

Student-Athlete Perceptions of Sources of Stress and Coping

TYLER RICHARDSON

Strength and Conditioning in Human Performance, Abilene Christian University;
Abilene, TX

Category: Masters

Advisor / Mentor: Lancaster, Lucas (lrl17d@acu.edu); Driskill, Cory (cjd08b@acu.edu); Long, Melissa (mdl16a@acu.edu)

ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to explore stress in student-athletes. Stress, especially distress, can lead to mental health issues. This topic has traditionally not been discussed in coaching but is becoming more necessary. Student-athletes are more in tune with their mental health than even before, and coaches are not always sure how to handle situations that arise on this topic. **PURPOSE:** The intent of this study was to help strength and conditioning coaches become more aware of their student-athletes' stress and coping mechanisms. **METHODS:** This study was conducted through an emailed survey to student-athletes. No identifying information was collected in the survey. The survey asked the student-athletes questions about stress, where the stress was derived from, what influenced the stress, did stress hinder their performance, and what they did to relieve from stress. **RESULTS:** Of the 43 student-athletes that answered the survey, it was found that 100% experienced stress. Of the respondents, 86% reported to be most stressed in-season, and 44.2% felt they never had time for themselves when they were stressed. Over half of student-athletes (60.5%) said stress hindered their athletic performance. Approximately 63% of participants reported that they talked to someone when they were stressed. Of the 63% that talked to someone, 86% said they talked to their parents, 83.7% said they talked to their friends, and 72.1% said they talked to a fellow teammate. When trying to identify where the stress came from, 96.4% of the student-athletes said that 'classroom expectations and goals' were what caused most stress; closely behind was 'athletic performance' at 78.6%. When asked if school overwhelms the student-athlete, 81% said yes. When diving deeper into the overwhelmingness of school, 34.3% said the workload was the main source of stress, 38.6% said tests were most overwhelming, and 25.7% said finding time to study stressed them out. When asking the student-athletes about what stressed them out about school, 86% of student-athletes said grades stress them out the most, 72.1% said tests were a source of stress, and 60.5% said finding time to study. **CONCLUSION:** This study found that student-athletes' stress level is great, and the sources of stress vary. It is clear that academic stress is greater than athletic stress. Distress can be a source of mental health issues and that is something that needs to be investigated more. Both student-athletes and coaches would benefit from learning more about the sources of stress and how to help relieve stress during the season. Future research should focus on collecting demographic data to sort stress levels and sources by year of the athlete, which sports' athletes feel more stressed, and to investigate why student-athletes talk to their parents and friends more than a coach or athletic trainer.