

Specialized care supports athletes' unique mental health needs

Combining sports psychology and psychiatry helps athletes of all levels cope with challenges of competition

The Ohio State University Wexner Medical Center

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Package Length: 1:47	Content provided by: The Ohio State University Wexner Medical Center

NEWS PACKAGE

SUGGESTED TEASE	AS WE CHEER ON OLYMPIANS COMPETING IN BEIJING, THEY MAY SEEM LIKE SUPERHEROES. BUT IGNORING THE UNIQUE CHALLENGES THAT ATHLETES FACE CAN BE DETRIMENTAL TO THEIR PERFORMANCE AND THEIR MENTAL HEALTH. COMING UP, HOW SPECIALIZED SPORTS CARE SUPPORTS ATHLETES THROUGH TRAINING, COMPETITION AND INJURY.
ANCHOR LEAD	TO EXCEL AS AN ATHLETE, YOU HAVE TO BE FOCUSED, TOUGH AND DRIVEN, EMBODYING THE OLYMPIC MOTTO OF "FASTER, HIGHER, STRONGER." DESPITE EXPECTATIONS, ATHLETES ARE STILL HUMAN, AND IGNORING THEIR EMOTIONS, FEARS AND OVERALL MENTAL HEALTH CAN AFFECT THEIR PERFORMANCE AND LIVES OUTSIDE OF THE SPORT. AS ELITE ATHLETES LIKE SIMONE BILES AND MICHAEL PHELPS OPEN UP ABOUT THEIR MENTAL HEALTH STRUGGLES, THE CONVERSATION ABOUT THE UNIQUE CHALLENGES THAT ATHLETES FACE AND THE IMPORTANCE OF SEEKING HELP IS GROWING. BARB CONSIGLIO HAS THE DETAILS.
(PACKAGE START) ----- CG: Courtesy: The Ohio State University Wexner Medical Center :00 - :03	(Nats - Sound) :02
Shots of Jordan lacing up shoes	JORDAN HOEWISCHER (HAY-wish-er) WORKED HARD HIS WHOLE LIFE TO PLAY FOOTBALL AT THE COLLEGE LEVEL, BUT HIS ATHLETIC CAREER CAME TO AN ABRUPT END AFTER A BACK INJURY. :07
CG: Jordan Hoewischer Former collegiate football player	<i>"The mental part of just, what's next? Is this it? Is this the end of the thing that I've been working for for 20 years? So, it really is tough. :10</i>


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<p>Shots of athletic competition</p> <p>CG: Dr. Joshua Norman Ohio State Wexner Medical Center</p> <p>CG: Jen Carter, PhD Ohio State Wexner Medical Center</p>	<p>WHILE ATHLETES FACE MANY MENTAL CHALLENGES, INJURY IS A COMMON CATALYST TO DEEPER ISSUES. :05</p> <p><i>“So they’re at greater risk for developing depression, anxiety, and even substance use disorders as they’re transitioning from their sport in an unexpected way.” :09</i></p> <p><i>“In terms of athletic injury, I talk to athletes about the very normal, emotional reactions many have, and those include sadness and loss.” :10</i></p>
<p>Shots of athletes in practice</p> <p>Dr. Norman (CG’d earlier)</p>	<p>IF NOT ADDRESSED, THESE FEELINGS CAN AFFECT THEIR ABILITY TO PERFORM IN THE FUTURE FOR FEAR OF BEING REINJURED. IN FACT, MANY ATHLETES SHOW SYMPTOMS OF P-T-S-D AFTER A TRAUMATIC INJURY.’ :09</p> <p><i>“It can slow their ability to progress through physical therapy and delay their return to sport, and also delay their ability to recover well from the injury.” :07</i></p>
<p>Shots of athlete counseling session</p> <p>Dr. Norman (CG’d earlier)</p>	<p>WHETHER IT’S AN INJURY OR SIMPLY THE PRESSURE OF PERFORMANCE, MENTAL HEALTH CARE IS AN IMPORTANT PART OF TRAINING, WHICH IS WHY THE OHIO STATE UNIVERSITY WEXNER MEDICAL CENTER IS AMONG A HANDFUL OF ACADEMIC HEALTH SYSTEMS TO OFFER BOTH SPORTS PSYCHIATRISTS AND PSYCHOLOGISTS WHO SUPPORT THE UNIQUE CHALLENGES THAT ATHLETES FACE AT ALL LEVELS OF COMPETITION. :15</p> <p><i>“It’s important to have psychiatrists and psychologists within either the general population and also within athletics, Because what we know is the best outcomes are sustained both with psychiatric management, so typically that involves medication and also having concurrent psychotherapy.” :15</i></p>
<p>Shots of athletes Shots of Jordan walking outside to exercise</p> <p>Dr. Norman (CG’d earlier)</p>	<p>IT’S A HIGHER LEVEL OF CARE THAT NOT ONLY KEEPS THEM HEALTHY IN THEIR ATHLETIC LIVES, BUT LATER ON DOWN THE ROAD, TOO. :05</p> <p><i>“At some point in time, athletes will end their career and move on to do other things in life, and really having an awareness and an openness to be able to seek treatment for mental health conditions can increase their quality of life longitudinally.” :12</i></p>

<p>Shots of Jordan jogging</p> <p>(PACKAGE END) -----</p> <p>ANCHOR TAG</p>	<p>AT THE OHIO STATE WEXNER MEDICAL CENTER, THIS IS BARB CONSIGLIO REPORTING. :03</p> <hr/> <p>BECAUSE ATHLETES ARE OFTEN TRAINED TO FIGHT THROUGH CHALLENGES, BOTH PHYSICAL AND MENTAL, IT CAN BE DIFFICULT TO IDENTIFY WHEN HELP IS NEEDED, MAKING REGULAR MENTAL HEALTH CHECK-INS JUST AS IMPORTANT AS PHYSICAL CARE.</p> <p>EXPERTS SAY THOSE CLOSEST TO ATHLETES, SUCH AS COACHES, TRAINERS AND FAMILY MEMBERS CAN ALSO WATCH FOR SIGNS OF MENTAL HEALTH STRUGGLES, SUCH AS MOOD CHANGES, SLEEP DEPRIVATION OR FEAR WITHIN THEIR SPORT OR TRAINING.</p>
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SOCIAL MEDIA

<p> Share it! Suggested tweet:</p> <p> Suggested post:</p>	<p>As we cheer on Olympians in Beijing, experts at @OSUWexMed stress the importance of combining the care of sports psychologists and psychiatrists to support the unique mental health challenges athletes face. https://bit.ly/34zTQBP.</p> <hr/> <p>As Olympians compete on the world stage, more elite athletes are opening up about their mental health. Experts at The Ohio State University Wexner Medical Center stress the importance of combining the care of sports psychologists and psychiatrists to support the unique mental health challenges athletes face, whether it's recovering from an injury or simply coping with the pressures of competition. https://bit.ly/34zTQBP</p>
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EXTRA BITES

<p>CG: Dr. Joshua Norman Ohio State Wexner Medical Center</p>	<p>Norman says coaches and trainers often refer athletes to mental health professionals:</p> <p><i>"If they are noticing that the athlete is having what we call kinesiphobia, or difficulty with movements or an aversion to movements, and it's sort of increasing symptoms that appear like post-traumatic stress disorder, a lot of times they'll get a psychiatrist or a psychologist involved in the care of that patient."</i> :16</p>
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CG: Dr. Joshua Norman
Ohio State Wexner Medical Center

Norman says mental health is as important as physical health:
"You can see a broken arm. You can see a lab value that supports hypertension. Whereas mental health is a bit more abstract and nuanced, but it's equally as impactful if not more impactful. And the two are very interrelated and can significantly increase your quality of life if these things are well controlled and well treated." :16

CG: Jen Carter, PhD
Ohio State Wexner Medical Center

Carter says it helps when athletes like Simone Biles speak openly about mental health:
19:49:28 "I was just talking to a youth gymnast and we were talking about Simone and how watching what she was going through and how she dealt with it so eloquently just enables all gymnasts to talk about mental health and to know that it's okay not to be okay." :19

Carter says mental health care helps athletes manage stress:
"We're seeing that the top athletes are getting that edge by seeking out sports psychology so that they can address the mental training as well as their mental health and addressing their stress, dealing with it as best they can." :17

Carter says athletes' toughness can be a strength and a weakness:
"That stoic toughness that athletes possess is a real strength that helps them put on their game face, helps them get through any ups and downs in the competition effectively. And when they're off the field, that can be a weakness because it can prevent them from asking for help. And we all need help. We're an interdependent society. We can't do it all alone." :23

CG: Jordan Hoewischer
Former collegiate football player

Jordan says he was hesitant to try to play after his injury:
"When I was able to work out again, I was definitely hesitant. You know, playing football, let alone the workouts, it's very physical, especially on the back. So you're coming out of a stance. You're doing these things that probably created an injury in the first place." :14

Jordan says he felt isolated while recovering from his injury:
"It is definitely isolating. You kind of get set aside to where you're doing rehab on your own, or you're just working out on your own, because you're on a different schedule, and it's really an abrupt end to your pattern that you're used to. And you're used to that almost your whole life." :14

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CG: Jordan Hoewischer
Former collegiate football player

Jordan says the abrupt end to his football career was hard:
“Knowing that I had put all that energy into getting to the college football level, it was tough because at a large university you really fall into a pattern of, you have to get your sports done, then you have to get your school done. And I kind of fell back into, ‘Oh my God, the real world’s coming.’” :17

References

¹Post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) and other trauma-related mental disorders in elite athletes: a narrative review, **British Journal of Sports Medicine, Volume 53, Issue 12, April 25, 2019**. Online: <https://bjsm.bmj.com/content/53/12/779>

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