



# ATHLETES **INTERRUPTED**

PERSISTENCE • RESILIENCE • GROWTH

## **Guidebook for *Athletes Interrupted***

*Peer Podcasts used to Develop Strength and Resilience in Student-Athletes*

<http://soundcloud.com/athletesinterrupted>

These podcasts were created and developed by Dr. Joyce Mikal-Flynn and Bethany Crouch using evidence based research to identify troubling, challenging and even traumatic issues impacting college student athletes. Current and former Sacramento State student-athletes were identified and invited to speak to issues involving: transitioning to college level academics and sport, coping with injuries, redshirting, deselection, transferring from one institution to another, the evolving athletic identity and moving on...life after sport.

### *To Begin:*

There are some basic steps to follow. First and foremost - pick the best TEAM. As an athlete, you get this. The team in terms of what they bring to the process, how well they work together, following up and supporting the creative process is key. Our team had five people; a project director, a project coordinator, two student assistants and a research director. Each person was willing, capable and interested in the project from the onset. They had special and unique skill sets including organizational, writing, research, creative process, and connections. Each member took on specific tasks and responsibilities and were accountable for their respective tasks.

### *Communication and Accountability*

To enhance, support each other and keep on the timeline, weekly meetings were scheduled, in person or via Zoom. The project timeline and activities were discussed, each team member's

task reviewed, current status of the project discussed and each person would suggest their own plan and workload for the following week. Besides the right TEAM, we found the weekly meetings key to our productive work together, trusting and respecting each other and getting the project completed well and on time. Some meetings lasted 15 minutes, others 45 minutes depending on project and group needs.

### Choosing the Right Themes and Athletes to Interview

The themes used (see above) were based on evidence. Research was initially completed to review the major issues faced by college athletes and their life after sports. Since this grant was awarded to Sacramento State, only Sac State student-athletes were invited to be interviewed. Some podcast themes involved post-graduation, thus we used both current and former athletes. Also, due to research, it was noted using peer or mentor support was helpful, so using this in the context of peer-support podcast seemed both feasible and responsible. The decision regarding athletes being interviewed rested primarily with the Athletic Academic Advisor. Trainers, coaches, and the sports psychologist was also consulted. Once chosen, athletes were contacted directly by email then by phone to discuss the project and their interest in it. All were both honored and pleased to be asked.

### Preparation for Interviews

In conjunction with selecting podcast guests, a search for the right equipment and room to record the interviews took place. After sending out an inquiry, the team was contacted by a Communications professor. We met and told him more about the project and he graciously provided some 'sound proof' space for the interviews and helped find the best equipment, at no cost. Equipment used to record the podcasts included a Surface Pro laptop, a Blue Yeti microphone, and the recording platform chosen was Zoom. Accessibility to create podcasts was also a reason why this method was selected.

Those being interviewed were met with in advance, given some basic information regarding the themes and content expected in the podcasts, but no specific questions were given in advance allowing them to tell their stories in a less scripted manner. The project director and project manager, in advance, had ideas of questions and some comments they wanted to cover for the interview, however, the interviews were open ended with minimal guidance from the interviewer (see pages 4-5). Each interview was taped at a convenient time for the interviewed athlete. Interviews lasted between 45-50 minutes. An important team decision was to engage a company to assist in the editing process with the podcasts. Without experience regarding this skill and to honor those being interviewed and their stories, the team decided that it a necessary part of the project-to make the podcasts more professional in the style and delivery.

### Podcast Production

Having vetted companies, it was decided to utilize a local production company in Sacramento, CA. They had experience with podcasts, connections to Sacramento State and were able to connect with the athletics department to gain audio footage of some of the featured athletes from their competitions. This added to the podcasts in their creativity and interest. Additionally, this creative aspect along with the editing process was very helpful. What would have taken many hours for the podcast team to do independently was fairly seamless for this production company. Additionally, and what is of great importance for the team as well, is the production company provided written transcripts of each interview allowing for a qualitative research project to emerge from these interviews or data.

### Conclusion

This was an amazing project and experience. At one of the last meetings, it was discussed how proud we were regarding our teamwork, accountability, creativity and most of all, the podcasts themselves. This is a relatively simple process once you build your team, organize the time, and invest in the final production. Athletes Interrupted, a name and logo we created, was a worthwhile project. All podcasts can be found at <http://soundcloud.com/athletesinterrupted>.



**SACRAMENTO STATE**  
HORNETS

DEVELOPING & STRENGTHENING RESILIENCE (DSR) PODCAST

**THEMES**

NAVIGATING INJURY

DESELECTION

TRANSFERRING TO ANOTHER INSTITUTION

LIFE AFTER SPORT – CHOOSING A CAREER

PURSUING A DOCTORATE

**Interview with Aaron Crouch**

Former Baseball Student-Athlete

Doctor of Physical Therapy

1. Tell us about your sport; how you got interested in playing baseball and why you choose pitching. What was it about being outfielder ... that role – that intrigued you?
2. How long have you played – when did you start and how long did you play in college?
3. Talk about the overall experience; the good stuff and the challenges.
4. Share about challenges faced during your collegiate athletics career involving your sport....baseball is tough, how did you balance playing, traveling and academics.
5. Injury is a part of sport and can greatly impact the athlete physical, emotional wellbeing as well as their confidence. From your student-athlete's experience, talk about the impact and how although there are tough things, growth can be an eventual outcome...speak as to how you handled your injuries then
  - a. And how you would have handled them knowing what you know now?

6. Collegiate coaches' roles, their jobs are challenging. They have both personal, athlete and organizational responsibilities and challenges, including making hard decisions to "produce" or create the best team. What perspective did you gain after being released from your sport?
7. Talk about your experiences as a collegiate athlete regarding what it brought to you, how you grew, what you learned.
8. Finally, do you think reaching the level of a college athlete with all the ups and downs, learning how to win and losing...did that affect your ability to handle life after, specifically your work life? Why?
9. Did you include this experience on your resume? Did you discuss your athletic experience in job interviews? How did you frame it?
10. In the form of 'rules' or strategies, share your wisdom / advice to current student-athletes regarding their time in college and preparing for life after sports?