Mind or Medal: Elite Athletes’ Mental Health Management in Sports Events
By Chin-Hsun Ken Tsai and Sophia A. Steinmeyer

Case Study Summary
Mental health has long been underestimated. Recently, athletes’ mental health has received more attention. Several sport and medical specialists are concerned about athletes’ post-competition performance. Studies on elite athletes’ mental health culminated in the IOC’s Expert Consensus Statement. New research on mental health among elite athletes suggests mental illness is often under-diagnosed due to the "mental toughness" mindset in many sports circles.

Mental health issues are a leading source of functional disability and illness worldwide. Despite evidence that regular physical activity improves physical and mental health, one-third of athletes may have mental health problems. Today, statistics reveal that society discusses and researches athlete mental health. Google Trends shows more than twice as many conversations concerning athletes’ mental health after 2020 than before.

Elite athletes face pressures that raise their mental illness risk. Distress and concern may emerge as withdrawing from friends and activities, appearing melancholy or unhappy, criticizing their physical form, violent behavior, or considerable weight loss. All sports departments and trainers worldwide must promote student athletes’ mental health and well-being to help them function at their social, academic, and athletic best.

Teaching Objectives
• Identify and comprehend the appearance of mental illnesses.
• Analyze the steps to resolve a mental health problem in sporting events.

Target Audience
This case study was prepared to educate and inform undergraduate students, graduate students, college athletes, and coaches about the importance of mental health. People with a mental health problem are encouraged to speak up and seek help. This case study is ideal for undergraduate and graduate courses in sports management and leadership.

Recommended Teaching Approach Strategy

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Block</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Suggested Time</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Introduction</td>
<td>5 minutes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Understand forms of mental illness</td>
<td>15 minutes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Understanding the problem</td>
<td>30 minutes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Encourage students to create a list of three highlights from their day</td>
<td>15 minutes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Key takeaways and reflections</td>
<td>10 minutes</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Block 1: Introduction (5 minutes)
Mental health affects our emotional, psychological, and social well-being. It influences the way we feel, thinks, and act. It also affects our decision-making, interpersonal interactions, and stress management. At every stage of life, from childhood and adolescence through adulthood, mental health is crucial.

Block 2: Understanding the forms of mental illnesses (15 minutes)
This block is designed to help students understand the various forms of mental illnesses. Mental illnesses include:
- Depression
- Anxiety disorders
- Personality disorders
- Eating disorders
- Trauma-related disorders
- Substance abuse disorders
- Bipolar disorder

Block 3: Understanding the problem (30 minutes)
The video is a five-minute explanation of what mental health is and why it is critical. While the video is playing, the instructor asks the students to jot down five key points, either something they discovered or something that piqued their curiosity.

Source: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oxx64hMBUI

Block 4: Encourage students to create a list of three highlights from their day (15 minutes)
Ask students to write down three highlights from their day and three things that could have been improved. Then, have students write next to their lows what they can do differently tomorrow to avoid those lows.

Block 5: Key takeaways and reflections (10 minutes)
Concentrating on the case's key takeaways. The emphasis in this case study is on the understanding that it is OK to seek assistance from a professor or another adult when feeling down.
Additional Readings


