

Balancing Act: Exploring Overtraining and Recovery Perspectives in College Athletics

Corrion Lewis-Ward, University of North Georgia

E. Su Jara Pazmino, University of West Georgia (Advisor)

Abstract

This research project delves into the critical issue of overtraining and limited recovery times faced by student-athletes in collegiate athletics, examining the perspectives of coaches and athletic administrators. According to the Drake Group Educational Fund (2023), the demanding nature of practice, travel, and other athletics-related activities presents a significant obstacle for college athletes pursuing meaningful education. As college presidents and boards of trustees prioritize lucrative conference memberships and media rights fees, the impact of long-distance travel on athletes is often overlooked.

In contemporary college athletics, overtraining and recovery have emerged as pivotal concepts, reshaping the landscape of coaching, training, and sports decision-making. Previously dismissed as insignificant, their importance in sustaining and developing successful athletic programs has become evident. This research seeks to address critical questions surrounding the identification of overtraining, the role of rest and recovery in preventing it, and the provision of appropriate recovery methods when overtraining and burnout occur.

Amanda Paule-Koba, a professor at Bowling Green University, emphasizes the need for institutions to reinvest the billions of dollars generated by conferences back into the athletes who contribute to this revenue (Golembeski, 2022). This research project aims to evaluate how overtraining, and recovery are currently addressed within athletic departments and explores potential protocols, materials, and methods that can enhance the well-being of student-athletes.

The study is driven by two central research questions:

1. How is overtraining and recovery currently being addressed in collegiate athletic programs?
2. What protocols, materials, and methods can be implemented to improve overtraining and recovery practices?

Recent reports suggest that athletic programs may not be fully aware of the underlying factors of overtraining and its impact on the recovery process for their athletes. The assumption is that athletic departments may overlook the delicate balance between intense workouts and potential overtraining, leading to injuries. Semi-structured interviews will be conducted with coaches and athletic administrators from various Division I (DI) and Division II (DII) NCAA institutions to gain insights into their perspectives and practices regarding overtraining and recovery.

This research endeavors to contribute valuable insights to the ongoing discourse on athlete well-being and athletic program management, shedding light on the complexities of balancing high-performance expectations with the essential need for adequate recovery in collegiate sport.