

Student Athletes & Conflict Resolution

Conflict Resolution Workshop Analysis

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Introduction

Conflict among college students is an event that's almost common as procrastinating on a homework assignment. All students will face conflict in their time spent at university, there is no one who has a conflict free experience. Within college, a group of students stand out as having more conflict than the average college student; These people are student athletes. They are expected to handle all of the responsibilities of a college student, and then add practice, competitions, skills training, game review, compliance meetings, and many other activities. The National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) estimates that student athlete's spend up to 40 hours per week on athletic activities. That's in addition to the recommended two to three hours per unit per week spent on academic responsibilities.^{1,2} For a student athlete, conflict resolution is one of the most important skills they can learn while in school. This paper will discuss the reason I've chosen incoming and current freshman student athletes as the target audience for my workshop, the topics I've researched as common sources of conflict for student athletes, and interviews with current coaches and athletes. Following the research and justification will be the outcome of the workshop, my personal reflection, and analysis of the experience. The PowerPoint and the handout used in my workshop presentation have been attached at the end of this document for reference.

Justification For Group Choice

Student athletes are a part of almost every college across the country but make up a very small percentage of the student body. Nonetheless, the expectations of a student athlete are double or triple those of a non-student athlete. Per NCAA regulations, student athletes are required to take a minimum of 12 units per semester with most taking 14-16 units. This equates to a maximum of 85 hours per week to manage both athletic and academic responsibilities, and this doesn't include sleeping or other necessary activities.^{1,2} It's a fine line of balancing morning practice, weight lifting sessions, afternoon practice, mandatory compliance meetings, and competitions, with classes and their own demands.

From my own experience as a student athlete, it's not only difficult to balance these two very different schedules, but conflicts arise all the time with class scheduling, midterms and finals, coaches' expectations, professors not accepting travel letters, and more. I chose incoming student athletes as the group for my workshop due to the immense benefits that a new student athlete could gain from working on conflict resolution skills. The information in the workshop is tailored to student athletes as they start their scholarly and athletic careers, and covers a range of topics. Simple topics such as when an athlete can miss class for an excused reason as well as more complex topics. For example, who to contact when a professor and their respective department say if you miss an exam for competition you'll fail the

class. I've had to experience all these events myself without any guidance or how to handle them correctly. I can personally see the benefit this type of workshop would have had for me if I had attended one when I started San Jose State. My personal experience also helped guide the way I researched this topic.

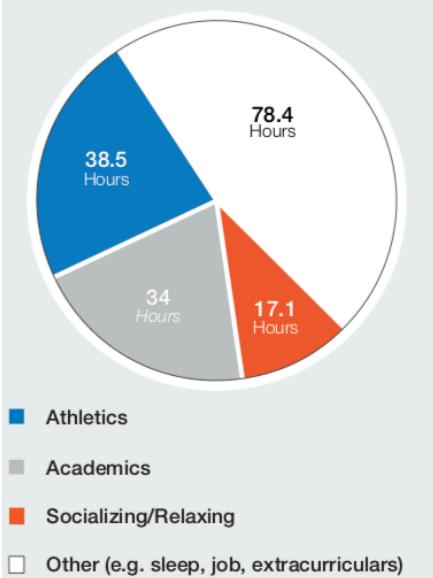
Research

To ensure that my opinion wasn't the only one being presented in my workshop, I interviewed coaches and athletes from San Jose State and the University of Louisville, used peer reviewed journals and dissertations, and distributed a survey to other student athletes at San Jose State and other universities. Combining these resources allowed me to prepare the workshop specifically tailored to incoming student athletes.

The interviews I conducted with the coaches helped me to see conflict resolution from a different point of view. The coaches have the best view of what conflict their athletes are going through. They are the people that have the power to resolve the conflict for student athletes or direct them to the proper resource who will guide them further. San Jose State's Head Cross Country Coach, Brad Wick, says the biggest conflict he sees in his athletes relates to time management and scheduling. "People schedule more than they can handle and everything they do suffers. If they're not getting enough sleep, athletics and school are going to go poorly."³ Coach Wick encourages his athletes to talk to him about any scheduling issues they may

have and to keep a sleep log. His philosophy is that getting a full night's rest will put you leaps ahead of where you'd be without sleep. There's research to back up his claims, too. A survey done on Division I athletes by the NCAA found that student athletes spend 78 hours per week, or 45% of their time, sleeping, working, and doing other extracurriculars.⁴ Not getting enough sleep is just one way to increase the physical demands on a student athlete, as well as raise the amount of stress they have.

In the 40 athletes that filled out the survey I distributed, 74% of them reported having a stress level of 6 or higher (See Appendix C). It's estimated that as much as 15% of college athletes have a higher risk of developing mental health issues because of the higher levels of stress and anxiety they have from participating in collegiate athletics.⁵ Stress management is an important skill for student athletes to work on. Hyperstress is a common event for athletes especially during midterms and finals. These times usually coincide with the end-of-season competitions and it becomes difficult to manage the tasks they need to do. In an interview with assistant track coach at the University of Louisville, Jeff Petersmeyer, he emphasized the balance that an athlete needs between school and athletics. "We require every new or transfer student athlete to do eight hours of mandatory study hall a

Figure 1: NCAA Time Spent on Activities⁴TIME SPENT ON ACTIVITIES PER WEEK*
(168 hours per week)

week. More than any other sport on campus.”⁶ Petersmeyer wants his athletes to get used to spending a majority of their time on school work, to prepare them to handle tougher upper division classes as well as learn how to deal with the stress that comes from balancing schoolwork and athletics.

The balance that a student athlete has to maintain with schoolwork is not an easy one. The rumor that student athletes aren’t good students and enroll in easy majors could not be further from the truth. In the journal article titled, *Student athlete success: Impact of sport participation on student engagement among NAIA and NCAA institutions*, Carrier discovered that on average, student athletes are “engaged in most educationally purposeful activities at similar levels as their nonathlete peers.”⁷ Even outside of the United States university system, student athletes are performing at similar or better levels as other nations. A study done in the United Kingdom found no differences in overall GPA between U.K. and U.S. student athletes, but found that the U.S student athletes were more motivated in both sports and academics than U.K student athletes, but had much higher levels of conflict with their roles as a student and an athlete.⁸ I was able to incorporate the information from my research into making my workshop more informed and provide a more complete workshop for the athletes I would present to.

Outcome of the Workshop

The closest group of people I could get to being new student athletes

in college are high schoolers. I contacted my former teammate and current assistant coach cross country coach at Los Gatos High School, Raul Rodarte, to help me organize my workshop. Coach Rodarte graduated from San Jose State in 2017 with a degree in Communications Studies. I worked with Coach Rodarte to create a workshop that would both help his athletes understand how different college is from high school, but not make it sound like I'm telling them what they should do. The workshop was designed with the intention to be a resource they could think back to when they encounter conflict as student athletes. When Coach Rodarte and I both entered college, the hardest thing for both of us to do was ask someone else for help. Who to ask for help? became the main focus of the handout for these athletes. The handout was created with language that was designed to, again, be a resource for them to consult in the future, but not the definitive guide to all of their conflict resolution problems.

The feedback that Coach Rodarte received from the athletes was positive and they felt that, overall, they had learned a fair amount about how to approach talking to people when conflicts arise. I utilized the program GoToMeeting to host a virtual workshop from my home on the evening of October 30th. For protection of the minors, they will not be included in any sort of recording or specific information pertaining to them for this workshop.

What I Would Do Differently

I had planned out multiple topics to talk about that pertained to new student athletes who had just arrived at San Jose State. The comments I had in my notes included topics that wouldn't make sense to the high schoolers, and ultimately I cut them out. If I had planned the workshop specifically for high schoolers, I would have done more research pertaining to choosing a school to attend, the difference in Division I, II, and III athletic programs, and how to balance a class schedule. I wouldn't have changed the message that the workshop delivered, but I would have liked to opportunity to tailor the workshop more for the students I was talking to.

What I Learned in the Process

This process allowed for me to investigate a little bit more about the areas of conflict that a student athlete faces. I've got my own personal experience, but this workshop gave me the opportunity to see it from other athletes and coaches points of view as well. It was especially interesting to see the emphasis that coaches put on academics. This is an area that my parents taught me was important from a young age, and I've learned how to manage school and athletics very well. However, I can see that this is an area that people who haven't been taught that will need help learning it, and learning it quickly. The research portion of this assignment also provided me with new insight about the types of research that have been done on student athletes. This opened me up to learning new data and information and

taught me about how I can better solve some of my own conflicts in my final semester at San Jose State.

Conclusion

Student athlete's have some of the toughest lives to balance. They have practice, team meetings, and school work that all needs to get done and still have to sleep a healthy amount. Thought the research that I've done, PowerPoint and handout I've designed, and interviews with current athletes and coaches, I've created a workshop designed to teach incoming student athletes about conflict. In addition to the workshop and research. I've also covered my personal reflections on the workshop and what I would have changed if I could do it again. This workshop presented me a unique experience to reflect on my time as a student athlete, and how to better prepare incoming student athletes to deal with common conflict that they'll encounter at college.

References Cited

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- ³ Wick, B., personal communication. (2018, Oct 06).
- ⁴ NCAA. (2016). *Time management: What division i student-athletes should expect.* http://fs.ncaa.org/Docs/eligibility_center/ECMIP/Time_Demands.pdf
- ⁵ Stress and the student athlete. (2013, Dec 04). *University Wire* Retrieved from <http://search.proquest.com.libaccess.sjlibrary.org/docview/1464781804?accountid=10361>
- ⁶ Petersmeyer, J., personal communication. (2018, Oct 07).
- ⁷ Carrier, B. L. (2013). *Student athlete success: Impact of sport participation on student engagement among NAIA and NCAA institutions* Retrieved from <http://search.proquest.com.libaccess.sjlibrary.org/docview/1435609046?accountid=10361>
- ⁸ Cross, J. (2004). *The British Student-athlete Experience : Identity, Commitment and Role Conflic*
Conflict Resolution Workshop Video: https://youtu.be/N5ihljl_fkw

Appendix A:
Workshop PowerPoint

How to Manage Conflict

Life of a Student Athlete

By: Craig Huff

About Myself

- Computer Science Major
- 5th Year Men's Cross Country/
Track Athlete
- NCAA All-American Academic
- 3x Mountain West Scholar
Athlete
- Software Engineer at Direct
Athletics



What Is Conflict?

Conflict is a problematic situation that occurs between interdependent people who seek different goals or means to those goals.

Common Sources of Conflict



- Team Related Events
- Roommates
- Classes
- Work

Conflict Resolution Skills

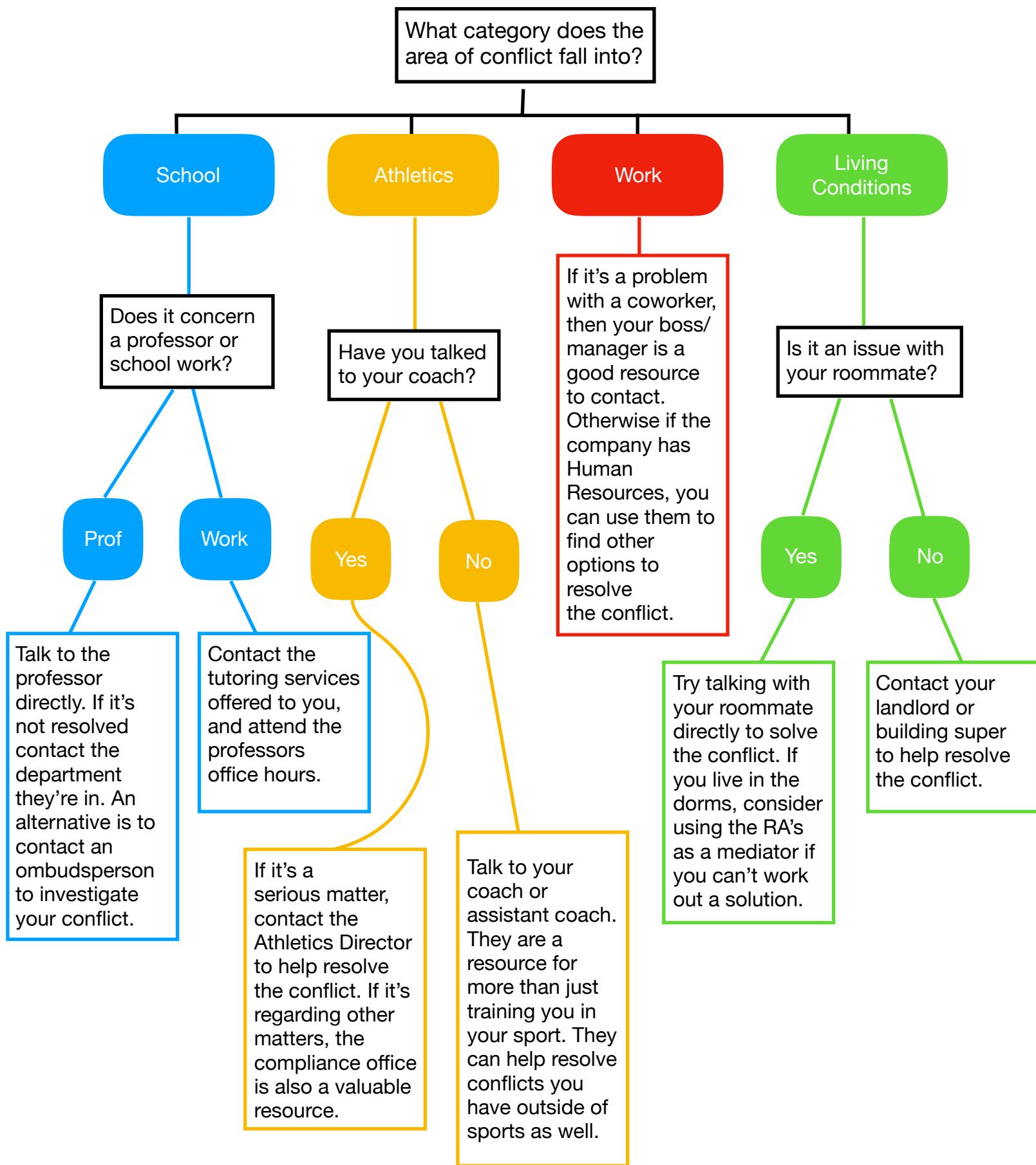
- Communication
- Stress Management
- Forgiveness
- Mediation

Important Resources

- Ombudspersons
- Coaches
- Teachers
- Department Chairs'
- Major Advisors
- Athletic Academic Advisors
- Athletic Director
- Compliance Office
- Resident Advisors

Appendix B:
Workshop Handout with Available Resources

Who Can I Contact In A Conflict?



Appendix C:
Google Forms Survey

Common Conflicts for Student Athletes

* Required

Email address *

Your email

Name *

Your answer

What sport do you play?

Your answer

What is your major?

Your answer

How often do you feel stressed from your responsibilities? *

22

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Not stressed
at all

Very stressed

Option 1

Which categories have you experienced conflict with? *

Choose all that apply

- Roommates
- Coaches
- Professors
- Schoolwork / Homework
- Practice
- Athletics Administration
- Work
- Classes
- Compliance Meetings
- Other:

How do you deal with conflict? *

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- Confrontation
- Passive Aggressive Behavior
- Avoidance
- Mediation
- Anger/Violence
- Open Discussions
- Forgiveness
- Stress Management to Prevent Conflict

Who do you turn to when you don't know how to solve a problem? *

For example: Mom, Dad, Coach, no one, etc.

Your answer

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Google Forms



Appendix D:
Time Log

Time Log

Student Name: Craig Huff		
Date	Duration (in hours)	Activity
9/25	3	Acquiring Sources for Workshop Proposal
9/29	2.5	Workshop Proposal
10/2	1.5	Meeting with LGHS Assistant Cross Country Coach about talking to his athletes
10/6	2	Meeting with SJSU XC Coach about conflicts
10/7	2	Adding information to the handout
10/11	1	Creating and distributing survey to SJSU student athletes
10/13	3	Research and source finding
10/15	2	Attending workshop about sexual harassment (This is a important for student athletes)
10/15	1	Working on handout
10/17	1.5	Meeting with freshman at SJSU to talk about conflict
10/21 - 10/24	4	Putting together powerpoint / and putting together script for workshop
10/25	3	Putting together handout in a readable and useful way
10/28	3	Finalizing all materials to be used for workshop and assembling data
10/29	1	Prep for workshop
10/30	0.5	Virtual Workshop for LGHS athletes
11/3	2	Working on Paper
11/4	2	Working on Paper
11/7	2	Working on Paper
11/10	2	Working on Paper
11/11	3	Finalizing Paper