A Coaches' Role in Assisting Athletes to Reset to a Next Level

Morgan Paige[a] and Brad Strand[b]

[a] Morgan Paige is an assistant women's basketball coach at North Dakota State University; [b]Brad Strand is a professor in the Department of Health, Nutrition, and Exercise Sciences at North Dakota State University.

Abstract

Next level athletes face significant challenges transitioning to higher level competition on and off the court. Those challenges can be an extremely shocking, traumatic, and life changing experience for many people. Many athletes come from being the stars of their team at their current level and then transition into a program that probably has more skilled athletes at the same participation level. Not being able to perform at the same skill level can be detrimental to an athlete's performance, confidence, and mental health. Taking a self-confidence hit may cause an athlete to want to quit, not want to exercise, and even not want to compete. They may even resort to partaking in other comfort activities such as drugs and alcohol, in order to deal with the emotional struggle. It is essential that coaches understand what impacts an athlete's confidence, self-worth, and performance as they transition from one level of competition to the next level of competition. How athletes see themselves being successful is the basis for reaching their next level of success in competition.

When athletes, be they middle school, high school, or first year college athletes, move to the next level of competition, many are unprepared for what will be asked of them as they compete at that level (Sturm, 2016). Coaches and trainers will be pushing them harder than they had previous experienced and in the case of collegiate athletes, to their physical capacities as well as the brink of their mental strength (Coutts, 2016). Building mental and physical endurance (toughness) is what separates the average athletes from the high performing athletes regardless of sport and in many cases, level of competition (Ness, 1997).

When an athlete is at the breaking point of mental and physical exhaustion, the first self-attributes to be questioned are one's self-confidence and self-belief (Hamilton, 2020). "Can I even compete at this level?", "What am I doing here?", "Why am I not as good as everyone else?", "Is this what I am supposed to be doing?". All of these questions spiral through almost all athletes' mind more often than they would like to admit (Smith, 2020). For a coach, it is imperative to understand how this thinking impacts players and how one can equip their athletes to start processing a different picture for more positive outcomes (Hyber, 2019).

All athletes have endured, what is appropriate for their level of competition, physical training and fatigue; the true test comes on the mental side of training (Flanagan, 2019). How can coaches prepare next level athletes for the change of pace, the culture, and intensity of training so when they are asked to push through fatigue, they are mentally ready to take the next step (Benson, 2020)? This paper discusses the hierarchy of needs, athlete identify, fixing identify concerns, and explores tactics coaches can use to help athletes prepare and train their minds to compete at their highest potential for their level of competition. Providing a set of applied practices will support the athletes and allow them to take ownership of their growth and performance.

Hierarchy of Needs

The mind of an athlete is complex and can be molded and shaped to advance the athlete's physical performance. When the playing environment transitions to the next level of competition, each athlete faces different transitional struggles to compete at that next higher level. When an athlete struggles with how they see themselves in comparison to their new teammates, or long for previous lower-level successes to manifest in their new level, it can truly set the athlete back from improving his or her play. The building of self-worth, self-esteem, self-confidence,

and self-efficacy allows for athletes to learn to create their own source of drive and commitment.

Self-Worth

An athlete's self-worth is established early in their athletic career (Lanter & Blackburn, 2015) and is based principally on deeply held feelings of value and worth as a person (Marshall & Paterson, 2017). In theory, self-worth is about who you are, not what you do. Unfortunately, many athletes judge their self-worth on how well they play a sport.

Healthy self-worth is displayed by athletes knowing they are living lives with value and are loved regardless of their athletic successes and failures (Collins, 2018). Their self-worth does not falter on a Tuesday when a failed test grade is returned or when the starting lineup does not include them. Athletes who struggle with their self-worth will blame themselves and constantly compare themselves to those around them (Price, 2018). Some of the struggles with self-worth are deep rooted in childhood upbringing and experience, and depending on the experience, it may take help from a mental health professional, or in the case of elite level athletes, a sport psychologist, in order to see changes in beliefs (Henriksen et al., 2017).

Self-Esteem

Self-esteem relates to the current experiences around an athlete. Self-esteem is affected by self-worth, but supports self-confidence (Ackerman, 2020). As an athlete's achievements grow or shrink, their self-esteem can change with each success or failure (Price, 2018). In many instances, athletes have been told throughout the course of their athletic career that they are elite and successful, and most of the time have the accolades to prove it.

When next level athletics begins, success may be more difficult to achieve and accomplishments fade away. This can be the make-or-break point for many athletes. Can the athlete shift his or her focus to accomplishing smaller successes throughout the course of the week? Can they be content with winning a single drill in practice? Can they take pride in acing an academic project and excelling in the classroom? The adjustment in growing self-esteem in a new environment is where struggles can become minor hiccups or serious roadblocks for next level athletes. Shifting ones' viewpoint of judgment to be less harsh towards ones' self and more positive will be the key to moving forward with confidence.

Self-Confidence

Self-confidence is an attitude about ones' skills and abilities. It means one accepts and trust themself and has a sense of control in their life. With self-confidence, one knows ones' own strengths and weakness well and has a positive view of self (University of South Florida, na).

Marshall and Paterson (2017) suggested that self-belief and self-confidence work together in how athletes see themselves. Levels of self-confidence can vary in different aspects of the athlete's ability or perception of what they can accomplish (Price, 2018). This means that an athlete can be very confident in a skill or ability and have low self-confidence in another. Feeling extremely confident as a ball handler, but lacking confidence in perimeter shooting is an example of this differentiation. It is easier to modify and grow self-confidence, in comparison to self-worth and self-esteem.

Self-Efficacy

Self-efficacy is defined as being a task-specific form of confidence. Self-efficacy refers to ones' beliefs about ones' capability of producing a very specific level of performance (Bandura, 1994) in ways that give them control over events that affect their lives (Cherry, 2020). The greater one's self-efficacy, the greater will be their intensive effort; the lower their self-efficacy, the less will be the effort and difficult tasks will be viewed as threats (Bandura, 2012).

Overall, self-efficacy is not what a person can actually do, but what a person THINKS he or she can do in specific settings and situations. Because self-efficacy is task specific, it stands apart from self-confidence (Marshall & Peterson, 2017). Depending on an athlete's mood or mindset for the task ahead, his or her self-efficacy can change (Hamilton, 2020). An athlete can have high self-efficacy to finish the entire conditioning portion of the take home workouts but have a low self-efficacy to give maximum effort on a day when they feel sick or under the weather. Self-efficacy can change in a minute, an hour, a week, or a month. The ability of fluctuation can be positive and negative for the life of an athlete.

Athletic Identity

Athletic identity has been defined as the degree to which an individual identifies with the athlete role and looks to others for acknowledgement of that role (Brewer et al., 1993). Athletic identity has nothing to do with how fast one is, how strong one is, or how much one trains (Poux & Fry, 2015). In a team sport, athletic identity means feeling like one belongs in the competitive group as well as how they stack up against others within their team. Using basketball as the example, a freshman, be it high school or college, does not have to be the tallest or most physically gifted member of the team to have a mature athletic identity. If one feels comfortable with what they offer and what is unique to themselves, they grow their self-belief and self-confidence to be a consistent asset to help boost

performance. A mature athletic identity allows athletes to take the next step in athletic performance.

Athletic identity can be divided into two parts: 1) personal inner thoughts and feelings about being an athlete (private identify); and, 2) how a person perceives other people's views of themselves (public identify) (Symes, 2010). A self-schema is the thought people have about themselves in different areas of life (Cherry, 2020); also defined as, a mental blueprint of who one is, what one can do, and how one think others perceive them (Marshall & Paterson, 2017). "I am ultra-competitive and I will never lose a sprint" or "I am not the best receiver" are examples of a football player's self-schema they have formulated about themselves.

Athlete self-schema develops from memories of personal experiences but is also influenced by expectations, what one has heard about their sport skills from parents and coaches, and of what one thinks their future self will be like in certain situations (Marshall & Paterson, 2017).

Self-schema shapes personal expectations of what is thought to be possible, what one will attempt and persist at, how to explain success and failure, and how one wants others to see themselves in certain areas of life (Jhangiani, & Tarry, 2014). If a coach can grasp the understanding of their athletes' self-schema, it will be easier to assist or support the athlete when situations arise that challenge their thinking and feelings (Pharion, 2014). The goal is to have athletes improve their confidence and grit, take responsibility for their own actions, and learn acceptance skills in their training. As athletes grows in these areas, so will the maturity of their athletic identity (Reifsteck et al, 2016).

Mature athletic identities are not created overnight, especially with younger athletes, as roadblocks often stand in the way of them being sure of their capabilities (Lally & Kerr, 2005). In addition, athletes can have different types of athletic identity issues (Berg, 2018). Marshall & Paterson (2017) explored four types of discord with athletic identity: 1) identity mismatch, 2) volatile identity, 3) chasing a former identity, and 4) identity foreclosure.

Identity Mismatch

Identity mismatch suggests there is a disconnect between an athlete's inner world perception and the athlete's outer world perception (Hoffman, 2016). In the basketball world, people may identify a player as "super quick and athletic" but the player themselves may not feel fast or like an athlete. Another example of identity mismatch comes from personal lives and athletic lives sending two different messages. Parents may tell their child they are one of the best defenders, but the coaching staff is providing a completely different message. Constant discord creates uncertainty and questioning of one's ability (Champion et al., 2020).

Discord can also come from those individuals with whom one spends time. Sticking with the example of basketball, there are a variety of levels of age, skill, work ethic, and discipline within any roster. One way to stretch an athlete's self-schema is to rotate their training partner. It is not helpful to constantly train with the best three-point shooter on the team when trying to build one's shooting skills. When an athlete only trains with people who are better skilled than themselves, it can affect the way the athlete thinks about their own ability. It is hard to feel good about oneself when one is constantly getting beaten by others (White, 2017).

And on the flip side, if athletes are constantly training with those less skilled than themselves, there is a danger of false comfort that comes with being the number one player on the roster (Edwards, personal interview, 2020). In order to assist athletes in reaching their highest potential, coaches should encourage athletes to train and practice with new people each week (Edwards). This will help build the habit of branching out while stabilizing their confidence in the growth of their skills.

Volatile Identity

Another common identity crisis is volatile identity. Volatile identity is the drastic change of how we see ourselves and the fluctuation of those viewpoints (Marshall & Paterson, 2017). For example, one week an athlete might feel like they can take on anyone, but another week they might feel as if they could not make the team. More often than not, "feeling like an athlete" is strongly influenced by training habits. The more a person trains, the more a person feels like an athlete. The less a person trains, the harder it is for them to see themselves as an athlete. The easiest way to improve this identity shift is training consistency.

Setting attainable goals and patterns that can be sustained for weeks and months, not just a weekend grind, are the smoothest way to grow personal self-schema. Instead of dribbling and ball handling for five hours the day after a game where six turnovers were committed, one might create a routine to practice ball handling 15 minutes before or after practice to feel more confident in that ability. Consistent training and planning rather than excessive reactionary training are ways to improve a volatile identity

Chasing a Former Identity

One of the most severe identity shifts seen at every level is the problem of chasing a former identity;

players on youth travel teams when they transition to middle or junior high teams and junior high athletes when they transition to high school teams and high school athletes when they transition toc college teams. For example, in collegiate baseball, it is likely that every member of a team has had numerous levels of success in their respective high school programs. There are expectations, spoken or unspoken, going into the collegiate level that these identities of being the star pitcher, the home run hitter, or go-to player will continue (Comeaux & Harrison, 2011). For many, being the person, the coaching staff and team call upon to make plays happen is the role of choice.

When athletes get to their next level of competition, they are surrounded by other athletes just as talented or more talented and the number of minutes or innings an athlete plays may be drastically different than what they are used to. This leads to fewer points, less possessions, and lower production in general. This can be one of the hardest transitions an athlete experiences.

Marshall and Paterson (2017) offered a solution in that athletes should focus on building a new identity at the next level, a revised sense of what is important, and how one measures success - a new normal. Building a new normal is thinking of one's abilities and talents as a 2.0 version. During training sessions, the athlete needs to spend more time on process goals, such as technique and form, instead of product or outcome goals.

Identity Foreclosure

Identify foreclosure is a stage of self-identity discovery in which an individual has an identity but has not explored other options or ideas. Athletic identity foreclosure refers to commitment to the athlete role in the absence of exploration of alternatives (Brewer & Petitpas, 2017). Athletes face problems with identity foreclosure when they believe they already know who they are, and in doing so, stop growing their identity prematurely (Marshall & Paterson, 2017).

An athlete may think they cannot do something but they may have never actually tried to do so because they believe cannot do it (Murphy et al., 1996). Good et al., (1992) reported that identity foreclosure of collegiate athletes increased with the level (freshman-senior years) of sports participation. The teaching point is to seek guidance from other athletes who have the skills and train with them. An athlete should avoid training solo when they are questioning if their training is being practiced correctly.

Fixing Self-Identity Issues

With all four of the athlete identity issues, there are two ways to approach fixing the issues and boosting athletic identity: 1) fixing self-schema (inside-to-out strategy) or 2) faking it until you make it (outside-to-in strategy). These strategies can be useful for athletes who are looking to grow their performance and abilities and is the most reasonable way for athletes to address self-identify issues

Self-Schema

A chess game is an analogy many can relate to. A strategic game of give-and-take is necessary in chess to be successful. As an athlete, there are days when thoughts and feelings are more powerful than the truth of their surroundings. "I am not good enough to play here", "Why am I not improving", or "They are so much better than I am", can all be like pieces in the game of chess. Marshall and Paterson (2017) explained that chess pieces can sometimes attack each other, and other times defend each other. The thoughts an athlete has can move around like chess pieces and sometimes stay quiet and still (defending) and other times become big and overwhelming (attacking). Detaching from the "game" that is being played is a way to change the mental narrative for athletes.

Because an athlete is the chess player, and not a piece on the game board, the athlete can decide what mental noise is ignored and what is being heard. A basketball athlete, for example, may have strong thoughts that her defensive skills are poor, and she can only hang her hat on being a solid perimeter shot maker. Thoughts make up her athletic identity because it is the message she is listening to. Sure, a three-point percentage of 43% may have factual evidence behind her thought process, but that does not mean she cannot change the narrative of only being a shooter and working on improving other aspects of her game.

The exercise in figure 1 can be used to change an athlete's perspective and is helpful for athletes at any level to work through some of the mental roadblocks keeping them from taking the next step in self-confidence and performance. As athletes acknowledge the difference between what they feel and what is factually true, the act of detaching from feelings and thoughts will allow them to change their mental narrative (Marshall & Paterson, 2017).

Figure 1 Illustration of Tell Me About Yourself as an Athlete
- Describe yourself as an athlete. No one else will read this, so try to be as honest as you can. Know that there isn't a right or wrong answer - this is just a chance for you to write about your athleticism. Write whatever you want in the way that feels the most natural.
- Now reread your self-description and circle all of the words or statements that relate to the Definable You (things that are factually

accurate). Read it through a second time and underline all of the words or statements that reflect thoughts or feelings about yourself as an athlete.

Rotella (2015) described confidence as residing in the subconscious of the brain and people having choices to change thoughts and behaviors. Rotella described self-image as an archive of all the thoughts one has ever had about themselves. Fortunately, athletes can rebuild their self-image and confidence (Ekeocha, 2015). In order to build confidence and a positive self-image, one must recognize that the mind cannot be a prisoner of a bad experience (Boss, 2015). As many coaches have said, "in order to be a good athlete you need to have a short memory."

Some have suggested talking to oneself in the first person with positive affirmation (Razzeti, 2018). For example, a golfer named Amy might say, "Come on Amy, you got this" to herself prior to executing a putt. Rotella (2015) suggested keeping a journal or notebook to record every good shot during a given day - even if it is in a practice setting. This is an example of continuous positive feedback and reassurance to the subconscious that things are going well, improvement is being made, and confidence is being built. The simple breakdown is remembering the positives and forgetting the negatives. Rotella says it best from an athletes' vantage point; "A champion understands that it's fine to save an experience when it's positive, to remember it, to celebrate it. When an experience is negative, he understands he can't let himself get stuck in it. He can see no benefit from ingraining a bad experience by reliving it" (p. 35).

Across different sports, young athletes struggle with creating a positive self-image when things do not go their way (Price, 2018). It is very easy for them to be overly focused on the different actions and decisions that go poorly throughout the course of a practice. As such, when leaving the gym, court, pool, or field, an athlete knows how many times he or she was corrected for doing something wrong, how many shots were attempted and missed, and how many times they were at fault.

Shifting mindsets can start early in athletic careers if athletes are given the tools necessary to grow (Dweck, 2016). Documenting positive plays and shifting the focus away from the negatives will help to grow the confidence needed to advance in training, even while an athlete is still learning and making mistakes as they go along (Gilbert, 2017). If all athletes do is focus on the negative results within the training, they will become a prisoner to the negative and it will prove to be a more difficult fix the longer the negative thoughts are allowed to grow and dominate self-image.

Fake It Until You Make It

Much of society measures athletes as being successful based on individual or team wins or loses (Vogel et al., 2019). Young athletes realize that everyone they see in the gym or on the field can run and jump pretty well. In basketball, some of them shoot the ball better and in baseball they throw the ball harder, which is a shock to a lot of players, and their confidence can easily falter (Rotella, 2015).

The players at every level of competition, were likely to be the best players on their previous teams at the lower level. They were the ones who took the last shot or had the ball in the final seconds because they were the ones their coaches wanted on the line at critical moments. However, in each level that one advances, someone else is often a star and someone else takes the critical shots and goes to the line in the final moments. Maybe the coach decides the younger, inexperienced athletes have limitations of speed, size, or something else and puts them on the bench where their confidence falters (Rotella). Athletes who experience these types of confidence slips need to look for sources of confidence in other aspects outside of themselves.

How do coaches help build confidence within these younger players who are feeling overwhelmed with a game they already know how to play? Rotella (2015) stated, "It's a two-pronged approach. Work on needed skills. Work on confidence. But don't make a confident self-image dependent on perfecting skills" (p. 50). Skill work could be as simple as ten minutes of pressure dribbling before or after practice to help an athlete feel more comfortable in live play situations or games. Confidence is found in little successes. If a player can build on little victories, they can start to create their own confidence in the work they are putting into their craft. Confidence blossoms when an athlete decides to put the work in for themselves and take ownership of their skills while earning more opportunities, additional playing time, and responsibility within the team.

If initial confidence is lacking, where does one start? Marshall and Paterson (2017) talked about forcing the issue and "faking it" until one makes it. For example, sometimes power comes from simply changing stances to exude confidence. Carney et al. (2010) studied the effects of high-power and low-power poses on some fundamental features of having power: feelings of power, elevation of the dominance hormone testosterone, lowering of the stress hormone cortisol, and an increased tolerance for risk. Findings suggest that by changing physical posture, individuals can prepare themselves mentally to withstand stress and difficult scenarios.

These findings suggest that, in some situations requiring power, people have the ability to "fake it 'til they make it" (Carney et al., 2010). What that looks like may vary from athlete to athlete. Pretending to be someone else can be a powerful strategy to instantly transform into an aspirational version of oneself. Taking on an "alter ego" who does not worry about competition, who refuses to quit, and has no shortage in confidence has helped athletes step out of their comfort zones and reach a higher level of performance (Marshall & Paterson, 2017).

Figure 2 shows the development of a competitors' identity that is readily accessible to the athlete. In this example, Lesley Paterson is a world championship level triathlete who struggles to consistently stay confident and compete at her highest level. In figure 2 (at the end of the paper) you see Paterson's alter ego and what she wants to personify when she races. This alter ego helps her find the right mindset so she performs how she wants to perform. This in similar to well-known professional athletes who give themselves nicknames, for example, Deion Sanders called himself Prime Time and Kobe Bryant was Black Mamba.

Allowing athletes' the opportunity to become another version of themselves to believe in while they are figuring out other pieces of their life is sometimes one of the best ways to help. As the athlete continues to develop, the alter ego will become less and less needed, and their true competitive nature will start to replace the imaginary.

Implications for Coaches

Coaches and mentors can play a significant role in helping athletes' transition to the next level of competition (Parietti, 2015). The best coaches grow and develop talent in their individual players and instill a belief in their athletes that encourages them to believe in themselves to perform well. In order to reach the level of efficacy within the team, it is the coaches' responsibility to build and create environments to challenge and stretch the comfort of their athletes (Price, 2018). It is important to grow athletes and build their level of successes, while also making sure to avoid placing them in situations where they are most likely to fail too early (Morton, personal interview, 1985). Self-efficacy is a cornerstone for competing at the best possible level, and the best athletes and coaches understand why self-efficacy is important in order to take their games to the next level (Forrester, 2018).

A number of suggestions coaches might consider to help athletes as they transition from one competition level to the next have been suggested throughout this paper. Something not mentioned but very useful is to have athletes complete some sort of assessment in an attempt for a coach to better understand individual personalities or traits and if athletes are ego (product) or mastery oriented (process). In some instances, these assessments might be used to match new athletes with veteran athletes who are similar in personality or traits. An older athlete helping a younger athlete will help the younger athlete better understand the transition from one level of competition to the next and it removes some of the fear of standing out.

Early season interviews with athletes also help coaches better understand the athletes hopes and fears. Post season interviews provide athletes a chance to explain what was difficult for them in the past year; information coaches can use to give future athletes more tools for success.

References

Ackerman, C. E. (2020, April). What is self-esteem: A psychologist explains. *Positive Psychology*. https://positivepsychology.com/self-esteem/

Afremow, J. A. (2013). *The champion's mind: How great athletes think, train, and thrive.* Emmaus, PA: Rodale Books.

Bandura, A. (1994). Self-efficacy. In V. S. Ramachaudan (Ed.), *Encyclopedia of human behavior* (Vol. 4, pp. 71-81). New York: Academic Press.

Bandura, A. (2012). *Self-efficacy the exercise of control*. New York, NY: Freeman.

Benson, J. (2020). Balancing school and college sports: How student athletes can kill it in class and the court. *AC Online*. https://www.theatlantic.com/education/archive/2019/04/teen-athletes-mental-illness/586720/

Berg, R. E. (2018). *I skate therefore I am: Athletic identity amongst collegiate level hockey players*. Honors Theses and Capstones. University of New Hampshire, Durham, NH, 412. https://scholars.unh.edu/honors/412

Boss, J. (2015, June). 4 ways to build your self-confidence after a setback. *Entrepreneur*. R https://www.entrepreneur.com/article/247177

Brewer, B. W., & Petitpas, A. J. (2017). Athletic identity foreclosure. *Current Opinion in Psychology, 16,* 118-122.

Brewer, B. W., Van Raalte, J. L., & Linder, D. E. (1993). Athletic identity: Hercules' muscles or Achilles' heel? *International Journal of Sport Psychology, 24, 237-254.*

Carney, D. R., Cuddy, A. J. C., & Yap, A. J. (2010). Power posing: Brief nonverbal displays affect neuroendocrine levels and risk tolerance. *Psychological Science (0956-7976), 21*, 1363–1368.

Champion, W. T., Karcher, R. T., & Ruddell, L. S. (2020). *Sport ethics for sport management professions*. 2nd Edition. Jones & Bartlett Learning, Burlington, MA.

Cherry, K. (2020, May). Self-schemas in psychology. *Verywellmind.* https://www.verywellmind.com/what-is-a-self-schema-2795026

Cohn, P. (2020). Sports visualization: The secret weapon of athletes. *Peak Performance Sports.* https://www.peaksports.com/sports-psychology-blog/sports-visualization-athletes/

Collins, 2018, Jan). Effects of early participation on self-esteem and happiness. *The Sports Journal.* https://thesportjournal.org/article/effects-of-early-sport-participation-on-self-esteem-and-happiness/

Comeaux & Harrison, (2011). A conceptual model of academic success for student-athletes. *Educational Researcher, 40*, 235-245.

Coutts, A. J. (2016). Fatigue in football: It's not a brainless task. *Journal of Sport Sciences, 34(*14), 1296.

Dweck, C. (2016). *Mindset: The new psychology of success*. Ballantine Books: NY.

Ekeocha, T. C. (2015). *The effects of visualization and guide imagery in sports performance.* Master's Thesis, Texas State University,

Flanagan, L. (2019, April). Why are so many teen athletes struggling with depression? *The Atlantic*, https://www.theatlantic.com/education/archive/2019/04/teen-athletes-mental-illness/586720/

Forrester, N. W. (2018, February). How Olympians train their brains to become mentally tough. *The Conversation*. https://theconversation.com/how-olympians-train-their-brains-to-become-mentally-tough-92110

Gilbert, W. (2017). *Coaching better every season: A year-round system for athlete development and program success.* Human Kinetics, Champaign, IL.

Good, A., Brewer, B., Petitas, A. J. Vanraalte, J. L., & Mahar, M. T. (1992). Identity foreclosure, athletic identity, and college sport participation. *The Academic Athletic Journal, 1,* 1-12.

Hamilton, A. (2020). Sport psychology: Self-confidence in sport – make your ego work for you! *Peak Performance*. https://www.peakendurancesport.com/endurance-psychology/coping-with-emotions/sports-psychology-self-confidence-sport-make-ego-work/

Henriksen, I. O., Ranøyen, I., Indredavik, M. S., & Stenseng, F. (2017). The role of self-esteem in the development of psychiatric problems: A three-year prospective study in a clinical sample of adolescents. *Child and Adolescent Psychiatry and Mental Health, 11, 68.*

Hoffman, K. J. (2016). *Identity crisis of an athlete/student*. Sport Management Undergraduate. St. John Fisher College Paper 117.

Hoover, A. J. (2006). *Keys to athletic success: A study of student-athletes' and coaches' views on mental toughness.* Master's thesis. Marietta College, Marietta, GA.

Hyber, J. (2019, March). *5 keys to building relationships with your athletes*. Vertimax. https://www.vertimax.com/blog/5-keys-to-building-a-relationship-with-your-athletes

Jhangiani, R. & Tarry, H. (2014). *Principles of social psychology – 1st International edition*. Victoria, B.C.: BCcampus. Retrieved from https://opentextbc.ca/socialpsychology

Lally, P. S. & Kerr, G. A. (2005). The career planning, athletic identity, and student role identity of intercollegiate student athletes. *Research Quarterly for Exercise and Sport, 76*, 275- 285.

Lanter, J. R., & Blackburn, J. Z. (2015). The influence of athletic success on the self-esteem of first year college students. *Journal for the Study of Sports and Athletes in Education, 9*(1), 1-11,

Marcone, M. (2017). *The impact of coaching styles on the motivation and performance of athletes*. Masters' Synthesis Projects. Brockport State University of New York, Brockport, NY. https://digitalcommons.brockport.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1021&context=pes_synthesis

Marshall, S., & Paterson, L. (2017). *The brave athlete: Calm the f*ck down and rise to the occasion*. Boulder, CO: VeloPress.

Murphy, G. M., Petitpas, A. J., & Brewer, B. W. (1996). Identity foreclosure, athletic identity, and career maturity in intercollegiate athletes. *The Sport Psychologist, 10*, 239-24.

Mumford, G. (2016). *The mindful athlete: Secrets to pure performance*. Berkeley, CA: Parallax Press.

Ness, J. (1997, Sept/Oct.). Are you training your mental game or just thinking about it? *USA Gymnastics Online: Technique, 17*(9), 1-2.

Parietti, M. (2015). *Parental influence on the academic and athletic behaviors of collegiate student athletes*. Doctoral Dissertation. Ohio State University, Columbus, OH.

Pharion, J. L. (2014). *Transformational leadership in coaching*. Master's thesis. Ashland University, Ashland, OH.

Price, J. (2018, Oct.). *Confidence among college female student-athletes.* American Volleyball Coaches Association. https://www.avca.org/Blog/Article/175/Confidence-Among-Female-Student-Athletes

Poux, K. N. & Fry, M. D. (2015). Athletes' perceptions of their team motivational climate, career exploration and engagement, and athletic

identity. *Journal of Clinical Sport Psychology JCSP, 9*, 360-372.

Reifsteck, E. J., Gill, D. L., & Labban, J. D. (2016). "Athletes" and "Exercisers": Understanding identity, motivation, and physical activity participation in former college athletes. *Sport, Exercise, and Performance Psychology 5*(1), 25-38.

Rotella, R. J., & Cullen, B. (2016). *How champions think: In sports and in life*. New York: Simon & Schuster Paperbacks.

Smith, C. (2020). *Why is it so hard for athletes to feel successful*? Athlete Network. https://an.athletenetwork.com/blog/why-is-it-so-hard-for-athletes-to-feel-successful

Smith, D., Wright, C., Allsopp, A., & Westhead, H. (2007). It's all in the mind: PETTLEP-based imagery and sports performance. *Journal of Applied Sport Psychology, 19(1), 80–92*.

Symes, R. (2016, May). Understanding athletic identity: 'Who am I?" *Podium Sports Journal.* https://www.podiumsportsjournal.com/2010/05/24/understanding-athletic-identity-who-am-i/

Sturm, L. (2016). *Sophomore student-athletes' perceptions of athletic academic support services*. Master's Thesis, Eastern Illinois University, Charleston, Il. https://thekeep.eiu.edu/theses/2349

University of South Florida. (na). *What is self-confidence?* USF Counseling Center. https://www.usf.edu/student-affairs/counseling-center/top-concerns/what-is-self-confidence.aspx#:~:text=Self%2Dconfidence%20is%20an%20attitude,a%20positive%20view%20of%20yourself.&text=People%20with%20low%20self%2Dconfidence%20often%20have%20errors%20in%20their%20thinking.

Vogel, B. L., Kress, J., & Jeske, D. R. (2019, Feb). Student-Athletes vs. Athlete-Students: The academic success, campus involvement, and future goals of Division I student athletes who were university bound compared to those who would not have attended a university had they not been an athlete. *The Sport Journal*. https://thesportjournal.org/article/student-athletes-vs-athlete-students-the-academic-success-campus-involvement-and-future-goals-of-division-i-student-athletes-who-were-university-bound-compared-to-those-who-would-not-have-attended/

White, A. L. (2017). *Perfectly unfinished: Finding beauty in the midst of brokenness*. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan.

Figure 2

An example of Lesley Paterson's Alter Ego

Name: Give your alter ego a name that fits his or her personality	Paddy McGinty
Characteristics: Describe the traits or personality of your alter ego	An old school boxer. Not graceful or pretty but a rough-around-the-edges fighter. Thrives on being the underdog. Loves tough conditions. Turns feral when backed into a corner. Will out-suffer anyone. Gets knocked down five times, will get up six. When in pain or discomfort, raise the stakes by asking "Is that all you've got?"
My alter ego reminds me of: List people or characters whom your alter ego reminds you of	Tom Hardy's MMA character in the movie *Warrior*. William Wallace in *Braveheart*
Their backstory: Describe the kind of life your alter ego has lived; things already endured	Started with nothing. Fought against impossible odds to win. People always write him off, but he out-works and out-suffers everyone. Finishes every match beaten and bloody but still standing
How will I get into character? Describe how you will make the transition	I become Paddy when I put on my race suit or certain types of training gear for hard sessions
How I will act? Describe your posture, how you will walk and talk, or other actions that get you into character	Avoid eye contact with other competitors before the race starts. Wear hoodie and headphones. Walk everywhere with strong body language and real sense of purpose. Shoulders up, chest out. Eyes say "not to be f*cked with"
Things I will say to myself: Include statements or mantras that are typical of how your alter ego think	Always fight. It's never over.
Something I will wear or do: Describe physical reminders you can use that will be noticeable during practice or competitions	Write "I am Free" and "Be Brave" in big letters on my forearms before a race. Being brave is about having the courage to give it everything. "I am free" reminds me to not care about expectations. On good days and bad days, being free is about just getting lost in the personal struggle.

(Marshall & Peterson, 2017, p. 45)