

# “Getting fired up”: Division I baseball student-athletes’ perceptions of walk-up songs

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In 1970, an organist for the Chicago White Sox organization, Nancy Faust, began playing walk-up songs for players going to bat (Comacho, 2016). Originally, when players would walk to the plate, their state's song was played. However, athletes found walk-up songs to be inspirational and a new tradition was born. Walk-up songs have become so iconic, as teams all over the world (and varying levels of competition) have implemented the tradition (Camacho, 2016).

Music has been found to enhance athletic performance (Akhshabi & Rahimi, 2021; Terry et al., 2020). According to Akhshabi and Rahimi (2021), “Music was associated with significant beneficial effects on affective valence, physical performance, perceived exertion, and oxygen consumption” (Terry et al., 2020, p. 91). Given the tradition of walk-up songs and the benefit of music on athletic performance, an investigation into collegiate walk-up songs is warranted. Informed by the Arousal-Mood-Hypothesis (Roeglin, 2023), the purpose of this study was to explore Division I baseball student-athletes’ perceptions of walk-up songs.

Utilizing a phenomenological approach, 10 Division I baseball student-athletes participated in semi-structured (zoom) interviews. The data revealed two major themes: It’s Go Time and The 10th Man. The first theme, It’s Go Time referenced the physical and mental preparation each participant described when hearing their specified walk-up song. The 10th man theme is derived from the participants’ perceived benefits of a “home field advantage” in combination with selecting walk-up songs to ensure crowd engagement.

This study strived to explore Division I baseball student-athletes’ perceptions of walk-up songs. The results demonstrated that the participants felt that walk-up songs had a positive impact on their performance and on the game-day atmosphere. Previous research has examined the influence of music on athletic performance (e.g., Fox et al., 2019; Delleli et al., 2023). To this, baseball student-athletes all should have the ability to pick their own walk-up songs and should utilize music therapy techniques (e.g., Jamali et al., 2016) in an effort to increase athletic performance.