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ENGL 110-02 Kastner

Argumentative Essay

Student Athletes Need More Mental Health Resources Specific for Athletes

Right before college students move onto campus, they go through this overwhelming fear of not knowing what is next to come. For college athletes, there is more of an added pressure: new teammates, new coaches, different schedules, trying to balance practices and classes, along with making time for friends and other fun activities. All of these stressors make it a little bit harder and affects most student athletes' mental health. The stigma around athletes needing to be perfect, along with pressure from peers, coaches, and parents, as well as students turning to bad habits leading to a poor mental health. With these issues becoming more prominent athletes need more specific resources for their mental health. The resources they need should be more directed at their needs rather than students as a whole.

Most often than not athletes have to face a pressure to be perfect and the best they can be. This pressure comes from many outside factors including coaches, family, friends, and teammates. Not only are there external factors, there are also internal factors as well; like the pressure they put on themselves. For some people this pressure outweighs an external factor. Athletes push themselves to their limits to be the best they can be and live up to the expectations of others and themselves, but that might not be possible. College athletes are at risk for a variety of different behaviors including alcohol abuse, eating disorders, stressors of injuries, overtraining, lack of sleep, and feeling of exhaustion (Armstrong 12). These stressors directly correlate to the idea of being perfect. Negative effects of these stressors include: eating disorders

to have the perfect body, overtraining so they can be the best. Lack of sleep to make up for loss of time at practice, trying to achieve perfect grades. “Participation in athletics has been associated with alcohol use on account of increased opportunities for social drinking, greater peer acceptance of drinking behaviors, and increased stress levels” (Armstrong 13). For some people drinking is an easy way to cope with stressors. Once people start turning to drinking that’s when some problems start to escalate.

Although they might have more internal and external factors that are pressuring them, they are the one making a choice to play sports. Student athletes are athletes first, hence why the student part comes first. “Students... they are there for an education” (Nasir). People take the side of student athletes should not get any special treatment because they are the ones that are choosing to play and sport making their schedules busier. You then also have to think about other people’s situation. Especially financially when it comes to college because of how expensive it is. For our college alone, the tuition is \$42,666 for living on campus (WVWC). For me personally, I know multiple athletes from different teams that are partaking in their sport because of the athletic scholarships. According to another article called “*The Pros of Being a Student Athlete*” states that “With American college student debt reaching almost \$1 trillion dollars, getting money to do what you love and attend school is definitely an advantage.” If you have the opportunity to stay out of debt, then why not take it? Along with staying out of debt there are other positives the being a student athlete brings.

Student athletes are more likely to finish college and less likely to drop out than non-athlete students. Athletes also have the advantage of registering for classes before non-athlete students and often have mandatory study hours and tutoring sessions to help boost their GPA, something not always easily accessible to non-athlete students. Lastly, going

into college can be a nerve-wracking time for those who find socializing easy. Being a student athlete almost forces you to be social from the beginning and helps to establish life-long friendships and relationships. (Barrer)

Being a student athlete is a choice. Some people may think that the positives outweigh the negative and vice versa. Athletes should not have to be put in the position where they have to make difficult decision that effects their education and college choices. Just because student choice to be athletes as well, it does not mean that they should give up something they love.

Even though there are differences between athletes and students doesn't mean their issues are different. Many athletes and non-athletes have many of the same problems but it's the solutions to these issues that are different. Specific people are needed for athletes because of the different solutions to their issues. "Students tell him, 'I go in to talk about anxiety, and the counselor says, 'Take a couple weeks off your sport,'" (Field). For many athletes taking time off is not a solution. Taking time off in the end creates more of a problem. This problem is created because the fear of missing valuable time to make them better, and their coaches picking other players over them because of the time missed.

Another common issue for many freshmen is not having a car on campus. "The campus counseling center referred her to a list of outside providers. With no car and a packed schedule, Lubarsky chose the most convenient provider, even though it wasn't a great fit" (Field). When getting help finding the most convenient provider is not good. You need to be able to see someone who makes you feel comfortable, so you are able to get the most out of it and are able to fix the situation.

To summarize, student athletes need better options to help with mental health issues. With many obstacles along the way, with resources, athletes can minimize the mental stigma around mental health and making situations worse. With the help of local and collegiate personnel, athletes can be given tools to allow them to cope, and deal with their thoughts without being judged or misinterpreted. By providing resources specifically geared towards student athletes, we can start to lower the stigma and provide a healthier atmosphere.

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