Social Support Among Student-Athletes and Coping Strategy
Differences Among Student-Athletes and Non-Student-Athletes

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Abstract
College student-Athletes face a variety of challenges and stressors that are unique to their academic and athletic responsibilities, and the types of support and coping strategies they utilize are often different than those of their non-student-athlete peers. For example, Cosh & Tully (2015) found that college student-athletes reported additional stress due to academic and sport schedule clashes. These additional stressors illustrate the need for student-athletes to use additional resources as they deal with their complicated schedules. Yang et al. (2010) found that college student-athletes have friends, family, teammates, coaches, athletic trainers, physicians, and counselors available to them for support. Our study investigated the different coping strategies that student-athletes engage in compared to their non-student-athlete peers while looking at the amount of social support the student-athletes received compared to what they desired. Participants rated their frequency of utilizing various types of coping behavior on a scale of 1-5 using the brief COPE (Carver, 1997). To assess social support discrepancies, student-athletes rated their perceptions of perceived and desired support for each support type on a scale of 1-5. A series of dependent t-tests were performed to determine if there were differences between student-athletes and non-student-athletes in their coping responses. Additionally, we investigated if there were differences in social support by sport type and gender. Overall, we found that student-athletes engaged in more adaptive coping strategies than their non-student-athlete peers. Further, we found that student-athletes received more social support than they desired generally, although individual-based sport athletes received significantly less network and tangible support than their team-sport peers. Future studies could investigate the nature of the difference between network and tangible support received by individual-based athletes compared to team-based athletes.
More positive coping than negative coping strategies were observed, and student-athletes utilized more positive coping strategies than non-student-athletes.

Generally, student-athletes experienced a surplus of social support.

Individual-sport athletes experienced significantly less network and informational support than team-sport athletes.