

## Unloading the Heavy Loads: Eustressors and Distressors of Instructor-Athletes

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### Abstract

This descriptive-phenomenological study aimed to explore and understand the lived experiences of eustressors and distressors, as well as the coping mechanisms of instructor-athletes participating in different sports competitions. Specifically, it answered the question on how instructor-athletes respond to the eustressors and distressors when participating in sports competitions. There were 12 instructor-athletes for this inquiry from the state universities and colleges in region 1. The data were gathered using an interview guide and conducted through social media platforms that were accessible and conducive to the participants, as well as via phone calls and chat messages since restrictions for gathering and closed contact with people were still in place per IATF Protocols. Thematic analysis using Colaizzi's method was utilized to interpret the results of the study. It was found that these eustressors as well as distressors were categorized into two groups: the intrinsic factors and the extrinsic factors, which affected the performance, behavior, and attitude of the instructor-athletes before, during, and after the sports competition. Moreover, there were coping mechanisms used by these instructor-athletes to respond to the different distressors that they met along the way. Based on the results, Acosta's Athletic Conditioning Model was developed to reflect their symbiotic relationship and that each element is relevant and important to the overall function of an instructor-athlete.

### 1. Introduction

Physical education has been tagged as the agent toward a healthy mind and soul. It is an inevitable course that underscores the importance of resilient health and robust well-being to achieve a satisfying and balanced life. It aims to develop one's physical competence and knowledge of movement and safety, as well as their ability to use these to perform in a wide range of activities associated with the development of an active and healthy lifestyle. It also develops their confidence and skills, especially those of collaboration, communication, creativity, critical thinking, and aesthetic appreciation. Together with the nurturing of positive values and attitudes, physical education (PE) is a good foundation for lifelong and life-wide learning. In the world of PE, there are many subsets that can be learned. One of these is the field of sports, where foundational values like discipline, teamwork, solidarity, passion, strength, and perseverance are developed. There is no other area where individuals can express their physical abilities and stamina than in the field of sports. In the curricula of elementary, high school, and tertiary education, sports play a significant

and vital role in achieving the aims and thrusts of learners [1].

With these significant sports contributions to the human aspect, it has been observed that various institutions were able to organize sports activities as a form of socialization, team building, and reconnecting activities with every parcel of the institution [2]. This is even conducted in all schools, in which one of the main functions is to develop and improve students' self-esteem, especially those who may not be good in academics, and make them believe in themselves, which may result in improved academic performance.

In tertiary education, the Philippine Association of State Universities and Colleges (PASUC), an association of public tertiary school level institutions in the Philippines that comprises all 102 State Universities and Colleges (SUC), which are under the Commission on Higher Education (CHED), holds its sports, literary, and musical competitions annually with participation by its members. In this competition, the state universities and colleges are clustered based on their location. One of these clusters is the Association of State Colleges and Universities—Solid

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North, which comprises the 23 SUCs in Regions 1, 2, 3, and the Cordillera Administrative Region. This cluster conducts its annual sports competitions as part of the proposed program of the association and to choose instructor-athletes who will represent the association in a bigger sports competition among state colleges and universities in the Philippines. In the past 5 years, low performances of instructor-athletes in the region have been recorded. This is based on the medal tally of the competition of the Association of State Colleges and Universities—Solid North for the past few years [3].

With this low performance of the athletes in the Philippines, as well as the other Asian countries in the international competitions and even in the local competitions, different studies focusing on the sports practices of the USA and other top-performing countries were conducted. One of those studies was attempted and conducted by [4], who disclosed that one of the reasons why athletes from other countries achieved higher sports rankings was due to their high level of grit and motivation. This high level of support coming from peers and school contributes to the positive emotional stress factors of the athletes.

Speaking of stress factors, there are two types: eustressors and distressors. Eustressors are positive stressors that come from the anticipation or experience of pleasurable events such as a roller coaster ride, falling in love, watching or participating in a close ball game, or waiting for the starting gun for a marathon. Eustress may cause some physical symptoms that are detrimental to the athletes' passion. At the same time, it also causes excitement. The body processes eustress as positive, and eustress can make an athlete feel good as their body releases endorphins [5]. Moreover, [6] stated that there is a need to shift away from combining the term stress with only negative reactions to stressors and the so-called distress.

Zooming in on the case of instructor-athletes, multiple reports have indicated that the prevalence of work-related stress is increasing among academics. This has been attributed to the expanding number of students, the need for efficiency in providing higher quality education, accountability to multiple stakeholders, internal and external factors, and problems in management and workplace communication systems [7]. Based on the presented situations, particularly the low sports performance of athletes not only at the

international level but also at the local level, there is a need to determine the different emotional stress factors being experienced by athletic achievers, particularly the instructor-athletes in the state colleges and universities in Region 1. With that, this study was conceptualized to determine the different eustressors and distressors of the instructor-athletes.

## 2. Methodology

This study utilized a qualitative research design, particularly phenomenology. According to Finn (2018), phenomenology is an approach to qualitative research that focuses on the commonality of a lived experience within a particular group. The fundamental goal of the approach is to arrive at a description of the nature of the phenomenon. Moreover, this study utilized a descriptive-phenomenological design because it describes a lived experience of a phenomenon. It also attempts to understand people's perspectives and understandings of a particular situation. This is appropriate in this study since it endeavors to understand and determine the experiences of the instructor-athletes in Region 1 state colleges and universities, particularly their eustressors, distressors, and coping mechanisms for their emotional stresses.

The study was conducted to State Colleges and Universities in Region 1 particularly- Don Mariano Marcos Memorial State University (DMMMSU), Pangasinan State University (PSU), Ilocos Sur Polytechnic State College (ISPSC), University of Northern Philippines (UNP), North Luzon State Polytechnic College (NLSPC), and Mariano Marcos Memorial State University (MMSU). The participants in this inquiry were the 12 instructor-athletes of the State Colleges and Universities in Region 1 particularly PSU, DMMMSU, UNP, ISPSC, NLSPC and MMMSU who participated in the Association of State Colleges and Universities- Solid North Annual Sports Competition as players in a particular event/ sport competition for at least 5 years, male/ female, ages 25-40/ middle adulthood and an instructor regardless of the subject/s taught for at least 5 years. The Middle Adulthood age was chosen because most of the psychological studies state that this set of people are the ones prone to stress. There were 2 instructor- athletes per institution. This study utilized snowball sampling in selecting participants for the instructor-athletes came from the different SUCs in the region.

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## 3. Result and Discussion

The themes that emerged were presented in relation to the questions asked during the interviews. The thematic analysis of the participants' transcribed responses, done through intelligent transcription, revealed that the presentation followed the pattern of eustressors, distressors, and coping mechanisms. Each of these eustressors and distressors is further divided and elaborated by the duration of the competition, whether before, after, or during the event.

The researchers formulated **Acosta's Athletic Conditioning Model**, in which the life of an athlete is likened to a barbell. The barbell is the longer version of the dumbbell that is used for free weight training and competitive sports such as powerlifting, Olympic weightlifting, and CrossFit. Many exercises can be done using the barbell, such as the bicep curl, bench press, Olympic weightlifting, overhead press, deadlift, and squat.

The aim of this weightlifting activity is for the man to carry the barbell up to the proper height. Once lifted correctly, the player is rated by the evaluator or judges based on its execution and fluidity of the action. This is how the stresses of an athlete can be assimilated or described. The weight of the barbell is the burden of the athletes. But these are easier to lift if there is a constant and repeated act before the end result can be perfectly achieved. The longer they devote themselves to the practices, engagements, experiences, and competitions, the more strength and passion they instill. This is more dramatic on the part of the instructors and professors who devote their time and efforts to molding their crafts and passion for sports. There were times that they had to feel anxiety, depression, and disappointment. But these are elements necessary for it to become more resilient, sturdier, and robust in its quest for greater glory and accomplishments.

The model in this research depicts the interactions of three (3) elements or ingredients that are composites in the achievement of a healthy and balanced life. These elements are the eustressors, distressors, and coping mechanisms, which will be explained in the succeeding paragraphs.



Fig. 1: Acosta's Athletic Conditioning Model

### Platform as the Base

As shown in the figure, the base is the eustressors, both intrinsic and extrinsic factors. [8] shared that eustress can be beneficial and is actually necessary for our overall wellbeing. This is the type of "positive" stress that keeps individuals excited about life. The very reason it is placed as a foundation is to denote that the players are deeply rooted in the ground. The implication of this platform in the ground is the longevity of the practices and training they had just to compete in the higher meets without any hassles.

Most of the athletes interviewed started their journey when they were still kids. Their teachers and parents have played a constant and primordial role in promoting or advancing their interests as athletes of this generation. The school intramurals have been the discovery stage of their potential until they have competed at higher levels, which include now that they are professionals. Some of the higher competitions are the Region 1 Athletic Meet and Palarong Pambansa. For their professional years at state universities and colleges, they have joined the SCUAA and the Solid North Athletic Conference.

Truly, sports know no age. It transcends in various ways and across the ages. It is up to the person to cope with these stresses through multiple means to divert the



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issues and concerns of losing in the sports they have chosen.

In this study, the following eustressors were found significantly in the life of the instructor- athletes: sports engagement, training and preparation for the competition, achieving and winning the competition, open to challenging tasks, passion and hard work, application of the strategic play, edge and experiences, and enjoyment and fulfillment on the duration of the competition while extrinsic factors were: exhilarating atmosphere of competing to other athletes, support from loved ones, school and stakeholders, vivid guidelines of the competition, outcomes of preparation, honor, prestige, recognition, rewards and incentives, improvement of the previous record, crowd support, strong competitors, fair play, venue of the competition, teamwork, and deserving winners.

## **Puzzles Comprising the Human Body**

As shown in the figure, the puzzles are embedded in the human body. It denotes the strong and unexplainable responses of the body to the needs and challenges of sports. These puzzles are considered to be the different coping mechanisms to protect, prevent, or avoid stress. Each individual has their own means to recuperate from the demands of sports. These make them better individuals as they continue their journey in their chosen field of sports.

The athlete can find ways and means to neutralize these stresses that he or she is experiencing. These coping techniques manifest the abilities of every athlete to be adaptive, resilient, robust, flexible, and agile to the circumstances that may come along. While these are natural responses whenever anxiety or depression strikes, it is important that these athletes be prepared for the eventualities, especially when facing defeats. Nonetheless, like a soldier, these athletes do not easily give up but rather become stronger every time they fall.

On this particular study, the coping mechanisms used by the instructor-athletes to address and respond to their distressors were as follows: doing mediation, engaging in recreational and pleasurable activities, maintaining a positive perspective, receiving mental health training, being flexible and resourceful, being prepared for contingencies, calming down, contemplating and thinking rationally, encouraging

oneself to be better on the next competition, enjoying the competition, communicating with other people, taking care of oneself, ignoring negative vibes, praying to God, believing in one's ability, and trusting my coaches. These coping mechanisms were classified as relaxation and physical activity, problem-solving, support, and humor.

## **The barbell as the burden or stress**

The way that athletes carry the load, or the so-called stresses, is a reflection of how hard they are working. The barbell is the best iconic symbol that epitomizes the distresses that an athlete has to experience and pass through all along in his or her journey in the sport field chosen. These distresses may have been deeply rooted in multifarious and varied situations, whether before, during, or after the competition. The athlete gets stronger every day as he or she faces the challenges or difficulties squarely. This is the true mark of a champion. He does not retreat, no matter how uncertain and unpredictable the competition may be.

The following distressors were found out which affect the performance of the instructor- athletes in the competition: being nervous on the result of the competition, exhaustion and tiresomeness, did not meet expectations, fear of losing and failing, me and my teammates performance and attitude during the competition, self- questioning on what happened during the competition, encouraging myself and teammates to be better next time, intimidated players, fear of being rejected for not winning, physical condition and being pessimistic while for extrinsic factors were: game tactics of the opponents, short preparation for the competition, lack of support from administrators and stakeholders, risk of accidents, unfair treatment of the sports committee, game tactics are not working well, boastful game participants and cheering squads, undeserving winners and biased and boastful coaches and referees.

To sum it up, stresses are part of one's life. How individuals cope with these stresses is dependent on the responses of their bodies.

## **Eustressors of Instructor-Athletes in Participating in the Different Sports Competitions**

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Athletes compete in and practice sports for a variety of reasons. These reasons fall into the two major categories of intrinsic and extrinsic motivation. Athletes who are intrinsically motivated participate in sports for internal reasons, such as enjoyment, whereas athletes who are extrinsically motivated participate in sports for external reasons, such as material rewards.

Moreover, the scenario of an athlete's life before the competition is one of rigid and rigorous training and practices. This is very crucial to them since it will dictate the outcome of the game. The lesser the preparation, the lesser the chances of winning the game. After asking the participants what their eustressors were before, during, and after the competition, the following themes and subthemes summarize their answers.

## *Intrinsic Factors*

As an instructor-athlete, there are factors that affect their performances that are inherent and innate in nature. These innate motivations have impacted the behavior, attitude, and goal of the instructor-athletes before, during, and after the competition.

Moreover, intrinsically motivated instructor-athletes participate in sport for internal reasons, particularly pure enjoyment and satisfaction, and intrinsically motivated instructor-athletes typically concentrate on skill improvement and growth.

## *Fulfillment Derived from Sports Engagement*

As an athlete, your mindset is to engage in the sports you like most. It is something that has developed in one's consciousness since the time that their inclination started to grow. For most of these instructor-athletes, their engagement with sports is deeply rooted, dating back to their elementary days when they got to compete in everything from school intramurals to the most coveted Palarong Pambansa, which is organized and sponsored by the Department of Education. They even mentioned that they had the fondest memories of these meets or events that honed their potential in sports.

This was manifested in the statement of Margielyn Didal that, *"As an athlete, it is always fulfilling to engage in sports competitions, for it always gives me a high level of excitement."* It was seconded by Mansuelo

Velasco when he said, *"I am always motivated to do my best in every competition, as I have always been engaged in sports since I was in elementary school."*

Moreover, Robert Jaworski said that, *"As an athlete, it is a fulfillment to be engaged in sports activities, for it will help us grow into a better and more effective player."*

With these statements, sports engagement is well-entrenched for them, and by practicing before competition, it gets into their nerves and systems. The school officials are very supportive of this cause, as they were given priority to have some practices in the sports venues on their respective campuses. The administration usually allots space and time for them to really be prepared for the competition.

According to [1] sports engagement helps an individual much more than the physical aspects alone. It builds character and teaches and develops strategic thinking, analytical thinking, leadership skills, goal-setting, and risk-taking, just to name a few.

## *Training and preparations for the competition*

The majority of the instructor-athletes interviewed mentioned that the key to motivating them is through constant and continuous training and development. By doing so, they are able to correct their mistakes or aim higher than their previous records. For instance, one research participant mentioned that in playing chess, it is very important to continuously challenge the old record. The moves of the chess officials should be thought through many times so that winning will be ensured. It is not just simply random moves or actions; it is something that is logically and sequentially observed and imagined.

According to Efren Reyes, *"I feel excited, fulfilled, and/or satisfied before the sports competition because I am prepared and have undergone training to improve my skills. Mentoring, coaching, and trainings build my self-efficacy, autonomy, and resilience before the sports competition."* As to Margielyn Didal, *"Training is the best motivator and weapon for me, for I love serious challenges when it comes to preparation before the competition."* Furthermore, Paeng Nepomuceno said, *"I think what makes me fulfilled as an instructor-athlete is the fact that I am fully prepared for a*

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competition." With these statements, it strengthens the claim that instructor-athletes are motivated because of the training they have been through.

Moreover, two instructor-athletes are engaged in basketball games. They mentioned that practices would make them better prepared for the competition proper. They have to condition their legs, arms, and minds so that they can easily carry out the game plan of their coach.

In addition, competition preparation teaches performers how to establish effective mental routines and rituals before, during, and after competitive events. Understanding how and when to do these routines is a crucial part of getting the performer's mindset in the right place [9].

## ***Achieving and Winning the Competition***

The very thought of winning the event inspires and motivates instructor-athletes before the competition actually begins. This is especially true for the perennial winners of their respective events and teams. They draw inspiration from the gold medals and recognition trophies they get for placing first, second, or third in the event.

At the onset of their training for the competition, they have to look back at their previous standing and the recognitions they received so that they will be inspired to dream bigger and act more in pursuit of the achievement of more medals in the forthcoming sporting event. Challenging one's record is a positive way to feel better about the next round. This is how important the previous standing or position is so that they can jumpstart anew in their present undertaking.

As to Lydia De Vega, *"Honestly, seeing myself as the winner is my prime objective before the game. This may sound arrogant to some, but having that fuel in mind makes it easier for me to turn it into realization."* As to Paeng Nepomuceno, *"What keeps me going and pushing more to join sports competitions are my achievements and wins."* On the other hand, Mansuelo Velasco opined that *"I am motivated to join because of my belief in the chance to become the champion."* On the basis of these statements, it can be deduced that instructor-athletes are fueled by their aims and

aspirations to win and champion the different sports competitions that they are joining.

Moreover, five (5) of the instructor-athletes believed that they are driven and inspired if they are optimistic and possess a winning attitude during the sports competition. It means that, behind the struggles during the competition, the respondents assured that they have positive energy to survive the pressures. They always look at the bright side so that in the long run, they can facilitate and implement whatever goals and objectives the organization wants to achieve.

In sports, it is pertinent that players have to be positive thinkers so that they can overcome the challenges and difficulties they may encounter ahead. Their bravado personalities could be a contributory factor in achieving greater heights in sporting events. No one could ever move forward if they entertained failures and disappointments. To be a sportsman, it takes the courage to face the realities of the game and to live up to positive values.

On the other hand, this is one of the motivations after the competition. Every competing team aims to get those positive results as an inspiration to move forward. This is shown from the statement of Paeng Nepomuceno that *"I always look forward to the result because I am always thirsty to win. I trained hard, so I expect to win. Even if I do not win, look forward to the result because this is your chance to see where I went wrong. The training program that I designed served as my foundation, which I believe can help me reach my goal at the very end. This makes me confident that I have the chance of getting the victory that I am pursuing."*

From this, it can be gleaned that they are always enthused and motivated because of the positive results that may happen, which are products of their dedication and commitment to the different trainings and programs to improve their skills and competencies in their sports events.

## ***Open to challenging tasks***

This was especially mentioned by three (3) of the instructor-athletes, who said that in sports, they have to be constantly and repetitively challenged. They have to be triggered by the struggles they have to undertake in



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order to win the battles in sports. Without these challenging tasks, they cannot bring out the best in them and remain on a plateau with their abilities.

This can be manifested by Paeng Nepomuceno saying, *"You know I am a very flexible person. I am open to challenging tasks. What keeps me motivated is the fact that, behind these challenging tasks, there are successful stories to tell. I strive more because I know this will not just help my career progress but also serve as a training ground to be a better person and capacitate myself with skills that uplift my competence as an instructor and as an athlete."* As to Hidilyn Diaz and Robert Jaworski, *"What keeps us going and moving in every competition is the challenge behind every success."*

In this particular statement, it can be gleaned that instructor-athletes are motivated to perform because of the challenging tasks ahead because it serves to capacitate themselves and uplift their skills and competencies in their chosen field of sports.

According to [10], the extant literature has shown that grit predicts well-being outcomes. Studies have demonstrated that grit is associated with higher levels of life satisfaction, which positively affect life. This will help the individual be motivated and perform better in any endeavor he undertakes.

## **Passion and hard work**

The instructor-athletes firmly believed that when they loved the sports, everything would fall into place. This is the start of the motivation. Passion speaks of their determination and firmness to win their game. Through hard work and commitment to the rigorous training, there is a big chance of winning the games they look forward to.

Accordingly, passion starts the day these athletes decide to pursue a specific sport. It is not an overnight plan that has developed instantly. Instead, it is the product of many failures and disappointments before one can glorify greater achievements. Sports have to be honed through time like a wine that has to be fermented so that the aroma can be tasted fruitfully.

Furthermore, successful athletes often have a passion and purpose for what they do; they are focused and

determined to get better every day, and they have specific goals they actively pursue. It is passion and purpose (intrinsic motivation) that help athletes overcome obstacles in life, focus on their goals, and outwork the competition [11].

## **Application of the Strategic Gameplay**

They believed that motivations come out when there is succinct application and integration of the game plan to the sports in which they are participating. This was manifested in the statement of Margielyn Didal that *"the application of the strategic gameplay always makes me feel excited during the sports competition."* According to Efren Reyes, *"The most exciting part in every competition for me is when I apply all the things and strategies I prepared for."* According to Gabriel Elorde, *"The application of the strategies served as motivation and inspiration for us, athletes, to keep moving and looking forward in every competition."* From these statements, it can be gleaned that instructor-athletes are always excited to measure how far they have gone on their prepared and planned gameplay.

Strategies employed in any sport are honed over the years. The coaches and mentors of these instructor-athletes are the wind beneath their wings. They are always there to provide the necessary support and guidance so that they will end up victorious in their sporting endeavors.

Also, after the competition, instructor-athletes are very elated because they are able to apply their skills, values, and strategies. According to Margielyn Didal, *"I feel satisfied and fulfilled after a sports competition when the skills and strategies were applied with accuracy, regardless of the results. It is always very fulfilling on my part as an athlete when the development of the strategic execution of skills transpires."*

## **Edges and Experiences**

Before the competition, these instructor-athletes already had insurmountable and substantive experiences under their belt. These experiences are their living testimonies of excellence and brilliance in their field of specialization.

Performing at a high level in sport and the performing arts requires a positive mindset and experiences, which

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are critical to success in any endeavor involving skill and challenge. These are the right mix of challenges and skills in a situation that can bring about an optimal psychological state for performance [12]. On the other hand, there are no other joys they can derive from the competition but the learning and experiences it brought them. These, according to them, are not measurable and quantifiable in monetary terms. It is a priceless experience that cannot be replaced by any other circumstance.

## ***Enjoyment and fulfillment over the duration of the competition***

The satisfaction of joining or participating in the competition is an experience of a lifetime. They find lasting happiness when they are able to represent their college or university in higher-level competitions.

According to Manny Pacquiao, *"After the competition, whether I won or lost, I still feel the adrenaline and excitement because, in the end, I did my best to win, and it is worth it. There are still next times."* As to Efren Reyes, *"Doing the best that I can makes me feel excited, fulfilled, and satisfied after the sports competition."* Furthermore, Robert Jaworski said that *"in every competition, I am always fulfilled and satisfied when I enjoy the duration of the competition."*

According to [13], achievement goals are cognitive representations that guide behavior toward a competence-related future end state. Existing theories and empirical findings suggest that achievement goals are potentially related to life satisfaction and enjoyment.

## **Extrinsic Factors**

As an instructor-athlete, there are factors that affect their performance that are extrinsic in nature. These motivations have impacted the behavior, attitude, and goal of the instructor-athletes before, during, and after the competition.

Furthermore, extrinsic motivation may come from social sources, such as not wanting to disappoint a parent, or material rewards, such as trophies and college scholarships. Extrinsically motivated athletes tend to focus on the competitive or performance outcome. Too much focus on extrinsic motivation

might give athletes the impression that extrinsic rewards are in charge of their behavior. On the other hand, athletes may continue to feel like they control their own behavior even in the presence of extrinsic rewards.

## ***exhilarating atmospheres of competing with other athletes***

This is practically true for most of the instructor-athletes: they view sports as "exhilarating", such that they enjoy the ups and downs of being an athlete or player. They are always excited during practices, and they have this "bravo" personality. They always look forward to the teamwork in which they will partake and the enjoyment of the company of their teammates.

The study by [14] in which he mentioned that a positive atmosphere at a sporting event is contagious, supports this. It is in this scenario that players are ignited to be passionate and determined about their sports. A player must not entertain negative vibes, since this would greatly affect the enthusiasm of other players.

## ***Support from loved ones, school, and stakeholders***

Most importantly, according to most of the instructor-athletes, is the support, love, and affection from their parents, spouses, families, and friends. They mentioned that practices make it easier for them because they have inspiration to cling on. They have very good reasons to strive harder and to achieve more. Indeed, family is the most motivational influence in one's lifetime [15]. They provide the bridge to connect one's aspirations with what society wants them to be. The family and friends are not strangers to the athlete's character. They are always there to support their relatives.

On the other hand, as to Mikee-Cojuangco-Jaworski, *"I am satisfied before the sport if I know that I have support from the administrators (like provision of sports equipment and the like)."*

With this statement, the school has a very important role in influencing the athletes. The school has to be responsive to the needs of the athletes. Some of these are monetary in nature since they need finances to fund their needs like water, food, and transportation. It is unfortunate that not all schools are providing monetary



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incentives to the players. They usually provide non-monetary needs like sports facilities, tools, and equipment.

Furthermore, sportsmen and women could get the edge on their opponents by accepting more emotional support in their personal and professional lives. A study by the University of Exeter, published in the *Journal of Applied Sport Psychology*, shows the extent to which a sympathetic ear or regular words of encouragement can improve sports performance [9].

## ***Vivid guidelines for the competition***

One of the instructor-athletes pointed out that the guidelines of the competition give them bright hopes to win the event. They have to read the guidelines over and over again in order to avoid a miscarriage of their university or school policy. In DMMMSU, for example, the director of sports cascades their report. This is also important for the instructor-athletes to be familiarized with the rules and regulations of the game, which serves as a motivation to perform a better and more correct strategy and plan for their chosen sports events.

Without a set of rules, everything devolves into chaos, according to [16]. Every sport needs some type of rule, as chaos would likely ensue if there were no rules, and watching sports would simply not be entertaining but rather disturbing. All sports truly need rules to function in a fair and competitive environment.

## ***Outcomes of Preparation***

The outcomes of preparation are also what three (3) of the instructor-athletes claimed to be driving them. This means that they hold onto their game plan and continue to be better not only for the institution but also for themselves as instructor-athletes.

Triggered by their performance during the training, they are passionate about the outcomes of their training. They have listed down their expectations and made a pact that no matter what, they will do their best. Coaching is a significant factor in achieving the outcome of the training. Hence, coaches are there, ready to catch them if they fall.

The outcomes are sure to happen. They served as their goals to achieve, and they have to work on them hard so that these athletes will not regret it in the end. They admitted that they have some apprehensions about setting the outcomes, but they also believed that by setting the outcomes, they are guided to become better warriors on the sports battlefield.

As to Carlos Yulo, *"What makes me excited before the start of a competition is the idea of finding out whether the sacrifices, plans, and strategies in the preparation will be worth it."* According to Robert Jaworski, *"The result of the competition motivates me to complete the task."* As to Mikee Cojuangco-Jaworski, *"I feel excited to hear the winners, especially when I see that my strategies are working during the competition."* On the basis of these statements, it can be shown that an instructor and athlete are motivated whether or not their plans and preparation are working during the competition.

## ***Honor, prestige, recognition, rewards, and incentives***

As an athlete, gold is the measurement of success. They are inspired to achieve this medal since it denotes victory and triumph. They said that one has to aim for the best so that it is closer to reality. Almost all the instructor-athletes are motivated to pursue their sporting event because of the lure of honor, prestige, and recognition.

Moreover, motivation is also drawn from the rewards and incentives of the school they are employed with. In one school, they said that they have a board resolution apportioning and institutionalizing a merit system based on the "level" of competition and the medals they bagged in the competition. For example, in an international tournament, if the athlete brought home gold, he is entitled to fifty thousand pesos.

Athletes have to be recognized, too, in order to incentivize their efforts and agility in playing their respective sports. According to [17], incentives and rewards increase employees' productivity. Employees try to work harder to achieve their targets and win a reward from the higher-ups. Rewards and incentives can motivate employees to do better in the workplace. The main thing, however, is that the employees feel a lot more driven due to the recognition they get that

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comes with the rewards. The recognition makes the employees push themselves to go that extra mile.

Moreover, [18] argues that honor, prestige, and recognition are extremely powerful techniques for enhancing performance that can be implemented for success in any environment. These help to focus attention, which is critical to maintaining and enhancing motivation. On the other hand, these give direction both in the short term and the long term.

## **Improvement of the Previous Record**

The instructor-athletes are also embattled to exert more efforts and stamina to sustain their record or break it for a higher ranking or status.

Moreover, the competition also serves as leverage for how they have performed. This is evident in the statement of Margielyn Didal: *The drive for unending improvement of skills and attitude motivates me to complete a challenging task after the sports competition.* As to Efren Reyes *"Going back to trainings and practices to improve my skills and techniques will build my self-efficacy, autonomy, and resilience after the competition."* According to Carlos Yulo, *"In every competition, I just want to maintain or even surpass my previous rank. It serves as my inspiration to go beyond my previous record."* These statements show that they are hoping to be better and improve their skills and competencies after the sports competition as they go back to training and programs.

[12] opined that athletes are motivated to develop their skills and competencies because of their determination to improve their previous record in a competition. They need to be better in the next competitions to come.

## **Crowd Support**

The shouts, yells, and chants of the spectators are something that would boost the morale of the players. When they see them and are shouting at the top of their lungs. This was manifested in the statement of Lydia De Vega that *"hearing the cheer from the crowd, from my coaches, and from other teammates makes me so excited during the game. It seems like half of my energy is coming from them."* According to Margielyn Didal, *"The support from my coach and teammates gives me*

*a high level of motivation during the sports competition."*

In the study of [12], a supportive crowd can help athletes push on to bigger and better performances. Research shows that having family and friends watch can help increase both motivation and persistence. Performing in front of a crowd can provide a positive distraction and reduce fatigue. It has been demonstrated to be an effective strategy to help athletes when they are tiring and about to 'hit the wall'. Likewise, the presence of social support, such as friends and family or a training partner, will also aid motivation, helping athletes maintain persistence.

## **Strong Competitors**

Gaining confidence to achieve further is the goal of the strong competitors of the ASCU-Solid North. These competitors are actually the "triggers" for them to excel further and embody the essence of being a warrior in a battle. They said that when they meet their competitors or opponents for the very first time, they feel excited and at the same time motivated to continue excelling in their field of specialization.

This is manifested in the sharing of Gabriel Elorde saying, *"During the event, I am excited to meet our competitors, to test their agility and resiliency,"* and was seconded by Hidilyn Diaz when she said, *"The performance of my contenders motivates me a lot, particularly if they are giving their best."* As to Carlos Yulo, *"It gives me excitement when I know that my competitors are strong. It gives me the challenge to surpass them all."*

Truly, this is a natural feeling for those who want to become competitive in sports. Although they value sportsmanship, it cannot be denied that sports are competitions and that athletes have to be sturdy for the rigors of the game. They should not only be content with setting these goals, but more importantly, they have to actualize them through proper practices and rehearsals.

## **Fair Play**

They are also inspired to do their best by the concept of fair play. They view the competition as a playground among equals. The players are on common ground

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without compromising their sense of camaraderie, friendship, and sportsmanship.

## ***Venue of the Competition***

The venue of the competition is also a factor in their aim to win for their team. According to one of the research participants, they usually do a dry run or practice in the venue before the actual event so that they will have first-hand experience and will know how to adjust in a situation.

As to Gabriel Elorde, *"The venue is also an exciting part, especially if it is a fully equipped sports center."* As to Manny Pacquiao, *"I am also excited to see where the competition will be held, for it will give us the opportunity to travel and benchmark other places."* It can be seen that the site where the competition will take place is also a great factor in keeping them motivated. Their excitement to play in a conducive and world-class location helps them pursue greater heights in their chosen sports.

## ***Teamwork***

Imbued with a sense of teamwork, the instructor-athletes are eager to win their most coveted gold medal in their respective game. They are motivated to bring out the best in them since they know that they have a strong group that will bring them to the pedestal.

Sports participation promotes balanced mental and physical growth, according to a study by [19] It teaches the children life skills like teamwork, leadership, and patience. It instills discipline and plays within the rules.

## ***Deserving Winners***

One (1) instructor-athlete assured me that after their competitions, he felt gratified and grateful for being able to reap what he had sown. He feels that sense of pride whenever he brings home the beacon on their campus—it is a source of pride and an honor to behold for anyone.

## **Distressors of Instructor-athletes in Participating in the Different Sports Competitions**

Feeling unmotivated is normal. It can be a sign that your body needs a break and needs to recharge. These

are the distressors that affect the performance of the instructor-athletes throughout the game or competition. There are times where instructor-athletes are demotivated as they go on to their preparation for a competition. These factors may affect their behaviors as well as their attitudes toward continuing to practice and prepare for their events. After asking the participants what their distressors were before, during, and after the competition, the following themes and subthemes emerged:

### ***Intrinsic Factors***

As an instructor-athlete, there were times where patience and determination to hit one's goal, particularly winning the competition, were tested. These were the innate factors that were present and negatively affected the performance of the instructor-athletes before, during, and after the competition. Intrinsic factors in distressors can be seen normally by the instructor-athletes because of their nature to be so worried about the result of the competition as well as their performances during their events. These results now create a threatening and pressured environment.

### ***Being Nervous about the Result of the Competition***

This is told to most instructor-athletes that they feel nervous about the outcomes of the competition. Although they believed that they were prepared for the sporting events, they cannot help but be afraid of the results. This is indeed arduous on the part of the players, as they have to bear the pain, struggles, strife, and consequences of their months of practices.

### ***Exhaustion and tiredness***

They feel demotivated when instructor-athletes have been exhausted and tired from continuous practices. This is exacerbated when they are not getting the support and assistance that are expected from their sports unit and administration.

[5] stated that fatigue affects the physical and mental capacity of a person to perform set tasks. It is especially noted in athletes who push themselves to the limits of endurance and is also common among people who engage in strenuous work. The onset of fatigue can be rapid or the result of cumulative effects after weeks or months of physical effort.



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## *Did not Meet Expectations*

The problem they also encounter is that the expectations they set eventually do not materialize. This is so devastating on the part of the athletes, as they have been wanting to accomplish more, but due to circumstances beyond their control, it was not meant to be for them to win. Moreover, athletes can experience disappointment when they do not perform up to their potential, lose an important game, sustain an injury, do not make the team, or lose a starting position. In addition to these performance pressures, they need to meet certain course requirements, maintain full-time student status, and earn a minimum grade point average. They also need to follow the policies and procedures set forth by the college or university they attend while managing the stereotypes professors, staff, and other students may hold regarding student athletes, including "dumb jocks", "overprivileged", "lazy", and "motivated to be at school in order to play his or her sport" [20].

In addition, there are also "what ifs" for the losing team or player. This occurs when they have a better opportunity to do well but fail to perform based on what they have prepared. They feel the loneliness in their hearts when they learn that they could have done better to achieve what is expected of them.

Moreover, some emotions, such as guilt, shame, and pride, are contingent on higher-order cognitive processing that considers self-awareness, self-representations, and social and moral standards [21].

## *Fear of Losing and Failing*

This is inevitable for most of the instructor-athletes, as losing means failure to them. Hence, before the competition, they already knew what would happen to them—it was a matter of choosing between losing and winning. This has a psychological impact on them, and they cannot control these circumstances.

Fear of failure can be both a positive and negative thing depending on how you handle it and when it occurs. Fear of Failure can be crippling during or just before a match, as we will see in Fear of Failure, but it can also be a great source of motivation if used during preparation.

In sports, failure is expected. It is somehow dependent on how the player will deal with it, whether by being affected by it or simply ignoring it. However, of the five (5) research participants interviewed, they blatantly mentioned that during the competition, they felt depression due to losing.

The sting of defeat is hard, but some athletes agonize when they see themselves as the sole reason for a negative outcome. It is understandable to experience negative emotions after a missed opportunity. They put in a lot of work, dedicate a vast amount of time, and make tremendous sacrifices as athletes to put themselves in position to succeed.

Moreover, after the competition, they feel bad due to losing the satchel they obtained from the game. This is so depressing on the part of the athlete, especially when there are expectations set for them to win. As to Paeng Nepomuceno, *"losing is part of the game. However, as an athlete who has prepared so much, losing is not an option. I am sad whenever I am not able to claim victory."* According to Lydia De Vega, *"In every competition, I am always afraid to lose, particularly if I gave my 100% before and during the competition."* Moreover, Josephine Dela Vina said, *"Losing and failing are not options since I prepared so much for every competition."*

According to [16], fear and **the** fear of failure are constant sources of stress or anxiety that sabotage your or your team's performance. In sports, most of the fear athletes have been based on their perception of the importance of a performance or game and what they assume others think about their performance.

## **Performance and Attitude of the Team During the Competition**

The attitude of the instructor-athletes speaks a lot about the outcome of the game. Most of the time, they exuded a negative attitude that was contagious among the players. The negative attitude of one player has domino effects on the other players. This is so problematic, causing disappointment and disparaging attitudes.

As to Margielyn Didal, *"It makes me feel sad when my teammates lack positivity during the games, and with that, it affects their performance too."* This statement was connected to what Manny Pacquiao said when he

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said, *"It makes me feel extremely worried or sad during the sports competition when I think of whether to win the competition or not."* These statements emphasize the attitude of the instructor-athletes to be worrisome in anything that they do during the competition. This attitude has a big impact on their performance during the different games.

Moreover, athletes with bad attitudes are like rotten apples. The actions they take as a coach say a lot about the standards they uphold. A few coaches and parents get upset when he tells them it's not her responsibility to encourage her athlete's effort; that's on the athlete. Attitude is another thing that's on the athlete. Bring these two things, and sports enthusiasts will provide the motivation and tools they need to succeed.

## *Physical Condition*

They also noted that due to tiredness and exhaustion from the games, their capacities are affected. Their stamina and strength to continue have been affected, so they need replenishment and refreshment to pursue the bout. This situation is undisputed among the athletes.

Moreover, due to depression, their physical conditions are also affected. Their body responses and stimuli have been greatly impaired to the point that they will not be as enthusiastic as they were before, prior to their competition. According to [22], it is normal to be psychologically affected when feeling depressed. This is an occurrence that cannot be restricted or controlled and naturally comes out when people experience failure.

According to [23], physical skill transcends sport and can be recognized in its absolute form—speed, power, coordination—across a variety of athletic endeavors. But less visible, and perhaps less considered, is the power of the elite athlete's mind. In fact, what often differentiates the greatest athletes has more to do with mental strength than physical strength.

## *Self-Questioning on What Happened During the Competition*

Athletes and coaches tend to lay down their cards after the event. They usually do self-reflection and ask themselves why their performance went that way. Though this is sometimes a positive way of viewing

their performance, they also felt the negativity of losing the game. They start doubting their capacities or capabilities and asking questions.

One instructor-athlete admitted that he tended to blame himself when they lost the game. He said that his coach expected him to save the team but failed to do so. The resultant effect is that he blames himself to the point of not doing anything for the whole day.

Moreover, some emotions, such as guilt, shame, and pride, are contingent on higher-order cognitive processing that considers self-awareness, self-representations, and social and moral standards [21].

As [24] pointed out, it is typical for people to feel uncertain when they are in unfamiliar or difficult circumstances. Self-doubt is characterized by feelings of uncertainty regarding one or more aspects of the self. It is something that people may all experience at certain times in their lives. However, when it becomes debilitating for them, that is when they may need more tools to overcome self-doubt.

Self-doubt may stem from previous negative experiences or from attachment-style issues. Those with insecure attachments may have experienced being criticized, which can contribute to self-doubt later in life. If someone has been told in the past that they are "not good enough" or incapable of something, then this can have a large negative effect on their self-worth.

## *Encouraging the Team to be Better Next Time*

As a consolation for these mental anxieties and depressions, they encouraged themselves to be better next time. Though this is sometimes helpful, the majority of them perceived that this was temporary, and they could not withstand the losing situation that happened to them. As to Carlos Yulo, *"What makes me worried after the competition is how I will encourage my players to work harder next time and not lose hope if ever we lose the competition."* According to Mansuelo Velasco, *"Sometimes, it is really hard to encourage myself and my teammates to practice and do better next time, particularly if we tried our best but still lose the competition."* Moreover, Josephine Dela Vina said that *"encouragement after the competition is one of the hardest things to do, particularly if the strategies and strategic plays did not help during the*

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*competition.*" It can be gleaned from these statements that one of the distressors for the instructor-athletes after the competition is to encourage their teammates and themselves to push through a more rigid and vigorous activity in order for them to improve their skills and competencies.

## *Being Pessimistic*

Pessimism is at its worst when the failure to achieve the goal is still fresh. This persists for a couple of weeks or months, depending on the coping mechanisms of the athletes. This was manifested in the statement of Mikee Cojuangco-Jaworski that, *"I feel hopeless when everyone feels negative about joining the sports competition."* As to Hidilyn Diaz, *"I am demotivated when I am seeing my teammates have already negative vibes during the duration of the game."* Moreover, Paeng Nepomuceno said, *"Sometimes, I am not interested in joining and participating because of the feeling that I will not win the competition since I can already assess my skill compared to my competitors."*

Furthermore, they claimed that this feeling comes when they are confined to monotonous activity without variation. [25] shared that pessimism is the attitude that things will go wrong and that people's wishes or aims are unlikely to be fulfilled. A person with a pessimistic personality tends toward a more negative—or some might say, realistic—view of life. Optimists, on the other hand, see things more positively. Pessimists usually expect negative outcomes and are suspicious when things seem to be going well. Optimists expect good things to happen and look for the silver lining when life doesn't go their way.

## *Fear of Being Rejected for Not Winning*

When they got home from the competition, some of them experienced rejection and embarrassment. The cancel culture has been prevalent among their colleagues in academia, and they are embarrassed when they go home empty-handed without any medal or accolade to present. Truly, cancellation culture has taken over the system of the society. Even athletes are affected by how they are treated. Though they did not aim to lose the games, there are backstabbers who wished them bad luck. This is too painful and hurtful for them that, through it all, despite the hardships they

went through in the training, they still received negativity from their colleagues.

## *Intimidated Players*

They also feel intimidation from the other players. This is especially true if they have titles to defend, like when they have been bagging gold medals in the immediate past meet or event. The feeling of intimidation is also obvious when they see other teams as competitive.

[26] cited that the intimidation factor is commonplace in competition. Some athletes will seek to get a mental edge by taking you out of your game. Intimidation takes many forms, such as: trash talking before a game; a brush-back pitch to shake up a hitter; an extra shove after a whistle was blown; and stare-downs or crazy antics.

## **Extrinsic Factors**

As an instructor-athlete, the presence of these factors affects one's performance before, during, and after the competition. External motivation often creates pressure, contrary to what you may think. Our brain just does not work well under pressure. Individuals become less happy.

According to [1], the brain's levels of the neurotransmitter's serotonin and dopamine decrease. Without those neurotransmitters, their cognitive skills like creativity, memory, and learning are weaker.

## *Game tactics of the opponents*

It is disheartening to most of the instructor-athletes that they feel the pressure given to them, particularly when they learn the capacity or capability of the opponents. They feel envious that they got the best coach while they were practicing based on their beliefs and perspectives.

This can be seen in the shared statement of Margielyn Didal when she said, *"Worrying before a sports competition is normal, especially when you are not familiar with the game tactics of the opponents."* Moreover, Lydia De Vega opined that *"Sometimes, I am worried about the result of the competition because of the strategies to be employed by my competitors during our games."* On these statements, it can be seen



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that instructor-athletes are also affected by the game tactics of their opponents, as to what methodology and/or strategy will be used against them.

## *Short Preparation for the Competition*

This is also a factor for them before the competition since the lack of practice makes them less confident in their endeavor. As to Paeng Nepomuceno, *"My worry is having short preparations. I always want to have a better conditioning process, and when there is a short preparation, expect the worst outcome out of it."* According to Margielyn Didal, *"Sometimes, it makes me feel worried if the training routines are not enough for me to become a competent athlete."* Moreover, Carlos Yulo opined that *"what makes me worried before the competition is the idea that we may not have enough practice or training, that players may be too nervous that would affect their performances."* In this case, instructor-athletes are worrisome if they have short preparations for the competition, as they believe that their skills and competencies are still lacking, especially when competing against schools that have rigid and vigorous training.

Moreover, time management has been shown to be a challenge for instructor-athletes. Most of the instructor-athletes engage in required athletic activities for 3 hours per day and 15 hours per week during in-season and 5 hours per week during off-season throughout the academic year. In the US, a breakdown of time commitments was not provided, but instructor-athletes reported dedicating up to 34 h per week to athletics (e.g., practices, weight training, meetings with coaches, tactical training, competitions, etc.), in addition to spending between 38.5 and 40 h per week working on academic-related tasks. These numbers show how important it is for instructors and athletes to develop time management skills to be successful in both academics and athletics. Overall, most athletes have expressed a need to find time to enjoy their experience outside of athletic obligations [27].

## *Lack of Support from Administrators and Stakeholders*

The role of the school administration plays a pivotal role in encouraging them to push harder and achieve greater heights. They admitted that there are policies in place; however, due to poor implementation of such policies, they are left behind in terms of benefits and

incentives received. Most of the participants agreed that they lack support from the administrators and other stakeholders. It was supported by the study of [28], which revealed that burnout results in athletes from high or conflicting demands that result in overload, low social support, low autonomy, low rewards, and low demands, which lead to boredom.

## *Risk of Accident*

In sports, anything could happen. Two of the instructor-athletes mentioned that one of their distresses is the risk of accident. This is a problematic scenario since it would be so hard for them to think positively when there are possibilities for accidents. The instructor-athletes are very cautious of any accidents that may happen to them. This is especially true as they are only relying on PhilHealth insurance provided by the government. There are no other insurances that cover the possible risk of an accident to them.

Furthermore, injured athletes have previously been reported to have elevated stress as a result of heightened worry about returning to pre-competition status [29], isolation from teammates if the injury is over a long period of time [30] and/or reduced mood or depressive symptoms [31]. In addition, athletes who experience prolonged negative thoughts may be more likely to have decreased rehabilitation attendance or adherence, worse functional outcomes from rehabilitation (e.g., on measures of proprioception, muscular endurance, and agility), and worse post-injury performance [32].

## *Unfair Treatment of the Sports Committee*

There are also issues with unfair treatment from the Sports Committee. This happens when they screen the instructor-athletes who will compose the team. Favoritism is still rampant and prevalent, which causes demoralization and derogatory feelings among the members of the team. The Sports Committee sometimes favors those who have influence or have been endorsed by the higher authorities, even if they are not capable of doing so.

Instructor-athletes also felt devastation when they heard that they were treated unfairly by the supposedly objective and impartial referees and umpires. It is unfortunate that they have been victims of dirty tactics

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from unscrupulous teams that wreak havoc on their stability of mind and their view on sportsmanship.

For example, in ball games, a foul is an inappropriate or unfair act by a player as deemed by a referee, usually violating the rules of the sport or game. A foul may be intentional or accidental and often results in a penalty.

Fair play gives sport the character of beauty. Fair play is a common language, the cement of sports that is capable of gathering together the whole sports world. There are many champions, but the champion of champions is the one who trains, competes, and lives in the spirit of fair play [33]

## *Game Tactics are not Working Well*

They said that they feel depressed when the things they have practiced and worked out do not go as well as expected. They tend to blame themselves to the point that they lose hope of winning the game. The uncertainties they feel while playing the game are inevitable. This was obvious in the statement of Margielyn Didal that, I am *extremely worried when the game tactics are not working well during the sport competition.* As to Robert Jaworski, *"Our team is worried when we see that our strategies are not working during the games."* This was seconded by Efren Reyes when he said, *"It is really a hard time when we see that our tactics are not working."* With this, instructors and athletes are worried if their plans will work against their opponents.

## *Boastful Game Participants and Cheering Squads*

This happens when athletes are confronted with players whose egos are super high, and they tend to malign the reputation of their opponent. This is quite disgusting and demoralizing, greatly affecting their optimism that they could win the game. The host school or university has the advantage considering that it is their home court, and they could easily invite cheerleaders from their troop.

Though cheering is a part of the game, their loud voice and gestures are very annoying to the other team. Some of these cheerleaders, according to the informant, have placards with printed words that would distort the attention and focus of the players.

## *Underserving Winners*

Instructor-athletes also questioned the veracity and validity of the winners. They believed that there are times when winners are undeserving, especially when tainted with doubts and dubious results. This happened when the officiating officials did not perform their functions as objectively and empirically as they could.

On the other hand, an athlete feels anger when an opponent is thought to be cheating, whereas joy is experienced when a valued goal is achieved. They have often sensed anxiety before a championship match, sadness after an unexpected loss, pride when overcoming and accomplishing a difficult or challenging goal, and guilt or shame after violating an idealized standard of behavior.

## *Biased and Boastful Coaches and Referees*

There are also instructor-athletes who experienced biased and boastful coaches and referees that were rampant. Instructor-athletes feel depressed, particularly if there are biased coaches and referees. According to Robert Jaworski, *Injustice in the decision-making of the game result made me feel so sad. Biased and boastful coaches who cannot accept defeat made me angry and out of control.* Moreover, Carlos Yulo opined that *"What makes me upset is if I hear unaccepted calls coming from the referees."* On the other hand, Margielyn Didal said that *"I feel angry when there are biased officiating officials during the competition."* On this particular distressor, instructor-athletes feel bad when they see that they are being aggravated in the game, particularly when calling for foul plays by the referees for their team.

On the other hand, within the sport context, emotions are not just phenomenological, subjective experiences; they strongly influence actions, performance, decision-making, and social functioning in sports and life [34]. Emotions are a response to situations that are automatically or reflectively interpreted by the person as potentially threatening, harmful, or beneficial [35].

## **Coping Mechanisms of Instructor-Athletes on Distressors in Participating in the Different Sports Competitions**

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The ability to perform successfully under pressure is a crucial aspect of sporting performance. A major problem for athletes is dealing with the critical deterioration in skill execution leading to substandard performance that is caused by an elevation in arousal levels. With this scenario, instructors and athletes highlighted strategies that can be implemented to help them overcome this issue.

Research has found that athletes are becoming more conscious of their performances, resulting in an upsurge in athletes administering special techniques aimed at lowering arousal levels and stress through mental skills training [1]. These techniques are known as coping strategies. After asking the participants how they respond to these distressors or negative stressors they have encountered before, during, and after the sports competition, the following themes summarize their answers:

## Relaxation and Physical Activity

Any number of relaxing activities can help people cope with stress. Relaxing activities may include practicing meditation, progressive muscle relaxation, or other calming techniques; sitting in nature; or listening to soft music.

Moreover, exercise can serve as a natural and healthy form of stress relief. Running, yoga, swimming, walking, dancing, team sports, and many other types of physical activity can help people cope with stress and the aftereffects of traumatic events.

## Doing Meditation

Most of the instructor-athletes said that mediation is a helpful means to cope with stress or depression related to their sporting event. Mediation provided them relief and comfort from the struggles they went through before, during, and after the competition.

There are many ways of meditating, like yoga exercises, Zumba classes, an early morning walk, sight-seeing, and others. These athletes are very eager to go out and be with nature and breathe in and out fresh air after the gruesome and troublesome trainings and results of the competition.

[37] noted that in the 21st century, meditation is making a resurgence as a practical tool for coping with life and nurturing personal growth. In fact, it has become very common to use meditation techniques for stress and anxiety relief, including banishing panic attacks. The benefits of meditation for anxiety and stress include reducing physical discomfort, putting things into perspective to make better decisions, and coping with difficult situations.

## Engaging in Recreational and Pleasurable Activities

Two (2) of the instructor-athletes identified engagement with recreational and pleasurable activities as mechanisms to move on and move forward. According to Margielyn Didal, *"I engage myself in recreational games in order to move on from negative stresses before, during, and after the sports competition."* Efren Reyes said it best: "I respond to the various distressors by engaging in pleasurable activities."

These recreational activities include visiting parks and nature, playing their favorite musical instrument, or simply singing in a videoke to blur out negativities in their body. According to [37], leisure activities can include playing an indoor game, listening to music, going for a walk in the park, playing with your kids or pets, social dancing, aerobics, or working out in the gym. Engaging yourself in a recreational activity that excites you is the best way to bring down unwanted worries, tensions, and stress and make you feel happier and healthier.

## Taking care of oneself

One has to be vigilant toward his or her physical self, as this will be the foundation of any sporting event. If the physical body deteriorates, there will be no other means to bounce back to the next level of competition. The instructor-athletes agreed that they have to take a bath every day, take vitamins and medicines if needed, take a rest, especially when the practices are toxifying, and have an executive check-up with a licensed physician to determine the status of the patients.

## Praying to God

One (1) instructor-athlete mentioned that placing God at the center of their endeavor will make them more



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prepared for their individualities. They are very positive that God provides the way for their aim to be champions in the game. This is one of the major characteristics of Filipino people: being thankful to God for the abundance of graces He gave them.

In sports, players have to say a little prayer before the start of the game. They call upon the intercession of the Divine Providence to guide, strengthen, and empower them as they play, with the end goal of winning the game. One of the research participants even admitted he has to read the Bible and do his rosary routine the night before the actual game.

## *Maintaining a positive perspective*

Being positive or optimistic gives them hope to continue their passion for sports. They get their inspiration and motivation from their loved ones, like their parents, friends, and comrades in the academy. This kind of attitude was manifested in the statement of Mansuelo Velasco when he shared, *Smile, for a new door of opportunity is about to come.*" It can be deduced from this statement that I am optimistic about the different possibilities in life.

On the other hand, Lydia De Vega said that *"tomorrow is another day. Sometimes we win, sometimes we lose. As long as we did our best, it served already as our trophy that we made it this far."* Moreover, Paeng Nepomuceno opined, *"As long as you have done your part, it's already a big contribution for your team. I know that it is not yet our time if we lose the competition; maybe next competition, we are the ones to bring home the bacon."*

According to [38], there are numerous advantages to becoming a positive thinker. The mechanism for the connection between health and positivity remains murky, but researchers suspect that people who are more positive may be better protected against the inflammatory damage of stress. Another possibility is that hope and positivity help people make better health and life decisions and focus more on long-term goals. Studies also find that negative emotions can weaken the immune response.

## *Being Prepared for Contingencies*

Some instructor-athletes admitted that they are also expecting whatever results come. To minimize the adverse impact of losing the game, they adopted the mindset of being prepared, that is, accepting the reality that there are only two possibilities in sports: either to win or to lose.

This was manifested in the statement of Paeng Nepomuceno: *"When preparations and financial constraints are on the way, I look for alternative techniques and strategies to train. Then, I am always prepared for contingencies. Whenever I see that things are not going my way, I always have a contingency plan."* According to Margielyn Didal, *"When there are problems along the way, all we need to do is be prepared and be resilient to cope with these problems."*

With these statements, it is up to the athlete to decide how to manage their situation. It is a matter of acceptance that will make them free from the bonds of failure and defeat.

## *Calming Down, Contemplating, and Thinking Rationally*

They also pointed out that calming down and thinking rationally makes them feel better. While this may sound impossible to most, particularly when one is in the middle of losing the game, this coping mechanism will mean a significant leap in stabilizing one's emotions.

One instructor-athlete quips that when in the midst of a dark moment in the competition, there is no other way to hold on but to think logically about what will happen next in their journey in sports.

Moreover, reflection and mediation, as mentioned in the earlier discussion, also helped a lot to accept defeat and move on. They asserted that by contemplating what transpired in the event, it made it easier for them to cope and look for better ways to rectify what went wrong in the competition. They even mentioned that they do some narrative analysis on their actions during the event and process their responses.

## *Mental health training*

At this time when depression is an issue, mental health training is one of their means to bounce back their

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enthusiasm towards sports. They certainly affirm that mental health issues are a concern among the athletes. Some of them broke down due to the expectations they set and eventually did not work well with them.

Athletes are also prone to mental and psychological torture. That is why it is imperative for them to take time to breathe and provide space to regain their strengths and passion for sports. According to one informant, their school is providing a mental health advocacy campaign to propagate the importance of a balanced life between physical and psychological needs.

[39] noted that when organizations implement mental health training programs, it helps normalize stress, depression, and anxiety. This is essential to concentrating on the whole person and connecting the dots between psychological and physical wellbeing. Training employees on how to manage their well-being can reduce feelings of shame when they are struggling. When employees feel comfortable talking about their well-being at work, they're less likely to withdraw or become disengaged.

## *Communicating with other People*

Communication is also one of the main coping mechanisms for stressors. Through constant communication and interaction, they tend to forget their defeats and laugh about them. For them, this will ease the pain they have inside their hearts.

Instructor-athletes believed that communication was the best way to thresh out differences and blurt out their sentiments and opinions on what transpired in their event. As correctly pointed out by [40] communicating one's mind through small talk and conversation will subside the pressures and struggles one feels inside. This is also true in the case of sports, where communication serves as an outlet to exchange ideas and convey messages. Athletes are provided with the opportunity to air out their issues and concerns, and the personnel concerned are given the opportunity to explain and elaborate on their sides.

## *Encouraging Oneself to Be Better on Next Competitions*

This is sometimes cliché and rhetorical, but as athletes, there is no one else who could help them move on but themselves. Encouragement is what they need to continue improving themselves. This self-encouragement is boosted by the encouragement made by their family, friends, and colleagues.

As to Manny Pacquiao, *"I encourage myself that I did the best that I could and enjoyed the game regardless of winning or losing."* As to Carlos Yulo, *"In every competition, we just need to encourage ourselves all the time to do better in the next competitions to come. This serves as an avenue for room for improvement."* Moreover, Hidilyn Diaz opined that *"encouraging ourselves to be better in the next competitions will help us to improve and motivate us to greater heights."* These statements emphasize that instructor-athletes can calm themselves after every competition as well as make themselves better on the next competition. This served as an avenue for them to achieve greater heights and glory for the next competitions they will be joining.

According to [41], self-talk serves as a platform to pacify their anxiety. These people need time to communicate with themselves so that they can redeem their confidence and ensure that they can bounce back from defeat. This coping mechanism is indeed helpful and beneficial for their mental health and psychological stability. After they have voiced their qualms, they will be able to regenerate their enthusiasm for better days ahead.

## **4. Conclusion and Recommendation:**

The instructor-athletes' eustressors act as motivators for them to advance their abilities in the sports they have chosen. They used it as a kind of inspiration to succeed in their line of work. Their distressors act as roadblocks and barriers to their achievement in the competition. Also, they are creative and sensitive enough to tackle the impractical problems and worries that arose, especially before, during, and after the sporting event.

The following suggestions were made: The administrators of the various schools, together with the organizers and facilitators of sports, should create training programs and initiatives that will lessen the many pressures experienced by the instructor-athletes and enhance their athletic performance in the various contests.

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Administrators need to be creative and offer initiatives that will help instructors and athletes feel less stressed. They may devise a work-life balance program that would provide instructor-athletes the support they need to manage their training, jobs, and personal lives. The coping strategies that help people deal with stressors should be reinforced and copied, and they should be used as a model for dealing with challenges before, during, and after sporting events. In order to be directed in maintaining the tradition of sporting greatness, the administrators may find it helpful to review their procedures, instructions, and programs with the help of the Acosta's Athletic Conditioning Model. Administrators, sports coordinators, and facilitators of the SUCs should create a training program to reshape and recalibrate instructor-athletes to address and handle stress. To properly and pertinently coordinate their sports programs and initiatives, schools and institutions should review their programs as well as their sports policies. Sports organizations should develop suitable and pertinent tactics, methods, and innovations for reducing and treating athletes' distressors as well as elevating their eustressors. To uncover new obstacles for instructor-athletes, a comparable study might be carried out on a different topic or area.

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