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The Effects of Coaching Feedback on Perfectionism and Disordered Eating in College Athletes

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Poster Presentation P8

**THE EFFECTS OF COACHING FEEDBACK ON PERFECTIONISM AND
DISORDERED EATING IN COLLEGE ATHLETES**

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Feedback given to athletes by their coaches is a topic that has not been extensively researched in terms of its effect on perfectionistic tendencies and disordered eating in athletes. It is important to reduce factors that are associated with disordered eating before the overt disordered eating behaviors can develop into a more severe clinical-level eating disorder. In investigating these links, I drew parallels between research that has shown negative effects from harsh *parental* feedback to hypothesize about the effects of *coaching* feedback. I hypothesized the following: 1. Feedback from coaches that is interpreted by athletes as harsh, ego-involved, or highly critical will be positively correlated with socially prescribed perfectionism in those athletes. 2. Athletes with higher levels of pre-existing self-oriented perfectionism will expect harsher and more critical feedback from coaches than athletes that have lower levels of pre-existing self-oriented perfectionism. 3. Unmet feedback expectations will be positively correlated with disordered eating behaviors. 4. Socially prescribed perfectionism will mediate the relation between harsh, ego-involved, or highly critical feedback and disordered eating behaviors. In the current study, 103 collegiate athletes reported their attitudes and behaviors concerning eating, body image, perfectionism, the feedback they received from their coaches, and the feedback they want from their coaches. In addition, 17 coaches reported the feedback they give to their athletes in the three domains of health, academics, and athletics. Results of the study examined correlations between socially-prescribed perfectionism and negative feedback, self-oriented perfectionism and athletes' expectations of feedback, unmet feedback expectations and disordered eating, and the relationship between socially-prescribed perfectionism, negative feedback, and disordered eating. The results have implications for both athletes and coaches.