3)	14.3% (2)	0% (0)	0% (0)
13. Lack of Control Over My Schedule	35.7% (5)	21.4% (3)	7.1% (1)	7.1% (1)	0% (0)	21.4% (3)	7.1% (1)
14. Perceptions of Others, Stereotypes	50% (7)	42.9% (6)	0% (0)	7.1% (1)	0% (0)	0% (0)	0% (0)
15. Social Life	14.3% (2)	35.7% (5)	35.7% (5)	7.1% (1)	14.3% (2)	0% (0)	0% (0)

0 = Not at All; 1-2 = Somewhat; 3-4 = Moderately; 5-6 = Extremely

Table 28 highlights the coping strategies baseball participants use to manage the stressors associated with being a student-athlete. Of the 14 participants, 78.6% endorsed *Taking a Break* and *Exercise* as coping strategies they used to help manage stress. *Spending Time with Friends* (64.3%) was endorsed by over 60% of baseball participants and 50% rated *Keeping Feelings to Self* as a strategy used to manage stress. Comparing

these coping strategies to the overall sample, male and female participants, and year in college a few differences can be seen. In all of the above cases, *Spending Time with Friends* was endorsed as the strategy used by most of the student-athlete participants. For those playing baseball, this coping strategy was endorsed less frequently compared to *Taking a Break* and *Exercise*. Also of note, *Keeping Feelings to Self* was endorsed by 50% of the baseball participants which is considerably higher than the overall sample (30.3%), male (37.2%) and female (23.7%) participants, and freshman (32%), sophomore (30.9%), junior (28.1%), and senior (30.2%) participants. The smaller number of baseball participants, with 14 completing the survey, compared to the larger grouping of gender and year in college may contribute to this difference. However, it is believed to be important to highlight this difference since it is found to be unique to this sport.

Table 28  
Coping Strategies Used to Manage Stressors (Baseball Student-Athletes)

<b>Coping Strategies</b>	<b>Response Percent</b>	<b>Response Count</b>
Taking a Break	78.6%	11
Exercise	78.6%	11
Spending Time with Friends	64.3%	9
Keep Feelings to Self	50%	7
Asking Friends/Family for Advice	42.9%	6
Focus Efforts on a Solution	42.9%	6
Drink	35.7%	5
Refuse/Avoid Thinking about Stressor	28.6%	4
Relaxation Techniques	21.4%	3
Do Things for Others	21.4%	3
Eat	21.4%	3

### *Basketball*

Table 29 depicts the stressors basketball student-athletes perceive as being stressful. Twelve participants completed the survey. Of these participants, 100%

endorsed *Getting Enough Playing Time* and *Grades* as being stressful. While *Grades* has consistently been rated by majority of participants as being stressful, such a high endorsement for *Getting Enough Playing Time* is unique to basketball participants, indicating that this stressor may be of particular concern for athletes who play basketball. Over 90% of the participants also endorsed *Pressure to Win* (91.7%), *Not Meeting Own Expectations* (91.7%), and *Balancing Sport and Academic Demands* (91.7%) as being stressful. Finally, 75% of the basketball student-athletes endorsed *Being Nervous Before or During Competition*, *Relationship with Coach*, *Not Enjoying Competition as Much as Before*, *Lack of Control Over My Schedule*, and *Social Life* as stressful. Only two items were not rated by majority of the basketball participants as being stressful, *Making the Team* (41.7%) and *Perceptions of Others, Stereotypes* (33.3%).

Table 29  
Basketball Student-Athletes Perception of Stressors (12)

Stressors	Yes	No
1. Making the Team	41.7% (5)	58.3% (7)
2. Getting Enough Playing Time	100% (12)	0% (0)
3. Pressure to Win	91.7% (11)	8.3% (1)
4. Not Meeting Own Expectations	91.7% (11)	8.3% (1)
5. Not Meeting Parent's Expectations	50% (6)	50% (6)
6. Relationship with Coach	75% (9)	25% (3)
7. Finances	66.7% (8)	33.3% (4)
8. Being Nervous Before or During Competition	75% (9)	25% (3)
9. Balancing Sport and Academic Demands	91.7% (11)	8.3% (1)
10. Missing Classes Because of Travel	58.3% (7)	41.7% (5)
11. Grades	100% (12)	0% (0)
12. Not Enjoying Competition as Much as Before	75% (9)	25% (3)
13. Lack of Control Over My Schedule	75% (9)	25% (3)
14. Perceptions of Others, Stereotypes	33.3% (4)	66.7% (8)
15. Social Life	75% (9)	25% (3)

Table 30 shows the basketball participants stress ratings for each of the 15 stressors. *Not Meeting Own Expectations* and *Grades* were both rated in the extremely stressful range. Approximately 58% of the basketball student-athletes rated *Not Meeting Own Expectations* as extremely stressful, with the most frequently endorsed rating being a 5. Forty-two percent rated *Grades* in the extremely stressful range with 5 also being the most frequently endorsed rating. Although 100% of the participants rated *Getting Enough Playing Time* as being stressful, this stressor was rated in both the moderate to extreme range. Approximately 40% rated *Getting Enough Playing Time* as being moderately stressful and 33% rated this stressor as extremely stressful. Although there are a variety of responses, this stressor appears to be particularly stressful for this sport. *Pressure to Win*, *Not Enjoying Competition as Much as Before*, *Lack of Control Over My Schedule*, and *Balancing Sport and Academic Demands* were all rated in the moderately stressful range. Approximately 50% of the participants rated *Pressure to Win* in the moderate range with 4 being the most frequently endorsed rating. The most frequently endorsed rating for *Not Enjoying Competition as Much as Before* and *Lack of Control Over My Schedule* was a 4, also within the moderately stressful range. Finally, *Balancing Sport and Academic Demands* was rated by approximately 66% of basketball participants as moderately stressful, with the most frequent rating being a 3.

Table 30  
Basketball Student-Athlete Stress Ratings

Stressors	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
1. Making the Team	58.3% (7)	0% (0)	16.7% (2)	8.3% (1)	0% (0)	8.3% (1)	8.3% (1)
2. Getting Enough Playing Time	0% (0)	8.3% (1)	16.7% (2)	8.3% (1)	33.3% (4)	33.3% (4)	0% (0)
3. Pressure to Win	0% (0)	8.3% (1)	0% (0)	0% (0)	50% (6)	33.3% (4)	16.7% (2)
4. Not Meeting Own Expectations	8.3% (1)	0% (0)	0% (0)	0% (0)	33.3% (4)	50% (6)	8.3% (1)
5. Not Meeting Parent's Expectations	50% (6)	8.3% (1)	0% (0)	16.7% (2)	16.7% (2)	8.3% (1)	0% (0)
6. Relationship with Coach	25% (3)	0% (0)	33.3% (4)	25% (3)	8.3% (1)	0% (0)	8.3% (1)
7. Finances	25% (3)	8.3% (1)	0% (0)	8.3% (1)	16.7% (2)	25% (3)	16.7% (2)
8. Being Nervous Before or During Competition	25% (3)	8.3% (1)	25% (3)	8.3% (1)	8.3% (1)	16.7% (2)	8.3% (1)
9. Balancing Sport and Academic Demands	8.3% (1)	0% (0)	8.3% (1)	41.7% (5)	25% (3)	8.3% (1)	8.3% (1)
10. Missing Classes Because of Travel	25% (3)	33.3% (4)	16.7% (2)	8.3% (1)	0% (0)	8.3% (1)	8.3% (1)
11. Grades	0% (0)	8.3% (1)	16.7% (2)	16.7% (2)	16.7% (2)	25% (3)	16.7% (2)
12. Not Enjoying Competition as Much	25% (3)	0% (0)	8.3% (1)	8.3% (1)	41.7% (5)	16.7% (2)	0% (0)
13. Lack of Control Over My Schedule	16.7% (2)	16.7% (2)	16.7% (2)	8.3% (1)	25% (3)	16.7% (2)	0% (0)
14. Perceptions of Others, Stereotypes	66.7% (8)	8.3% (1)	8.3% (1)	0% (0)	16.7% (2)	0% (0)	0% (0)
15. Social Life	33.3% (4)	16.7% (2)	16.7% (2)	8.3% (1)	16.7% (2)	8.3% (1)	0% (0)

0 = Not at All; 1-2 = Somewhat; 3-4 = Moderately; 5-6 = Extremely

Table 31 highlights the coping strategies basketball participants use to manage the stressors associated with being a student-athlete. Of the 12 participants, 66.7% endorsed *Spending Time with Friends* and *Exercise* as coping strategies they used to help manage stress. *Taking a Break* was also endorsed by 50% of the participants. These strategies are consistent with strategies endorsed by the overall sample, male and female participants,

and freshman through senior student-athletes. Of note, only one participant endorsed *Drinking* as a strategy used to manage stress. Although *Drinking* has been found to be one of the least endorsed strategies in this study, it was somewhat surprising that only one participant endorsed this item as a coping strategy given the number of student-athletes who reportedly drink in college. A possible explanation for this finding is that although student-athletes may drink, they do not identify or view drinking as a copying strategy.

Table 31  
Coping Strategies Used to Manage Stressors (Basketball Student-Athletes)

<b>Coping Strategies</b>	<b>Response Percent</b>	<b>Response Count</b>
Spending Time with Friends	66.7%	8
Exercise	66.7%	8
Taking a Break	50%	6
Keep Feelings to Self	33.3%	4
Relaxation Techniques	33.3%	4
Asking Friends/Family for Advice	33.3%	4
Focus Efforts on a Solution	25%	3
Refuse/Avoid Thinking about Stressor	25%	3
Do Things for Others	25%	3
Eat	16.7%	2
Drink	8.3%	1

### *Cross Country*

The stressors cross country student-athletes perceive as being stressful is depicted in Table 32. Thirteen cross country participants completed the survey. Of these participants, over 90% endorsed *Not Meeting Own Expectations* (92.3%) and *Grades* (92.3%) as being stressful. Approximately 84% endorsed *Relationship with Coach* as being stressful, indicating that this relationship may be particularly stressful for a number of student-athletes on the cross country team. Over 75% of the participants endorsed *Being Nervous Before or During Competition* (76.9%) and *Balancing Sport and*

*Academic Demands* (76.9%) as stressful. Finally, *Missing Classes Because of Travel* (69.2%) and *Social Life* (69.2%) were both rated as being stressful by approximately 69% of cross country student-athletes. Of note, only one participant indicated that *Making the Team* was stressful and less than 25% of the cross country student-athletes endorsed *Getting Enough Playing Time* as stressful. While these items are stressful for some sports, this does not appear to be the case for these student-athletes.

Table 32  
Cross Country Student-Athletes Perception of Stressors (13)

Stressors	Yes	No
1. Making the Team	7.7% (1)	92.3% (12)
2. Getting Enough Playing Time	23.1% (3)	76.9% (10)
3. Pressure to Win	61.5% (8)	38.5% (5)
4. Not Meeting Own Expectations	92.3% (12)	7.7% (1)
5. Not Meeting Parent's Expectations	30.8% (4)	69.2% (9)
6. Relationship with Coach	84.6% (11)	15.4% (2)
7. Finances	30.8% (4)	69.2% (9)
8. Being Nervous Before or During Competition	76.9% (10)	23.1% (3)
9. Balancing Sport and Academic Demands	76.9% (10)	23.1% (3)
10. Missing Classes Because of Travel	69.2% (9)	30.8% (4)
11. Grades	92.3% (12)	15.4% (1)
12. Not Enjoying Competition as Much as Before	61.5% (8)	38.5% (5)
13. Lack of Control Over My Schedule	53.8% (7)	46.2% (6)
14. Perceptions of Others, Stereotypes	23.1% (3)	76.9% (10)
15. Social Life	69.2% (9)	30.8% (4)

Table 33 shows the cross country student-athletes stress ratings for each of the 15 stressors. *Being Nervous Before or During Competition* and *Grades* were both rated in the extremely stressful range. Approximately 46% of the cross country participants rated *Being Nervous Before or During Competition* as extremely stressful, with an equal number of participants endorsing both a 5 and a 6 rating. Forty-six percent also rated *Grades* in the extremely stressful range with 5 being the most frequently rating. The most

frequently endorsed rating for *Not Meeting Own Expectations* was a 4, with over 53% of participants rating this stressor in the moderately stressful range. Thirty-eight percent of the participants also rated this stressor in the extremely stressful range, indicating that many cross country athletes perceive this item as a significant stressor. Approximately 61% rated *Balancing Sport and Academic Demands* as being moderately stressful with the most frequently endorsed rating being a 4. *Lack of Control Over My Schedule* and *Missing Classes Because of Travel* were also rated in the moderately stressful range. Both of these items resulted in a variety of responses, with some indicating *Not at All* or *Somewhat* while others gave a moderate rating, indicating that some athletes see these stressors as stressful while other cross country athletes do not. The most frequently endorsed ratings for these items were 1 and 4 for *Missing Classes Because of Travel* and 1 and 3 for *Lack of Control Over My Schedule*.



Table 33  
Cross Country Student-Athlete Stress Ratings

Stressors	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
1. Making the Team	69.2% (9)	15.4% (2)	7.7% (1)	7.7% (1)	0% (0)	0% (0)	0% (0)
2. Getting Enough Playing Time	69.2% (9)	7.7% (1)	15.4% (2)	0% (0)	7.7% (1)	0% (0)	0% (0)
3. Pressure to Win	46.2% (6)	0% (0)	7.7% (1)	7.7% (1)	30.8% (6)	7.7% (1)	0% (0)
4. Not Meeting Own Expectations	7.7% (1)	0% (0)	0% (0)	23.1% (3)	30.8% (4)	23.1% (3)	15.4% (2)
5. Not Meeting Parent's Expectations	61.5% (8)	7.7% (1)	15.4% (2)	0% (0)	7.7% (1)	0% (0)	7.7% (1)
6. Relationship with Coach	7.7% (1)	7.7% (1)	30.3% (4)	7.7% (1)	23.1% (3)	15.4% (2)	7.7% (1)
7. Finances	38.5% (5)	23.1% (3)	15.4% (2)	7.7% (1)	7.7% (1)	0% (0)	7.7% (1)
8. Being Nervous Before or During Competition	15.4% (2)	0% (0)	7.7% (1)	15.4% (2)	15.4% (2)	23.1% (3)	23.1% (3)
9. Balancing Sport and Academic Demands	15.4% (2)	0% (0)	7.7% (1)	15.4% (2)	46.2% (6)	15.4% (2)	0% (0)
10. Missing Classes Because of Travel	15.4% (2)	30.8% (4)	7.7% (1)	15.4% (2)	30.8% (4)	0% (0)	0% (0)
11. Grades	15.4% (2)	0% (0)	15.4% (2)	15.4% (2)	15.4% (2)	38.5% (5)	7.7% (1)
12. Not Enjoying Competition as Much	30.8% (4)	15.4% (2)	15.4% (2)	0% (0)	7.7% (1)	15.4% (2)	15.4% (2)
13. Lack of Control Over My Schedule	30.8% (4)	0% (0)	23.1% (3)	30.8% (4)	7.7% (1)	7.7% (1)	0% (0)
14. Perceptions of Others, Stereotypes	69.2% (9)	0% (0)	15.4% (2)	0% (0)	7.7% (1)	7.7% (1)	0% (0)
15. Social Life	7.7% (1)	30.8% (4)	30.8% (4)	15.4% (2)	0% (0)	7.7% (1)	7.7% (1)

0 = Not at All; 1-2 = Somewhat; 3-4 = Moderately; 5-6 = Extremely

Table 34 highlights the coping strategies cross country participants use to manage the stressors associated with being a student-athlete. Of the 13 participants, 61.5% endorsed *Spending Time with Friends* as a strategy they use to help manage stress. *Asking Friends and Family for Advice* was also endorsed by 53.8% of the participants. Of note,

one of the most frequently endorsed coping strategies in many of the other sports, *Exercise*, is the strategy used the least for Cross Country athletes. This may be due to the exercise and demand placed on fitness for this sport. These athletes rely more on friends and family for support to help cope with their role as a student-athlete.

Table 34  
Coping Strategies Used to Manage Stressors (Cross Country)

<b>Coping Strategies</b>	<b>Response Percent</b>	<b>Response Count</b>
Spending Time with Friends	61.5%	8
Asking Friends/Family for Advice	53.8%	7
Taking a Break	46.2%	6
Refuse/Avoid Thinking about Stressor	46.2%	6
Relaxation Techniques	38.5%	5
Do Things for Others	38.5%	5
Focus Efforts on a Solution	30.8%	4
Eat	30.8%	4
Keep Feelings to Self	23.1%	3
Drink	23.1%	3
Exercise	15.4%	2

### *Fencing*

Table 35 depicts the stressors fencing participants perceive as being stressful. Only 4 of the 18 student-athletes who fence completed the survey. All 4 of these participants endorsed *Not Meeting Own Expectations*, *Being Nervous Before or During Competition*, *Balancing Sport and Academic Demands*, and *Grades* as being stressful. Three participants, or 75% of the student-athletes, endorsed *Getting Enough Playing Time* and *Pressure to Win* as being stressful. Half of the participants rated *Relationship with Coach*, *Finances*, *Not Enjoying Competition as Much as Before*, *Lack of Control Over Schedule*, and *Social Life* as being stressful.

Table 35  
Fencing Student-Athletes Perception of Stressors (4)

Stressors	Yes	No
1. Making the Team	25% (1)	75% (3)
2. Getting Enough Playing Time	75% (3)	25% (1)
3. Pressure to Win	75% (3)	25% (1)
4. Not Meeting Own Expectations	100% (4)	0% (0)
5. Not Meeting Parent's Expectations	25% (1)	75% (3)
6. Relationship with Coach	50% (2)	50% (2)
7. Finances	50% (2)	50% (2)
8. Being Nervous Before or During Competition	100% (4)	0% (0)
9. Balancing Sport and Academic Demands	100% (4)	0% (0)
10. Missing Classes Because of Travel	0% (0)	100% (4)
11. Grades	100% (4)	0% (0)
12. Not Enjoying Competition as Much as Before	50% (2)	50% (2)
13. Lack of Control Over My Schedule	50% (2)	50% (2)
14. Perceptions of Others, Stereotypes	0% (0)	100% (4)
15. Social Life	50% (2)	50% (2)

Table 36 highlights fencing participants stress ratings for each of the 15 stressors. Although there were only 4 participants in this group, certain trends consistent with the overall sample and other sports are seen. *Being Nervous Before or During Competition, Grades, and Balancing Sport and Academic Demands* were all rated in the extremely stressful range. Fifty percent of the fencing student-athletes rated *Being Nervous Before or During Competition* as extremely stressful, with these participants giving a 5 and a 6 rating. Fifty percent also rated *Grades* in the extremely stressful range with 6 being the most frequently endorsed rating. *Balancing Sport and Academic Demands* received all ratings in the moderate to extremely stressful range, indicating that this item is at least moderately stressful for all of the student-athletes. Seventy-five percent rated *Not Meeting Own Expectations* in the moderately stressful range with 3 being the most frequently endorsed rating. *Pressure to Win* was also rated as moderately stressful for two of the fencing participants.

Table 36

Fencing Student-Athlete Stress Ratings

Stressors	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
1. Making the Team	50% (2)	25% (1)	0% (0)	25% (1)	0% (0)	0% (0)	0% (0)
2. Getting Enough Playing Time	0% (0)	0% (0)	75% (3)	0% (0)	25% (1)	0% (0)	0% (0)
3. Pressure to Win	0% (0)	0% (0)	50% (2)	50% (2)	0% (0)	0% (0)	0% (0)
4. Not Meeting Own Expectations	0% (0)	0% (0)	0% (0)	50% (2)	25% (1)	0% (0)	25% (1)
5. Not Meeting Parent's Expectations	75% (3)	0% (0)	0% (0)	0% (0)	0% (0)	25% (1)	0% (0)
6. Relationship with Coach	25% (1)	50% (2)	0% (0)	0% (0)	0% (0)	25% (1)	0% (0)
7. Finances	25% (1)	50% (2)	25% (1)	0% (0)	0% (0)	0% (0)	0% (0)
8. Being Nervous Before or During Competition	0% (0)	0% (0)	25% (1)	25% (1)	0% (0)	25% (1)	25% (1)
9. Balancing Sport and Academic Demands	0% (0)	0% (0)	0% (0)	25% (1)	25% (1)	25% (1)	25% (1)
10. Missing Classes Because of Travel	75% (3)	0% (0)	0% (0)	25% (1)	0% (0)	0% (0)	0% (0)
11. Grades	0% (0)	0% (0)	0% (0)	25% (1)	25% (1)	0% (0)	50% (2)
12. Not Enjoying Competition as Much	25% (1)	0% (0)	25% (1)	25% (1)	25% (1)	0% (0)	0% (0)
13. Lack of Control Over My Schedule	50% (2)	0% (0)	25% (1)	0% (0)	0% (0)	25% (1)	0% (0)
14. Perceptions of Others, Stereotypes	100% (4)	0% (0)	0% (0)	0% (0)	0% (0)	0% (0)	0% (0)
15. Social Life	25% (1)	25% (1)	25% (1)	25% (1)	0% (0)	0% (0)	0% (0)

0 = Not at All; 1-2 = Somewhat; 3-4 = Moderately; 5-6 = Extremely

Table 37 highlights the coping strategies fencing participants use to manage the stressors associated with being a student-athlete. All 4 participants endorsed *Spending Time with Friends* and *Taking a Break* as coping strategies they use to help manage stress. *Relaxation Techniques*, *Asking Friends and Family for Advice*, *Refuse/Avoid*

*Thinking About Stressor, and Focus Efforts on a Solution* were all endorsed by 75% of the participants. Whether it is due to the low number of participants within this group or the individual participants, several coping strategies were endorsed by majority of the fencing student-athletes that were not endorsed by participants from other sports. For example, *Relaxation Techniques, Refuse/Avoid Thinking About the Stressor, and Focus Efforts on a Solution* are all useful coping strategies that are consistently rated by less than half of participants from other sports. It may be worth exploring whether these strategies are emphasized by the team or whether their use is more consistent with the sport of fencing

Table 37  
Coping Strategies Used to Manage Stressors (Fencing)

<b>Coping Strategies</b>	<b>Response Percent</b>	<b>Response Count</b>
Taking a Break	100%	4
Spend Time with Friends	100%	4
Relaxation Techniques	75%	3
Asking Friends/Family for Advice	75%	3
Refuse/Avoid Thinking about Stressor	75%	3
Focus Efforts on a Solution	75%	3
Keep Feelings to Self	50%	2
Do Things for Others	50%	2
Exercise	50%	2
Eat	50%	2
Drink	25%	1

### *Field Hockey*

The stressors field hockey participants perceive as being stressful are depicted in Table 38. Thirteen field hockey student-athletes completed the survey. Of these participants, over 90% endorsed *Not Meeting Own Expectations* (92.3%) and *Grades* (92.3%) as being stressful. Approximately 84% endorsed *Social Life* as stressful which is

a high rating compared to the overall sample and other sport teams. *Getting Enough Playing Time* (76.9%), *Pressure to Win* (76.9%), and *Balancing Sport and Academic Demands* (76.9%) were endorsed as being stressful by over 75% of the participants. Finally, *Relationship with Coach* (69.2%) and *Being Nervous Before or During Competition* (69.2%) were both rated as being stressful by approximately 69% of field hockey student-athletes. Of note, in addition to the three items that were not endorsed as stressful by the overall sample (*Making the Team, Not Meeting Parents Expectations, Perceptions of Others, Stereotypes*), *Finances* (30.8%), *Missing Classes Because of Travel* (46.2%), and *Not Enjoying Competition as Much as Before* were also not endorsed as being stressful by majority of the field hockey participants.

Table 38  
Field Hockey Student-Athletes Perception of Stressors (13)

Stressors	Yes	No
1. Making the Team	38.5% (5)	61.5% (8)
2. Getting Enough Playing Time	76.9% (10)	23.1% (3)
3. Pressure to Win	76.9% (10)	23.1% (3)
4. Not Meeting Own Expectations	92.3% (12)	7.7% (1)
5. Not Meeting Parent's Expectations	46.2% (6)	53.8% (7)
6. Relationship with Coach	69.2% (9)	30.8% (4)
7. Finances	30.8% (4)	69.2% (9)
8. Being Nervous Before or During Competition	69.2% (9)	30.8% (4)
9. Balancing Sport and Academic Demands	76.9% (10)	23.1% (3)
10. Missing Classes Because of Travel	46.2% (6)	53.8% (7)
11. Grades	92.3% (12)	7.7% (1)
12. Not Enjoying Competition as Much as Before	23.1% (3)	76.9% (10)
13. Lack of Control Over My Schedule	61.5% (8)	38.5% (5)
14. Perceptions of Others, Stereotypes	23.1% (3)	76.9% (10)
15. Social Life	84.6% (11)	15.4% (2)

Table 39 shows the field hockey participants stress ratings for each of the 15 stressors. *Not Meeting Own Expectations, Balancing Sport and Academic Demands* and

*Grades* were all rated in the extremely stressful range. Approximately 61% of the field hockey participants rated *Not Meeting Own Expectations* as extremely stressful, with 6 being the most frequently endorsed rating. Forty-six percent rated *Grades* and 38.5% rated *Balancing Sport and Academic Demands* in the extremely stressful range with 5 being the most frequently endorsed rating. *Social Life* also received a high rating compared to other sports. Approximately 54% of the field hockey participants rated *Social Life* in the moderately stressful range with a 3 being the most frequently endorsed rating. *Getting Enough Playing Time* received a variety of ratings from the somewhat to extremely stressful range. The most frequently endorsed ratings for this item were a 2, 4 and 5. *Relationship with Coach* also received a variety of ratings from not at all to extremely stressful. The most frequent ratings were a 1 and 3 indicating that this stressor is not perceived to be significantly stressful by majority of the field hockey student-athletes.

Table 39  
Field Hockey Student-Athlete Stress Ratings

Stressors	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
1. Making the Team	38.5% (5)	23.1% (3)	15.4% (2)	0% (0)	7.7% (1)	7.7% (1)	7.7% (1)
2. Getting Enough Playing Time	7.7% (1)	15.4% (2)	23.1% (3)	7.7% (1)	23.1% (3)	23.1% (3)	0% (0)
3. Pressure to Win	0% (0)	30.8% (4)	30.8% (4)	0% (0)	15.4% (2)	15.4% (2)	7.7% (1)
4. Not Meeting Own Expectations	7.7% (1)	0% (0)	7.7% (1)	15.4% (2)	7.7% (1)	23.1% (3)	38.5% (5)
5. Not Meeting Parent's Expectations	46.2% (6)	0% (0)	7.7% (1)	23.1% (3)	7.7% (1)	15.4% (2)	0% (0)
6. Relationship with Coach	15.4% (2)	23.1% (3)	15.4% (2)	23.1% (3)	7.7% (1)	15.4% (2)	0% (0)
7. Finances	61.5% (8)	7.7% (1)	0% (0)	0% (0)	7.7% (1)	7.7% (1)	15.4% (2)
8. Being Nervous Before or During Competition	23.1% (3)	23.1% (3)	23.1% (3)	15.4% (2)	0% (0)	15.4% (2)	0% (0)
9. Balancing Sport and Academic Demands	15.4% (2)	15.4% (2)	7.7% (1)	15.4% (2)	15.4% (2)	23.1% (3)	15.4% (2)
10. Missing Classes Because of Travel	30.8% (4)	15.4% (2)	15.4% (2)	7.7% (1)	23.1% (3)	7.7% (1)	0% (0)
11. Grades	7.7% (1)	7.7% (1)	15.4% (2)	7.7% (1)	15.4% (2)	30.8% (4)	15.4% (2)
12. Not Enjoying Competition as Much	61.5% (8)	15.4% (2)	7.7% (1)	15.4% (2)	0% (0)	0% (0)	0% (0)
13. Lack of Control Over My Schedule	15.4% (2)	7.7% (1)	38.5% (5)	23.1% (3)	15.4% (2)	0% (0)	0% (0)
14. Perceptions of Others, Stereotypes	61.5% (8)	15.4% (2)	23.1% (3)	0% (0)	0% (0)	0% (0)	0% (0)
15. Social Life	15.4% (2)	0% (0)	23.1% (3)	30.8% (4)	23.1% (3)	7.7% (1)	0% (0)

Table 40 highlights the coping strategies field hockey participants use to manage the stressors associated with being a student-athlete. Of the 13 participants, 92.3% endorsed *Exercise* as a coping strategy used to help manage stress. Of note, this coping strategy is endorsed by more field hockey participants than any of the other sport teams that participated in this study. *Asking Friends/Family for Advice* and *Spending Time with*



*Friends* were both endorsed by 61.5% of the participants. *Taking a Break*, a strategy endorsed by many as a coping strategy, was endorsed by 46.2% of the field hockey participants. *Relaxation Techniques* were also endorsed by just under 50% of the student-athletes.

Table 40  
Coping Strategies Used to Manage Stressors (Field Hockey)

<b>Coping Strategies</b>	<b>Response Percent</b>	<b>Response Count</b>
Exercise	92.3%	12
Asking Friends/Family for Advice	61.5%	8
Spend Time with Friends	61.5%	8
Relaxation Techniques	46.2%	6
Taking a Break	46.2%	6
Eat	38.5%	5
Focus Efforts on a Solution	30.8%	4
Drink	30.8%	4
Refuse/Avoid Thinking About Stressor	23.1%	3
Keeping Feelings to Self	15.4%	2
Do Things for Others	15.4%	2

### *Football*

Table 41 depicts the stressors football student-athletes perceive as being stressful. Thirty-two football participants completed the survey. Of these participants, over 90% endorsed *Balancing Sport and Academic Demands* (96.9%) and *Grades* (90.6%) as being stressful. Over 80% of the participants endorsed *Not Meeting Own Expectations* (87.5%) and *Pressure to Win* (84.4%) as being stressful. *Being Nervous Before or During Competition* (78.1%) and *Getting Enough Playing Time* (75%) were also rated as stressful by approximately 75% of football student-athletes. Of note, compared to the overall sample, two items not endorsed as stressful by majority of the football participants but endorsed as stressful by the overall sample of participants were

*Relationship with Coach* (46.9%) and *Not Enjoying Competition as Much as Before* (34.4%).

Table 41  
Football Student-Athletes Perception of Stressors (32)

Stressors	Yes	No
1. Making the Team	28.1% (9)	71.9% (23)
2. Getting Enough Playing Time	75% (24)	25% (8)
3. Pressure to Win	84.4% (27)	15.6% (5)
4. Not Meeting Own Expectations	87.5% (28)	12.5% (4)
5. Not Meeting Parent's Expectations	51.5% (17)	48.5% (16)
6. Relationship with Coach	46.9% (15)	53.1% (17)
7. Finances	65.6% (21)	34.4% (11)
8. Being Nervous Before or During Competition	78.1% (25)	21.9% (7)
9. Balancing Sport and Academic Demands	96.9% (31)	3.1% (1)
10. Missing Classes Because of Travel	34.4% (11)	65.6% (21)
11. Grades	90.6% (29)	9.4% (3)
12. Not Enjoying Competition as Much as Before	34.4% (11)	65.6% (21)
13. Lack of Control Over My Schedule	65.6% (21)	34.4% (11)
14. Perceptions of Others, Stereotypes	32.3% (10)	68.8% (22)
15. Social Life	50% (16)	50% (16)

Table 42 shows the football participants stress ratings for each of the 15 stressors. *Not Meeting Own Expectations*, *Balancing Sport and Academic Demands* and *Pressure to Win* were all rated in the extremely stressful range. Approximately 62% of the football participants rated *Not Meeting Own Expectations* as extremely stressful. Forty-six percent rated *Pressure to Win* and *Balancing Sport and Academic Demands* in the extremely stressful range with 6 being the most frequently endorsed rating. *Grades* was rated in the moderate to extremely stressful range, with the most frequently endorsed ratings being both a 3 and 6. *Being Nervous Before or During Competition*, *Lack of Control Over My Schedule*, and *Getting Enough Playing Time* were rated in the moderately stressful range. Approximately 40% rated *Being Nervous Before or During Competition* and *Lack of*

*Control Over My Schedule* as being moderately stressful with the most frequently endorsed ratings being a 4 and 3 respectively. *Getting Enough Playing Time* was also rated in the moderately stressful range by 37% of the football student-athletes. The most frequently endorsed ratings for this item was a 3.

Table 42  
Football Student-Athlete Stress Ratings

Stressors	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
1. Making the Team	56.3% (18)	12.5% (4)	12.5% (4)	9.4% (3)	15.6% (5)	0% (0)	0% (0)
2. Getting Enough Playing Time	18.8% (6)	9.4% (3)	6.3% (2)	21.9% (7)	15.6% (5)	15.6% (5)	12.5% (4)
3. Pressure to Win	12.5% (4)	3.1% (1)	3.1% (1)	12.5% (4)	21.9% (7)	21.9% (7)	25% (8)
4. Not Meeting Own Expectations	9.4% (3)	0% (0)	9.4% (3)	12.5% (4)	6.3% (2)	28.1% (9)	34.4% (11)
5. Not Meeting Parent's Expectations	37.5% (12)	3.1% (1)	6.3% (2)	15.6% (5)	18.8% (6)	12.5% (4)	6.3% (2)
6. Relationship with Coach	40.6% (13)	15.6% (5)	6.3% (2)	15.6% (5)	12.5% (4)	3.1% (1)	6.3% (0)
7. Finances	21.9% (7)	9.4% (3)	15.6% (5)	6.3% (2)	15.6% (5)	15.6% (5)	18.8% (6)
8. Being Nervous Before or During Competition	18.8% (6)	3.1% (1)	18.8% (6)	6.3% (2)	34.4% (11)	12.5% (4)	12.5% (4)
9. Balancing Sport and Academic Demands	3.1% (1)	3.1% (1)	12.5% (4)	12.5% (4)	21.9% (7)	18.8% (6)	28.1% (9)
10. Missing Classes Because of Travel	50% (16)	18.8% (6)	6.3% (2)	15.6% (5)	6.3% (2)	3.1% (1)	0% (0)
11. Grades	3.1% (1)	6.3% (2)	6.3% (2)	25% (8)	21.9% (7)	12.5% (4)	25% (8)
12. Not Enjoying Competition as Much	46.9% (15)	12.5% (4)	12.5% (4)	9.4% (3)	9.4% (3)	3.1% (1)	6.3% (2)
13. Lack of Control Over My Schedule	18.8% (6)	9.4% (3)	21.9% (7)	25% (8)	15.6% (5)	3.1% (1)	6.3% (2)
14. Perceptions of Others, Stereotypes	46.9% (15)	15.6% (5)	3.1% (1)	15.6% (5)	0% (0)	9.4% (3)	9.4% (3)
15. Social Life	40.6% (13)	15.6% (5)	12.5% (4)	9.4% (3)	15.6% (5)	0% (0)	6.3% (2)

0 = Not at All; 1-2 = Somewhat; 3-4 = Moderately; 5-6 = Extremely

Table 43 highlights the coping strategies football participants use to manage stressors associated with being a student-athlete. Of the 32 participants, 78.1% endorsed *Taking a Break* as a coping strategy used. *Asking Friends/Family for Advice* was endorsed by 59.4% of the participants and *Spending Time with Friends* was endorsed by 56.3% of the football student-athletes. In addition to these coping strategies, student-athletes endorsed several other strategies including using *Relaxation Techniques* and *Exercise*. Also of note, *Drinking* was endorsed as a coping strategy by 25% of these participants, a slightly higher percentage compared to the overall sample (19.5%). Even the coping strategy that was endorsed the least, *Do Things for Others*, was endorsed by 6 participants as a strategy used to help cope and manage stress.

Table 43  
Coping Strategies Used to Manage Stressors (Football)

<b>Coping Strategies</b>	<b>Response Percent</b>	<b>Response Count</b>
Taking a Break	78.1%	25
Asking Friends/Family for Advice	59.4%	19
Spend Time with Friends	56.3%	18
Relaxation Techniques	40.6%	13
Exercise	40.6%	13
Keep Feelings to Self	34.4%	11
Focus Efforts on a Solution	31.3%	10
Eat	25%	8
Drink	25%	8
Refuse/Avoid Thinking about Stressor	21.9%	7
Do Things for Others	18.8%	6

### *Golf*

The stressors golf participants perceive as being stressful are depicted in Table 44. Five student-athletes completed the survey. Of these participants, 100% endorsed *Getting Enough Playing Time*, *Not Meeting Own Expectations*, *Being Nervous Before or During*

*Competition*, and *Balancing Sport and Academic Demands* as being stressful. *Making the Team*, *Pressure to Win*, *Missing Classes Because of Travel*, *Grades*, *Lack of Control Over Schedule*, and *Social Life* were endorsed by 80% of the participants. Of note, 4 out of the 5 golf student-athletes endorsed *Making the Team* as being stressful. This percentage is considerably higher compared to other sports teams, indicating that *Making the Team* may be particularly difficult or stressful for athletes who play golf. In addition, 60% of these participants endorsed *Not Meeting Parent's Expectations* as being stressful. This endorsement was also given by freshman student-athletes. Of note, only 20% or 1 student-athlete indicated that the *Relationship with Coach* is stressful possibly indicating a positive athlete-coach relationship.

Table 44  
Golf Student-Athletes Perception of Stressors (5)

Stressors	Yes	No
1. Making the Team	80% (4)	20% (1)
2. Getting Enough Playing Time	100% (5)	0% (0)
3. Pressure to Win	80% (4)	20% (1)
4. Not Meeting Own Expectations	100% (5)	0% (0)
5. Not Meeting Parent's Expectations	60% (3)	40% (2)
6. Relationship with Coach	20% (1)	80% (4)
7. Finances	40% (2)	60% (3)
8. Being Nervous Before or During Competition	100% (5)	0% (0)
9. Balancing Sport and Academic Demands	100% (5)	0% (0)
10. Missing Classes Because of Travel	80% (4)	20% (1)
11. Grades	100% (4)	0% (0)
12. Not Enjoying Competition as Much as Before	60% (3)	40% (2)
13. Lack of Control Over My Schedule	80% (4)	20% (1)
14. Perceptions of Others, Stereotypes	0% (0)	100% (5)
15. Social Life	80% (4)	20% (1)

Table 45 shows the golf student-athletes stress ratings for each of the 15 stressors.

*Balancing Sport and Academic Demands*, *Grades*, *Missing Classes Because of Travel*,

and *Not Enjoying Competition As Much* all received ratings in the extremely stressful range. Eighty percent of golf student-athletes rated *Balancing Sport and Academic Demands* and *Grades* as extremely stressful. The most frequently endorsed rating for *Balancing Sport and Academic Demands* is a 5 with *Grades* receiving both a 5 and 6 rating. *Missing Classes Because of Travel* was rated as extremely stressful by 2 of the golf participants, while the other participants rated this stressor in the not at all or somewhat stressful range. The same finding was seen for *Not Enjoying Competition as Much as Before* with ratings in both the extremely stressful range and the not at all to somewhat stressful range. *Not Meeting Own Expectations*, *Getting Enough Playing Time*, *Not Meeting Parents Expectations*, and *Being Nervous Before or During Competition* were all rated in the moderately stressful range. Approximately 60% of the participants rated *Not Meeting Own Expectations* in the moderate range with 4 being the most frequently endorsed rating. The most frequently endorsed rating for *Not Meeting Parents Expectations* was a 4, also within the moderately stressful range. Eighty percent of the golf student-athletes rated *Being Nervous Before or During Competition* in the moderately stressful range, with ratings of both a 3 and 4. Finally, *Getting Enough Playing Time* was rated by approximately 40% of golf participants as moderately stressful, with the most frequent rating being both a 2 and a 4, indicating that this item is more stressful for some of the participants than it is for others.

Table 45  
Golf Student-Athlete Stress Ratings

Stressors	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
1. Making the Team	0% (0)	20% (1)	40% (2)	0% (0)	20% (1)	0% (0)	20% (1)
2. Getting Enough Playing Time	0% (0)	0% (0)	40% (2)	0% (0)	40% (2)	20% (1)	0% (0)
3. Pressure to Win	20% (1)	20% (1)	40% (2)	0% (0)	0% (0)	20% (1)	0% (0)
4. Not Meeting Own Expectations	20% (1)	0% (0)	0% (0)	0% (0)	60% (3)	20% (1)	20% (1)
5. Not Meeting Parent's Expectations	20% (1)	20% (1)	0% (0)	0% (0)	40% (2)	20% (1)	0% (0)
6. Relationship with Coach	60% (3)	20% (1)	20% (1)	0% (0)	0% (0)	0% (0)	0% (0)
7. Finances	60% (3)	0% (0)	0% (0)	20% (1)	20% (1)	0% (0)	0% (0)
8. Being Nervous Before or During Competition	0% (0)	0% (0)	0% (0)	40% (2)	40% (2)	20% (1)	0% (0)
9. Balancing Sport and Academic Demands	0% (0)	0% (0)	0% (0)	0% (0)	20% (1)	60% (3)	20% (1)
10. Missing Classes Because of Travel	20% (1)	20% (1)	0% (0)	20% (1)	0% (0)	40% (2)	0% (0)
11. Grades	20% (1)	0% (0)	0% (0)	0% (0)	0% (0)	40% (2)	40% (2)
12. Not Enjoying Competition as Much	40% (2)	0% (0)	20% (0)	0% (0)	0% (0)	40% (2)	0% (0)
13. Lack of Control Over My Schedule	20% (1)	20% (1)	20% (1)	20% (1)	0% (0)	20% (1)	0% (0)
14. Perceptions of Others, Stereotypes	100% (5)	0% (0)	0% (0)	0% (0)	0% (0)	0% (0)	0% (0)
15. Social Life	20% (1)	20% (1)	40% (2)	0% (0)	20% (1)	0% (0)	0% (0)

0 = Not at All; 1-2 = Somewhat; 3-4 = Moderately; 5-6 = Extremely

Table 46 highlights the coping strategies golf participants use to manage the stressors associated with being a student-athlete. Of the 5 participants, 80% endorsed *Taking a Break* as a coping strategy used to manage stress. *Exercise* was endorsed by 60% of the participants and *Spending Time with Friends* and *Relaxation Techniques* were

endorsed by 40% of the golf student-athletes. These strategies are consistent with strategies endorsed by the overall sample.

Table 46  
Coping Strategies Used to Manage Stressors (Golf)

<b>Coping Strategies</b>	<b>Response Percent</b>	<b>Response Count</b>
Taking a Break	80%	4
Exercise	60%	3
Relaxation Techniques	40%	2
Spend Time with Friends	40%	2
Asking Friends/Family for Advice	20%	1
Refuse/Avoid Thinking about Stressor	20%	1
Focus Efforts on a Solution	20%	1
Keep Feelings to Self	20%	1
Do Things for Others	20%	1
Drink	20%	1
Eat	0%	0

### *Lacrosse*

Table 47 shows the stressors lacrosse participants perceive as being stressful. Twenty-six student-athletes completed the survey. Of these participants, 100% endorsed *Not Meeting Own Expectations* and *Balancing Sport and Academic Demands* as being stressful. Over 95% endorsed *Pressure to Win* (96.2%) as being stressful. More than 80% of the lacrosse student-athletes endorsed *Getting Enough Playing Time* (88.5%), *Grades* (84.6%), and *Being Nervous Before or During Competition* (80.8%) as stressful. Finally, *Relationship with Coach* was rated as being stressful by approximately 73% of the lacrosse participants.



Table 47  
Lacrosse Student-Athletes Perception of Stressors (26)

Stressors	Yes	No
1. Making the Team	23.1% (6)	76.9% (20)
2. Getting Enough Playing Time	88.5% (23)	11.5% (3)
3. Pressure to Win	92.6% (25)	7.4% (2)
4. Not Meeting Own Expectations	100% (26)	0% (0)
5. Not Meeting Parent's Expectations	53.8% (14)	46.2% (12)
6. Relationship with Coach	73.1% (19)	26.9% (7)
7. Finances	65.4% (17)	34.6% (9)
8. Being Nervous Before or During Competition	80.8% (21)	19.2% (5)
9. Balancing Sport and Academic Demands	100% (26)	0% (0)
10. Missing Classes Because of Travel	46.2% (12)	53.8% (14)
11. Grades	84.6% (22)	15.4% (4)
12. Not Enjoying Competition as Much as Before	61.5% (16)	38.5% (10)
13. Lack of Control Over My Schedule	77.8% (21)	22.2% (6)
14. Perceptions of Others, Stereotypes	30.8% (8)	69.2% (18)
15. Social Life	80.8% (21)	19.2% (5)

Table 48 shows the lacrosse student-athletes stress ratings for each of the 15 stressors. *Not Meeting Own Expectations*, *Grades*, *Lack of Control Over Schedule*, and *Relationship with Coach* were all rated in the extremely stressful range. Approximately 65% of the lacrosse participants rated *Not Meeting Own Expectations* as extremely stressful, with 5 being the most frequently endorsed stress rating. Approximately 42% rated *Grades* in the extremely stressful range with the most frequently rating being a 6. *Relationship with Coach* and *Lack of Control Over My Schedule* were both rated in the extremely stressful range by approximately 30% of the participants. *Relationship with Coach* received a variety of ratings, with an equal number of participants rating this item as not stressful at all. The relationship with the coach is therefore variable for participants, with some seeing this relationship as very stressful. *Lack of Control Over Schedule* also received various ratings, with majority of the ratings being in the moderate to extreme range. *Getting Enough Playing Time*, *Being Nervous Before or During*

*Competition, Balancing Sport and Academic Demands, Pressure to Win, Finances, and Social Life* were all rated in the moderately stressful range. Approximately 46% of the lacrosse participants rated *Getting Enough Playing Time* and *Balancing Sport and Academic Demands* in the moderately stressful range. Forty-six percent of the participants rated *Pressure to Win* in the moderate range, with 3 being the most common rating. *Finances* received a variety of ratings with the most common being a 4. Over 34% rated *Being Nervous Before or During Competition* and *Social Life* in the moderate range with 4 and 3 ratings respectively.

Table 48  
Lacrosse Student-Athlete Stress Ratings

Stressors	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
1. Making the Team	65.4% (17)	19.2% (5)	3.8% (1)	3.8% (1)	7.7% (2)	3.8% (1)	0% (0)
2. Getting Enough Playing Time	7.7% (2)	11.5% (3)	11.5% (3)	23.1% (6)	23.1% (6)	23.1% (6)	0% (0)
3. Pressure to Win	0% (0)	7.7% (2)	15.4% (3)	26.9% (7)	19.2% (5)	23.1% (6)	7.7% (2)
4. Not Meeting Own Expectations	0% (0)	0% (0)	3.8% (1)	19.2% (5)	11.5% (3)	34.6% (9)	30.8% (8)
5. Not Meeting Parent's Expectations	34.6% (9)	11.5% (3)	23.1% (6)	3.8% (1)	19.2% (5)	7.7% (2)	3.8% (1)
6. Relationship with Coach	23.1% (6)	7.7% (2)	3.8% (1)	19.2% (5)	15.4% (4)	23.1% (6)	7.7% (2)
7. Finances	19.2% (5)	19.2% (5)	7.7% (2)	11.5% (3)	26.9% (7)	19.2% (5)	0% (0)
8. Being Nervous Before or During Competition	15.4% (4)	11.5% (3)	11.5% (3)	11.5% (3)	23.1% (6)	15.4% (4)	11.5% (3)
9. Balancing Sport and Academic Demands	0% (0)	7.7% (2)	7.7% (2)	23.1% (6)	23.1% (6)	15.4% (4)	23.1% (6)
10. Missing Classes Because of Travel	34.6% (9)	15.4% (4)	15.4% (4)	15.4% (4)	7.7% (2)	7.7% (2)	3.8% (1)
11. Grades	19.2% (5)	0% (0)	7.7% (2)	15.4% (4)	19.2% (5)	19.2% (5)	23.1% (6)
12. Not Enjoying Competition as Much	38.5% (10)	0% (0)	15.4% (4)	11.5% (3)	7.7% (2)	23.1% (6)	3.8% (1)
13. Lack of Control Over My Schedule	19.2% (5)	7.7% (2)	3.8% (1)	19.2% (5)	19.2% (5)	26.9% (7)	3.8% (1)
14. Perceptions of Others, Stereotypes	61.5% (16)	11.5% (3)	15.4% (4)	3.8% (1)	0% (0)	7.7% (2)	0% (0)
15. Social Life	15.4% (4)	11.5% (3)	23.1% (6)	26.9% (7)	7.7% (2)	7.7% (2)	7.7% (2)

0 = Not at All; 1-2 = Somewhat; 3-4 = Moderately; 5-6 = Extremely

Table 49 highlights the coping strategies lacrosse student-athletes use to manage the stressors associated with being a student-athlete. Of the 26 participants, 76.9% endorsed *Spending Time with Friends* as a coping strategy used to help manage stress. *Taking a Break* was endorsed by 61.5% of the participants and *Asking Friends/Family for Advice* was endorsed by 53.8% of the lacrosse student-athletes. These athletes rely more

on friends and family for support to help cope with their role as a student-athlete.

Although not endorsed by majority of the participants, *Keeping Feelings to Self* and *Eating* were endorsed by 46.2% of the participants, both higher when compared to the overall sample.

Table 49  
Coping Strategies Used to Manage Stressors (Lacrosse)

<b>Coping Strategies</b>	<b>Response Percent</b>	<b>Response Count</b>
Spend Time with Friends	76.9%	20
Taking a Break	61.5%	16
Asking Friends/Family for Advice	53.8%	14
Keep Feelings to Self	46.2%	12
Eat	46.2%	12
Refuse/Avoid Thinking about Stressor	38.5%	10
Exercise	34.6%	9
Relaxation Techniques	30.8%	8
Drink	26.9%	7
Focus Efforts on a Solution	19.2%	5
Do Things for Others	15.4%	4

### *Soccer*

The stressors that soccer student-athletes perceive as being stressful are depicted in Table 50. Thirty-three participants completed the survey. Of these participants, 100% endorsed *Balancing Sport and Academic Demands* as being stressful. Over 90% endorsed *Not Meeting Own Expectations* (97%), *Pressure to Win* (93.9%), and *Grades* (90.9%) as stressful. Approximately 88% of the participants rated *Being Nervous Before or During Competition* as stressful. Finally, over 75% rated *Relationship with Coach* (78.8%) and *Getting Enough Playing Time* (75.8%) as being stressful. Compared to the overall sample, less than 50% of the soccer athletes endorsed *Not Enjoying Competition as Much as Before* and *Social Life* as being stressful. Even though this is slightly less than the

overall sample, a number of soccer student-athletes reportedly view these items as stressful (48%).

Table 50  
Soccer Student-Athletes Perception of Stressors (33)

Stressors	Yes	No
1. Making the Team	39.4% (13)	60.6% (20)
2. Getting Enough Playing Time	75.8% (25)	24.2% (8)
3. Pressure to Win	93.9% (31)	6.1% (2)
4. Not Meeting Own Expectations	97% (32)	3% (1)
5. Not Meeting Parent's Expectations	48.5% (16)	51.5% (17)
6. Relationship with Coach	78.8% (26)	21.2% (7)
7. Finances	64.7% (22)	35.3% (12)
8. Being Nervous Before or During Competition	87.9% (29)	12.1% (4)
9. Balancing Sport and Academic Demands	100% (33)	0% (0)
10. Missing Classes Because of Travel	66.7% (22)	33.3% (11)
11. Grades	90.9% (30)	9.1% (3)
12. Not Enjoying Competition as Much as Before	47.1% (16)	52.9% (18)
13. Lack of Control Over My Schedule	63.6% (21)	36.4% (12)
14. Perceptions of Others, Stereotypes	12.1% (4)	87.9% (29)
15. Social Life	48.5% (16)	51.5% (17)

Table 51 shows soccer student-athletes stress ratings for each of the 15 stressors. *Not Meeting Own Expectations*, *Grades*, *Pressure to Win*, and *Balancing Sport and Academic Demands* were all rated in the extremely stressful range. Approximately 69% of the soccer participants rated *Not Meeting Own Expectations* as extremely stressful, with the most frequently endorsed rating being a 6. Approximately 63% of the participants endorsed *Grades* as being stressful with a rating of 6. In addition, 54% of the participants rated *Pressure to Win* in the extremely stressful range, with 5 being the most frequently endorsed rating. *Balancing Sport and Academic Demands* was rated in the extremely stressful range by 45% of the soccer student-athletes, with 5 being the most frequent rating. *Relationship with Coach* and *Being Nervous Before or During*

*Competition* received a variety of ratings. The most frequently endorsed ratings for these stressors were a 4 and 5, indicating that *Relationship with Coach* and *Being Nervous Before or During Competition* are seen by many participants as being moderately to extremely stressful. Finally, approximately 39% of the participants rated *Getting Enough Playing Time* in the moderate range with 4 being the most frequently endorsed rating.

Table 51  
Soccer Student-Athlete Stress Ratings

Stressors	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
1. Making the Team	51.5% (17)	9.1% (3)	15.2% (5)	6.1% (2)	9.1% (3)	3% (1)	6.1% (2)
2. Getting Enough Playing Time	9.1% (3)	12.1% (4)	15.2% (5)	18.2% (6)	21.2% (7)	9.1% (3)	15.2% (5)
3. Pressure to Win	0% (0)	6.1% (2)	0% (0)	12.1% (4)	27.3% (9)	33.3% (11)	21.2% (7)
4. Not Meeting Own Expectations	0% (0)	3% (1)	3% (1)	6.1% (2)	18.2% (6)	21.2% (7)	48.5% (16)
5. Not Meeting Parent's Expectations	42.4% (14)	9.1% (3)	6.1% (2)	15.2% (5)	9.1% (3)	9.1% (3)	9.1% (3)
6. Relationship with Coach	12.1% (4)	15.2% (5)	6.1% (2)	15.2% (5)	18.2% (6)	18.2% (6)	15.2% (5)
7. Finances	27.3% (9)	12.1% (4)	6.1% (2)	0% (0)	24.2% (8)	18.2% (6)	12.1% (4)
8. Being Nervous Before or During Competition	12.1% (4)	15.2% (5)	9.1% (3)	15.2% (5)	18.2% (6)	18.2% (6)	12.1% (4)
9. Balancing Sport and Academic Demands	0% (0)	3% (1)	6.1% (2)	21.2% (7)	24.2% (8)	27.3% (9)	18.2% (6)
10. Missing Classes Because of Travel	24.2% (8)	21.2% (7)	24.2% (8)	9.1% (3)	9.1% (3)	9.1% (3)	3% (1)
11. Grades	3% (1)	6.1% (2)	9.1% (3)	3% (1)	15.2% (5)	27.3% (9)	36.4% (12)
12. Not Enjoying Competition as Much	45.5% (15)	3% (1)	12.1% (4)	18.2% (6)	12.1% (4)	9.1% (3)	0% (0)
13. Lack of Control Over My Schedule	21.2% (7)	12.1% (4)	12.1% (4)	21.2% (7)	15.2% (5)	15.2% (5)	3% (1)
14. Perceptions of Others, Stereotypes	75.8% (25)	6.1% (2)	6.1% (2)	6.1% (2)	6.1% (0)	0% (0)	0% (0)
15. Social Life	45.5% (15)	6.1% (2)	9.1% (3)	18.2% (6)	18.2% (6)	3% (1)	0% (0)

0 = Not at All; 1-2 = Somewhat; 3-4 = Moderately; 5-6 = Extremely

Table 52 shows the coping strategies soccer student-athletes use to manage the stressors associated with being a student-athlete. Of the 33 participants, 72.7% endorsed *Spending Time with Friends* and *Taking a Break* as coping strategies used to help manage stress. *Exercise* was also endorsed by 57.6% of the participants. Similar to the football student-athletes, soccer participants endorsed several strategies as being used to manage stress including *Asking Friends/Family for Advice* which was endorsed by approximately 42% of the participants.

Table 52  
Coping Strategies Used to Manage Stressors (Soccer)

<b>Coping Strategies</b>	<b>Response Percent</b>	<b>Response Count</b>
Taking a Break	72.7%	24
Spend Time with Friends	72.7%	24
Exercise	57.6%	19
Asking Friends/Family for Advice	42.4%	14
Eat	42.4%	14
Relaxation Techniques	36.4%	12
Refuse/Avoid Thinking about Stressor	36.4%	12
Keep Feelings to Self	33.3%	11
Focus Efforts on a Solution	30.3%	10
Do Things for Others	24.2%	8
Drink	18.2%	6

### *Softball*

Table 53 depicts the stressors softball student-athletes perceive as being stressful. Thirteen softball participants completed the survey with 100% of these student-athletes endorsing *Not Meeting Own Expectations*, *Balancing Sport and Academic Demands*, and *Grades* as being stressful. Over 90% endorsed *Getting Enough Playing Time* (91.7%) and *Pressure to Win* (91.7%) as stressful. *Relationship with Coach* was endorsed by approximately 83% of the softball student-athletes. Finally, 75% of the participants

endorsed *Missing Classes Because of Travel, Not Enjoying Competition as Much as Before*, and *Social Life* as being stressful. Of note, *Not Meeting Parents Expectations* was also rated as stressful by 66.7% of the participants, a finding that is not common with many of the other sport teams.

Table 53  
Softball Student-Athletes Perception of Stressors (13)

Stressors	Yes	No
1. Making the Team	33.3% (4)	66.7% (8)
2. Getting Enough Playing Time	91.7% (11)	8.3% (1)
3. Pressure to Win	91.7% (11)	8.3% (1)
4. Not Meeting Own Expectations	100% (12)	0% (0)
5. Not Meeting Parent's Expectations	66.7% (8)	33.3% (4)
6. Relationship with Coach	83.3% (10)	16.7% (2)
7. Finances	66.7% (8)	33.3% (4)
8. Being Nervous Before or During Competition	66.7% (8)	33.3% (4)
9. Balancing Sport and Academic Demands	100% (12)	0% (0)
10. Missing Classes Because of Travel	75% (9)	25% (3)
11. Grades	100% (12)	0% (0)
12. Not Enjoying Competition as Much as Before	75% (9)	25% (3)
13. Lack of Control Over My Schedule	66.7% (8)	33.3% (4)
14. Perceptions of Others, Stereotypes	25% (3)	75% (9)
15. Social Life	75% (9)	25% (3)

Table 54 shows the softball participants stress ratings for each of the 15 stressors. *Not Meeting Own Expectations, Grades, Balancing Sport and Academic Demands* and *Getting Enough Playing Time* were all rated in the extremely stressful range. Approximately 66% of the softball student-athletes rated *Not Meeting Own Expectations* and *Grades* as extremely stressful. The most frequently endorsed stress rating for *Not Meeting Own Expectations* was both a 5 and 6 and the most endorsed rating for *Grades* was a 6. Both of these stressors were rated as extremely stressful by a large number of the softball participants. Forty-one percent rated *Getting Enough Playing Time* and



*Balancing Sport and Academic Demands* in the extremely stressful range with the most frequently endorsed ratings being a 5 and 6 respectively. *Pressure to Win*, *Relationship with Coach*, and *Social Life* were all rated in the moderately stressful range.

Approximately 41% rated *Pressure to Win* as being moderately stressful with 3 being the most frequently endorsed rating. *Relationship with Coach* received a variety of ratings, ranging from not at all to moderately stressful. Approximately 58% of the softball participants rated this item in the moderate range with 4 being the most common rating. Finally, *Social Life* was also endorsed as moderately stressful by 58% of the participants, a relatively high rating compared to other sports.

Table 54  
Softball Student-Athlete Stress Ratings

Stressors	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
1. Making the Team	58.3% (7)	8.3% (1)	16.7% (2)	0% (0)	8.3% (1)	0% (0)	8.3% (1)
2. Getting Enough Playing Time	8.3% (1)	0% (0)	25% (3)	0% (0)	25% (3)	41.7% (5)	0% (0)
3. Pressure to Win	0% (0)	16.7% (2)	25% (3)	8.3% (1)	33.3% (4)	8.3% (1)	8.3% (1)
4. Not Meeting Own Expectations	0% (0)	0% (0)	0% (0)	25% (3)	8.3% (1)	33.3% (4)	33.3% (4)
5. Not Meeting Parent's Expectations	16.7% (2)	16.7% (2)	16.7% (2)	16.7% (2)	16.7% (2)	16.7% (2)	0% (0)
6. Relationship with Coach	16.7% (2)	8.3% (1)	16.7% (2)	16.7% (2)	41.7% (5)	0% (0)	0% (0)
7. Finances	33.3% (4)	0% (0)	16.7% (2)	8.3% (1)	8.3% (1)	25% (3)	8.3% (1)
8. Being Nervous Before or During Competition	33.3% (4)	16.7% (2)	0% (0)	8.3% (1)	8.3% (1)	16.7% (2)	16.7% (2)
9. Balancing Sport and Academic Demands	0% (0)	0% (0)	25% (3)	16.7% (2)	16.7% (2)	16.7% (2)	25% (3)
10. Missing Classes Because of Travel	16.7% (2)	16.7% (2)	41.7% (5)	25% (3)	0% (0)	0% (0)	0% (0)
11. Grades	0% (0)	8.3% (1)	0% (0)	16.7% (2)	8.3% (1)	25% (3)	41.7% (5)
12. Not Enjoying Competition as Much	25% (3)	16.7% (2)	8.3% (1)	25% (3)	8.3% (1)	8.3% (1)	8.3% (1)
13. Lack of Control Over My Schedule	33.3% (4)	8.3% (1)	0% (0)	25% (3)	16.7% (2)	16.7% (2)	8.3% (1)
14. Perceptions of Others, Stereotypes	75% (9)	8.3% (1)	0% (0)	8.3% (1)	0% (0)	8.3% (1)	0% (0)
15. Social Life	25% (3)	0% (0)	16.7% (2)	25% (3)	33.3% (4)	0% (0)	0% (0)

0 = Not at All; 1-2 = Somewhat; 3-4 = Moderately; 5-6 = Extremely

Table 55 shows the coping strategies softball participants use to manage the stressors associated with being a student-athlete. Of the 13 participants, 91.7% endorsed *Taking a Break* as a strategy used to manage stress. *Asking Friends/Family for Advice* was endorsed by 75% of the participants and *Exercise* was endorsed by 66.7% of the softball student-athletes. *Spending Time with Friends* was also endorsed by 58.3% of the

participants. These coping strategies are consistent with strategies endorsed by the overall sample.

Table 55  
Coping Strategies Used to Manage Stressors (Softball)

<b>Coping Strategies</b>	<b>Response Percent</b>	<b>Response Count</b>
Taking a Break	91.7%	11
Asking Friends/Family for Advice	75%	9
Exercise	66.7%	8
Spend Time with Friends	58.3%	7
Refuse/Avoid Thinking about Stressor	41.7%	5
Eat	41.7%	5
Focus Efforts on a Solution	33.3%	4
Keep Feelings to Self	33.3%	4
Relaxation Techniques	25%	3
Do Things for Others	8.3%	1
Drink	8.3%	1

### *Swimming and Diving*

Table 56 shows the stressors swimming and diving participants perceive as being stressful. Thirty-five student-athletes completed the survey. Of these participants, over 90% endorsed *Not Meeting Own Expectations* (94.3%) and *Being Nervous Before or During Competition* (91.4%) as being stressful. Approximately 85% of the participants endorsed *Grades* as being stressful. More than 70% of the swimming and diving athletes endorsed *Balancing Sport and Academic Demands* (77.1%) and *Missing Classes Because of Travel* (71.4%) as stressful. *Pressure to Win* was also endorsed by approximately 68% of the participants. Of note, there were several items that were endorsed as being stressful by the overall sample that were not endorsed by the swimming and diving student-athletes including: *Making the Team*, *Getting Enough Playing Time*, *Not Meeting Parents*

*Expectations, Relationship with Coach, Finances, Not Enjoying Competition as Much as Before, Lack of Control Over Schedule, and Perceptions of Others, Stereotypes.*

Table 56  
Swimming & Diving Student-Athletes Perception of Stressors (35)

Stressors	Yes	No
1. Making the Team	17.1% (6)	82.9% (29)
2. Getting Enough Playing Time	41.7% (15)	58.3% (21)
3. Pressure to Win	68.6% (24)	31.4% (11)
4. Not Meeting Own Expectations	94.3% (33)	5.7% (2)
5. Not Meeting Parent's Expectations	31.4% (11)	68.6% (24)
6. Relationship with Coach	42.9% (15)	57.1% (20)
7. Finances	28.6% (10)	71.4% (25)
8. Being Nervous Before or During Competition	91.4% (32)	8.6% (3)
9. Balancing Sport and Academic Demands	77.1% (27)	22.9% (8)
10. Missing Classes Because of Travel	71.4% (25)	28.6% (10)
11. Grades	85.7% (30)	14.3% (5)
12. Not Enjoying Competition as Much as Before	40% (14)	60% (21)
13. Lack of Control Over My Schedule	40% (14)	60% (21)
14. Perceptions of Others, Stereotypes	20% (7)	80% (28)
15. Social Life	51.4% (18)	48.6% (17)

Table 57 shows the swimming and diving participants stress ratings for each of the 15 stressors. *Not Meeting Own Expectations* was the only stressor rated in the extremely stressful range. Approximately 57% of the participants rated *Not Meeting Own Expectations* as extremely stressful, with 5 being the most frequently endorsed stress rating. *Grades, Balancing Sport and Academic Demands, and Being Nervous Before or During Competition* were all rated in the moderately stressful range. Approximately 40% of the student-athletes rated *Grades* in the moderately stressful range, with 4 being the most frequent rating endorsed. Fifty-one percent of the participants rated *Being Nervous Before or During Competition* in the moderately stressful range with 3 being the most frequently endorsed rating. Finally, approximately 34% rated *Balancing Sport and*

*Academic Demands* in the moderately stressful range. The most frequently endorsed ratings for this item was a 4. All of the other items received a 0 as the most frequent rating except for *Missing Classes Because of Travel*. This stressor was rated in the somewhat stressful range with 2 being the most frequently endorsed rating.

Table 57  
Swimming & Diving Student-Athlete Stress Ratings

Stressors	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
1. Making the Team	91.4% (32)	2.9% (1)	2.9% (1)	0% (0)	2.9% (1)	0% (0)	0% (0)
2. Getting Enough Playing Time	68.6% (24)	8.6% (3)	17.1% (6)	2.9% (1)	0% (0)	5.7% (2)	0% (0)
3. Pressure to Win	25.7% (9)	8.6% (3)	20% (7)	11.4% (4)	22.9% (8)	11.4% (4)	2.9% (1)
4. Not Meeting Own Expectations	5.7% (2)	5.7% (2)	5.7% (2)	17.1% (6)	11.4% (4)	40% (14)	17.1% (6)
5. Not Meeting Parent's Expectations	60% (21)	8.6% (3)	8.6% (3)	11.4% (4)	0% (0)	5.7% (2)	5.7% (2)
6. Relationship with Coach	54.3% (19)	20% (7)	17.1% (6)	5.7% (2)	0% (0)	0% (0)	2.9% (1)
7. Finances	62.9% (22)	14.3% (5)	5.7% (2)	5.7% (2)	5.7% (2)	5.7% (2)	0% (0)
8. Being Nervous Before or During Competition	2.9% (1)	5.7% (2)	20% (7)	31.4% (11)	20% (7)	17.1% (6)	5.7% (2)
9. Balancing Sport and Academic Demands	22.9% (8)	5.7% (2)	14.3% (5)	11.4% (4)	22.9% (8)	14.3% (5)	8.6% (3)
10. Missing Classes Because of Travel	17.1% (6)	20% (7)	22.9% (8)	14.3% (5)	8.6% (3)	5.7% (2)	11.4% (4)
11. Grades	11.4% (4)	2.9% (1)	2.9% (1)	14.3% (5)	25.7% (9)	22.9% (8)	20% (7)
12. Not Enjoying Competition as Much	60% (21)	2.9% (1)	14.3% (5)	5.7% (2)	5.7% (2)	5.7% (2)	5.7% (2)
13. Lack of Control Over My Schedule	45.7% (16)	14.3% (5)	20% (7)	14.3% (5)	2.9% (1)	0% (0)	2.9% (1)
14. Perceptions of Others, Stereotypes	77.1% (27)	14.3% (5)	0% (0)	2.9% (1)	0% (0)	5.7% (2)	0% (0)
15. Social Life	48.6% (17)	14.3% (5)	22.9% (8)	8.6% (3)	2.9% (1)	0% (0)	2.9% (1)

0 = Not at All; 1-2 = Somewhat; 3-4 = Moderately; 5-6 = Extremely

Table 58 highlights the coping strategies swimming and diving participants use to manage the stressors associated with being a student-athlete. Of the 35 participants, 85.7% endorsed *Spending Time with Friends* as a strategy used to help manage stress. *Taking a Break* was endorsed by 65.7% of the participants and *Exercise* was endorsed by 57.1% of the student-athletes. Finally, *Asking Friends/Family for Advice* was endorsed by 51.4% of the swimming and diving student-athletes. Although not endorsed by majority of the participants, *Relaxation Techniques* and *Focus Efforts on a Solution* were endorsed by over 45% of the student-athletes.

Table 58  
Coping Strategies Used to Manage Stressors (Swimming and Diving)

<b>Coping Strategies</b>	<b>Response Percent</b>	<b>Response Count</b>
Spend Time with Friends	85.7%	30
Taking a Break	65.7%	23
Exercise	57.1%	20
Asking Friends/Family for Advice	51.4%	18
Relaxation Techniques	48.6%	17
Focus Efforts on a Solution	45.7%	16
Keep Feelings to Self	37.1%	13
Eat	34.3%	12
Refuse/Avoid Thinking about Stressor	22.9%	8
Do Things for Others	20%	7
Drink	14.3%	5

### *Track and Field*

The stressors track and field student-athletes perceive as being stressful are depicted in Table 59. Thirty-nine participants completed the survey. Of these participants, over 90% endorsed *Not Meeting Own Expectations* (97.4%) and *Grades* (94.9%) as being stressful. Approximately 87% endorsed *Being Nervous Before or During Competition* and *Balancing Sport and Academic Demands* as stressful. Over 75% of the participants

also endorsed *Pressure to Win* (79.5%) and *Relationship with Coach* (79.5%). Of note, *Getting Enough Playing Time* was only endorsed by 15.4% of the participants. This is considerably less compared to the overall sample, indicating that *Getting Enough Playing Time* is a not concern for many of the track and field student-athletes.

Table 59  
Track and Field Student-Athletes Perception of Stressors (39)

Stressors	Yes	No
1. Making the Team	15.4% (6)	84.6% (33)
2. Getting Enough Playing Time	15.4% (6)	84.6% (33)
3. Pressure to Win	79.5% (31)	20.5% (8)
4. Not Meeting Own Expectations	97.4% (38)	2.6% (1)
5. Not Meeting Parent's Expectations	33.3% (13)	66.7% (26)
6. Relationship with Coach	79.5% (31)	20.5% (8)
7. Finances	56.4% (22)	43.6% (17)
8. Being Nervous Before or During Competition	87.2% (34)	12.8% (5)
9. Balancing Sport and Academic Demands	87.2% (34)	12.8% (5)
10. Missing Classes Because of Travel	55% (22)	45% (18)
11. Grades	92.5% (37)	7.5% (3)
12. Not Enjoying Competition as Much as Before	61.5% (24)	38.5% (15)
13. Lack of Control Over My Schedule	56.4% (22)	43.6% (17)
14. Perceptions of Others, Stereotypes	17.9% (7)	82.1% (32)
15. Social Life	51.3% (20)	48.7% (19)

Track and field participants stress ratings for each of the 15 stressors are shown in Table 60. *Being Nervous Before or During Competition* was rated in the moderate to extremely stressful range. Approximately 32% of the track and field student-athletes rated *Being Nervous Before or During Competition* as extremely stressful and 41% rated this stressor in the moderately stressful range. *Not Meeting Own Expectations*, *Grades*, *Pressure to Win*, *Balancing Sport and Academic Demands*, and *Relationship with Coach* were all rated in the moderately stressful range. Approximately 48% of the participants

rated *Not Meeting Own Expectations* in the moderately stressful range, with 4 being the most frequently endorsed rating. Forty-eight percent of these participants also rated this stressor in the extremely stressful range, indicating that many of the track and field athletes perceive not meeting their expectations as being stressful. Forty-six percent of the student-athletes rated *Grades* in the moderately stressful range, with 4 being the most frequently endorsed rating. *Pressure to Win* and *Balancing Sport and Academic Demands* were rated by 43% of the track and field student-athletes as moderately stressful. For both of these stressors, a 4 was the most frequent rating provided. *Relationship with Coach* was endorsed as moderately stressful by 41% of the participants, with 4 being the most frequently endorsed stress rating. Of note, 24% also rated *Relationship with Coach* in the extremely stressful range.



Table 60  
Track and Field Student-Athlete Stress Ratings

Stressors	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
1. Making the Team	66.7% (26)	10.3% (4)	5.1% (2)	15.4% (6)	2.6% (1)	2.6% (1)	0% (0)
2. Getting Enough Playing Time	71.8% (28)	5.1% (2)	10.3% (4)	2.6% (1)	7.7% (3)	0% (0)	2.6% (1)
3. Pressure to Win	17.9% (7)	5.1% (2)	10.3% (4)	12.8% (5)	30.8% (12)	17.9% (7)	5.1% (2)
4. Not Meeting Own Expectations	2.6% (1)	0% (0)	0% (0)	15.4% (6)	33.3% (13)	28.2% (11)	20.5% (8)
5. Not Meeting Parent's Expectations	51.3% (20)	12.8% (5)	15.4% (6)	7.7% (3)	7.7% (3)	2.6% (1)	7.7% (3)
6. Relationship with Coach	12.8% (5)	5.1% (2)	15.4% (6)	15.4% (6)	25.6% (10)	12.8% (5)	12.8% (5)
7. Finances	23.1% (9)	15.4% (6)	17.9% (7)	10.3% (4)	15.4% (6)	2.6% (1)	15.4% (6)
8. Being Nervous Before or During Competition	5.1% (2)	2.6% (1)	20.5% (8)	20.5% (8)	20.5% (8)	20.5% (8)	12.8% (5)
9. Balancing Sport and Academic Demands	5.1% (2)	2.6% (1)	12.8% (5)	15.4% (6)	28.2% (11)	23.1% (9)	12.8% (5)
10. Missing Classes Because of Travel	20.5% (8)	28.2% (11)	12.8% (5)	20.5% (8)	17.9% (7)	2.6% (1)	0% (0)
11. Grades	5.1% (2)	0% (0)	10.3% (4)	12.8% (5)	33.3% (13)	28.2% (11)	12.8% (5)
12. Not Enjoying Competition as Much	30.8% (12)	7.7% (3)	20.5% (8)	5.1% (2)	7.7% (3)	15.4% (6)	12.8% (5)
13. Lack of Control Over My Schedule	25.6% (10)	10.3% (4)	17.9% (7)	20.5% (8)	15.4% (6)	5.1% (2)	5.1% (2)
14. Perceptions of Others, Stereotypes	64.1% (25)	15.4% (6)	7.7% (3)	2.6% (1)	5.1% (2)	2.6% (1)	2.6% (1)
15. Social Life	28.2% (11)	20.5% (8)	25.6% (10)	10.3% (4)	7.7% (3)	2.6% (1)	5.1% (2)

0 = Not at All; 1-2 = Somewhat; 3-4 = Moderately; 5-6 = Extremely

Table 61 depicts the coping strategies track and field participants use to manage the stressors associated with being a student-athlete. Of the 39 participants, 71.8% endorsed *Spending Time with Friends* as a strategy they use to manage stress. *Taking a Break* was endorsed by 66.7% of the participants and *Asking Friends/Family for Advice* was endorsed by 51.3% of the track and field student-athletes. As seen with other sport

teams, these athletes rely more on friends and family for support in helping cope with their role as a student-athlete.

Table 61  
Coping Strategies Used to Manage Stressors (Track and Field)

<b>Coping Strategies</b>	<b>Response Percent</b>	<b>Response Count</b>
Spend Time with Friends	71.8%	28
Taking a Break	66.7%	26
Asking Friends/Family for Advice	51.3%	20
Exercise	46.2%	18
Relaxation Techniques	38.5%	15
Focus Efforts on a Solution	35.9%	14
Eat	35.9%	14
Do Things for Others	30.8%	12
Refuse/Avoid Thinking about Stressor	17.9%	7
Keep Feelings to Self	17.9%	7
Drink	12.8%	5

### *Volleyball*

The stressors volleyball participants perceive as being stressful are depicted in Table 62. Of the 8 volleyball participants who completed the survey, 100% endorsed *Getting Enough Playing Time, Pressure to Win, Not Meeting Own Expectations, Relationship with Coach, Balancing Sport and Academic Demands, Missing Classes Because of Travel, Grades, and Lack of Control Over My Schedule* as being stressful. Approximately 87% endorsed *Being Nervous Before or During Competition, Not Enjoying Competition as Much as Before, and Social Life* as being stressful. *Not Meeting Parents Expectations* was endorsed as being stressful by over 62% of the participants. Only *Making the Team (37.5%), Finances (37.5%), and Perceptions of Others, Stereotypes (25%)* were rated as stressful by less than 50% of the participants.

Table 62  
 Volleyball Student-Athletes Perception of Stressors (8)

Stressors	Yes	No
1. Making the Team	37.5% (3)	62.5% (5)
2. Getting Enough Playing Time	100% (8)	0% (0)
3. Pressure to Win	100% (8)	0% (0)
4. Not Meeting Own Expectations	100% (8)	0% (0)
5. Not Meeting Parent's Expectations	62.5% (5)	37.5% (3)
6. Relationship with Coach	100% (8)	0% (0)
7. Finances	37.5% (3)	62.5% (5)
8. Being Nervous Before or During Competition	87.5% (7)	12.5% (1)
9. Balancing Sport and Academic Demands	100% (8)	0% (0)
10. Missing Classes Because of Travel	100% (8)	0% (0)
11. Grades	100% (8)	0% (0)
12. Not Enjoying Competition as Much as Before	87.5% (7)	12.5% (1)
13. Lack of Control Over My Schedule	100% (8)	0% (0)
14. Perceptions of Others, Stereotypes	25% (2)	75% (6)
15. Social Life	87.5% (7)	12.5% (1)

Table 63 shows volleyball student-athletes stress ratings for each of the 15 stressors. Of note, there were several stressors rated in the extremely stressful range. *Pressure to Win, Balancing Sport and Academic Demands, Grades, Not Enjoying Competition As Much as Before, Not Meeting Own Expectations, Relationship with Coach, Lack of Control Over Schedule, and Getting Enough Playing Time* all received a large number of extremely stressful ratings. Approximately 62% of volleyball student-athletes rated *Balancing Sport and Academic Demands* as extremely stressful. The most frequently endorsed rating for this stressor is a 6. *Not Meeting Own Expectations* and *Relationship with Coach* were also rated in the extremely stressful range by approximately 62% of the participants. The most frequently endorsed rating for these stressors was a 5. Finally, 62% of the volleyball student-athletes rated *Getting Enough Playing Time* in the extremely stressful range, with 5 being the most frequently endorsed rating. Fifty percent of the participants rated *Pressure to Win, Grades, and Not Enjoying*

*Competition as Much as Before* as extremely stressful. The most frequently endorsed rating was a 6 for these stressors. *Lack of Control Over My Schedule* was also rated in the extremely stressful range by 50% of volleyball student-athletes, with a 5 being the most frequently endorsed rating. *Missing Classes Because of Travel* was rated as both moderately and extremely stressful by an equal number of participants, with both 3 and 5 ratings being endorsed. Approximately 75% of the participants rated *Social Life* in the moderate range, with ratings of both a 3 and a 4.

Table 63  
Volleyball Student-Athlete Stress Ratings

Stressors	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
1. Making the Team	37.5% (3)	12.5% (1)	12.5% (1)	12.5% (1)	25% (2)	0% (0)	0% (0)
2. Getting Enough Playing Time	0% (0)	12.5% (1)	12.5% (1)	0% (0)	12.5% (1)	37.5% (3)	25% (2)
3. Pressure to Win	0% (0)	0% (0)	0% (0)	25% (2)	25% (2)	12.5% (1)	37.5% (3)
4. Not Meeting Own Expectations	0% (0)	0% (0)	12.5% (1)	25% (2)	12.5% (1)	37.5% (3)	25% (2)
5. Not Meeting Parent's Expectations	25% (2)	25.5% (2)	25% (2)	0% (0)	12.5% (1)	0% (0)	12.5% (1)
6. Relationship with Coach	0% (0)	12.5% (1)	12.5% (1)	0% (0)	12.5% (1)	37.5% (3)	25% (2)
7. Finances	37.5% (3)	25% (2)	12.5% (1)	12.5% (1)	0% (0)	12.5% (1)	0% (0)
8. Being Nervous Before or During Competition	12.5% (1)	0% (0)	25% (2)	25% (2)	25% (2)	0% (0)	12.5% (1)
9. Balancing Sport and Academic Demands	0% (0)	0% (0)	12.5% (1)	12.5% (1)	12.5% (1)	25% (2)	37.5% (3)
10. Missing Classes Because of Travel	0% (0)	12.5% (1)	12.5% (1)	37.5% (3)	0% (0)	37.5% (3)	0% (0)
11. Grades	0% (0)	0% (0)	12.5% (1)	25% (2)	12.5% (1)	12.5% (1)	37.5% (3)
12. Not Enjoying Competition as Much	12.5% (1)	12.5% (1)	25% (2)	0% (0)	0% (0)	12.5% (1)	37.5% (3)
13. Lack of Control Over My Schedule	0% (0)	0% (0)	25% (1)	12.5% (1)	12.5% (1)	37.5% (3)	12.5% (1)
14. Perceptions of Others, Stereotypes	75% (6)	0% (0)	12.5% (1)	0% (0)	12.5% (1)	0% (0)	0% (0)
15. Social Life	12.5% (1)	0% (0)	0% (0)	37.5% (3)	37.5% (3)	12.5% (1)	0% (0)

0 = Not at All; 1-2 = Somewhat; 3-4 = Moderately; 5-6 = Extremely

Table 64 highlights the coping strategies volleyball participants use to manage the stressors associated with being a student-athlete. Of the 8 participants, 62.5% endorsed *Asking Friends/Family for Advice* as a strategy they use to help manage stress. *Spending Time with Friends, Exercise, and Drinking* were all endorsed by 50% of the participants. Of note, compared to other sport participants, a larger number of volleyball student-

athletes endorsed *Drinking* as a coping strategy used to manage stress. Also worth mentioning, *Keeping Feelings to Self* and *Do Things for Others* were not endorsed by any of the volleyball student-athletes.

Table 64  
Coping Strategies Used to Manage Stressors (Volleyball)

<b>Coping Strategies</b>	<b>Response Percent</b>	<b>Response Count</b>
Asking Friends/Family for Advice	62.5%	5
Spend Time with Friends	50%	4
Exercise	50%	4
Drink	50%	4
Taking a Break	37.5%	3
Focus Efforts on a Solution	37.5%	3
Eat	37.5%	3
Relaxation Techniques	25%	2
Refuse/Avoid Thinking about Stressor	12.5%	1
Keeping Feelings to Self	0%	0
Do Things for Others	0%	0

### *Tennis*

Table 65 depicts stressors tennis student-athletes perceive as being stressful. Of the 10 participants who completed the survey, approximately 88% endorsed *Not Meeting Own Expectations* and *Grades* as being stressful. Over 75% endorsed *Pressure to Win* (77.8%), and *Being Nervous Before or During Competition* (77.8%) as stressful. *Making the Team*, *Getting Enough Playing Time*, *Balancing Sport and Academic Demands*, and *Grades* were all endorsed as stressful by over 66% of the participants. There were several stressors that were not endorsed as being stressful by over 50% of the participants including, *Not Meeting Parents Expectations*, *Relationship with Coach*, *Finances*, *Not Enjoying Competition as Much as Before*, *Lack of Control Over My Schedule*, *Perceptions of Others*, *Stereotypes*, and *Social Life*.

Table 65  
Tennis Student-Athletes Perception of Stressors (10)

Stressors	Yes	No
1. Making the Team	66.7% (6)	33.3% (3)
2. Getting Enough Playing Time	66.7% (6)	33.3% (3)
3. Pressure to Win	77.8% (7)	22.2% (2)
4. Not Meeting Own Expectations	88.9% (8)	11.1% (1)
5. Not Meeting Parent's Expectations	22.2% (2)	77.8% (7)
6. Relationship with Coach	33.3% (3)	66.7% (6)
7. Finances	44.4% (4)	55.6% (5)
8. Being Nervous Before or During Competition	77.8% (7)	22.2% (2)
9. Balancing Sport and Academic Demands	66.7% (6)	33.3% (3)
10. Missing Classes Because of Travel	66.7% (6)	33.3% (3)
11. Grades	88.9% (8)	11.1% (1)
12. Not Enjoying Competition as Much as Before	44.4% (4)	55.6% (5)
13. Lack of Control Over My Schedule	33.3% (3)	66.7% (6)
14. Perceptions of Others, Stereotypes	0% (0)	100% (9)
15. Social Life	33.3% (3)	66.7% (6)

Table 66 depicts tennis student-athletes stress ratings for each of the 15 stressors. *Not Meeting Own Expectations* was the only stressor rated in the extremely stressful range. Approximately 66% of the tennis student-athletes rated *Not Meeting Own Expectations* as extremely stressful, with the most frequently endorsed rating being a 5. *Pressure to Win*, *Being Nervous Before or During Competition*, *Grades*, *Balancing Sport and Academic Demands*, and *Making the Team* were all rated in the moderately stressful range. Approximately 66% rated *Pressure to Win* and *Being Nervous Before or During Competition* in the moderately stressful range with 3 being the most frequently endorsed rating. Sixty-six percent also rated *Balancing Sport and Academic Demands* in the moderately stressful range, with both 3 and 4 ratings being the most frequently endorsed. *Grades* was rated in the moderately stressful range by 55% of the tennis student-athletes with 4 being the most frequently endorsed rating. Finally, 55% percent of the participants

rated *Making the Team* as moderately stressful. *Making the Team* received a relatively high rating compared to the other sport teams in this study.

Table 66  
Tennis Student-Athlete Stress Ratings

Stressors	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
1. Making the Team	22.2% (2)	22.2% (2)	0% (0)	33.3% (3)	22.2% (2)	0% (0)	0% (0)
2. Getting Enough Playing Time	22.2% (2)	0% (0)	22.2% (2)	22.2% (2)	22.2% (2)	11.1% (1)	0% (0)
3. Pressure to Win	11.1% (1)	0% (0)	11.1% (1)	55.6% (5)	11.1% (1)	11.1% (1)	0% (0)
4. Not Meeting Own Expectations	0% (0)	0% (0)	11.1% (1)	11.1% (1)	11.1% (1)	55.6% (5)	11.1% (1)
5. Not Meeting Parent's Expectations	66.7% (6)	0% (0)	22.2% (2)	0% (0)	0% (0)	0% (0)	11.1% (1)
6. Relationship with Coach	44.4% (4)	11.1% (1)	0% (0)	0% (0)	22.2% (2)	0% (0)	22.2% (2)
7. Finances	44.4% (4)	0% (0)	0% (0)	33.3% (3)	11.1% (1)	11.1% (1)	0% (0)
8. Being Nervous Before or During Competition	11.1% (1)	0% (0)	11.1% (1)	44.4% (4)	22.2% (2)	11.1% (1)	0% (0)
9. Balancing Sport and Academic Demands	22.2% (2)	0% (0)	0% (0)	33.3% (3)	33.3% (3)	0% (0)	11.1% (1)
10. Missing Classes Because of Travel	22.2% (2)	33.3% (3)	22.2% (2)	0% (0)	11.1% (1)	11.1% (1)	0% (0)
11. Grades	11.1% (1)	0% (0)	0% (0)	11.1% (1)	44.4% (4)	22.2% (2)	11.1% (1)
12. Not Enjoying Competition as Much	44.4% (4)	0% (0)	22.2% (2)	11.1% (1)	11.1% (1)	0% (0)	11.1% (1)
13. Lack of Control Over My Schedule	44.4% (4)	11.1% (1)	0% (0)	33.3% (3)	11.1% (1)	0% (0)	0% (0)
14. Perceptions of Others, Stereotypes	66.7% (6)	22.2% (2)	11.1% (1)	0% (0)	0% (0)	0% (0)	0% (0)
15. Social Life	44.4% (4)	11.1% (1)	0% (0)	33.3% (3)	0% (0)	11.1% (1)	0% (0)

0 = Not at All; 1-2 = Somewhat; 3-4 = Moderately; 5-6 = Extremely

Table 67 highlights the coping strategies tennis participants use to manage the stressors associated with being a student-athlete. Of the 10 participants, 88.9% endorsed



*Spending Time with Friends* as a strategy the use. Seventy-seven percent endorsed *Taking a Break*, *Asking Friends/Family for Advice*, and *Exercise* as coping strategies used to manage stress. *Do Things for Others* was also endorsed by 55.6% of the participants. This is a unique finding compared to the other sport teams in this study. A larger number of tennis student-athletes endorsed *Doing Things for Others* than any other sport team.

Table 67  
Coping Strategies Used to Manage Stressors (Tennis)

<b>Coping Strategies</b>	<b>Response Percent</b>	<b>Response Count</b>
Spend Time with Friends	88.9%	8
Taking a Break	77.8%	7
Asking Friends/Family for Advice	77.8%	7
Exercise	77.8%	7
Do Things for Others	55.6%	5
Keep Feelings to Self	22.2%	2
Relaxation Techniques	11.1%	1
Focus Efforts on a Solution	11.1%	1
Refuse/Avoid Thinking about Stressor	11.1%	1
Eat	11.1%	1
Drink	0%	0

### *Summary of Sports Played*

By separating the data by sport, similarities and differences across teams can be seen. As was previously stated, a large number of items were endorsed as being stressful by the participants in this study. Since several items were endorsed as stressful, attention was focused on which items were not rated as stressful by over 50% of the student-athletes in each sport. One interesting finding included the first item on the survey, *Making the Team*. Majority of the sport teams did not endorse *Making the Team* as being stressful. There were only 2 sports, golf and tennis, with over 50% of the student-athletes rating this item as stressful. The smaller number of positions available for the golf and

tennis teams may make competition for a place on the team greater adding to the stress these student-athletes experience. *Perceptions of Others, Stereotypes* was the only item rated as not stressful by all 14 sport teams. Although this stressor is included in the literature as affecting student-athletes, this was not found to be the case for majority of the participants in this study. Also of note, *Swimming and Diving* and *Tennis* were two sports that rated several of the items as not stressful. For example, majority of the swimming and diving participants rated making the team, getting enough playing time, not meeting parents expectations, relationship with coach, finances, not enjoying competition as much as before, lack of control over schedule, and perceptions of others, stereotypes as not being stressful. Tennis participants rated not meeting parents expectations, relationship with coach, finances, missing classes because of travel, not enjoying competition as much as before, lack of control over schedule, perceptions of others, and social life as not being stressful.

When looking at the stress ratings of the 15 stressors, both similarities and differences were noted. Many of the student athletes from a variety of sports rated *Not Meeting Own Expectations* as extremely stressful. There were only 4 sports that did not give this item an extremely stressful rating: cross country, fencing, golf, and track and field. Although majority of the participants from these sports did not endorse an extremely stressful rating, they did rate this item in the moderately stressful range indicating that it is still stressful for these student-athletes. *Grades* is another item that was endorsed as extremely stressful by majority of participants. Majority of the participants who play Football, Swimming and Diving, Track and Field, and Tennis did not endorse an extremely stressful rating, but did indicate that Grades are moderately

stressful for them. Also worth mentioning, *Balancing Sport and Academic Demands* received a variety of ratings in the moderate to extremely stressful range. The only sport who did not rate this item as significantly stressful was lacrosse.

After looking further at the data, there were certain stressors that were rated as particularly stressful for specific sports. For example, *Being Nervous Before or During Competition* was rated extremely stressful by majority of the cross country, fencing, and track and field participants. *Relationship with Coach* was rated as particularly stressful for baseball, lacrosse, and volleyball participants. When working with these student-athletes it would be important to determine what specifically is stressful about the relationship. *Pressure to Win* was rated as extremely stressful by majority of football, soccer, and volleyball participants. Although many sports endorsed *Pressure to Win* as moderately stressful, this item was rated as being particularly stressful for these three sports. Also of note, when looking at individual sport teams, volleyball had a large number of items endorsed in the extremely stressful range. In addition to pressure to win, balancing sport and academic demands, grades, and not meeting own expectations, majority of volleyball participants also rated not enjoying competition as much as before, relationship with coach, lack of control over schedule, and getting enough playing time as extremely stressful. The smaller number of volleyball participants completing the survey (8) may impact this finding.

Finally, there were 4 coping strategies that were endorsed by participants across a variety of sports. For example, *Spending Time with Friends* was endorsed as a coping strategy used to manage stress by majority of participants from 13 out of the 14 sports included in the survey. Golf was the only sport that had less than 50% of its student-

athletes endorsing this strategy. *Taking a Break* is another coping strategy frequently used by participants. Only Cross Country, Field Hockey, and Volleyball participants had less than 50% of the student-athletes endorsing this strategy. *Asking Friends/Family for Advice* and *Exercise* were also endorsed as coping strategies by majority of student-athletes from 10 different sport teams. Of note, *Keeping Feelings to Self* was endorsed as a coping strategy by majority of baseball student-athletes. This is a unique finding to this sport. Also of note, only one team endorsed a variety of coping strategies, including more problem-focused coping techniques. Fencing participants endorsed using *Focusing Efforts on a Solution*, *Relaxation techniques* as well as *Spending Time with friends*, *Taking a Break*, and *Asking Friends/Family for Advice*.

#### *Additional Coping Strategies*

In addition to the 11 coping strategies described in the study, an open-ended question was included in order to obtain any strategies used by student-athletes that were not included in the survey. Only thirteen of the 231 participants provided additional information. Three of these participants indicated *Sleep* or *Napping* as a strategy used to manage stress. Also similar to the coping strategy *Taking a Break*, two participants included *Having a Day Off* and *Relaxing* as coping techniques they find helpful. The need to rest and relax was common among participant responses. Additional techniques that involve engaging in a relaxing activity include: *Listening to Music*, *Watching TV/Movies*, *Hanging Out and Playing Videogames*, and *Yoga/Meditation*. *Religion* and “*God*” were also endorsed by one of the participants. Three of the student-athletes endorsed more active techniques as ways to manage stress including: *Getting a Job*,

*Using Time Management/Planning skills, and Having Friends Outside of Teammates* in order to “have an outlet to relax”.

#### *Additional Stressors*

Similar to coping strategies, an open-ended question was also included asking participants to indicate additional stressors they experience as student-athletes. A total of 46 participants provided responses. While some of the responses were individualized and participant specific, there were also responses that were relevant to multiple student-athletes. One area that participants indicated as being stressful was not *getting enough sleep*. Multiple respondents reported having difficulty finding enough time in their schedule to get the rest they need. Along the same theme of not having enough time, a number of participants reported difficulty *balancing other activities* with sport and academic demands. For example, maintaining a job and participating in a club were two activities that added to the stress experienced by some participants. The *Physical Demands* placed upon them by their sport was also a reported stressor for several participants. The focus on increasing individuals' fitness levels through lifting and conditioning contributes to these physical demands. For two participants, lifting and its impact on their body image was particularly stressful.

Student-athletes also described particular relationships as sources of stress. One such stressor is “trying to get along with all the various personality types/work ethics of the kids that make up the team”. Getting along with teammates, including worrying about what upperclassmen on the team think of them, was also a concern for some athletes. One participant wrote about the time demands of the sport and the strain put on relationships with friends who are not athletes. Another participant indicated that people's views of

athletes when their team is struggling and how they treat you differently when you find success was stressful. In addition to relationships with teammates and peers, the coach's relationship with players was reported as being stressful for several student-athletes. Specifically, the impact of a coach favoring or not favoring an athlete and the "inability to change coaching style and skills" were both reported as being stressful. Some participants also indicated that meeting their coaches' expectations was stressful. Finally, the relationship with a professor was another possible source of stress. One participant wrote about professors not respecting student-athletes as much as other students. Another student wrote about professors' response to missed classes. "Teachers are not understanding when you have to miss a class. They almost become annoyed even though it is out of the athletes control".

Additional responses provided by participants include stress related to making it to practice on time and traveling long distance for games. Meal times were also reported as a stressor for one of the participants. The transition to college, specifically making own decisions and living independently, was also cited as being stressful. One participant wrote about stress associated with post college plans and the possibility of going to medical school. Another participant wrote about the pressure felt as a captain. Dealing with injury and the relationship with the coach and team when injured was also reported as being stressful. Finally, one participant spoke about the many demands placed on collegiate student athletes. "It's not trying to balance two things at once that's so stressful...what's stressful is balancing school, softball, homework, sleeping, and trying to have a social life. Trying to do all of this while attempting to meet the expectations for

each, placed on you by yourself and family, is even more stressful. Oh yeah, and trying to find time for “normal” things like showering, laundry, etc”.

### *Counseling and Support Services*

Information regarding participants experience receiving help in order to manage their role as a student-athlete was elicited. Participants were first asked the question, “Have you ever received counseling services or any other type of support for dealing with life as a student-athlete (re. time management, performance, etc)?”. Approximately 34% of the respondents indicated that they have received some type of support service. Of these participants, seventy-three student-athletes answered the open-ended question which asked them to describe the help they have received and indicate whether the support was helpful. Several resources were listed by the participants. One of the most commonly mentioned support service is a mandatory program for the freshman student-athletes. This program includes three classes or sessions that work on time management, study skills, and note taking. Respondents varied in their perception of the program with some indicating that the program was helpful while others viewed the program as including information they already knew. Many participants described the program, but did not indicate whether or not the program was effective.

Time management workshops/assistance was the most frequently reported support service. Of the 16 participants who indicated receiving this service, 6 of the participants viewed this support as being helpful. Three of the participants reported that it was “somewhat helpful” and three participants indicated that it was not helpful at all. Specific details of what was helpful were not obtained in this survey, but would be important

information to collect in future studies. Peer mentoring and meetings held with older student-athletes was reported by 9 of the participants. Of these participants, 4 indicated that they found this support helpful and one participant indicated that it was “somewhat helpful”. The academic resource center was another support service endorsed by 3 of the participants, all of which found the center helpful. Consultation with an academic advisor was also reported by one participant. Another respondent wrote about weekly meetings with a coach to review academic progress and discuss strategies for improvement. Another student-athlete has received anger management support which was viewed as being helpful.

Services provided by counselors and psychologists were also reported. Five student-athletes have gone to the counseling center for support. Three of these participants indicated that the counseling they received was helpful. One participant indicated that it was somewhat helpful and that further support was needed at the time. One student-athlete reported seeing a clinical psychologist, but did not find this support to be helpful. Another participant talked about the help received while working with a psychiatrist during a stressful time in high school and during freshman year to help with the transition. Finally, 5 participants wrote about the support received from a sport psychologist. Both individual work and consultation of the sport psychologist with the team was reported. Three of the participants reported finding this support helpful and one participant indicated that it “did not help significantly”.



## Summary

Data from 231 student-athletes was collected and analyzed. Out of the 15 stressors included in the survey, 12 were endorsed as being stressful by more than 50% of the participants. Although many items were rated as stressful, 5 out of the 12 items received a moderate to extreme stress rating indicating that these are the most stressful for the student-athletes participating in this study. Specifically, *Not Meeting Own Expectations* and *Grades* received the highest stress ratings followed by *Pressure to Win*, *Balancing Sport and Academic Demands*, and *Being Nervous Before or During Competition*. While these are significant stressors that can impact student-athletes, many participants endorsed using coping strategies to help manage these stressors. *Spending Time with Friends*, *Taking a Break*, *Exercising*, and *Asking Friends/Family for Advice* are all strategies used by majority of the participants to help manage the stressors associated with being a student-athlete. In order to explore whether differences exist between male and female participants; between freshman, sophomore, junior, and senior student-athletes; and between participants who play a variety of sports including: baseball, basketball, cross country, fencing, field hockey, football, golf, lacrosse, soccer, softball, swimming and diving, track and field, tennis, and volleyball data was separated into various subcategories and then analyzed. The similarities and differences found among these subgroups are outlined throughout the chapter. For example, *Relationship with Coach* was rated as being more stressful for female compared to male student-athletes. More male participants rated *Keeping Feelings to Self* as a coping strategy used to manage stress. More freshman participants rated *Not Meeting Parents Expectations* as stressful compared to and sophomore, junior, and senior participants. *Balancing Sport*

*and Academic Demands* was still rated as moderately stressful by senior participants indicating that this remains a constant stressor for some participants throughout their collegiate career. There are several findings related to certain sport teams that can be found throughout the chapter. For example, golf and tennis student-athletes were the only two sports to rate *Making the Team* as being stressful by majority of the participants. *Pressure to Win* was rated as extremely stressful by football, soccer, and volleyball participants indicating that this is a significant stressor for a large number of student-athletes on these teams. Finally, a summary of additional stressors and coping mechanisms used to deal with these stressors (ex. listening to music, sleeping) was provided. Overall, results suggest that there are a variety of stressors participants manage throughout their collegiate career with many relying on friends and family for support to help manage their role as a student-athlete.

CHAPTER V

GUIDELINES FOR ATHLETIC DEPARTMENT PERSONNEL AND OTHER  
PROFESSIONALS WORKING WITH STUDENT-ATHLETES

Abstract

This chapter presents guidelines for athletic department personnel and other professionals working with collegiate student-athletes in an effort to increase their understanding of stress and coping and how to further proceed in helping athletes balance sport and academic demands. The stressors included may affect one or more aspects of an athlete's performance and development and can have an impact on multiple periods of a competitive performance. Guidelines are presented for each of the identified stressors endorsed by student-athletes through the administration of an independent survey. The coping mechanisms they use to help manage these stressors, both problem-focused and emotion-focused coping skills, are also discussed. Information not included in the survey but reported by student-athletes is included in the guidelines to further increase understanding of athletes' experiences so as to better meet their needs.

The following guidelines are designed to provide athletic departments and related personnel working with collegiate student-athletes information regarding the stressors athletes experience and the coping mechanisms they use to manage their dual role as a student and athlete. The information provided is based on data collected from an independent survey distributed as part of a dissertation examining the type and degree of stress experienced by a sample of student-athletes and the coping skills used to manage this stress. The guidelines are also created in an effort to provide further information about differences that exist based on gender, year in college, and particular sport played. It is important to not only know what student-athletes perceive to be stressful, but how this stress can affect particular athletes' well-being as well as their performance.

Maher's (1996) *Resource Guide for Planning and Evaluating Human Services Programs* was used as a framework, or set of skills, for designing the following guidelines in order to add value to organizations and individuals who work with collegiate student-athletes. The process of program planning and evaluation includes the gathering, analyzing, interpreting, and use of information to increase the likelihood that valuable programs will be provided. This dissertation focuses on the first major task of this process, the Clarification phase, which is concerned with clarifying the situation through specifying the target population, determining their needs, and delineating the relevant context (Maher, 1996). This process allows for the collection of important information which informs athletic departments and related services personnel about factors that can have an impact on student-athletes.

According to Maher (2004), athletes can be understood and described in terms of several psychological levels of development. According to this framework, athletes

evolve in their development as a person, coper, teammate, and performer. At the level of the person, an athlete brings a set of traits and dispositions to the team and sport they play. This will impact how they relate to others, the extent to which they experience worry, doubt, and stress, the way they consider and use information presented to them, the extent to which they initiate action rather than rely on others, and how they are able to remain in control and manage their emotions (Maher, 2004). At the level of the coper, athletes have to continually manage factors that may negatively affect their development as a student and an athlete (i.e. alcohol and drugs, negative personal influences) as well as the protective factors (supportive family and friends, academic support) that will help them remain balanced and support a healthy life style. At the level of the teammate, athletes have to continually manage relationships with their teammates as well as coaches and support staff. How the individual is perceived by teammates including being a leader, competitor, or a distraction will impact how the athlete relates to others, and to some extent, the stress they can experience. At the level of the performer, several factors need to be taken into consideration: how the athlete prepares for competition, applies quality preparation and skills during the actual competition, reacts to positive and negative results and performance, and whether the individual is a consistent contributor to the team. For the purposes of this dissertation, focused was placed on the athlete as a “person” and the athlete as a “coper”. Increasing understanding of the stress student-athletes experience, and the coping strategies they use to manage this stress, will help athletic departments support the needs and development of collegiate student-athletes.

Athletic competition involves three distinct periods: before, during, and after competition (Maher, 2004). Before a competition, the athlete must prepare both mentally

and physically. Mental preparation includes blocking out non-competitive matters in order to get ready to compete and being aware of his or her role including what is needed to be successful. The athlete also needs to be prepared physically with respect to strength, conditioning, and being fundamentally sound. During a competition, an athlete is involved in several activities simultaneously. An athlete must maintain an appropriate level of energy, remain focused and composed throughout the competition, interact effectively with teammates and coaches, and have confidence in self and abilities in order to be more successful. After a competition, an athlete needs to accurately evaluate his or her personal performance. This evaluation should include how well the individual prepared, the competitive performance itself, along with reflection of areas that are in need of continuous improvement. The stressors included in this survey may affect one or more aspects of an athlete's performance and development and can have an impact on multiple periods of a competitive performance. Stressors may affect the way an athlete prepares for a competition, relates to teammates, manages emotions, and is able to evaluate a performance. It is important to gain as much information about the stressors that impact student athletes so that additional supports and programs can be put into place to minimize these stressors.

The following guidelines were created in an effort to increase the awareness of athletic departments and personnel working with student athletes with regard to the stressors student-athletes experience and the coping mechanisms they most frequently utilize. This information is applicable to anyone involved with or exposed to collegiate student athletes, including athletic directors, coaches, trainers, athletes, sport psychologists, school counselors, and professors. These guidelines serve as a way to

provide knowledge of their unique needs and pressures in the hopes that additional supports and programs will be put into place to help collegiate athletes manage their role as a student and athlete.

In order to obtain information regarding stressors, an independent survey was designed and distributed electronically to 550 student athletes from a Division 1 College in Pennsylvania during March 2007. A total of 231 usable surveys were elicited and encompassed 14 different sports: baseball, basketball, cross country, fencing, field hockey, football, golf, lacrosse, softball, swimming/diving, track and field, volleyball, and tennis. Data for the entire sample was first analyzed to examine the items student athletes find most stressful and the coping mechanisms they use to help manage these stressors. The data was then separated based on gender, year in college, and sport played in order to further examine smaller subgroups of athletes to determine additional relationships and findings. Each participant was asked to indicate whether 15 items were stressful for them and provide a rating of how stressful each item was based on the following scale: *Not at all* (0); *Somewhat* (1-2), *Moderately* (3-4), and *Extremely* (5-6). Participants were then asked to indicate, from a list of 11 coping mechanisms, which mechanisms they use to help manage student athlete related stress. Participants' interest in receiving counseling services and whether they have had any previous support and/or counseling experiences to help manage life as a student-athlete was elicited. Three open-ended questions were also included in the survey. These questions sought additional information about stressors and coping mechanisms that were not included in the survey. A brief discussion of the results will be provided in the following sections with the

stressors receiving the highest stress ratings being presented first. Guidelines related to the coping skills endorsed by the student-athletes will then be described.



## Presentation of the Guidelines

Psychologists have identified collegiate student-athletes as a population that faces unique challenges over and above the challenges that non-athletes face (Ward et al, 2005; Martens & Lee, 1998). A student-athlete is responsible for meeting the academic demands of their institution as well as the practice and performance demands of their sport teams. As a result of this dual role of student and athlete, these individuals experience unique stressors related to extensive time demands, pressure to perform, managing relationships, and meeting academic expectations (Humphrey et al, 2000; Fletcher et al, 2003). These stressors can have both a physical and emotional impact leading to problems such as fatigue, headaches, digestive problems, lower self-esteem, and anxiety.

Psychological stress can be defined as a relationship between the person and the environment that is appraised by the person as taxing or exceeding his or her resources and endangering his or her well-being (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984). The transactional process model of stress and coping states that situational appraisals are key determinants of a person's emotional reactions and coping responses. People appraise situations as being relevant or irrelevant to their well-being, goals, motives, values, and beliefs. Stress is perceived when an individual's goals and motives are threatened. Secondary appraisals are then made that focus on what can be done in response and the individual weighs his or her coping options with regard to the situation (Giacobbi et al, 2004). Events appraised as controllable are associated with coping efforts aimed at resolving the situation (problem-focused coping) while events perceived as outside of one's control require

coping efforts that are intended to alter one's reactions or interpretations of the situation (emotion-focused coping). The transactional process model views the stress and coping process as dynamic. Therefore, as situations and sources of stress change, coping responses change and evolve.

In the athletic environment, focus is often on resiliency and self-reliance. The good of the team and an individual's athletic performance can take precedence over other problems which may contribute to the resistance of counseling and sport psychology services (Watson, 2005; Etzel, 1989). Assistance to student-athletes may need to be provided through programs or services offered through the athletic department which can focus on reducing their stress and managing their role as a student and athlete.

The survey distributed as part of this dissertation included the following 15 stressors: Making the team, Getting enough playing time, Pressure to win, Not meeting own expectations, Not meeting parents' expectations, Relationship with coach, Finances, Being nervous before or during competition, Balancing sport and academic demands, Missing classes because of travel, Grades, Not enjoying competition as much as before, Lack of control over schedule, Perceptions of others- stereotypes, and Social Life. Of the 15 stressors presented, 12 were endorsed as being stressful by over half of the participants. *Not Meeting Own Expectations* (94.8%), *Balancing Sport and Academic Demands* (90%), and *Grades* (90%) were all endorsed by approximately 90% or more of the student-athletes participating in the study. *Pressure to Win* (85.3%) and *Being Nervous Before or During Competition* (83.6%) were endorsed by over 80% of the participants. Sixty percent or more of the participants endorsed *Relationship with Coach* (65.4%), *Getting Enough Playing Time* (64.7%), and *Lack of Control over Schedule*

(60.3%) as stressful. Finally, *Social Life* (57.8%), *Missing Class Because of Travel* (56.9%), *Finances* (52.2%), and *Not Enjoying Competition as Much as Before* (50.9%) were endorsed by over 50% of student-athletes. Items that majority of the participants do not see as stressful include *Not Meeting Parent's Expectations* (41.8%), *Making the Team* (29%), and *Perceptions of Others, Stereotypes* (19.5%). The following guidelines review the stressors endorsed by majority of the student-athletes who participated in this study.

### *Not Meeting Own Expectations*

Student-athletes often begin each year, semester, or season with certain expectations. Individuals try to meet these expectations, whether they be related to athletic, academic, or personal performance and can experience disappointment when they are not achieved. Based on the survey that was conducted as part of this dissertation, approximately 94% of the participants indicated that not meeting their own expectations was stressful for them, with over half perceiving this to be extremely stressful. A significant portion of males and females alike rated this as stressful. When looking at year in college, a higher percentage of sophomore (65%) and senior (62%) athletes indicated that not meeting their own expectations was extremely stressful. When separating athletes based on sport played, several student-athletes from all 14 sports reported that this stressor is moderately and extremely stressful for them. Baseball, lacrosse, soccer, and softball had a large number of athletes give this a particularly high stress rating. Based on these findings, the following should be considered when working with student-athletes:

- 1) Assessing student-athletes expectations at the beginning of the year or athletic season. Student-athletes' expectations can be placed into specific and measurable short-term goals that each person can work towards. Coaches, counselors, or related personnel can play an important role, helping them to look at their expectations and create realistic goals. A specific way for the personal goals to be measured should also be discussed and put into place so that successes can be further realized.
- 2) For freshman athletes, time can be spent highlighting the differences between high school athletics and the demands of a collegiate sport team. The level of competition is often higher at the collegiate level. Helping student-athletes adjust to this increased competition will be important and may contribute to more realistic expectations.
- 3) Sophomore and senior student-athletes report a higher degree of stress. For many sophomores, this is their second year on the team which is often associated with increased expectations from the previous year. These expectations can include additional playing time, obtaining a starting position, additional responsibility and a larger role on the team, and an overall improvement in performance. In order to assist in decreasing stress, coaches can play an important role by speaking directly with the student athlete explaining their own expectations for the individual, their role on the team as they see it, and what they need to do to continue to improve. The same can be true with senior student-athletes. More focus may need to be placed on expectations as they relate to sport, but also academics and their goals for post-graduation. Having individual's who know the student-athlete well to

help provide support and guidance through this transition process can be very valuable. Also, connecting athletes to a career development center and allowing time in their schedule to attend different workshops or job interviews will be important.

- 4) Finally, several student-athletes who are members of larger sport teams, such as baseball, soccer, and lacrosse indicated that not meeting their own expectations was extremely stressful. This may be due to increased competition for a limited number of positions or a starting role. It would be helpful to periodically check-in with these athletes to see how they view their role on the team, where they want to improve, and offer possible suggestions on how they can further reach these goals.

### *Balancing Sport and Academic Demands*

Student-athletes need to meet the demands of their sports teams which often include practice, conditioning, travel, and competition as well as the academic demands of their institution which include meeting course requirements, studying, attending class, and maintaining a certain GPA. These demands can become overwhelming at times.

According to those participants that were surveyed, 41% view balancing sport and academic demands as moderately stressful while 37% view this stressor as extremely stressful. Of note, a higher number of male and freshman student-athletes rated balancing sport and academic demands as being extremely stressful compared to female and sophomore through senior athletes. Following are recommendations that may be useful when helping student athletes balance sport and academic demands.

- 1) The athletic department at the organizational level and/or individual sport teams can host seminars or workshops that target time management strategies and resources. This can be particularly helpful for incoming freshman who may need additional help adjusting to the new demands of college and sport. However, information regarding how to manage time should be available to all student-athletes as needed.
- 2) Individualized support should also be available. It is important for counselors and coaches to be sensitive to and aware of the multiple demands placed upon student-athletes. The athletic department can provide information to those working at the college or university counseling center regarding athletes demands, schedules, and requirements so that these professional will be better prepared to support students who utilize this resource. Athletic departments can also provide information to coaches regarding how to help student-athletes with time management. Having information regarding resources within the college or institution which student-athletes can access for support will be important.
- 3) Based on the survey distributed for this dissertation, males reported a higher stress rating for balancing sport and academic demands when compared to female participants. This finding indicates the possible need for additional support and structure for male student-athletes. This support may be in the form of designated time for studying and completing assignments, such as a study hall, which can be built into a team's schedule. Coaches and staff can check in with student-athletes periodically throughout the season regarding how they are managing their academic and sport demands. Providing additional academic support, such as peer

tutoring when needed, can be helpful. Finally, monitoring practice times and demands, particularly during exam time, and making adjustments when possible may serve to help decrease some of the stress student athletes' experience.

- 4) Moderate to extreme stress ratings for balancing sport and academic demands were found across all years, including seniors. The need to address the issue of managing multiple responsibilities and demands does not stop after a student-athletes freshman year. The demands may change as student-athletes progress through their collegiate career, but the need for assistance and support in managing these demands does not. At the beginning of each season, it may be valuable to spend time with student-athletes discussing the upcoming season as well as semester and being available to help student-athletes with time management concerns.
- 5) Since stress related to the demands of sport and academics can take away from the focus a student-athlete is able to give to his or her performance on the field and in the classroom, a workshop or seminar regarding how to "keep your mind in the moment" may be beneficial. It will be important to build the skill of focusing one's attention on the task at hand while blocking outside distractions. This can help decrease stress related to outside demands and potentially improve performance.

### *Grades*

Across gender, year in college, and sport teams, student-athletes view their academic grades as being stressful. The stress associated with grades most likely varies from

individual to individual. Some student-athletes may be concerned about maintaining a certain GPA in order to continue to be eligible to play their sport. Other athletes may be more concerned with meeting their own expectations of how they should perform as a student. Although the reason may vary, approximately 44% of the participants who completed the independent survey rated grades as being extremely stressful. Of these, sophomore student-athletes had the highest stress rating with 53% giving grades an extremely stressful rating. An increase in expectations regarding grades from freshman year, often seen as an adjustment year, may be one possible explanation for the reported high level of stress. Pressure to maintain or increase grades from family or coaches may also play a role. A number of junior and senior student-athletes reported grades being stressful for them, indicating that grades remain stressful for student-athletes across years in college. In order to help students with the stress associated with grades the following recommendations should be considered.

- 1) Having students take advantage of academic support offered through the college of university would help provide support for those who are in need of additional help. As a result of student-athletes academic, practice, and game schedules time to access these services may be limited. Ensuring that academic support services have flexible hours that can fit with student athletes schedules may increase the ability of athletes to take advantage of this support. Allowing access to academic tutors within the athletic department itself might also increase students' willingness to seek assistance when needed.



- 2) For some sport teams, a “study hall” or designated time built into their schedules as outlined by the team will also be helpful. This scheduled time can become a part of the student-athletes routine.
- 3) Coaches can check in periodically with their athletes, particularly during mid-semester, to see how they are doing academically and advise them on how to make necessary adjustments when needed.
- 4) Open communication between the athletic department and university professors can also be helpful. Understanding policies regarding missing classes, making up assignments and tests, and clarifying the academic responsibilities of the student athlete will be important.

### *Pressure to Win*

Pressure to win can come from many sources and be experienced to different extents. Some student athletes feel pressure from their coaches, parents, friends, student body, athletic department, and of course, themselves. Regardless of the source, student athletes strive to win their match, game, or round and often experience disappointment when losing. Majority of the student athletes surveyed as part of this dissertation viewed pressure to win as moderately stressful. When looking at male versus female student athletes, 91% of female athletes reported stress associated with the pressure to win compared to 79% of male athletes. A larger number of female student athletes rated pressure to win in the moderately stressful range indicating that this stressor may be perceived as more stressful for female athletes when compared to male athletes. When looking at year in college, sophomore participants gave the highest stress rating with 43%

providing an extremely stressful rating. A possible explanation for this finding is the increased expectation of improvement regarding performance and skill that often occurs from freshman to sophomore year. Seniors also provided a slightly higher stress rating related to feeling pressure to win. Seniors often take on a leadership role along with increased team responsibility. Wanting to do well during their final season to win during their final season of sport participation may also account for this elevated stress rating. Finally, certain sport teams endorsed a higher stress rating associated with pressure to win, particularly football, soccer, and volleyball. Larger sport teams often bring revenue to the college and university. Additional pressure may be felt by the student athletes, as well as other individuals within the athletic department, to be a winning team. This pressure can impact a student athlete's performance as well as the outcome of a competition. As a result, it is important to look at factors that may decrease the pressure student-athletes can feel.

- 1) Rather than focusing on the outcome of the athletic event, focus should be placed on the process. This includes the student athletes' preparation, following through, and evaluation of his or her performance. Emphasis should be placed on how the student-athletes prepared for the competition which includes physical, fundamental, and mental preparation. The next important component to consider is "competitive follow through". Did the athletes keep their focus and intensity throughout the competition? Did they remain composed and interact effectively with teammates when appropriate? At the conclusion of the competition did the student-athletes accurately evaluate their performance looking beyond the final result and look for areas for continued improvement? By focusing on these

factors, less emphasis will be placed on the final outcome, potentially resulting in less stress related to winning and losing.

- 2) Coaches can play an important role on how student-athletes evaluate their individual performances and the pressure they feel in relation to winning. Just like student-athletes, coaches are concerned about winning. The way they conduct themselves at practices and games sets the tone for the team. By having the coach being more focused on the individual components that make up a winning team, student-athletes will also follow suite. Coaches can create process goals for their teams, evaluating the meeting of these goals throughout the season. Rather than just one goal of winning, student-athletes can experience success as they meet the many goals that make up a successful team.
- 3) For those student athletes who continue to experience a high degree of stress, resources within the college and university should be made available to them so that additional, and more individualized support, can be provided.

### *Being Nervous Before or During Competition*

Being anxious or nervous before or during competition is a common experience for many athletes, particularly before the athletic event begins. “Butterflies in your stomach”, sweaty hands, increased heartbeat, shaking, or feeling weak are some of the feelings student-athletes can experience when involved in competition. For some, this is a natural and expected aspect of sport and competition. For others, the nervousness associated with competition can be more significant and can impact an athlete’s performance. Of the student-athletes who completed this independent survey, over 83%

rated being nervous before or during competition as stressful. Approximately, 38% rated this stressor in the moderate range and 26% provided an extremely stressful rating.

Slightly more female student-athletes rated being nervous before or during competition as being stressful and gave a higher stress rating compared to male student-athletes.

Interestingly, juniors reported the highest stress rating followed by seniors, sophomores, and freshman, indicating that the nervousness associated with athletic competition does not decrease over time, but instead may increase for some student-athletes. Also of note, student athletes involved in more individualized sports such as fencing, cross country, and track and field provided a higher stress rating regarding the nervousness they experience before and during competition. As a result the following should be considered.

- 1) While nervousness associated with competition can be positive and serve as a way to “psych up” some athletes, it can also hinder or negatively impact others performance. Regardless of whether the impact is positive or negative, it would be beneficial for each team and/or athlete to have established pre-competition routines. These routines will become automatic and help student-athletes focus on the upcoming competition while helping to manage some of the pre-game emotion. Making components of practice be as similar to game time situations as possible may also help with managing emotions.
- 2) Seminars or team meetings regarding the use of relaxation techniques, or strategies to help with “keeping your composure” can be arranged through the athletic department or through individual teams. Practicing techniques, or

suggestions, that individual student-athletes feel works for them will be important and should be encouraged at both the team and organization levels.

- 3) Consultation with a sport psychologist may also be considered. Sport psychologists can work with individual teams and/or student-athletes to help them with various aspects of sport and competition, including managing their emotions.
- 4) Making athletes aware of the resources within the college setting, including the counseling center will also be important for student athletes who need additional support.

### *Getting Enough Playing Time*

Many student-athletes get up early for practice, stay late to work on improving skills, review game plans, weight train and exercise, and balance the demands of being a student and athlete so that they can play and compete “when it counts” on game day. Most student-athletes would like to play every minute of the competition. Particularly at the collegiate level, where competition is high, the role of the athlete and the minutes played per game are often decreased compared to high school sports. When student athletes are taken out of a game or not given the opportunity to play for a substantial period of time, student athletes can view this lack of playing time as stressful. When looking at the results from the survey conducted as part of this dissertation, approximately 64% of the participants viewed not getting enough playing time as being stressful. A variety of ratings were provided with some student athletes seeing this as extremely stressful for them while most seeing this as only somewhat stressful. Of note, sophomore student athletes rated this stressor considerably higher than freshman, junior, and senior

participants. Approximately 89% of sophomore student-athletes rated getting enough playing time as being stressful, with 34% giving an extremely stressful rating. Increased expectations from freshman to sophomore year may account for some of this stress.

Freshman athletes often expect to receive minimal playing time as they continue to improve their skills and become familiar with the coach and other team members.

However, many expect that the following season will be met with an increase in their role on the team. When this is not achieved, or not achieved to the extent that is consistent with a student-athlete's beliefs, frustration and stress related to playing time can occur.

Team sports, such as baseball, softball, volleyball, and lacrosse as opposed to more individualized sports such as tennis or cross country rated getting enough playing time as being more stressful. Team oriented sports often have larger rosters, multiple student-athletes vying for the same position, and there is often an increased level of competition among these athletes. As a result, student-athletes may be more concerned with their role and the amount of playing time that they are allotted. The following recommendations should be considered:

- 1) While student-athletes will continue to want to be a more integral part of the team and play as much as possible, coaches can help student athletes cope with limited playing time by being open about their expectations for each player and the role they see them playing on the team. A conversation with each student-athlete that includes what the coaches' expectations are for him or her, the specific role that they play on the team, and areas that continue to need improvement and should be worked on in practice would be beneficial. If student-athletes are given the knowledge of what exactly they need to improve upon and can work toward this

improvement, the possibility of additional playing time may increase. Also, by specifying the role of the student-athlete on the team, any inconsistencies between the athletes' views and the coaches' views can be discussed and worked through.

- 2) Coaches and assistant coaches who are apart of larger teams, may need to pay particular attention to the student-athletes on their team, how the athletes are being utilized, and how they respond when they are not involved in the competition. Keeping athletes motivated and focused on the competition will benefit the athlete as well as the team.
- 3) Particular attention should be paid to sophomore student athletes, who often have increased expectations from the prior year. Athletes' roles on the team should be outlined by staff, again with suggestions on areas to improve, particularly if playing time does not increase significantly.

### *Relationship with Coach*

Each student-athlete's relationship with their coach will be different or viewed differently by athletes. Some coaches are better at communicating their desires for the team, their expectations, and the goals that they want to accomplish during the season. Some coaches develop supporting relationships with their student-athletes and serve as mentors. Other coaches are more distant or have a different style of communication which student-athletes will need to adjust to over time. Whatever the relationship, student-athletes report being concerned about the relationship they have with their coach and are aware of how the coach relates to others. Some are content with their interaction

with their coach, for others, this relationship can be stressful and impact an athletes performance.

For the student-athletes surveyed as part of this dissertation, approximately 65% rated their relationship with their coach as being stressful. A variety of stress ratings were provided, with many student-athletes giving this stressor a lower rating, indicating that while it may be stressful it is not a major concern for them. When looking at male and female student athletes, approximately 55% of male athletes viewed their relationship with their coach as stressful while 74% of female athletes viewed this relationship as stressful. In general, females tend to put more emphasis on their relationships with others which may account for some of this difference. When looking at year in college, a larger number of sophomore and senior student-athletes rated this relationship as being stressful compared to freshman and junior athletes. Sophomores increased expectations from freshman to sophomore year and their developing relationship with their coach may account for some of the stress they experience. Senior student-athletes often have had the longest relationship with their coaches which will be ending at the conclusion of the season. Their changing role on the team, often as leaders, and the knowledge of this being their final season may impact their relationship with their coach. Based on these findings, the following should be considered:

- 1) It is important for athletic departments to be aware of how relationships with coaches can impact student-athlete performances as well as their willingness to participate and be a member of the team. Being a good coach takes skill related to particular sport knowledge as well as leadership and communication skills. It would be beneficial for athletic directors and staff to be involved in their sport



teams, monitor coaching styles, and offer support and development opportunities when appropriate.

- 2) Coaches and staff who are involved in women's sports should be aware of the focus and stress associated with female athletes' relationship with their coach. Developing different ways to communicate with various student-athletes would be important. Some athletes, regardless of being female or male, prefer a strict and structured approach, while others may need more regular reassurance and feedback on their performance. Understanding what student-athletes need will be important for all coaches and staff in order to maximize performance.
- 3) The changing relationship of the coach with his or her players should also be recognized. Student athletes' expectations and focus as they go through their collegiate and athletic career change. Recognizing the changes in student-athletes, particularly during sophomore and senior years, and acknowledging the different stages of their athletic career and their expectations may serve to help support the student-athlete and aid in the coach-athlete relationship.
- 4) Finally, assessing student-athletes views of their relationship with their coach and his or her coaching style should be considered. For some sport teams, this relationship may be more conflictual than others and may need to be addressed at the team level. Providing a brief and anonymous survey or evaluation at the organization level may serve to highlight areas or teams that may be in need of additional support.

### *Less Frequently Endorsed Stressors*

The following 5 stressors were rated as being stressful by over half of the participants who completed the survey. While majority indicated that these items were stressful, the stress ratings were variable with a large number of the student-athletes providing a lower rating. One such stressor was *Lack of Control over Schedule*. While this stressor may be similar to balancing sport and academic demands, it is more focused on the schedule student-athletes must follow and the lack of flexibility often associated with the demands of being on a sport team. Approximately 60% of the student-athletes surveyed indicated that the lack of control over their schedule was stressful, although many rated this stressor as a 1 or a 2 indicating that it is only somewhat stressful for them. While the schedule in place may seem stressful at times, it does not appear to be a major concern. Significant differences were not found based on gender or year in college. Of note, although a variety of stress ratings were provided, a larger number of sophomore and junior student-athletes rated this item a 3 indicating that it is moderately stressful for them. When looking at individual sport teams, more basketball, cross country, and football student-athletes view the lack of control over their schedule as moderately stressful while lacrosse and volleyball players view this as extremely stressful. As a result of these findings that following is recommended.

- 1) Since there is significant variability in the way student-athletes view the lack of control over their schedule, it may be difficult and/or unnecessary to address this stressor at the team or organizational level. It will be important however, at the start of the season, to provide the support resources for student-athletes within the college community so that student-athletes who need assistance can access the

services available to them. This will help ensure that student-athletes have the knowledge of where to turn to if the need arises.

- 2) It is interesting that sophomore and junior student-athletes view the lack of control over their schedule as more stressful than freshman and senior athletes. This may have to do with increased responsibility in regards to their role on the team or increased interest in areas outside of sport which may highlight the demands of their schedule. Despite the increased perception of stress associated with their schedule, many student-athletes do not view this as extremely stressful.
- 3) For the individual sport teams highlighted, such as football and lacrosse, it may be beneficial to look at each teams' schedule. What is significantly different from other sport teams? Does this sport require practice and a demanding schedule throughout the year or just during the main season? Is there a particular aspect of the schedule that can be modified or changed? Also, consulting with athletes to see what specifically is stressful can be beneficial.

Another item which was rated as stressful by over half of the student-athletes who completed this survey is *Missing Classes Because of Travel*. This again taps the multiple demands placed on student-athletes and one of the effects of their involvement in collegiate sports. While missing classes is stressful for a number of student-athletes, it is not as stressful as the previous stressors presented. While more female student-athletes rated missing classes because of travel as stressful when compared to male athletes, majority indicated that it was only somewhat stressful for them. A variety of ratings were found across year in college, with no particular year seeing this as a significant stressor.

When looking at individual sports, student-athletes on the golf team found that missing classes because of travel was more distressing for them. Cross country and volleyball also had a larger number of student-athletes indicate that this was moderately stressful. As a result of these findings it may be helpful to:

- 1) Look at sport teams that endorse a higher stress rating as it relates to missing classes because of travel. Are these schedules significantly different from other teams? Do the missed classes occur at an important time during the academic semester (ex. exam time)? By answering some of these questions, greater information can be obtained regarding stress as it pertains to particular sport teams.
- 2) Additional questions to consider are: How many classes do the student-athletes miss? What is the protocol regarding missed classes? How does the college or university view and handle missed classes due to athletic commitments? How do particular professors react to student-athletes who miss classes? Is there a school-wide protocol or does each professor have the discretion to handle missed classes and assignments as he or she sees fit? If a school-wide policy or statement does not exist, it may be beneficial to work with a committee to create a clear statement regarding how this should be handled by the student-athletes, professors, and athletic department. The defining of clear expectations for all parties may decrease the stress student-athletes experience.

*Finances* are another area that over half of the student-athlete's who completed a survey perceived as being stressful. A wide variety of ratings were received for this

stressor, which is more heavily determined by family economic situation and support. Looking at the results of the survey, there was no difference in stress ratings based on gender or sport played. However, a larger number of senior student-athletes reported finances as being a stressor for them. The finishing up of their collegiate career and the increase focus on post college plans may contribute to this finding. While it is difficult to address the financial pressures student-athletes experience, the following may be helpful:

- 1) Making student-athletes aware of scholarship opportunities when they become available.
- 2) Being cognizant of practice times and the sudden change of schedules which can make having a job and working more challenging for student-athletes.
- 3) Collaborating with the career or academic support center regarding resources and opportunities that may be available for student-athletes, particularly for senior athletes.

Finally, *Not Enjoying Competition as Much as Before* was rated as stressful by a little over half of the student-athletes surveyed. Again, a variety of ratings were provided, with a large number endorsing a lower stress rating. There were no significant findings based on gender, year in college, or sport played. For those student-athletes who experience a decline in their enjoyment of sport and, as a result, stress associated with this decline, the following may be beneficial:

- 1) Making student-athletes aware of the resources within the college or university counseling department to talk about their involvement and feelings regarding their sport and participation. Having someone to talk to outside of the athletic

department who can be less biased or invested in an athlete's decision whether to continue playing a sport, can be helpful.

- 2) Coaches and support staff should be aware that student-athletes interest and commitment to sport can change throughout their collegiate career.

Acknowledging these changes and having an open dialogue with athletes when appropriate will be important.

- 3) Encouraging teammates to be a source of support when appropriate should also be considered.

#### *Additional Stressors*

In addition to the 15 stressors included in the independent survey, an open-ended question elicited additional stressors student-athlete's experience. One such stressor was *Not Getting Enough Sleep*. Student-athletes reported having difficulty finding enough time in their schedule to get the rest they need. This can have an impact on performance both on and off the field as well as in the classroom. While it is difficult to address the hours of sleep a student-athlete receives at the organization or team level, it is important to be aware of how challenging demands and schedules can take a toll on student-athletes. Additional time spent addressing athlete's schedules and how they are managing these demands may provide the student-athletes with the support they need.

Similar to balancing sport and academic demands, student-athletes find *Balancing Other Activities* along with sport and academics to be challenging. For example, maintaining a job or participating in a club or organization further adds to the responsibilities and demands placed upon them. Understanding that student-athletes have

other commitments outside of sport and how these demands may impact performance will be important. Time management skills that can be taught through the athletic department or at the team level will help athletes manage the various demands and commitments they encounter.

The *Physical Demands* placed upon them by their sport was also reported as stressful by multiple athletes, particularly increasing one's fitness level through lifting and conditioning. For a few student-athletes, lifting and its impact on their body image was stressful. This may be particularly stressful for female athletes, who have reported wanting to balance being fit without becoming too muscular. Education about fitness, lifting, and conditioning, particularly as it pertains to each sport and its effects on the body, can be beneficial. This may help relieve some of an athlete's stress and anxiety related to body image and appearance.

Stress related to relationships with others, including *Getting Along With Teammates* was reported. Worrying about relationships with upperclassmen as well as getting along with teammates with varying personalities can be stressful. Coaches and support staff are in a position to monitor the relationships among teammates. They can also help set the tone for the team including, to some extent, how teammates interact with each other while with the team. Spending time fostering the team's culture, including the way competition is perceived within the team, and the role of upperclassmen as mentors can help improve team performance as well as potentially limit the stress experienced by student-athletes.

Although the *Relationship with the Coach* was a stressor included in the survey, several student-athletes commented on this stressor in the open-ended response question.

Emphasis was placed on the relationship certain athletes have with coaches, including favoring or not favoring a player. *Meeting Coaches' Expectations* is also stressful for some athletes. Coaching style, and the inability of some coaches to adapt their style or skill to meet the needs of different student-athletes, was also reported as stressful. A coach can be instrumental in a student-athletes growth and can have a large impact on the experience an athlete has in college. Having workshops and meetings for coaches to discuss and improve their own skills, as it relates to their sport and their communication with players, can be beneficial to both coaches and athletes.

Finally, the *Relationship with Professors* was cited as being stressful by multiple student-athletes. Specifically, professors' negative response to missed classes as a result of sport participation was cited as stressful. Some student-athletes believe that although these absences are beyond their control, professors are not understanding of their situation. Some also feel that they have less of their professor's respect compared to other students. Communication between the athletic department and various academic departments prior to the start of the year regarding scheduling and the impact athlete's participation in sport will have on academics may be helpful. Encouraging student-athletes to speak with professors at the beginning of each semester about the classes that will be missed and what, if anything, can be done in advance is a proactive approach that may impact the way some professors view their absence. This may lessen the stress student-athletes experience and improve the professor-student relationship.



## Coping

As a result of the numerous stressors student-athletes experience, it is important to also examine the preferred coping mechanisms they use to manage these stressors. Coping is often defined as constantly changing efforts to manage specific external and/or internal demands that are appraised as taxing or exceeding the resources of a person. Coping skills, as it pertains to this study, include any activities that a student-athlete engages in when feeling stressed, frustrated, or overwhelmed in order to help relieve some of this stress. Eleven coping skills were included as part of a survey distributed to student-athletes. These coping skills include: Focusing Efforts on a Solution, Spending Time with Friends, Taking a Break, Exercising, Relaxation Techniques, Asking Friends/Family for Advice, Keeping Feelings to Self, Refusing/Avoiding Thinking about Stressor, Doing Things for Others, Eating, and Drinking. There were four coping skills that were reported as being used by a large number of the student-athletes; Spending Time with Friends, Taking a Break, Exercise, and Asking Friends/Family for Advice. These coping skills will be presented first, followed by the remaining coping mechanisms according to their frequency of use.

### Problem-focused verse Emotion-focused Coping

The coping skills identified and included as part of this independent survey include both problem-focused and emotion-focused coping skills. Problem-focused coping is directed at managing or altering problems causing distress. This is often used when conditions are appraised as amenable to change. Problem-solving skills, which include the ability to analyze a situation in order to identify the problem and generate courses of action, weigh the alternatives with respect to outcomes, and select and

implement an appropriate plan of action, are important. Emotion-focused coping is directed at regulating the emotional response to the problem. Emotion-focused forms of coping are more likely to occur when a person appraises that nothing can be done to modify harmful or challenging environmental conditions. One form is focused on cognitive processes directed at lessening emotional distress through the use of strategies such as avoidance, minimization, selective attention, and making positive comparisons (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984; Holt & Hogg, 2002). In addition, individuals may change the way an encounter is viewed by changing the meaning of the situation. For example, 'Nothing really happens at the beginning of the game. It's better to come off the bench.' Behavioral strategies are also used such as engaging in exercise, meditating, having a drink, venting anger, and seeking emotional support (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984).

The ways in which people cope also depend on the resources that are available to them and the constraints that inhibit the use of these resources. Viewing oneself positively is regarded as an important psychological resource for coping. Hope can be encouraged by the generalized belief that outcomes are controllable, that one has the power to affect such outcomes, and that a positive outcome seems possible, if not probable. Social skills, the ability to communicate with others in ways that are socially appropriate and effective, is also a coping resource. Social skills facilitate problem-solving and increases the ability to turn to others for support. In addition to these approaches specific strategies such as relaxation techniques, use of imagery, and behavior modification have been recommended to help manage stress and increase an individual's overall well-being.

The following section will discuss the findings of the independent survey and will offer a brief description of each coping mechanism.

### *Spending Time with Friends*

Student-athletes, across gender, year in college, and sport played report that spending time with friends is a coping mechanism they frequently use to manage student-athlete related stress. This coping mechanism, while generally stated, focuses mostly on the use of social support. Friends can serve as a distraction and can help you forget about various demands and stressors. Friends can also be a good sounding board to vent frustrations or to make you laugh when needed. They can help you problem-solve, offer advice or encouragement, or help you redirect your energy on what is important. These friends can be fellow teammates, friends outside of sport, or long time friends outside of college.

Student-athletes can identify with peers, share in some of the similar stressors they experience, and learn from how friends have handled similar situations. In this way, they use this as a problem-solving coping mechanism. Spending time with friends can also include just enjoying their friends company, putting expectations and responsibilities aside for a period of time. This is utilizing a more emotion-focused coping skill.

Regardless of its use, a number of participants completing the survey utilize this approach to manage their role as a student and athlete.

### *Taking a Break*

Taking a break is another coping mechanism frequently used by student-athletes. Taking a short break from sports related activities and academic responsibilities can be a

welcomed escape. It can give student-athletes time for themselves to take “a deep breath”. Since this coping skill involves escaping or avoiding stressors, this would be considered an emotion-focused coping mechanism. In this manner, it provides temporary relief, but usually does not lead to change or improvement of a situation. However, this temporary relief serves as a reprieve and may enable student-athletes to refocus on the tasks and demands at hand and problem-solve strategies to decrease the stress they experience.

### *Exercise*

Exercising, or engaging in a physical activity in order to reduce stress, is another frequently occurring coping mechanism used by student-athletes. Exercising can include walking, running, lifting weights, riding a bike, and playing another sport, among many others. Exercising is often described as an outlet to relieve stress and emotions. For many, exercising and engaging in physical activities allows time to reflect and problem-solve. It can also be an outlet to relieve frustration or to clear one’s mind. This is also considered an emotion-focused coping mechanism as well as a behavioral strategy used to help regulate an individual’s response to a problem or stressor that they experience and can be very effective.

### *Asking Friends/Family for Advice*

Student-athletes also appear to frequently employ the coping mechanism of seeking out advice from family and friends. A student-athlete may seek guidance and support from family members in regards to several stressors identified through the independent survey.

For example, they may consult family members regarding how to manage feelings associated with not meeting their own expectations or how to more effectively balance sport and academic demands. Student-athletes may also seek advice from friends who are familiar with some of the same pressures and stressors they face. For example, they can turn to friends for support regarding academic work and grades and how to navigate their relationship with coaches and teammates. Asking advice from family and friends is considered a problem-focused coping mechanism. This strategy involves a means of reducing stress by actively seeking possible solutions to help manage their role as a student and athlete.

### *Relaxation Techniques*

Although endorsed by only 35% of the student-athletes who completed this survey, relaxation techniques can be a valuable coping skill to use to manage a variety of stressors. Relaxation techniques can include activities such as deep breathing, progressive muscle relaxation, and imagery and can be useful in helping to manage emotions and stress. These techniques can be particularly helpful when dealing with anxiety and nervousness both before and during competition. It is somewhat surprising that more student-athletes did not endorse using this coping strategy. One possible explanation is that athletes use these techniques automatically when involved in sports without viewing this as a coping mechanism. If student-athletes are not utilizing relaxation techniques, this can be a coping mechanism to expose athletes to at an organization or team level, including its use and possible benefits as it relates to managing emotion and stress.

### *Eating*

A number of people of all ages report eating, or a lack there of, in response to stress. Particularly when a stressor appears overwhelming, individuals can feel a sense of control over what they do or do not eat. While some view eating as a response to stress, others see it as a way of coping with the stressors they experience. For a large number of the student-athletes surveyed, eating was not viewed as a coping mechanism. However, 34% did endorse eating as a coping skill they use. This strategy was used by more female student-athletes (41%) when compared to male student-athletes (26%). The extent to which the athletes use eating to cope was not obtained through this survey distribution. It would, however, be useful to know how often they use this strategy and how effective they believe it is for them. This is considered an emotion-focused coping mechanism that does not seek to improve the situation, but may provide temporary relief from the stress experienced by the student-athlete. The extent to which this coping mechanism is used should be monitored and additional strategies put in place as needed.

### *Focus Efforts on a Solution*

Surprisingly, focusing efforts on a solution or problem-solving was not frequently reported as a coping mechanism used to manage stress by participants who completed this survey. Problem-solving involves analyzing and defining a problem or stressor, considering various alternatives, and then implementing an appropriate plan of action. Student-athletes can use this coping skill for a variety of stressors including managing their schedule, balancing the multiple academic and athletic demands they face, and navigating relationships with teammates and coaches. One possible explanation for a

smaller number of student-athletes endorsing this coping strategy may be the feeling that their situation or stressor is not controllable and can not be changed. In this case, more effort would be placed on managing their emotions associated with the stressors rather than trying to find a solution or change. Of note, sophomore student-athletes who completed the survey reportedly use this coping skill less often than their peers.

Providing a seminar during student-athletes freshman or sophomore year on problem-solving and ways to help manage stress may be beneficial.

### *Keeping Feelings to Self*

When some individuals become stressed or overwhelmed, rather than turning to others, they prefer to be alone or to keep their feelings to themselves. Regardless of the stress they experience, some individuals appear to be unaffected or to be handling the demands placed upon them very well. While this may be the case for some student-athletes, others may be feeling the affects of stress and not utilizing available supports or coping mechanisms that can help alleviate some of this stress. When looking at the student-athletes who endorsed keeping feelings to self as a coping strategy, more male participants (37%) than female participants (23%) endorsed this as a coping skill they utilize. In sport, athletes who complain or seek support can be viewed as being “weak”. It is important that student-athletes realize that using additional coping strategies to manage stress is not a sign of weaknesses, but rather a strength in that they utilize various supports which may enable them to become a better student and athlete.

### *Refuse/Avoid Thinking About Stressor*

Although endorsed by only 25% of the student-athletes who participated in this study, some try to avoid thinking about the stressor or stressors they are experiencing.

This would be considered an emotion-focused coping mechanism, as it does not permit the solution of a problem or stressor and is based on the individual's emotions.

Avoidance of thinking about what is stressful may provide temporary relief or add to the stress a person is experiencing. A student-athlete who uses this coping strategy will still have to meet the same academic and athletic demands and will continue to have the same pressures to deal with after having used this skill. While this strategy can be helpful, for example, blocking out a stressor during a competition, this coping skill should be paired with more proactive coping mechanisms in order to help manage the stress that is experienced.

### *Doing Things for Others*

Focusing time and energy on something outside of sport and academics can be beneficial for some individuals. Doing things for others, whether it be volunteering at a church or campus organization, helping a friend, or becoming a mentor can also be considered a coping mechanism. Focus can be taken off of the stress a student-athlete experiences and on to something or someone else. While this can serve as an effective coping mechanism for some, it can also work in the opposite way for others. Adding another commitment to a student-athletes busy schedule might add to the stress they are experiencing. Considering that a small number of student-athletes endorsed using this strategy, the extensive time demands and commitments of participating in collegiate



sports might minimize the time they have for other commitments and make this coping skill less effective.

### *Drinking*

Drinking was the coping mechanism endorsed by student-athletes the least. This finding was somewhat surprising given the high frequency of drinking reported by student-athletes in previous studies. One possible explanation is that student-athletes do not perceive drinking to be a coping mechanism. They do not drink in response to being stressed, but rather see drinking as a social part of their college experience. For those individuals who did endorse drinking, this is considered an emotion-focused coping skill. Again, potentially providing temporary emotional relief from the stressor but not effectively coping with the stressors at hand. The use of drinking in response to stress may also lead to additional problems and stressors for the student-athlete and should be discouraged.

### *Additional Coping Mechanisms*

In addition to the 11 coping strategies included in the independent survey, additional techniques utilized to help manage stress were elicited. These strategies include: *Sleeping, Napping, or Relaxing; Listening to Music; Watching TV or Movies; Playing Videogames;* and the use of *Yoga/Meditation*. These techniques can serve as a break or distraction from the demands placed upon student-athletes. They can also provide temporary relief from the stress they experience. More active strategies reported include: *Using Time Management/Planning Skills, Getting a Job, and Having Friends Outside of Teammates*. One student-athlete also reported turning to *God and Religion* to

help manage the demands she experiences as a student-athlete. All of these techniques can be useful. Having student-athletes share the strategies they use to cope with stress may help others who are looking for additional suggestions to help them manage their role as both a student and athlete.

### Summary

The guidelines presented were designed to provide athletic departments and related personnel working with collegiate student-athletes information regarding the stressors athletes experience and the coping mechanisms they use to manage their role as a student and athlete. This information is applicable to anyone involved with or exposed to collegiate student-athletes, including athletic directors, coaches, trainers, athletes, sport psychologists, school counselors, as well as professors. These guidelines serve as a way to provide knowledge of their unique needs and pressures in the hopes that additional supports and programs will be put into place to help them manage their role as a student and athlete.

Maher's (1996) *Resource Guide for Planning and Evaluating Human Services Programs* was used as a framework, or set of skills, for designing these guidelines. This process allows for the collection of important information which informs athletic departments and related services personnel about factors that can have an impact on student-athletes. In order to obtain this information, an independent survey was designed. Of the 15 stressors presented, 12 were endorsed as being stressful by over half of the respondents. Not Meeting Own Expectations, Balancing Sport and Academic Demands, Grades, Pressure to Win, and Being Nervous Before or During Competition are all particularly stressful athletes. While Relationship with Coach, Getting Enough Playing

Time, Lack of Control over Schedule, Social Life, Missing Class Because of Travel, Finances, and Not Enjoying Competition as Much as Before are also stressful, they have less of a perceived effect on student-athletes.

As a result of the numerous stressors student-athletes experience, it is important to examine the preferred coping mechanisms used to manage these stressors. Coping skills, as it pertains to this study, include any activities that a student-athlete engages in when feeling stressed, frustrated, or overwhelmed in order to help relieve some of this stress. Both problem-focused coping, directed at managing or altering a situation, and emotion-focused coping, directed at regulating the emotional response to the problem, are utilized by student-athletes. The most common coping skills include: Spending Time with Friends, Taking a Break, Exercising, and Asking Friends/Family for Advice. This information serves to increase the understanding of stress student-athletes experience, and the coping strategies they use, in an effort to help athletic departments develop additional supports or programs to meet the needs of their collegiate athletes.

## CHAPTER VI

### CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

#### Abstract

The following chapter presents the findings and conclusions that were drawn from this survey research. First, the numerous survey items endorsed as stressful by participants are presented with specific focus placed on the five stressors student-athletes indicated as being the most stressful for them (Not Meeting Expectations, Grades, Balancing Sport and Academic Demands, Pressure to Win, and Being Nervous Before or During Competition). The coping mechanisms used to manage these stressors are then discussed. Findings related to the similarities and differences that exist based on gender, year in college, and sport played are then summarized. Additional stressors and coping mechanisms not included in the survey but reported by student-athletes are presented. The implications of this research that specifically pertain to athletic department staff, coaches, psychologists, and student-athlete's are discussed. While this study yielded useful information, limitations related to the survey instrument and data collection are present and need to be considered. Finally, recommendations for further research and study are presented.

## Conclusions

Researchers have highlighted the dual-role of student and athlete and the challenges related to meeting the academic demands of their institution as well as the practice and performance demands of their sport teams. As a result, researchers have called for the continued study of stress and coping with various athletes using a variety of methodological approaches. Information regarding the degree to which student-athlete demands are stressful, the ways in which student athletes cope with these stressors, and their views on receiving support in managing their role as a student-athlete has been needed. In an effort to collect this information, a survey was created by the author to examine collegiate student-athletes perceptions of the stress they experience as a result of the academic and athletic demands placed upon them. This survey was distributed electronically to 550 student-athletes enrolled at a Division-1 college in Pennsylvania with data being collected and used from 231 participants. The participants were asked to indicate whether or not they view the following 15 items as stressful and how distressing each item was using a scaled from 0 (Not at all) to 6 (Extremely): Making the team, Getting enough playing time, Pressure to win, Not meeting own expectations, Not meeting parents' expectations, Relationship with coach, Finances, Being nervous before or during competition, Balancing sport and academic demands, Missing classes because of travel, Grades, Not enjoying competition as much as before, Lack of control over schedule, Perceptions of others- stereotypes, and Social Life. Participants were also asked to indicate which coping strategies they use to help manage these stressors. The opportunity to provide additional information regarding stress and coping not identified by the survey was given through open-ended questions.

Survey responses yielded several interesting findings and conclusions. One such finding was the large number of survey items endorsed as being stressful by participants. Out of the fifteen stressors included in the survey, twelve were rated as stressful by more than half of the participants. Many of these stressors received a stress rating of 1 or 2 indicating that these items were only somewhat stressful for them. However, there were 5 items that majority of student-athletes endorsed as being moderately to extremely stressful. They were: *Not Meeting Own Expectations, Grades, Balancing Sport and Academic Demands, Pressure to Win, and Being Nervous Before or During Competition*. As a result of the higher stress ratings, these stressors can have a significant affect on student-athletes experience, performance, and potential overall health and should be further investigated.

In order to help manage these stressors, student-athletes reportedly *Spend Time with Friends, Take a Break, Exercise, and/or Ask Friends and Family for Advice* utilizing both problem-focused and emotion-focused coping skills. Problem-focused coping skills such as spending time with friends and asking friends and family for advice aim to manage or alter problems that cause distress. The utilization of friends and family can help student-athletes identify problems and generate plans or courses of action in order to effectively deal with the stressors related to being a student-athlete. Emotion-focused coping skills such as taking a break and exercising can offer a welcomed, although temporary, escape from the stress they experience. It was surprising that more student-athletes did not indicate using coping skills such as *Relaxation Techniques or Focusing Efforts on a Solution*, suggesting that further support in developing additional coping techniques may be needed.

### *Gender*

In order to look at additional findings, data from the survey was separated based on gender to examine whether differences exist between male and female student-athletes. One interesting finding was the larger number of female participants who indicated that their *Relationship with their Coach* was stressful for them. While it is unclear from the data collected exactly why this is the case, female student-athletes may put more emphasis on the coach/athlete relationship or may be more sensitive to coach interaction and feedback. A further look at this relationship is needed. In addition, fewer male student-athletes endorsed *Pressure to Win, Being Nervous Before or During Competition, Missing Classes Because of Travel* and *Not Enjoying Competition as Much as Before* as being stressful for them, indicating that these items may not have as much of an impact on male athletes. The higher stress ratings given by female student-athletes indicate a need to gain further information regarding female athletes' perceptions of the stress they experience and how this may differ from male athletes. It is interesting that while female participants endorsed more items as stressful, they also reported using more coping strategies to manage this stress, particularly *Spending Time with Friends, Taking a Break, Asking Friends and Family for Advice, and Exercise*. Conversely, male student-athletes endorsed *Keeping Feelings to Self* more often than female athletes, indicating a tendency for male athletes not to share the stress they experience with others.

### *Year in College*

In order to examine whether differences exist among student-athletes based on year in college, the data for freshman, sophomore, junior, and senior participants was separated and reviewed which also lead to interesting findings. Of note, regardless of

year in college, over 90% of the student-athletes view *Not Meeting Their Own Expectations* as stressful with many indicating that it is moderately or extremely stressful for them. Therefore, it can be concluded that not meeting expectations is a consistent stressor that student-athletes experience throughout their collegiate career. Strategies to help manage this stressor should therefore target all student-athletes regardless of year in college and may need to be addressed on an annual basis. *Balancing Sport and Academic Demands* is also seen as moderately stressful by senior athletes indicating that this may remain a consistent stressor for student-athletes with additional support being needed.

The results of this survey also suggest that differences exist based on year in college. For example, freshman student-athletes reported more stress related to *Not Meeting their Parent's Expectations*. They may be more concerned about their parent's expectations because of the increased parental involvement associated with high school sports and the new expectations associated with the transition to playing at the collegiate level. Freshman seminars and workshops may benefit from addressing the topic of meeting not only their own, but their families expectations. *Getting Enough Playing Time* was reported as particularly stressful for sophomore athletes. Increased expectations regarding playing time and contribution to the team may account for this finding. Also of note, seniors reported that the *Relationship with their Coach* was moderately stressful for them. This stress rating was unique to seniors and may be a result of coaches' increased expectations for these athletes. At the conclusion of the season, the athletes' relationship with their coach will end which might also contribute to this finding.

When looking at coping strategies based on year in college, freshman athletes endorsed using the fewest coping strategies. Only *Spending Time with Friends* and



*Taking a Break* were reported by over 50% of the freshman athletes. In contrast, a large number of sophomore, junior, and senior student-athletes indicate using *Spending Time with Friends*, *Taking a Break*, as well as *Exercise* and *Asking Friends/Family for Advice*, suggesting an increased use and reliance on coping strategies by older student-athletes.

### *Sports Played*

Finally, data was separated based on sport played in order to look for additional findings. One interesting finding was related to an item that was not reported as being stressful by majority of the student-athletes surveyed. *Making the Team* was surprisingly only stressful for a minority of student-athletes and did not pertain to majority of the sport teams. Golf and tennis, however, two of the coactive teams which emphasize individual performance outcomes had over half of their student-athletes endorse *making the team* as stressful. The smaller number of positions available on these teams may add to the stress these student-athletes experience. Interestingly, *Perceptions of Others*, *Stereotypes* was one stressor reported in the literature as impacting student-athletes which was not found to be the case with majority of the participants in this study. In fact, it was the only stressor that was not rated as being stressful by majority of athletes for all 14 sport teams surveyed.

In contrast, there were certain stressors that were rated as being particularly stressful for specific sport teams. For example, student-athletes involved in cross country, fencing, and track and field indicated that *Being Nervous Before or During Competition* was extremely stressful for them. Both fencing and cross country have only five to six competitions during their season. The limited number of opportunities to perform may contribute to the nervousness reported by these student-athletes. *Relationship with the*

*Coach* received a variety of ratings from not at all to extremely stressful. When looking at the various sport teams, baseball, lacrosse, and volleyball athletes rated this item as particularly stressful for them. It is somewhat surprising that these teams are all interactive teams with emphasis being placed on team performance outcomes as opposed to individual performances. It was assumed by the author that teams with larger rosters would place less emphasis on the athlete/coach relationship. However, the individual personalities and coaching styles of these sport teams may be impacting the stress athletes' experience. Another stressor, *Pressure to Win*, was seen as moderately stressful for majority of the sport teams surveyed and rated as extremely stressful by football, soccer, and volleyball participants. The focus of athletics in college on the sport of football, and a lesser extent soccer, may contribute to the stress these athletes experience. Colleges and universities also profit through ticket sales from the performance of sport teams such as football increasing the stress associated with these sports.

When looking at coping strategies, *Spending Time with Friends*, *Taking a Break*, *Exercising*, and *Asking Friends and Family for Advice* were the four strategies used by student-athletes across a variety of sport teams with a few exceptions. For cross country athletes, exercise was the least used coping strategy. The fitness demands placed on these student-athletes by the nature of their sport probably contributes to this finding. Instead, cross country athletes utilize *spending time with friends* and *asking friends and family for advice* as a way of managing the stress they encounter. *Keeping Feelings to Self* was endorsed as a coping strategy by majority of baseball student-athletes which is a finding unique to this sport. However, these athletes also used *exercising*, *taking a break*, and *spending time with friends* to help manage stress. Another unique finding was seen with

fencing student-athletes. Many of these athletes endorsed using more problem-focused coping techniques such as *Focusing Efforts on a Solution* and using *Relaxation Techniques*. Overall, it was surprising that more participants did not report using these strategies. Fencing athletes may believe that the stress they experience is more within their control to manage and therefore choose more problem-focused approaches.

#### *Additional Coping Strategies and Stressors*

In addition to the coping strategies included in the survey, some participants reported using strategies such as *sleeping, napping, or relaxing*. Others *listen to music, watch TV or a movie, play videogames*, or do some type of *yoga or meditation*. Three participants endorsed using more active techniques such as *getting a job* and *using time management and planning skills*. One participant finds *religion* to be helpful for them. Future research should consider including these coping strategies in a survey or study to determine whether these strategies are frequently used by athletes. Similar to coping strategies, additional stressors that were not included in this study but are relevant for student-athletes was elicited. Stressors that were identified include *Not Getting Enough Sleep or Rest* and *Balancing Other Activities with Sport and Academic Demands* such as a job or participating in a club. The *Physical Demands*, including increasing fitness through lifting and conditioning, was also a reported stressor. The impact of lifting on body image was found to be stressful for some female student-athletes. *Relationships with Others* such as “getting along with upperclassmen and teammates of varying personalities” was another identified stressor. Their *Relationship with Professors*, specifically professors’ negative response to missed classes and student-athletes not

feeling as “respected” by professors as much as other students also affects some athletes. In addition, the stress related to the *Athlete-Coach Relationship* was further described. Examples provided by participants focused on stress associated with meeting their coaches’ expectations, the inability of some coaches to change a particular coaching style to better meet an athletes needs, and reported favoritism by coaches for particular student-athletes. Specific to junior and senior student-athletes, considering *Post College Plans* in addition to other demands is stressful. As a result of these findings, the above stressors should be further explored along with the impact they have on student-athletes.

### *Support Services*

Approximately 34% of the respondents to this survey indicated that they have received some type of support service in order to help manage their role as a student-athlete. This support has included a mandatory freshman student-athlete program which deals with time management, study skills, and note taking; general time management workshops and/or assistance; peer mentoring by upperclassmen; utilization of the academic resource center; and consultation with an academic advisor or coach. Services provided by counselors and psychologists were also reported. Five of the participants indicated working with a sport psychologist. Both individual work and team consultation was reported. Overall, a variety of responses were received regarding the effectiveness of the support student-athletes have received, with some indicating that the support was helpful while others report finding the support less beneficial. Future research should focus on the effectiveness of the support student-athletes receive so that programs and services can be developed to better meet their needs.

## Implications

Information regarding the stress athletes experience and the preferred coping mechanisms they use to manage their role as student and athlete is applicable to anyone working with collegiate student-athletes particularly athletic directors, coaches, sport psychologists, counselors, and athletes themselves. The guidelines and recommendations created as part of this dissertation provide knowledge of student-athletes' unique needs and pressures so that these needs can be addressed at both the organizational and individual level. Knowledge of student-athlete stress as well as recommendations for helping to relieve this stress can be communicated through athletic department trainings, coaches' professional development workshops, future school and clinical psychology programs, and new student-athlete seminars. This will enable those individuals working closest with student-athletes to have a greater understanding of athlete's needs and experiences so that appropriate support can be provided.

### *Athletic Department*

The athletic department at the organizational level can play an important role in helping to address the stressors student-athletes face. Beyond the services that the athletic director, trainers, strength and conditioning coaches, and other support staff provide on a daily basis, additional support targeting identified stressors may have a significant impact on the experience and performance of student-athletes. Therefore, it is recommended that information regarding student-athlete stress and coping mechanisms be communicated to athletic department personnel through staff development workshops, new staff trainings, and/or seminars. Information should focus on stressors relevant to student-athletes, the

physical and psychological consequences of stress, barriers to receiving support, effective coping strategies to help manage stress, and resources within the community to help support athletes.

Balancing sport and academic demands is one stressor that athletes view as being particularly stressful. In order to address this stressor, the athletic department can host seminars or workshops targeting time management strategies and stress management for all student-athletes as this appears to be a stressor that impacts athletes throughout their collegiate career. Seminars focused on the use of relaxation techniques and strategies focused on “keeping your mind in the moment” can also be arranged through the athletic department and would be of great value to student-athletes. The athletic department can also provide information to those psychologists and counselors working at the college counseling center regarding athlete demands, schedules, and requirements so that these professionals can be better prepared to support the student-athletes who utilize this resource. Supplying coaches with stress related information and resources to help support their student-athletes reinforces the importance of meeting the athletes’ needs both on and off the field.

Academically, the athletic department can assist in providing access to academic tutors and encourage academic support services to have flexible hours which may increase students’ willingness to seek assistance when needed. In addition, the athletic department can help address the relationship that exists between some athletes and their professors. Open communication between the athletic department and university professors regarding policies pertaining to missing classes, making up assignments and tests, and clarifying the academic and athletic responsibilities of the student-athlete can

potentially reduce the stress related to missing classes and improve the professor/student relationship. It is also important to be aware of how relationships with coaches impact student-athlete performance. Athletic directors and staff can become involved with their sport teams, monitor coaching styles, and offer support and development opportunities when appropriate. Providing a brief and anonymous survey or evaluation at the organizational level may serve to further highlight areas or specific sport teams that may be in need of additional support.

### *Coaches*

Coaches play an important role in developing and fostering student-athlete athletic abilities. Based on the relationships they form through sport, coaches often serve as a support to athletes when they are faced with academic, performance, and emotional concerns. As a result, it is important for coaches to be aware of the stressors student-athletes face as well as what they can do to help reduce this stress. Information regarding student-athlete stress can be disseminated to coaches through professional development workshops initiated by the athletic department or through coaches training and education programs. Similar to information provided to athletic department staff, knowledge regarding student-athlete stressors, the physical and psychological consequences of stress, effective coping strategies to help manage stress, resources within the community to help support student-athletes, as well as recommendations of specific ways coaches can help athletes manage their role as student and athlete should be communicated.

One of the most significant stressors found through this dissertation was *Not Meeting Own Expectations* which highlights a need that is currently not being met.

Coaches can play an integral role in helping student-athletes develop realistic expectations through the creation of specific and measurable short term goals. Coaches can meet with athletes at the beginning of the season to assess each athlete's personal expectations. Creating short term goals that are measured and monitored can allow student-athletes to focus on meeting these goals while realizing success and progress along the way. Particular attention should be given to sophomore and senior student-athletes who often have increased expectations from the previous year such as increased playing time and an improvement in performance. Coaches can speak directly with the student-athlete explaining their own expectations for the individual, their role on the team as they see it, and recommendations regarding what they can do to improve. Student-athletes, particularly male athletes, experience significant stress associated with balancing their sport and academic demands. Coaches can be a support to these athletes simply by checking in with them periodically throughout the season to see how they are managing these demands. Implementing designated times for studying, similar to a study hall, may help student-athletes meet academic demands as well as encourage peer tutoring. Monitoring and altering practice times, particularly around exam time, can also potentially decrease stress.

Many student-athletes feel pressure to win. Rather than focusing on the outcome of an athletic event, attention should be placed on the process. Coaches can play an integral part in shifting athletes' focus from winning and losing to how well the athlete prepared, followed through, and then evaluated his or her own performance. Focusing on the process and the individual components that make up a winning team, through individual and team goals, rather than just the outcome of winning or losing can help



athletes experience success as they meet these goals throughout the season. Coaches also need to be aware of their relationship with athletes. Female athletes, particularly, report experiencing stress related to athlete-coach relationships. Developing different ways to communicate with various student-athletes, including offering more structure, support, or reassurance as needed, will help maximize athlete performance. Coaches often set the tone for the team and can have an impact on how teammates get along. Coaches should spend time fostering the team's culture, for example, the way competition is perceived among team member as well as the role of upperclassmen as potential mentors to younger athletes.

The physical demand placed upon athletes by their sport is another reported stressor. For some student-athletes, particularly female athletes, lifting and its impact on their body image can be distressing. Coaches, along with athletic trainers and strength and conditioning coaches, can provide education and information about fitness and conditioning which may help relieve stress related to body image. Since coaches have many responsibilities and can be instrumental in a student-athletes growth and collegiate experience, support and assistance should also be provided to them. This can occur in the form of a workshop or coaches seminar with the focus being on improving their own skills as it relates to their sport, coaching style, and their communication with players that will be both beneficial to the coaches as well as the athletes with which they work.

### *Psychologists and Counselors*

College and university counseling centers can be a valuable resource for students who seek support in dealing with a variety of issues. While this resource is available to

all, many athletes underutilize counseling and support services. Athletes report not using these services for several reasons, including the perception of others that it is a “sign of weakness”. However, psychologists and counselors can be integral in offering individualized support to deal with specific stressors student-athletes face. In order to serve this population, psychologists and counselors will need to describe the various services they provide as well as how these services apply to student-athletes. An important step in this process will be consultation with the athletic department regarding the needs of the student-athletes as well as how these needs can be met through counseling services. Obtaining the support of the athletic department will be important in fostering a climate that is more accepting of sport psychology and counseling services. Offering office times and locations that are more accessible to student-athletes, perhaps within the athletic department itself, can be important in bridging the gap leading to more students taking advantage of these services.

Specific areas that have been identified through this survey can be addressed through counseling services. For example, exploring student-athletes academic and athletic expectations and developing specific, realistic, and measurable short term goals can help reduce stress related to unmet expectations. Freshman often need support as they make the transition from high school to college. These student-athletes may need assistance as they adjust to the different demands and competition that exist at the collegiate level. Workshops and strategies related to time and stress management is needed and can be a way to reach a large number of student-athletes. Counselors can also play a role in helping student-athletes balance sport and academic demands through individual work with athletes. Since stress related to the demands of sport and academics

can take away from the focus athletes are able to give to their performance on the field and in the classroom, time can be spent helping athletes “keep their mind in the moment”. Building the skill of focusing one’s attention on the task at hand while blocking outside distraction can help decrease stress.

Student-athletes often feel pressure to win, regardless of the sport they play, with many focusing exclusively on the outcome of the competition. Sport psychologists and counselors can play an important role in helping student-athletes focus on the steps that lead to the outcome of a competition such as preparation, follow through, and evaluation of performance. The less emphasis placed on the final outcome can result in less stress related to winning and losing. The nervousness that student-athletes experience before and during competition can both help and hinder performance. Helping athletes manage the anxiety related to competition through the development of coping skills is needed. For example, many student-athletes turn to others for support when dealing with stress and anxiety, with considerably less using skills such as relaxation techniques, deep breathing, and/or meditation. Assisting individual athletes as well as sport teams develop additional coping skills is needed. Finally, the enjoyment of competition for some athletes can diminish over time. Counseling centers are a necessary resource for student-athletes as it provides a neutral place to talk about their feelings regarding their sport and participation. Having someone to talk to outside of the athletic department who will be less invested in an athlete’s decision to continuing playing a sport is important. Relationships with coaches and professors, another identified source of stress, can also be addressed in this supportive and unbiased setting.

As a result of the potential impact psychologists and counselors can have on student-athletes, specific training regarding student-athlete stress and coping is needed at psychology and counseling programs. The inclusion of a sport psychology concentration in school psychology training programs may increase the awareness and use of sport psychology in the school setting. Practicum and internship opportunities with sport teams working with athletes can aid future psychologists in developing an understanding of the experiences and needs of student-athletes. School psychologists, particularly, have experience working with students, parents, and professors managing stress and coping skills at various levels and are in a unique position to help student-athletes. They often have a greater understanding of academic demands as well as the various learning styles that can impact athlete performance. They can assist student-athletes with goal-setting, stress reduction, coach and teammate communication, decision-making, and self evaluation. School psychologists' understanding of the school climate along with the athletic and academic demands of collegiate sport participation, provides them with the foundation needed to affectively work with student-athletes.

### *Student-Athletes*

While majority of the focus has been placed on support others can provide to athletes, it is important for student-athletes to also be aware of the stressors that can potentially impact them along with the coping skills and resources available to help them manage their role as student and athlete. Information regarding time management strategies, goal-setting techniques, coping skills, academic support services, and sport psychology and counseling resources can be communicated through new student-athlete

seminars. By acknowledging the various demands placed on student-athletes and the difficulties sometimes associated with meeting these demands, athletes may be more likely to discuss and seek support when needed. This information can also help student-athletes anticipate certain obstacles and plan ahead or problem-solve so as to minimize the stress they experience.

### Study Limitations

#### *Survey Instrument*

Although use of an electronic survey has several advantages such as the ability to reach a larger sample size, less time and fewer cost associated with the recruitment of subjects, faster response times, and a reduction of errors associated with survey completion and data entry, the use of a survey instrument also has its limitations. For example, as a result of using an e-mail based survey for this study there was a lack of control over the research setting. Participants may have been subject to distractions and engaged in other activities while completing the survey thus impacting their attention to the task. The possibility of participant interaction could have also impacted findings. Although each student has an active e-mail address through the university, differences may exist in the technological comfort among participants which could impact survey results.

A major limitation to this study was the instrument used to investigate the stressors student-athletes experience and the coping mechanisms they use to manage their stress. While The Survey of Recent Life Experiences (Kohn, Lafreniere, & Gurevich, 1990), The Social Readjustment Scale (Holmes & Rahe, 1967), and The Ways of Coping

Scale (Lazarus & Folkman, 1988) were reviewed, a pre-established measure of stress and coping was not used for this study. Since the instrument was created by the author based on relevant literature, the information obtained from this study can not be compared to other samples of student-athletes and reliability and validity data was not obtained. This survey was used for exploratory purposes and will need to undergo revisions before future administrations. One such revision will need to address the ambiguity of the survey question related to “How many years?” they have been playing their sport. Since this question was not clearly stated, some respondents answered how many years in college they have been playing their sport while others answered when they first began playing as a child or young adult. As a result of the different interpretations, this question needed to be eliminated from the analysis.

### *Response Rate*

While this survey was distributed electronically to all 550 student-athletes, responses from only 231 participants were used resulting in a response rate of 42%. Although this is considered an average response rate for e-mail surveys, a higher response rate was desired. Differences may exist between those student-athletes who completed the survey and those who did not elect to participate in the study. These individuals may experience more or less stress or use different coping skills to manage the stress related to academics and sport participation which would impact findings.

### *Exclusion of Responses*

Although 251 participants gave their consent to participate in this study, twenty of the respondents completed less than 80% of the survey and were therefore excluded from the sample. Respondents either gave their consent and did not answer any further questions or only answered a few of the closed-ended survey questions before exiting the survey. While the incomplete responses resulted in exclusion from the final data analysis it is difficult to devise a solution for avoiding this limitation in the future. Although the participant is unable to continue onto the next page unless all questions are answered, respondents can exit the survey and discontinue their participation in the study at any time. Respondents may be less likely to discontinue their participation in the study if the survey is administered to the student-athletes in person as opposed to their own environment. This should be considered for future administrations.

### *Data Analysis*

Although careful attention was given to eliminating the responses of those 20 participants who did not complete the necessary components of the survey, these incomplete responses may have impacted the calculation of the percentages. The percentages for certain items were manually recalculated by the author since the more reliable data analysis program through Survey Monkey could not be used. Therefore, errors may be present as a result of this recalculation. Data for this study was analyzed as a whole and then separated based on gender, year in college, and sport played. When separated based on sport played, there was an unequal number of participants involved in various sports. For example, thirty-four football student-athletes compared to five fencing

athletes completed the survey. The disproportionate number of athletes by sport complicates the interpretation of the data. The findings for those sport teams who have fewer athletes, such as fencing and golf, should be interpreted with caution.

### Recommendations for Future Research

The purpose of this dissertation was to increase the awareness of athletic departments, coaches, and psychologists working with student-athletes with regard to the stressors student-athletes experience and the coping mechanisms they use to manage their stress. Previous studies examining student-athlete stress have consisted of relatively small sample sizes, have focused on a limited number of sports, and have predominately used a case study approach. As a result of the impact stress can have on student-athletes, there is a need for future research to continue to study larger sample sizes of student-athletes from a variety of sport teams at college and universities of varying competitive levels. In addition to the use of a survey approach, future research should consider using focus groups which will provide the opportunity for clarification and question follow-up.

While the survey approach is an effective way to examine the stress and coping mechanisms of a large number of student-athletes, effort should be placed on improving and creating a more reliable and valid survey measure of stress and coping. In addition to the 15 stressors included in this independent survey, additional stressors were reported by student-athletes including *not getting enough sleep, balancing other activities along with sport and academics, physical demands of their sport, getting along with teammates, and the relationship with professors*. Consideration should be given to adding these stressors to a subsequent survey for further exploration.



While the coping mechanisms student-athletes utilize to manage their role as student and athlete were elicited from this study, future research should look at how effective these coping strategies are for student-athletes. Examination as to whether different coping mechanisms are used more frequently with certain stressors is also needed. A surprisingly small number of participants reported using problem-solving techniques to manage stress. Future surveys should include specific examples of problem-solving techniques in order to further examine the use of this coping mechanism. In addition, coping skills that were not included in this survey such as *listening to music, watching tv or movies, playing videogames, doing yoga, getting a job, and turning to their religion* were reported as being used by some respondents. Further exploration of the utilization and effectiveness of these coping techniques is warranted.

In the athletic environment, focus is often placed on toughness and resiliency which can make asking for help managing athletic and academic demands difficult. This may contribute to the resistance to sport psychology and counseling services that has been reported in the literature. Additional research should focus on developing support programs and services that can be offered through the athletic department and then examining the impact these services have on student-athlete stress and coping. One of the most significant stressors found through this survey distribution was related to student-athletes not meeting their own expectations. This stressor should be explored further in order to gain information regarding what these expectations are, how they go about working toward meeting these expectations, and how student-athletes cope when these expectations are not met. Student-athletes relationship with their coach was cited as a stressor both in the closed-ended and open-ended response sections of the survey. It may

be beneficial to look further at the athlete-coach relationship, specifically coach communication with players, various coaching styles and its effect on the athlete, and the frequency of which preferential treatment is experienced. By examining these stressors further, supports can be put into place and coping skills developed in order to minimize its impact.

### Summary

Collegiate student-athletes are faced with meeting the academic demands of their institution as well as the practice and performance demands of their sport teams. As a result of their role as student and athlete, these individuals experience unique stressors above and beyond those experienced by other students. This dissertation was designed to gather information regarding the stressors student-athlete experience, the ways in which they cope with these stressors, and their views on receiving support in managing their role as a student-athlete. A survey was created and distributed electronically to 550 student-athletes at a Division 1 college in Pennsylvania with data being collected and used from 231 participants. Responses indicate that student-athletes perceive majority of the survey items as being stressful. Stress ratings indicate that *Not Meeting Own Expectations, Grades, Balancing Sport and Academic Demands, Pressure to Win, and Being Nervous Before or During Competition* are the most distressing for student-athletes. In addition, similarities and differences exist based on gender, year in college, and sport played regarding the extent to which these stressors are experienced. In order to manage these stressors, student-athletes reportedly utilize both problem-focused and emotion-focused coping skills particularly *Spending Time with Friends, Taking a Break, Exercising, and/or Asking Friends and Family for Advice*.

The information obtained from this research can be communicated to individuals working with student-athletes through athletic department trainings, coaches' professional development workshops, future school and clinical psychology programs, and new student-athlete seminars. This will enable those individuals working closest with student-athletes to have a greater understanding of athlete's needs and experiences so that appropriate support can be provided. Despite the limitations present in this study, the primary task of this dissertation which was to assess the perceived stressors and coping mechanisms utilized by collegiate student-athletes in order to assist athletic departments, coaches, and psychologists in meeting student-athletes' needs was achieved. Awareness of the stressors student-athletes experience across sport, year in college, and gender will hopefully highlight the need for additional support and lead to future study in this area.

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Appendix A  
**Survey Consent Form**

You are being asked to participate in a research study investigating stressors student-athletes can experience. These stressors may influence an individual's athletic and academic performance. Providing information about the degree of stress associated with various situations and how you are able to cope and manage these experiences can help coaches, sport psychologists, and athletic departments better understand student-athletes needs. It can also help you recognize personal areas of stress so that you can identify and develop ways to cope. The survey will take approximately 15 minutes to complete. Your responses to the survey will be kept confidential. Your participation is voluntary and you are free to terminate participation in this study at any time without penalty. If you elect to complete the survey, guidelines for balancing sport and academics can and will be sent to you as a courtesy for participating in this research.

As a result of completing this survey, you may be more aware of the demands placed on you as a student-athlete. You may also be more aware of how you are able to manage and cope with a variety of demanding experiences. However, if you are having difficulty managing any of the stressors on this survey or would like to talk to someone, please call or go to the Lafayette College Counseling Center located at Bailey Health Center, 607 High St. located on the 2<sup>nd</sup> Floor. Tel: (610) 330-5005.

If you have any questions or would like to obtain results from the study when it is completed you can contact Denise Dreitlein at:  
 The Graduate School of Applied and Professional Psychology, Rutgers University  
 152 Frelinghuysen Rd.  
 Piscataway, NJ 08854; Tel: (732) 445-6111 ext. 884.

*If you have any questions about your rights as a research subject, you may contact the Sponsored Programs Administrator at Rutgers University at:*

*Rutgers University Institutional Review Board for the Protection of Human Subjects  
 Office of Research and Sponsored Programs  
 3 Rutgers Plaza  
 New Brunswick, NJ 08901-8559  
 Tel: 732-932-0150 ext. 2104  
 E-mail: humansubjects@orsp.rutgers.edu*

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 \_\_\_\_\_ I give my consent to participate in this research study

\_\_\_\_\_ I do not give my consent to participate in this research study

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Name (printed): \_\_\_\_\_

Signature of Principal Investigator \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Appendix B  
**Collegiate Student-Athlete Coping Skills Inventory**

This survey was created in order to better understand stressors associated with being a student-athlete. Providing information about the degree of stress associated with various situations and how you are able to cope and manage these experiences can help sport psychologists, counselors, and coaches better understand student-athletes needs. It can also help you recognize personal areas of stress so that you can identify and develop ways to cope. This survey will take about 15 minutes to complete. Please answer each question to the best of your ability.

**Age:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Gender:** M F **Ethnicity(optional)** \_\_\_\_\_

**Year in College:** Freshman Sophomore Junior Senior Other \_\_\_\_\_

**Sport(s) Played:** Baseball Basketball Cross Country Fencing Field Hockey  
 Football Golf Lacrosse Soccer Softball Swimming & Diving  
 Track & Field Volleyball Tennis

**How Many Years?** \_\_\_\_\_

Below you will find a list of potential stressors that may be experienced by student-athletes. Please indicate whether you feel each situation or experience is a stressor for you (Y or N) and how distressing it is (0-6). For each item, please use the following scale to indicate how stressful the items are for you: 0 -- Not at all, 1 -- 2 Somewhat, 3 -- 4 Moderately, 5 --6 Extremely.

1. **Making the team?** Y N **Stress Rating** (1-6) \_\_\_\_\_
2. **Getting enough playing time?** Y N **Stress Rating** (1-6) \_\_\_\_\_
3. **Pressure to Win?** Y N **Stress Rating** (1-6) \_\_\_\_\_
4. **Not meeting own expectations?** Y N **Stress Rating** (1-6) \_\_\_\_\_
5. **Not meeting parent's expectations?** Y N **Stress Rating** (1-6) \_\_\_\_\_
6. **Relationship with coach?** Y N **Stress Rating** (1-6) \_\_\_\_\_
7. **Finances?** Y N **Stress Rating** (1-6) \_\_\_\_\_
8. **Being nervous before or during the competition?** Y N **Stress Rating** (1-6) \_\_\_\_\_
9. **Balancing sport and academic demands?** Y N **Stress Rating** (1-6) \_\_\_\_\_

10. Missing classes because of travel?    Y    N    *Stress Rating* (1-6) \_\_\_\_
11. Grades?    Y    N    *Stress Rating* (1-6) \_\_\_\_
12. Not enjoying competition as much as before?    Y    N    *Stress Rating* (1-6) \_\_\_\_
13. Lack of control over my schedule?    Y    N    *Stress Rating* (1-6) \_\_\_\_
14. Perceptions of others, stereotypes?    Y    N    *Stress Rating* (1-6) \_\_\_\_
15. Social life?    Y    N    *Stress Rating* (1-6) \_\_\_\_

Below please check the approaches that you use to help cope with the various stressors of being student-athlete.

Relaxation Techniques \_\_\_\_ Taking a Break \_\_\_\_ Asking Friends/Family for Advice \_\_\_\_  
 Focus Efforts on a Solution \_\_\_\_ Refuse/Avoid Thinking about Stressor \_\_\_\_  
 Keep Feelings to Self \_\_\_\_ Spend Time with Friends \_\_\_\_ Do Things for Others \_\_\_\_  
 Exercise \_\_\_\_ Eat \_\_\_\_ Drink \_\_\_\_ Other (please describe) \_\_\_\_\_

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Is there anything else that you find stressful that is not included in this survey? If so, please indicate what is stressful and provide a rating.

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Have you ever received counseling services or any other type of support for dealing with life as a student-athlete (re. time management, performance, etc.)?    Y    N

What type of help have you received? Was it helpful?

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If offered by your team, would you be interested in participating or receiving counseling services?    Yes    No    Maybe

I would like to receive a copy of guidelines for balancing sport and academics.    Y    N

Thank you for your time and participation!