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Crash and Burnout:
The Sophomore Slump in College Athletics

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Abstract

This study analyzed and compared the severity of performance slumps of collegiate student-athletes in general and across academic years. The factors examined with performance slumps included athlete burnout, academic burnout, relationship satisfaction, and grade point averages. The first hypothesis was that reduced accomplishment scores from the athlete burnout questionnaire would indicate the severity of performance slumps. The results did not support the hypothesis. The second hypothesis was that the severity of performance slumps would positively correlate with academic burnout and negatively correlate with relationship satisfaction. The results supported this hypothesis. The third hypothesis was that student-athletes who experienced a performance slump during their sophomore year would have significantly higher scores of athlete and academic burnout and lower relationship satisfaction scores. This hypothesis was based on sophomore slump literature, explaining that sophomores must establish an identity, overcome academic pressures, and maintain relationships without support programs. The results showed that there was no significant difference. The fourth hypothesis was that student-athletes would experience a performance slump more often in their sophomore year than other academic years. The results showed that the student-athletes experienced performance slumps more often in their freshman and sophomore years. The fifth hypothesis was that student-athletes' grade point averages before and after a performance slump would be higher than their grade point averages during. The results supported this hypothesis. Discussion centers on explaining the results based on student-athletes' personal descriptions of performance slumps.

Keywords: performance slump, sophomore slump, athlete burnout, academic burnout, relationship satisfaction

Crash and Burnout:

The Sophomore Slump in College Athletics

Playing sports demands more than just time and commitment, it demands the body and mind. Playing sports as a collegiate student-athlete is more straining since the athlete is expected to balance athletics with academics and college life. Athletes tend to fluctuate in their performances with phenomenal and poor play at the extremes. Performance slumps affect every athlete and strike without warning, causing the athlete to play poorly. However, the performance slump leaves in the same mysterious manner in which it came. Although performance slumps are natural and expected fluctuations in performance, they can greatly impact athletes by causing stress. The stress can eventually lead to athlete burnout and potentially end a career in sports as athletes can no longer cope or manage the stress.

Performance slumps during the sophomore year may be more severe because of several factors unique to this academic year. These contributing factors include identity issues, academic pressures, and strained relationships with coaches and teammates. These factors combined with a performance slump may increase a student-athlete's chances of developing athlete burnout. This study investigates how experiencing a performance slump during the sophomore year in college may lead to athlete burnout more often than any other academic year. The athlete burnout may then permeate into other areas of a student-athlete's life.

Originally, the concept of a performance slump was applied to teams and their win-loss record. However, research redefined performance slumps to fit the individual. Now, performance slumps are defined as an unexplainable prolonged drop in performance that is significantly different from an individual's average performance in their respective sport (Taylor, 1988). This definition accounts for the fact that an athlete could be experiencing a

performance slump even though his or her team is winning. In order for an athlete to be considered to be experiencing a performance slump, his or her performance must be significantly below his or her individual baseline and last longer than his or her average expected fluctuation in performance. Therefore, no two athletes will experience a performance slump for the same duration of time, in the same way, or with the same intensity (Taylor, 1988).

According to Taylor (1988), when athletes suspect they are experiencing a performance slump, they must ask themselves if their baseline performance is different compared to their current performance. Typically, athletes would not ask this question unless they had perceptions of a performance slump (Taylor, 1988). However, research has shown that athletes' perceptions of their performance and their actual performance often differ greatly (Taylor, 1988). A perceived performance slump is not always a real performance slump as it only exists in the mind of the athlete and may not reflect performance accurately. Athletes tend to exaggerate a performance slump when in fact, from an objective point of view, their performance has not declined, or they are experiencing a normal fluctuation in their performance (Taylor, 1988). However, the misperceptions of a perceived performance slump may eventually cause a real performance slump.

Misperceptions can be classified as a psychological cause for a performance slump. Other factors that are known to cause performance slumps are physical, technical, and technological causes (Taylor, 1988). Examples of physical causes include fatigue or injuries. Technical causes of performance slumps are associated with the execution of a skill such as the timing of a batter's swing. Technological causes are related to the equipment required for an athlete's sport such as cleats or rackets (Taylor, 1988). Researchers have archived

solutions to alleviate a performance slump through various coping strategies. These coping strategies are passed down from athlete to athlete and include being patient, letting the slump run its course, refocusing, relaxing, and using positive imagery (Prapavessis & Grove, 1995). The most successful approach to alleviating a performance slump is rest and relaxation (Madden, Kirkby, McDonald, 1989; Madden, Summers & Brown, 1990; Taylor, 1988). This strategy allows athletes to take time off from their sport, recharge, reevaluate their performance slump, and gain a perspective on their performance. However, the demands of sports do not allow athletes to rest and relax in order to alleviate a performance slump.

Problems arise when athletes feel pressured to alleviate their performance slump as quickly as possible, so they do not miss important upcoming competitions (Taylor, 1988). In collegiate athletics, seasons begin and end in predetermined times of the year, meaning once the season begins for collegiate student-athletes, it cannot be paused for any reason. The pressures from coaches and teammates to overcome a performance slump may become an additional stressor in collegiate student-athletes' lives. Considering that student-athletes do not have time to let a performance slump run its course and end on its own, the next coping strategy they tend to use is increased efforts and resolve (Madden, Summers & Brown, 1990). This method of increased effort and resolve may seem to be an effective way to alleviate a performance slump; however, it can take away from necessary rest and relaxation which may prolong a performance slump rather than alleviate it (Madden, Summers & Brown, 1990).

The symptoms associated with performance slumps present themselves when student-athletes give all their efforts to overcome a performance slump with no avail. The primary symptom that arises from perceived performance slumps are feelings of failure and a decrease in athletes' senses of self-worth (Taylor, 1988). Additionally, as a result from the

overtraining and increased efforts student-athletes make to alleviate a performance slump, they can experience fatigue as a secondary symptom. Fatigue does not always present itself with a performance slump. Both the primary and secondary symptoms associated with performance slumps align closely with components of athlete burnout. According to Raedeke (1997), athlete burnout is defined as a syndrome of exhaustion, sport devaluation, and reduced athletic accomplishment. Athlete burnout develops from chronic stress and can lead to athletes losing motivation and potentially quitting their sport (Dale & Weinberg, 1990). Performance slumps are precursors but do not always lead to athlete burnout (Dale & Weinberg, 1990; Taylor, 1988). The primary symptom of performance slump, feelings of failure and a decrease in athletes' self-worth, presents itself with nearly every performance slump and is associated with the reduced accomplishment component of athlete burnout. Whereas the secondary symptom of performance slumps, fatigue, does not always present itself yet is associated with another component of athlete burnout, exhaustion.

Performance slumps and athlete burnout can be differentiated in the fact that there is a third component that makes up athlete burnout, sport devaluation, and all three components must be present to develop athlete burnout. The three components within athlete burnout are reduced sense of accomplishment and exhaustion which are associated with performance slumps, and sport devaluation which is represented when athletes no longer care about their sport (Raedeke & Smith, 2001). Athlete burnout can be a cause for collegiate student-athletes to withdraw from sports by either dropping out or transferring to another college (Cohn, 1990).

Athlete burnout describes burnout in one aspect of a collegiate student-athlete's life. Given that collegiate student-athletes are competitors and students, they can potentially

experience burnout in academics and athletics. In addition to training, collegiate student-athletes must maintain their eligibility by studying and completing assignments to succeed in the classroom. Previous research has failed to examine the relationship between burnout in one area of an individual's life and burnout in a second, unrelated area (e.g. academics and athletics). There is reason to believe collegiate student-athletes who are at the most risk for experiencing athletic and academic burnout from a performance slump are sophomores.

The sophomore slump is a specific performance slump that occurs in the second year of play typically following a phenomenal first year of play (Wetcher-Hendricks, 2014). Unlike performance slumps, sophomore slumps may lead to athlete burnout because the sophomore year is when collegiate student-athletes struggle to develop an identity, are pressured to choose a career path, abide by the National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) rules, and are offered little to no support through programs at their colleges. Despite the difficulties for student-athletes during the sophomore year, research on the sophomore slump in college athletics has been limited.

Although empirical studies have supported the existence of an academic sophomore slump, an athletic sophomore slump lacks validity according to Wetcher-Hendricks (2014). This study suggests a freshman fluke rather than a sophomore slump phenomenon is the reason behind the poor performance in professional baseball athletes' second year. The outstanding first year of play is uncharacteristic, and the significant change in performance from the first to second year reflects a regression to the mean (Wetcher-Hendricks, 2014). Regression to the mean accounts for performances on both sides of the extreme with the extreme values eventually turning towards the mean (Wetcher-Hendricks, 2014). For example, an athlete who experiences a fantastic first year of play followed by a poor second

year of play will most likely not experience another year as fantastic or poor in his or her third and fourth years of play as his or her performance regresses towards the mean.

Although this study addressed professional athletes, it may be extrapolated to encompass other athletes including collegiate student-athletes.

However, the study by Wetcher-Hendricks (2014) was flawed because the selection of participants was biased. This study analyzed the sophomore slump in professional baseball players who received the Rookie of the Year award which is given to first year standouts in baseball (Wetcher-Hendricks, 2014). Considering that the participants were selected based on this award, the conclusion that a freshman fluke instead of a sophomore slump phenomenon occurs is not accurate for two reasons. The first reason is that this study analyzed athletes who may have been average players and happened to have a phenomenal first year of play then returned to their average performance their second year. When this second year is compared to the phenomenal first year, it seems these athletes were experiencing a sophomore slump when in fact, they were experiencing a freshman fluke. Their performance would regress to the mean with time, meaning their play would be below their freshman fluke performance. The second reason is that this study did not include the greater population of professional baseball athletes. There could have been athletes with an average first year, who then experienced a performance slump in their second year, and then returned to their average performance for their following years. In this example, the athletes experienced a sophomore slump since their period of poor performance occurred in their second year of play. They also regressed to the mean; however, their mean performance would be above their sophomore slump performance.

The Wetcher-Hendricks (2014) study is one among a few studies focused on the sophomore slump in athletics. Within the small number of studies there are several limitations. The first limitation is the fact that a sophomore slump inventory does not exist. Without a validated inventory, it is difficult to analyze the extent and severity of the sophomore slump in collegiate student-athletes. The second limitation is that this phenomenon has been researched within an academic setting, not giving much attention to athletics in general. The last limitation is that collegiate student-athletes comprise a rather small subpopulation that has not been thoroughly investigated (Drummer, 2014).

Although the athletic sophomore slump lacks research, the symptoms that arise from it can be drawn from the academic sophomore slump since the academic sophomore slump has been thoroughly investigated. Collegiate students in general experience lack of motivation and loss of interest in activities they once thought of as enjoyable (Lemons & Richmond, 1987). Lack of motivation and loss of interest can be termed devaluation. For collegiate student-athletes, the activities in which they lose interest and motivation could be their sport; therefore, these feelings can be referred to as sport devaluation. Sport devaluation is the component of athlete burnout where student-athletes no longer care about their sport (Raedeke & Smith, 2001). Along with causing sport devaluation, the sophomore slump is merely a performance slump experienced during the sophomore year. Therefore, collegiate student-athletes experiencing a sophomore slump not only have symptoms of sport devaluation, they also have the symptoms associated with a performance slump which are reduced feelings of accomplishment and exhaustion. The appearance of all three components at the same time may lead to the development of athlete burnout. As such, the sophomore

slump is more likely associated with athlete burnout than a performance slump during any other academic year.

The reason for an increased chance of developing athlete burnout in the sophomore year could be that the sophomore year is the time collegiate student-athletes struggle with developing an identity, maintaining relationships with coaches and teammates, abiding by the NCAA, and finding support through their colleges. The primary struggle identified in the sophomore year is developing an identity. Chickering's (1969) student development model recognizes the importance of establishing a stable identity during the sophomore year (Lemons & Richmond, 1987). Identities are created through individual experiences, thoughts, actions, and direct students to discover their passions which in turn lead them to develop their purpose (Lemons & Richmond, 1987). The time it takes to fully establish an identity is part of the reason why sophomore students struggle. Acquiring identities happen over time and usually are not fully developed until the end of college. Problems arise when students are pressured to make rushed decisions about their future such as choosing a career path before forming a stable identity. A second sophomore developmental model was created, pointing to identity as the underlying issue as well (Schaller, 2005).

In addition to typical identity development, collegiate student-athletes also develop an athletic identity. An athletic identity is one where collegiate student-athletes identify themselves more strongly as athletes while their student identity is less prominent (Drummer, 2014). There are two types of athletic identities. One is positive, and the other is negative. Which identity student-athletes develop depends on the amount of time they are given to establish the identity. Student-athletes with a positive, well-established athletic identity tended to have a greater desire to earn their degree, higher rates of satisfaction with their

overall college experience, and a broader range of leadership skills (Drummer, 2014).

However, time constraints in student-athletes' schedules may not allow for sufficient time to develop a well-established athletic identity. The athletic identity develops because collegiate student-athletes spend most of their time with coaches and teammates and are unable to identify with other campus groups due to their structured schedule and lack of free time (Drummer, 2014). A negative, undeveloped athletic identity could potentially limit an athlete's academic success as their athletics and academics are two competing factors, and the athletic identity can be recognized as an imbalance with other aspects of their lives (Drummer, 2014). Student-athletes with this undeveloped athletic identity tended to have less adjustment to the stresses and demands from academics and college life, a weaker connection to their student identity, and an increase in the severity of the sophomore slump (Drummer, 2014).

Collegiate student-athletes with undeveloped athletic identities can have low relationship satisfaction with their coaches and teammates given that these relationships are closely tied to forming an identity (Drummer, 2014). Coaches greatly influence their athletes as they determine the structured schedule for which athletes must abide, they enforce strict rules on their team, and they motivate their team to perform well (Drummer, 2014). Both the coach and the athlete are satisfied when the relationship functions properly. When coaches invest in their athletes, their athletes are satisfied with skill improvements while the coach is satisfied with a successful outcome in competitions (Drummer, 2014). The student-athlete is unsatisfied with the relationship when the coach is disrespectful to him or her or does not have the same goal of winning as the student-athlete (Drummer, 2014). Athletes' relationships with their teammates may be as influential as that with their coaches.

Considering that teammates endure the same strict schedule and abide by the same team rules placed upon them by their coaches, teammates tend to form a camaraderie and friendship may form from the bond.

In addition to relationships with coaches and teammates, another factor adding to the severity of the sophomore slump is the NCAA rules and their pressures on academics. The NCAA complicates being a collegiate student-athlete by requiring them to maintain eligibility through multiple rules. The first rule is that student-athletes must maintain the minimum grade point average (GPA) of their respective college in order to be considered eligible to play (Drummer, 2014). The second rule deals with declaring and completing a major. Collegiate student-athletes must have declared a major by the first semester of their third year, which is typically the beginning of their junior year (Drummer, 2014). However, the NCAA requires that 40% of this declared major must be completed by the same time (Drummer, 2014). This means during collegiate student-athletes' sophomore years, they must decide a major, even if they are not sure of it, so they can begin completing 40% of their major before the beginning of their junior year. After this year, student-athletes are only required to complete 20% of their major (Drummer, 2014). According to Hamilton (2005), the largest gap in required credits occurs during the sophomore year entering the junior year as student-athletes must complete a total of 40% of their major while all consecutive years they only need to complete a total of 20% of their major. Thus, the greatest academic pressure on student-athletes occurs during their sophomore year which may add to the severity of the sophomore slump.

Collegiate student-athletes will have difficulty overcoming a sophomore slump because most colleges do not offer support programs for sophomore students nor advise them

with their academic decisions. Typically, colleges focus their resources on the freshman class with programs that help them adjust to college life since the freshman year has the highest dropout rates (Tobolowsky, 2008). Today, freshman dropout rates have declined while sophomore dropout rates are increasing, suggesting that the struggles experienced during the sophomore year is overlooked by colleges (Tobolowsky, 2008). Until recently, sophomore directed programs were rare and considered unnecessary. Now, as more attention and research has been given to the sophomore year, programs directed for only sophomore students are being developed and implemented nation-wide (Tobolowsky, 2008). Sophomore-focused programs offering support to sophomore students in general has shown to greatly reduce the severity of the academic sophomore slump; thus, sophomore programs directed towards sophomore student-athletes may reduce the athletic sophomore slump severity (Lemons & Richmond, 1987).

The sophomore year of college is when student-athletes struggle with identity development, relationship maintenance, and academic pressures. The sophomore year can be challenging especially considering sophomores do not have support programs available to them. Even though research has shown the sophomore slump may be a statistical phenomenon as student-athletes' performances regress toward the mean over time, sophomore student-athletes are expected to maintain their sport performance while academic, identity, and relationship issues become salient. Because the sophomore year pressures and stresses collegiate student-athletes in each aspect of their lives, experiencing a performance slump during the sophomore year is more likely to lead to athlete burnout compared to the other academic years. The performance slump and likely associated athlete burnout may

affect collegiate student-athletes' academic success and relationship satisfaction. Based on previous research, it is hypothesized that:

1. A performance slump will be associated with high levels of burnout indicated by reduced feelings of accomplishment and exhaustion components but not in sport devaluation.
2. A performance slump will be positively correlated with academic burnout and negatively correlated with relationship satisfaction.
3. A performance slump experienced during the sophomore year will lead to higher rates of athlete burnout, academic burnout, and lower relationship satisfaction compared to other academic years.
4. The majority of performance slumps will occur during the sophomore year.
5. Student-athletes' GPAs before and after their performance slump will be higher than their GPAs during their performance slump.

Method

Participants

Participants ($N=203$) were collegiate student-athletes. Table 1 shows the demographics of the participants.

Instrumentation

Demographic Questionnaire. A total of five questions were used to gather basic information such as gender, sport, academic year, division of university, if the participants have or had experienced a performance slump defined as “a prolonged drop in performance,” along with questions about the participants' GPAs.

Maslach Burnout Inventory—Student Survey (MBI-SS; Schaufeli, Martínez, Pinto, Salanova & Bakker, 1996). This survey was modified from the MBI—General Survey to assess burnout in an academic setting by changing the wording to fit the study. The MBI-SS consists of 15 items that are distributed into three components of exhaustion, cynicism, and professional efficacy. The first five items are contained in the exhaustion component and include questions such as “I feel burned out from my studies.” The next four items are contained in the cynicism component and include questions such as “I doubt the significance of my studies.” The last six items are contained in the professional efficacy component and include questions such as “In my opinion, I am a good student.” Participants responded to how often they related to the items when they reflected on when they were experiencing their performance slump. The items are based on a seven-point Likert scale ranging from one to seven with one meaning “strongly disagree” and seven meaning “strongly agree.” High scores on the first two components and low scores on the last component are indicative of academic burnout.

Athlete Burnout Questionnaire (ABQ; Raedeke & Smith, 2001). The ABQ was adapted from Eade’s (1990) burnout inventory. This questionnaire was included in the survey to gauge performance slump severity from the perception of the participants using the reduced accomplishment component. The ABQ has a total of 15 items where participants responded to how often they related to the questions while reflecting on when they experienced their performance slump. The survey is based on a five-point Likert scale from one meaning “almost never” to five meaning “almost always.” The ABQ is composed of three components and each have a total of five questions. The first component is physical and emotional exhaustion and includes questions such as “I feel extremely tired from my sport

participation.” The second component is reduced sense of personal accomplishment and includes questions such as “I am not performing up to my ability in my sport.” The third component is sport devaluation and includes questions such as “I feel less concerned about being successful in my sport than I used to.” Two items, “I am accomplishing many worthwhile things in my sport” and “I feel successful at my sport” were reversed scored. A score of 15 in any of the components is representative of moderate burnout while a score of 17.5 represents moderately high burnout, and scores of 20 to 25 indicate high burnout scores.

Perceived Relationship Quality Components Inventory (PRQC; Fletcher, Simpson & Thomas, 2000). The PRQC is an 18-item inventory with six components: relationship satisfaction, commitment, intimacy, trust, passion, and love. Each component contains three questions and is used to determine what a relationship is like. Responses are based on a seven-point Likert scale from one meaning “not at all” to seven meaning “extremely.” Questions include “How happy are you with your relationship,” and “how dedicated are you to your relationship.” In the case of this study, only the relationship satisfaction and the commitment component were used for a total of 6 questions. Participants completed the inventory three times while reflecting on when they experienced their performance slump. The word “relationship” was modified to “personal relationships, in general,” relationships “with teammates,” and relationships “with coaches.” The scores can range from 6 to 42 with scores on the higher range signifying stronger relationships than those on the lower end.

Slump questions. There were three questions at the end of the survey. The first question asked about the beginnings of the performance slump such as “when did your slump begin.” This had prompts such as first semester freshmen year, second semester freshman year, and so on. The second question asked, “how long did it last,” which also gave prompts

the participants could follow such as one week, one month, one semester, it is currently ongoing, and so on. The last question asked participants to describe their slump. This question was optional and could be skipped if the participant had nothing more to add.

Procedure

Athletic directors of colleges in the United States from all three NCAA divisions were selected using a random sampling method, and they were emailed asking for permission to involve their student-athletes in this survey. The significance of the survey and the potential time duration of the survey were stated within the initial email. The athletic directors then decided to continue the survey to their respective student-athletes. The email contained the purpose of the survey, asked for participation in the survey, and contained the link to the survey which was completed in surveymonkey. The athletic directors were emailed a second time, two weeks after the initial email to increase participation.

The first page the participants saw once they opened the link was a consent form which they agreed to by pressing submit to continue the survey. The participants first answered the demographic questionnaire. The last question of the demographic questionnaire was “have you ever had a slump, or a prolonged drop in performance.” The participants who answered “no,” were thanked for their participation, given the debriefing statement, and the survey ended. However, those who select “yes,” continued through the survey as they were linked to the other questionnaires to gauge their academic success through the MBI-SS, the extent of their slump through the ABQ, their relationship satisfaction through the PRQC, and the slump questions. Once the participants had completed the survey by submitting it, they were thanked for their participation and given a debriefing statement.

Data Analysis

Descriptive statistics were used to determine the means and standard deviations of each athlete burnout component, when a performance slump began, and how long it persisted. Pearson correlation statistics were calculated between the severity of a performance slump using scores from the reduced accomplishment component and academic burnout and relationship satisfaction. A one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) was conducted between the freshman, sophomore, junior, and senior years to determine the severity of athlete burnout, academic burnout, and relationship satisfaction scores. A paired-sample *t*-test was performed between participants' GPA before and during their performance slump. A second paired-sample *t*-test was performed between participants' GPA during and after their performance slump. The open-ended questions were evaluated qualitatively.

Results

Performance Slumps and Components of Athlete Burnout

It was hypothesized that a performance slump would be associated with high levels of burnout indicated by reduced feelings of accomplishment and exhaustion components but not in sport devaluation. Descriptive statistics did not support the hypothesis. Participants experiencing a performance slump indicated moderate scores of reduced accomplishment ($M = 15.9$, $SD = 2.1$), moderately high scores of exhaustion ($M = 17.6$, $SD = 4.5$), and moderate scores of sport devaluation ($M = 15.04$, $SD = 5.05$). Each burnout component was indicated with either moderate or moderately high scores in participants experiencing a performance slump. The exhaustion component had the highest scores for participants experiencing a performance slump.

The Relationship Between Performance Slump Severity, Academic Burnout, and Relationship Satisfaction

It was hypothesized that there would be a positive correlation between the severity of performance slumps and academic burnout and a negative correlation between the severity of performance slumps and relationship satisfaction. The severity of perceived performance slumps were scored using the feelings of reduced accomplishment component of athlete burnout. A Pearson correlation analysis provided support for the hypothesis indicating a significant positive correlation between the severity of performance slumps and academic burnout ($r = .23, p = .04$) and a significant negative correlation between the severity of performance slumps and overall relationship satisfaction ($r = -.24, p = .04$). Within the overall relationship satisfaction were three components: in general, with teammates, and with coaches. Pearson correlation analysis indicated a significant negative correlation between the severity of performance slumps and relationship satisfaction with coaches ($r = -.25, p = .03$) while a correlation with teammates ($r = -.18, p = .12$) and in general ($r = -.13, p = .26$) were negative but not significant. Thus, a performance slump may be indicative of higher academic burnout scores and lower relationship satisfaction overall and specifically with coaches.

Performance Slumps Experienced During the Sophomore Year Compared to Other Academic Years

A one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) was calculated on the scores of athlete burnout, academic burnout, and relationship satisfaction during the sophomore year compared to the freshman, junior, and senior years. It was hypothesized that experiencing a performance slump during the sophomore year would lead to higher rates of athlete burnout, academic burnout, and lower relationship satisfaction compared to the freshman, junior, or senior years. The ANOVA test did not provide support to the hypothesis.

Differences in the experience of athlete burnout across the freshman, sophomore, and junior years¹ were not significant, $F(2, 48) = 1.12, p = .33$. However, the junior year was associated with higher scores of athlete burnout ($M = 57.8, SD = 9.6$) compared to freshman ($M = 52.3, SD = 10.95$) and sophomore ($M = 51, SD = 10.5$) athlete burnout scores.

Differences in the experience of academic burnout across the freshman, sophomore, and junior years were not significant, $F(2, 49) = 1.49, p = .24$. However, the junior year was associated with higher scores of academic burnout ($M = 63.9, SD = 16.03$) compared to freshman ($M = 60.2, SD = 18.8$) and sophomore ($M = 53.3, SD = 14.8$) academic burnout scores.

Differences in mean scores of relationship satisfaction across the freshman, sophomore, and junior years were not significant, $F(2, 50) = .19, p = .82$. However, the junior year was associated with lower scores of relationship satisfaction ($M = 75, SD = 19.5$) compared to the freshman ($M = 78.5, SD = 17.06$) and sophomore ($M = 79.6, SD = 16.3$) relationship satisfaction scores.

Thus, experiencing a performance slump during the sophomore year does not result in significant differences in athlete burnout, academic burnout, and relationship satisfaction scores compared to the other academic years. The junior year had higher academic and athlete burnout scores and lower relationship satisfaction scores compared to the other academic years.

Timing and Duration of a Performance Slump

It was hypothesized that a performance slump would occur in the sophomore year more often than other academic years. There were 34 participants who experienced a performance slump during their freshman year, 30 during their sophomore year, and 11

during their junior year (Figure 1). The first semester of each academic year had the highest number of participants experiencing a performance slump. Participants were also asked to estimate how long they have or had experienced their slump which ranged from one week to one year with “ongoing” as an option for those who were in a performance slump while completing the survey (Figure 2). There were four participants whose performance slump lasted one week, two that lasted two weeks, four that lasted three weeks, ten that lasted one month, five that lasted two months, six lasted half a semester, 20 lasted one semester, 21 lasted one year, and 23 responded that their performance slump was ongoing.

GPA Before, During, and After a Performance Slump

It was hypothesized that student-athletes' mean GPAs before and after a performance slump would be significantly higher than their GPAs during a performance slump. The results supported the hypothesis. A paired-samples *t*-test was conducted to compare participants' GPAs before experiencing a performance slump and during a performance slump. There was a significant difference with GPAs before ($M = 3.65$, $SD = .34$) and during ($M = 3.47$, $SD = .50$) a performance slump; $t(81) = 5.22$, $p = .001$. The results indicated that student-athletes' mean GPAs were significantly lower when experiencing a performance slump compared to before they had fallen into a performance slump. A second paired-samples *t*-test was conducted to compare participants' GPAs during and after a performance slump. There was a significant difference with GPAs during ($M = 3.47$, $SD = .495$) and after ($M = 3.58$, $SD = .408$) experiencing a performance slump; $t(73) = -4.35$, $p = .001$. The results indicated that student-athletes' mean GPAs were significantly higher after their performance slump had passed. Thus, when a participant experiences a performance slump, his or her GPA is

significantly lower compared to his or her GPA before and after experiencing their performance slump.

Discussion

The phrase, the sophomore slump, describes athletes performing poorly in their second year of play. However, the Wetcher-Hendricks (2014) study questioned the validity of the sophomore slump by concluding the participants in their study experienced a freshman fluke rather than a sophomore slump phenomenon and regressed to their mean performance. In addition to this, multiple limitations including the lack of a sophomore slump inventory, lack of sophomore slump research in athletics, and lack of research on the collegiate student-athlete population in general makes the sophomore slump in college athletics a difficult topic to study. Considering that the sophomore year is a time of identity development and newfound academic pressures and challenges, this study researched the effects a performance slump may have on collegiate student-athletes during the sophomore year compared to other academic years. The results showed that the sophomore year was not significantly different when compared to the other academic years as the severity of performance slumps was found to be significantly positively correlated with academic burnout and significantly negatively correlated with relationship satisfaction. Moreover, student-athletes' GPAs during a performance slump were significantly lower than their GPAs before or after their performance slump. The results suggested that a performance slump and athlete burnout coincide, and that the freshman and sophomore years are when performance slumps tend to occur.

The first hypothesis was that a performance slump would be associated with high levels of burnout indicated by reduced feelings of accomplishment and exhaustion

components but not in sport devaluation. This hypothesis was not supported by the results. Student-athletes indicated moderate to moderately high mean scores on each component with exhaustion having the highest mean score out of all three components. These scores are indicative of athlete burnout as all three components of burnout were present. Considering that performance slumps are natural fluctuations in performance and precursors to athlete burnout, it can be difficult to determine which performance slump will be experienced as athlete burnout and which will be experienced as a period of poor performance. Thus, the results suggested most participants had experienced their performance slump as athlete burnout. Although participants indicated the highest mean level of exhaustion, the participants overall indicated a moderate athlete burnout score.

One possible reason for the increased occurrence of athlete burnout could have been related to when the survey was distributed. Even though the survey asked the participants to reflect on when they had experienced a performance slump, 23 student-athletes indicated their performance slump was ongoing at the distribution of the survey. Thus, this explanation may only apply to this cohort within the study. The survey was distributed late in the fall semester which is usually the time when student-athletes are nearing the end of a grueling season. This could potentially explain how their performance slump was experienced as athlete burnout. A performance slump experienced as a period of poor performance may have occurred earlier in the fall semester either in the beginning or middle of the season and had progressed into athlete burnout by the end of their season. The end of a season tends to be when exhaustion is the highest because student-athletes have trained for nearly 20 hours a week for three months straight.

Additionally, the qualitative results from the slump questions added support to the quantitative findings that most student-athletes had experienced their performance slump as athlete burnout. The participants' descriptions mentioned all three components of burnout and how they personally experienced their performance slumps. Typically, performance slumps are associated with the reduced feelings of accomplishment component of burnout. The quantity of student-athletes describing their performance slump as feelings of reduced accomplishment suggests these two factors are related. One student-athlete said, "my times were not where they should have been," a second student-athlete stated, "I was not hitting very well," while others mentioned they were not confident in their athletic abilities. Additionally, the extreme symptoms associated with reduced feelings of accomplishment were expressed as feelings of failure and depression. One student-athlete claimed, "I was in a depressed state and didn't feel like my normal self" while another said her performance slump felt like "a combination of anxiety and depression." These quotes demonstrate how performance slumps are related to reduced feelings of accomplishment. However, performance slumps are also related to exhaustion.

Exhaustion was only experienced with one of the other two components of burnout, and never alone according to the student-athletes' descriptions. Reduced feelings of accomplishment and sport devaluation components were presented alone or with exhaustion. The reduced feelings of accomplishment component was mentioned most often while the sport devaluation component was the least mentioned category. This finding was consistent with the hypothesis. Considering that exhaustion never presented itself alone, this could offer a potential reason to why the exhaustion component using the ABQ had the highest mean score. According to the literature, exhaustion develops as athletes try to overcome their

performance slump with increased efforts and resolve which is contrary to the rest and relaxation coping strategy (Taylor, 1988). One student-athlete responded, “my sports performance went down because my body was so exhausted, making me push harder which only made things worse, translating to me being burned out” while another said, “due to my dedication, I became very depressed and drained because my energy was being dismissed and had no purpose.” Both descriptions aligned with the literature’s explanation of developing exhaustion. Overall, student-athletes experienced their performance slump as athlete burnout as all three components were present according to the qualitative and quantitative results.

The second hypothesis, that the severity of a performance slump would be significantly positively correlated with academic burnout and significantly negatively correlated with relationship satisfaction, was supported by the results. The negative correlation between the severity of a performance slump and relationship satisfaction will be discussed first, with the relationship between the severity of a performance slump and academic burnout following. The total relationship satisfaction score was measured using three relationships. These relationships were designated as in general, with coaches, and with teammates. One observation was that only relationships with coaches were significantly negatively correlated with the severity of a performance slump while the other two correlations were slightly negative, but not significant.

A student-athlete’s relationship with his or her coach is the most influential in his or her college experience (Drummer, 2014). Coaches dictate their players’ strict schedule and playing time. Typically, this relationship works in both directions as the coach invests in their athletes while the athlete invests in his or her coach. The way in which coaches invest is

through helping their athletes improve their athletic skills. The way in which athletes invest is through winning competitions, using their newfound athletic skills. Thus, the relationship satisfaction is the lowest when student-athletes believe their coach has stopped investing in them. When describing their slump, multiple student-athletes mentioned their relationship with their coach contributed to their performance slump. One felt that “my coaches were not helping me improve my abilities and it showed on the field,” and a second student-athlete said, “my coaches now perceived me as the national’s winner which has translated into them not putting in as much effort into my training...it’s exhausting and frustrating because I give 10,000% and they give 20%.” Another student-athlete responded, “I was slow, unmotivated, and backtracking in progress. I was mad at my coaches and myself and didn’t want to practice”. Even if the coach invests in his or her student-athletes’ athletic skills, relationship satisfaction can be affected when the coach does not motivate the team to be successful. One student-athlete claimed she had “extreme discouragement from the lack of team success and stubbornness of coaches to try to adjust in order to be successful.”

Moreover, when student-athletes perceive their coaches as not caring or assisting them with overcoming their performance slump, this may further decrease the relationship satisfaction. Some coaches may believe they are supporting their athletes out of a performance slump by limiting their playing time and giving them rest. Resting and relaxing have been shown to reduce the severity of a performance slump, but without the proper communication, this approach may induce more stress in the student-athlete. Student-athletes feel accomplished by earning playing time and competing. When the coach limits playing time, the student-athlete would likely develop feelings of reduced accomplishment which is associated with a performance slump. One student-athlete responded, “I received no

encouragement or support to transition out of my slump.” However, the support could have derived from coaches reducing this particular athlete’s playing time. Moreover, coaches are typically the ones pressuring student-athletes to overcome their performance slump as soon as possible without offering the necessary support. This added pressure stresses the student-athlete and strains the relationship between the coach and athlete. Chronic stress from trying to alleviate a performance slump, losing playing time, and facing pressures from the coach are reasons why there is a negative correlation between the severity of a performance slump and relationship satisfaction towards the coach.

The correlation between a performance slump and relationship satisfaction in general and with teammates were negative but not significant. Relationships in general encompass family members, administrators, professors, classmates, and any other relationship student-athletes form with those excluding teammates or coaches. Although the quantitative results indicated a slightly negative correlation with relationship satisfaction in general, with teammates, and the severity of a performance slump, the qualitative results suggested a positive correlation between these factors. These relationships potentially have a positive influence on student-athletes considering that these relationships are removed from sports. One example of this could be relationships with family members, as they may have positive impacts on student-athletes. When describing his performance slump, one student-athlete mentioned “the only thing that kept me going was my family. I felt like quitting several times”. Thus, the support from his family positively influenced him by encouraging him to continue playing. The relationship formed with teammates are important but not as influential as that with the coach. Only one student-athlete mentioned, “I thought I wasn’t good enough and that my teammates thought less of me.” This thinking may have strained this athlete’s

relationship with his teammates. However, these two accounts were the only ones not addressing relationships with coaches. Therefore, the negative correlation between the severity of a performance slump and relationship satisfaction with coaches was the most significant.

As hypothesized, the severity of a performance slump was significantly positively correlated with academic burnout. Most student-athletes explained how performing poorly in the classroom and sports were connected. One student-athlete replied, “I did not have the motivation to succeed on the field or in the classroom” while another said, “I was not achieving what I trained for and suffered academically and in my sport because of disappointment.” One student-athlete’s description captured the struggle of athletics coupled to academics by stating “part of [the performance slump] comes from the fact that I had patellar tendinitis...so doing my sport has become painful. The other part is feeling pressure to do well in my classes, so it becomes stressful.” These descriptions show that the qualitative responses align with the quantitative correlation data.

A likely reason there for the positive correlation between performance slump severity and academic burnout could be related to confidence issues. Confidence is potentially associated with student-athletes’ identities; thus, when student-athletes feel a lack of confidence, their identities and other aspects of their lives (e.g. academics) may be affected. Although confidence was not included in this study, multiple student-athletes mentioned in their responses that they had no confidence in both their sports and classrooms. One said, “I didn’t have confidence in myself and did not have the motivation to succeed on the field or in the classroom” which captures how confidence is perhaps related to the correlation between performance slumps and academic burnout.

Another potential reason why performance slump severity and academic burnout are positively correlated might be due to the pressures student-athletes face when abiding by the NCAA rules. To maintain eligibility, the NCAA requires student-athletes to maintain above the minimum GPA, to choose a major, and to complete a certain amount of their major by a specified time. These rules create a more challenging academic atmosphere where student-athletes must complete a larger quantity of school work in a limited amount of time. One student-athlete stated, "I felt mentally strained and physically exhausted by trying to juggle school work and playing my sport." Another said, "I had to stay up late and do homework." The lack of sleep leads to fatigue, and this may translate to or prolong a performance slump. Furthermore, if student-athletes identify more strongly as students rather than athletes, they may not want to dedicate as much time to their sport. Less time committed to maintaining athletic skills may lead to a performance slump. One felt that "the workload at school increased which made me feel as though I didn't have enough time to finish it all." This same student-athlete also "felt as though the practice was a waste of my time, and I could be doing my homework instead." Therefore, the NCAA pressures combined with athletic pressures results in a demanding situation that is prone to performance slumps.

The third hypothesis was that a performance slump experienced during the sophomore year would lead to higher scores of athlete and academic burnout and lower scores of relationship satisfaction compared to other academic years. However, the results showed there were no significant differences between the academic years. This suggests that student-athletes in a performance slump potentially have the same chance of developing athlete burnout, academic burnout, and low relationship satisfaction during any academic year. One explanation for this is related to the transitions student-athletes face with each

academic year. The freshman year marks the transition from high school to college and living at home with parents to gaining more freedoms away from parents (Tobolowsky, 2008). The sophomore year marks the time when academic pressures increase as student-athletes take harder classes and begin to narrow down their academic major choices (Tobolowsky, 2008). The junior year marks the transition from underclassman to upperclassman which adds the responsibilities of being a leader on one's team and on campus while the senior year marks the transition from college to the working world or graduate school (Tobolowsky, 2008). When describing his performance slump, one student-athlete said, "when I came to college, I had trouble adjusting. This resulted in poor performance on the court. It bothered me because I knew I could do better but for some reason I couldn't get my body to do the things I knew it could." This description could align with any of the transitions between academic years in college as each year brings its own unique set of pressures.

Although there were no significant differences between academic years, the junior year indicated higher mean scores on athlete burnout and academic burnout and lower mean scores on relationship satisfaction compared to the other academic years. This suggests the junior year is the year in which student-athletes struggle the most. The first explanation for the lack of significance could be there were only seven participants who had experienced a performance slump their junior year. Seven student-athletes do not allow for enough power to find significant differences. Additionally, the small sample size for the junior year may not have been representative of the entire group; however, representative sampling was used to capture the population, so the small junior group should not significantly impact the results. Thus, the population sampled should, in general, be consistent with a normal distribution.

The second explanation could be related to the fact that the junior year has not been researched nearly as much as the other academic years. Research has extensively studied the experiences, needs, behaviors, and expectations of the freshmen and senior years because these two academic years mark the greatest transitions in college (Tobolowsky, 2008). The sophomore year has seen more attention than the junior year (Tobolowsky, 2008). Typically, the junior year is when student-athletes have declared their major and can focus specifically on courses in their major. Additionally, the junior year is when student-athletes engage in internships, service opportunities, study abroad, and gain leadership responsibilities on their teams and college campuses (Tobolowsky, 2008).

The third explanation is related to developing an identity. Given that student-athletes in their junior year begin to identify themselves outside of sports, they may struggle to establish an identity. This could result in junior student-athletes experiencing similar identity issues as sophomores. Thus, a performance slump experienced during the junior year may affect other aspects of a student-athlete's life. The last possible explanation for the difference in the mean scores could be the responsibility juniors have on their teams by being team leaders. Team leaders are constantly under scrutiny by their teammates. Considering that team leaders have a say in certain team rules, teammates watch to see if their team leaders follow these rules. The pressures from being a team leader compounded with maintaining academic eligibility and performing well may explain why the junior year indicates the most severe scores. Research of student-athletes' junior year may be a direction for future research to isolate the factors affecting them. Overall, the results found there were no significant differences between the academic years as it pertained to academic burnout, athlete burnout, and relationship satisfaction scores.

The fourth hypothesis was that a majority of student-athletes would experience their performance slumps during the sophomore year. The results showed that student-athletes indicated their performance slumps began in the freshman or sophomore years more often than the junior or senior years. From the results, 45% of student-athletes indicated their performance slump began their freshman year while 40% indicate their sophomore year (Figure 1). One observation was that most student-athletes reported their performance slump began in the first semester. This could be due to the fact that the first semester of each year is when student-athletes struggle to adjust from their summer recess to the demands placed upon them during their academic school year. By the second semester of the year, it could be student-athletes have made the appropriate adjustments to alleviate their performance slump as the second semester observed fewer performance slumps. Some pressures that may lead to a performance slump the first semester freshman year are establishing team chemistry, learning one's place on the team, and getting along with teammates. The performance slump can simply be that the college team plays in a different style compared to the student-athlete's previous team he or she competed with while in high school. The freshman student-athlete may not feel that he or she is contributing when, in reality, he or she is but in a different way than what he or she was previously used to doing. Thus, the performance slump may manifest as playing in a different style rather than playing poorly. Each year introduces new academic pressures which may lead to a performance slump. The added pressures and time commitments from academics limits the amount of training a student-athlete can do. With less time to train, a student-athlete's skill may not be as sharp for competitions.

The last observation was that no student-athlete in this study experienced a performance slump during their senior year. A possible reason could be that the survey asked

student-athletes to think back to when they had experienced a performance slump, so the seniors and graduate students who participated in the survey thought back to a previous performance slump that occurred earlier in their collegiate career. The survey did not account for multiple performance slumps, so student-athletes who fell into a performance slump their senior year as well as earlier in their collegiate career may have referred to their earlier performance slump. Furthermore, this observation may have been due to the pool of participants. It could have been that those who experienced a performance slump as a senior had graduated and were not able to participate in the study.

Participants were also asked to report how long their performance slump lasted (Figure 2). Performance slump experiences ranged anywhere from one week to one year with “ongoing” as an option for student-athletes who were currently experiencing a performance slump when they participated in the survey. The ongoing category is ambiguous with respect to time because a student-athlete who is currently experiencing a performance slump may have been in his or her performance slump for three days, two years, or any amount of time. This category captured the relevance of a performance slump for the fall of 2017 as 23 student-athletes indicated their performance slump was ongoing at that time.

The next largest category was “one year” closely followed by “one semester”. The “one year” category meant student-athletes felt they were in a performance slump for two consecutive semesters. This could be due to injury or nagging pains that can negatively influence a student-athlete’s performance because the pain limits their abilities. Multiple student-athletes mentioned the difficulties in overcoming an injury which resulted in a prolonged performance slump. One student-athlete stated, “I was injured in the fall semester and in the spring when I began competing again I was slow” while another mentioned,

“injured, I was out for a year. Started to return to play and then was injured again.” One student-athlete responded “I had been pulled from practice because I lost too much weight. Gaining weight back caused me to run slower and during that time I questioned whether running in college is worth it.” Gaining weight and overcoming injuries can potentially take a year which explains the duration of these student-athletes’ performance slumps.

The “one semester” category spans an entire season. Student-athletes physically prepare for their seasons in the breaks (e.g. summer, winter) preceding them which can potentially exhaust them for their college season. One student-athlete stated, “I was on fire the first semester of my sophomore year, then it hit January and I was in a slump” which demonstrates how a student-athlete’s performance one semester is not related nor dictates how the following semester will be. Thus, the findings were that most student-athletes experienced a performance slump in their freshman or sophomore years, and the performance slump tended to last either one year, one semester, or was currently ongoing.

The fifth and final hypothesis, that student-athletes’ GPAs before and after a performance slump would be significantly higher than their GPAs during a performance slump, was supported by the results. Considering the relationship between the severity of performance slumps and academic burnout, it follows that student-athletes’ GPAs suffer as a result. Academic burnout presents as a lack of desire or motivation to attend classes, complete assignments, nor study. Many student-athletes expressed they were not motivated to compete in their sports nor complete school work because they had fallen into a performance slump. One student-athlete responded, “I felt zoned out all the time, felt that I just didn’t want to play my sport or go to class” to describe the lack of motivation in academics and athletics.

The last likely explanation for the significant drop in GPA during a performance slump when compared to before or after may be that student-athletes try to alleviate their performance slump by increasing their efforts in training or by training for longer periods of time. The extra training leads to fatigue and reduces the time student-athletes have to focus on academics. The coupled effect of limiting one's time by training harder and being enrolled in extra classes that are more time consuming may be why student-athletes' GPAs drops when they are experiencing a performance slump. When describing his performance slump, one student-athlete felt "the demand of practice...leaves me with very little energy and even less time to get my school work completed." Therefore, the positive correlation between performance slump severity and academic burnout along with limited time for academics lends evidence for the significant drop in student-athletes' GPAs when they are in a performance slump.

Solutions for performance slumps include rest, specifying goals, and counseling (Taylor, 1988). When experiencing a performance slump, student-athletes need to find time in their busy schedules for relaxation, or coaches needs to implement off days without optional workouts to encourage their student-athletes to solely rest. Student-athletes may also find it useful to identify what is causing their performance slump and set goals to alleviate it. This entails a student-athlete focusing on one aspect of his or her performance such as their timing or technique (Taylor, 1988). According to Taylor (1988), counseling could be individual or in groups where negative emotions associated with a performance slump can be discussed and replaced with coping strategies.

When these solutions are not implemented on time, athlete burnout may result. To decrease the severity of athlete burnout, the student-athlete needs social support (Dale &

Weinberg, 1990). This support is needed during each academic year to address the newfound pressures from the transitions between the years. Support can come from many sources including peers, teammates, coaches, or staff administration. However, receiving support from coaches may be the most influential considering the significance in the relationship between athlete and coach.

Coaches can offer support to their athletes in a variety of ways. One could be individual meetings where the student-athlete and the coach discuss and share their expectations in their respective sport, and the student-athlete can talk about his or her academics, future goals, families, and other subjects outside of athletics. Coaches could also implement team bonding to encourage their student-athletes to work together. The team bonding activities could be a multitude of games that may or may not pertain to athletics such as charades or scavenger hunts. Another way could be through team dinners hosted by the coach. This would entail a coach inviting his or her athletes to his or her home for a meal and spend time with each other outside of athletics.

Limitations

Only student-athletes who had experienced a performance slump at one point in their collegiate career were of interest in this study. Collegiate student-athletes who did not experience a performance slump were excluded and could not participate in the survey. By excluding these student-athletes, the performance slump group could not be compared to the non-performance slump group. However, a performance slump in each academic year could be compared to one another to determine if a performance slump during the sophomore year was more likely to lead to higher scores of athlete and academic burnout, and lower scores of relationship satisfaction.

The participant pool encompassed multiple student-athletes who had experienced a performance slump either in their freshman or sophomore year; however, few indicated they experienced a performance slump in their junior or senior years. The lack of junior and senior data could be that there were a greater number of participants who had completed their freshman and sophomore years compared to those who had completed their senior year. Thus, the junior and senior athletes would reflect on when they experienced their performance slump which most likely would have been either their freshman or sophomore years since those are the years they completed. Additionally, collegiate student-athletes complete their athletic eligibility in four years. Therefore, those who may have experienced a performance slump in their junior or senior year may not have been included or able to participate in the survey, considering they may have already graduated.

Given the amount of limitations, there are many directions for future research. One direction could be the development of a performance slump questionnaire. This questionnaire may possibly be used to better gauge an individual's experiences and severity of a performance slump. This way, a performance slump would not have to be measured using the ABQ or assumed that it is associated with the feelings of reduced accomplishment component, its measurement would be able to stand alone. Another direction could be the expansion of sophomore slump research within an athletic setting considering that usually the athletic setting is given little attention. Future research could also gather the experiences of collegiate student-athletes in general. This small subpopulation's behaviors, expectations, and experiences tend to be implied based on research on the college student in general.

Another direction for future research would be to link the ABQ with clinical trials. By doing this, the severity of athlete burnout could be studied and compared to literature values.

This would allow ABQ scores to be compared to “normal” scores which would be predetermined from the clinical trials. Thus, coaches and other administration could assess and evaluate individual student-athletes’ ABQ scores to understand their severity and take action to alleviate it.

In conclusion, the data showed that the experience of a performance slump during the sophomore year is not significantly different compared to other academic years. This leads to the conclusion that a performance slump during any academic year may lead to higher scores of athlete burnout, academic burnout, and lower scores of relationship satisfaction. Thus, there is no one year that is more severe than the others. Additionally, the results showed that the severity of a performance slump was positively correlated with academic burnout and negatively correlated with relationship satisfaction with coaches. Student-athletes’ GPAs during a performance slump were significantly lower than their GPAs before and after a performance slump. Lastly, most student-athletes indicated their performance slump began either in their freshman or sophomore year and lasted anywhere from one week to one year. Although performance slumps are considered natural, they can have rather unnatural consequences in an athlete’s life.

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Footnotes

1. There were no participants who experienced a performance slump their senior year.

Thus, only freshman, sophomore, and junior years were compared in the ANOVA.

Appendix A

Table 1

Demographics of participants.

Experiencing a slump	Number of Athletes
Yes	156
No	47
NCAA Division	
I	133
II	32
III	10
Academic Year	
Freshmen	43
Sophomore	36
Junior	23
Senior	42
5 th Year Senior	6
Graduate Student	5
Gender	
Male	54
Female	102
Sport	
Baseball	5
Football	12
Basketball	10
Cross Country	9
Golf	10
Wrestling	8
Triathlon	1
Lacrosse	15
Rifle	1
Soccer	21
Swimming and Diving	17
Tennis	3
Track and Field	18
Softball	18
Volleyball	13
Equestrian	8

Appendix B

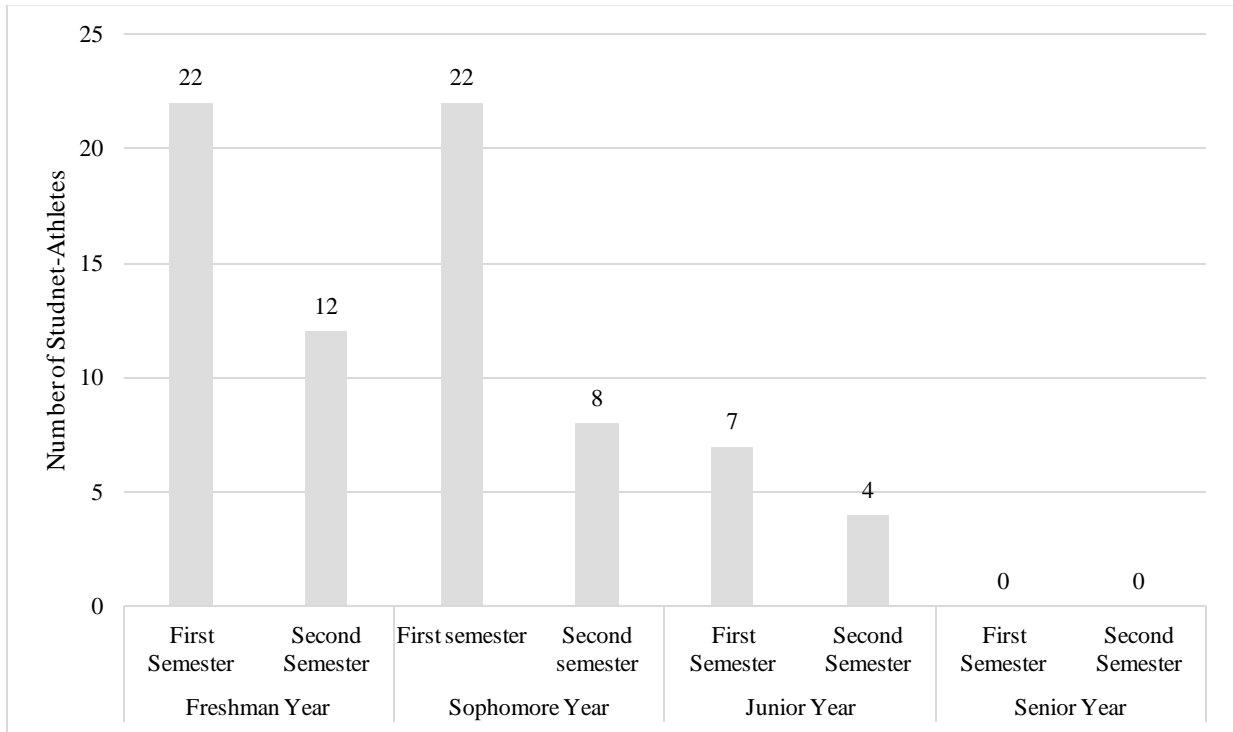


Figure 1. Timing of when student-athletes indicated they experienced a performance slump.

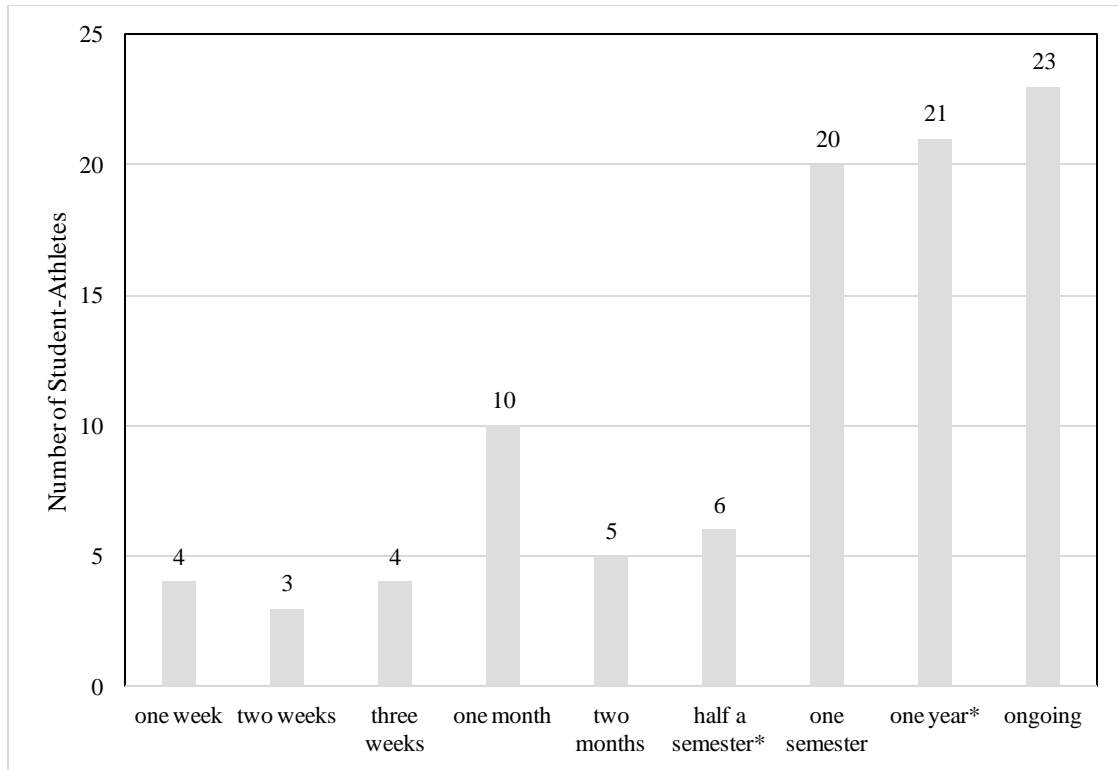


Figure 2. Student-athletes reported how long they experienced symptoms of a performance slump.

*Student-athletes who described their performance slump as lasting three and four months were grouped in the “half a semester” category, and student-athletes who described their performance slump as lasting two semesters were grouped in the “one year” category.

Appendix C

Demographic Questionnaire

1. What is your gender?

Male

Female

Other:_____

2. Which sport(s) do you play? Check all that apply.

Baseball

Gymnastics

Lacrosse

Softball

Field Hockey

Water Polo

Rifle

Volleyball

Football

Wrestling

Skiing

Equestrian

Basketball

Bowling

Soccer

Rugby

Cross Country

Rowing

Swimming and Diving

Fencing

Triathlon

Tennis

Golf

Ice Hockey

Track and Field

Other:_____

3. What is your academic year?

Freshmen

Sophomore

Junior

Senior

5th year Senior

Graduate

4. At which division level do you compete?

I

II

III

5. Have you ever experienced a slump or a prolonged drop in performance in your sport?

Yes

No

Academic Success Questionnaire

1. If applicable, what was your GPA before your slump?

_____ N/A

2. What was/is your GPA during your slump?

3. If applicable, what was/is your GPA after your slump?

_____ N/A

Maslach Burnout Inventory—Student Survey

Reflect on when you were experiencing your slump. How often do/did you feel this way?

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Strongly Disagree	Moderately Disagree	Slightly Disagree	Neutral	Slightly Agree	Moderately Agree	Strongly Agree

1. I feel/felt emotionally drained by my studies.
2. I feel/felt used up at the end of a day at the university.
3. I feel/felt tired when I get/got up in the morning, and I have/had to face another day at the university.
4. Studying or attending a class is/was really a strain for me.
5. I feel/felt burned out from my studies.
6. I have/had become less interested in my studies since my enrollment at the university.
7. I have/had become less enthusiastic about my studies.
8. I have/had become more cynical about the potential usefulness of my studies.
9. I doubt/doubted the significance of my studies.
10. I can/could effectively solve the problems that arise/arose in my studies.
11. I believe/believed that I make/made an effective contribution to the classes that I attend/attended.
12. In my opinion, I am/was a good student.
13. I feel/felt stimulated when I achieve/achieved my study goals.
14. I have/had learned many interesting things during the course of my studies.
15. During class I feel/felt confident that I am/was effective in getting things done.

Athlete Burnout Questionnaire

Reflect on when you were experiencing your slump. How often do/did you feel this way?

1	2	3	4	5
Almost never	Rarely	Sometimes	Often	Almost always

1. I am/was accomplishing many worthwhile things in my sport.
2. I feel/felt so tired from my training that I have/had trouble finding energy to do other things.
3. The effort I spend/spent in my sport would be/would have been better spent doing other things.
4. I feel/felt overly tired from my sport participation.
5. I am/was not achieving much in my sport.
6. I do/did not care as much about my sport performance as I used to.
7. I am/was not performing up to my ability in my sport.
8. I feel/felt “wiped out” from my sport.
9. I am/was not into my sport like I used to be.
10. I feel/felt physically worn out from my sport.
11. I feel/felt less concerned about being successful in my sport than I used to.
12. I am/was exhausted by the mental and physical demands of my sport.
13. It seems/seemed that no matter what I do/did, I do/did not perform as well as I should.
14. I feel/felt successful in my sport.
15. I have/had negative feelings toward my sport.

Relationship Questionnaire

Reflect on when you were experiencing your slump. How are/were your relationships

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Not at all			Sometimes			Extremely

Relationships in general

1. How satisfied are/were you with your personal relationships, in general?
2. How content are/were you with your personal relationships, in general?
3. How happy are/were you with your personal relationships, in general?
4. How committed are/were you to your personal relationships, in general?
5. How dedicated are/were you to your personal relationships, in general?
6. How devoted are/were you to your personal relationships, in general?

Relationship with Teammates

7. How satisfied are/were you with your relationship with your teammates?
8. How content are/were you with your relationship with your teammates?
9. How happy are/were you with your relationship with teammates?
10. How committed are/were you to your relationship with teammates?
11. How dedicated are/were you to your relationship with teammates?
12. How devoted are/were you to your relationship with teammates?

Relationship with Coaches

13. How satisfied are/were you with your relationship with your coaches?
14. How content are/were you with your relationship with your coaches?
15. How happy are/were you with your relationship with your coaches?
16. How committed are/were you to your relationship with your coaches?
17. How dedicated are/were you to your relationship with your coaches?
18. How devoted are/were you to your relationship with your coaches?

Slump Questions

1. When did your slump begin? First semester freshman year, second semester freshmen year, etc. _____
2. How long did your slump last? One week, one month, one semester, it is currently ongoing, etc. _____
3. Describe your slump? (optional)