

Title: Sport Migration from the UK to the US: The Student-Athlete Experience

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Main Theme: Migration to the American collegiate system

Secondary Theme(s): Athletic development

Aims: To explore UK student athletes' experiences of migrating to the American Collegiate system, including their reasons for attending university in America and the impact the experience has had on their athletic development.

Method: Interviews were conducted with elite student-athletes who were currently attending university in the US (4 student athletes) or who had previously attended university in the US (7 student athletes). This provided experiences of a variety of NCAA division I, II, and III universities.

Results and Practical Implications: The results present several reasons for UK student-athletes to migrate to the US to attend university. First, coaches recruiting athletes to their programs and showing interest in their athletic talents. However, this often meant the athletes did not fully explore their options with other universities or investigate the reality of the scholarship programmes, instead trusting the coach's word and accepting offers presented to them. Second, athletes were offered substantial financial scholarships that they were not offered in the UK. Additionally, the level of athletic competition and support was believed to be better in the US than in the UK. With this in mind, the study identified several factors that both positively and negatively impacted the student-athlete's athletic

development and their experience once they were in America, including: (1) the coach-athlete relationship, which was challenging in situations where the coach held an athlete-first approach (rather than a holistic or person-first approach) and where there was a high coach turnover (which was reported by all participants); (2) significantly higher training demands, which improved strength but could lead to long-term injuries; (3) developing mental skills to cope with a high-level of competition and the realisation that only a few will make it to the professional level; (4) the team culture, which offered social support and motivation to succeed, but also resulted in less individualised training; and (5) the pressure leading to them thinking of sport as their job.

The research helps to understand the realities of the American collegiate experience for athletes. Practitioners can use these experiences to better inform their athletes who are considering the US system. Athletes could also be supported to fully explore their options and the positive and negative consequences of each of these options, including exploring multiple universities in the US and exploring university support within the UK. The research also suggests pre-transition support programs for athletes choosing this dual career route.

TASS have produced this lay summary. The full article is available (permissions may apply):
<https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/19357397.2020.1736487?journalCode=yssa>
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