

Background

- Being an athlete can be a protective factor, but many college athletes report feeling stressed and mentally exhausted.
- According to the NCAA Student-Athlete Health & Wellness Study, 44% of college athletes experience mental health challenges on a daily basis.
- NCAA D3 athletes often report high levels of stress and lower access to mental health resources than those provided to D1 athletes. Research on this is lacking.

Purpose

- The MindBody Lab for Athletes is a partnership between a wellness department and an athletic department to teach practices designed to decrease stress and performance anxiety and increase focus in athletes.
- Athletes are introduced to biofeedback to learn how to regulate their body's responses and are taught mindfulness techniques to reduce stress and improve focus.

Measures

- <u>Athlete Mindfulness Questionnaire (AMQ)</u>
 - A 16-item questionnaire that measures sport specific mindfulness for athletes and is broken into three dimensions: present moment attention, acceptance, and awareness
- <u>Sport Anxiety Scale (SAS)</u>
 - A 21-item questionnaire that measures somatic anxiety, worry, and concentration disruption

MINDBODY LAB FOR ATHLETES A Meditation & Biofeedback Program to Reduce Performance Anxiety & Improve Focus

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Methods

- Equestrian (17 participants) and women's basketball (12 participants) teams met with instructors for five 45minute sessions.
- Used HeartMath, a biofeedback sensor to help athletes monitor their heart rate variability (HRV). • Used Subjective Units of Distress Scale (SUDS) to teach athletes how to monitor distress levels before and after
- meditations.
- Taught athletes mindfulness meditations, including: visualizations, body scans, paced breathing, mantra meditation, and progressive muscle relaxation. Administered AMQ and SAS as pre- and post-tests.



Athlete Mindfulness Questionnaire (<u>AMQ</u>): No significant difference <u>Sport Anxiety Scale (SAS)</u>: 19.34% decrease in sports anxiety

Athlete Mindfulness Questionnaire (<u>AMQ</u>): 6.47% increase in mindfulness related to athlete's training and competition <u>Sport Anxiety Scale (SAS)</u>: 5.74% decrease in sports anxiety





- and increasing focus.
- greater results.
- increased ability to focus and stay mindful.
- Coaches for both teams reported that they felt their teams were more focused and less anxious.
- We plan to continue research on this topic, and next year we will add three additional teams, along with a control group. More research on how to improve mental health for D3 athletes is needed because this is an underrepresented and under-resourced group.



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Conclusion

 Initial research indicates that MindBody Lab for Athletes has proven benefits for decreasing performance anxiety

• The most significant result was with the equestrian team, which showed a 19.34% decrease in sports performance anxiety. This team had gone through the program in the prior semester and had also improved in this area; it may be that increased familiarity with the techniques led to

• Both teams showed improvement in decreased sports anxiety, while only the basketball team showed an

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