

Matthew Grey
Summer 2009

Peak Performance or Revelry: An Imperative Decision

In our society presently there is an emergent trend, and that trend is the abuse of alcohol among college students. There seems to be a smaller, more finite group of individuals however who are taking drinking to a complete new level. Are male college athletes, ages 18-24, who participate in sports at the division 1 level, more likely to drink in excess than those who do not, and are they much more probable to acquire consequences from drinking that are dealt with much more leniently than those of an run of the mill non athlete student?

The question that I am looking to solve this paper is if in fact male athletes ages 18-24, do in fact drink alcohol far more habitually than their conventional college peers. To what extent do these men exceed the normal drinking barrier, and enter a world that is objectionable. Then there is the case of the underage drinking that is taking place, those under the age of 21 and consuming an alcoholic beverage, which is against the law. To what extent do the universities that these men participate at, take responsibility for the negative actions of their players and minors, or do they simply look the other way in ignorance acting like no offence has occurred at all?

From my perspective there is a mounting problem and there seems to be staggering evidence that correlates along with this, it was said, "Findings from the Harvard School of Public Health College Alcohol Study indicate that college athletes binge drink and suffer alcohol-related harmful consequences at a higher rate than do college students who are not athletes. The first national look at binge drinking behaviors among college athletes appears in the January issue of Medicine & Science in Sports & Exercise. According to the study, male athletes binge drink at a rate 16 percent higher than that of male non-athletes, while female athletes binge drink at a rate 19 percent higher than that of female non-athletes." (Weekly 8)

From these findings and forewarnings there is no denying the fact that there is a serious problem with male college athletes ages 18-24 in the university sector. The case that was brought to light in the research was that they do in fact drink more than the regular college student. In our society currently we have accepted the fact that it is okay to smoke, drink, and act out of line, as long as you bestow the numbers and services requested of you on recruitment day. There is one major problem that is being over looked when these men set out for instant gratification, and the live for the moment motif, and that is they fail to realize that they are destroying their bodies that are meant to be treated as temples and well oiled machines, in order to get out the best optimum results possible. However if they keep ingesting alcohol in their systems at the rate in which they due, not only will it slow down their reaction speed, it will effect their quality of overall health. There is a difference between health and fitness, so I will let my friend Anthony Robbins help me out with the dissimilarity, "Fitness is physical ability to perform athletic activity. Health, however, is defined as the state where all the systems of the body -nervous, muscular, skeletal, circulatory, digestive, lymphatic, hormonal, etc.- are working in an optimal way..." (Robbins 440) Looking at the body from this light shifts the perception to the damage being done. If an individual continuously puts alcohol, and toxins, into his body at an irregular rate it causes the body to be unable process the alcohol and in turn leads to a function of the body known as a "hangover." These men are not in a peak state of mind, or awareness if they are abusing the degrees of alcohol that the report claimed.

It is understood that these men are not at a state of peak performance because of their alcohol consumption, but to what degree does alcohol effect the body of an athlete, it was written "The use of alcohol is often intimately associated with sport. As well as providing a source of energy, alcohol (ethanol) has metabolic, cardiovascular, thermoregulatory, and neuromuscular actions that may affect exercise performance. Strength is minimally affected, and performance impairments depend on the dose of alcohol and subject habituation to alcohol intake, exercise duration, environmental conditions, and other factors. Central nervous system function is impaired at high doses, resulting in decrements in cognitive function and motor skill, as well as behavioral changes that may have adverse

effects on performance. Effects may persist for hours after intoxication." (Shirreffs and Maughan 192-196) From this example the college players that are abusing alcohol on a daily basis are not only causing serious harm to their bodies but they are also effecting the way in which they perform their overall skill on the field. A player cannot be in a state of complete awareness if he was out the previous night getting intoxicated until the early hours of the morning. His reaction time and physical ability will be affected from the abuse of alcohol. How is it then that so many players deem it appropriate to abuse alcohol at such a high rate and carry out such high demanding sports?

College athletes live and network inside a world that is unlike that of their peers, trying to understand what is the motivating factor behind this alcohol fueled environment is something researchers have been working on avidly, much like this example, "Alcohol use among college students has become a considerable public health problem. Among this group, intercollegiate athletes are at a particularly high risk for excessive alcohol consumption and resulting negative alcohol-related consequences. The purpose of our review was to systematically examine three main issues related to alcohol consumption among intercollegiate athletes: (a) the prevalence rates and alcohol consumption patterns of this group, especially in comparison with those of collegiate nonathletes; (b) the various factors that might motivate or encourage alcohol use among intercollegiate athletes, primarily sport-related individual and environmental variables; and (c) considerations for conducting alcohol-related interventions with intercollegiate athletes. (Martens, Dams-O'Connor and Beck 305-16) How is it that this form of behavior has become acceptable and deemed fitting, and if not fitting one might imagine that it is at least endured to the point where it is permissible as long as the college athlete performs his tasks or skill that he was recruited to provide. This might seem very hypocritical to some individuals that feel that this form of favoritism does not exist, lenient might be the correct word since most coaches and advisors simply turn their heads and allow this behavior to go on.

The cause of why these male college athletes, ages 18-24 participate in increased drinking activities is still unknown, it is a complex layer cake of complex proportions

that account for a great deal of investigation, however it was said, "The present study used perspectives from the general literature on college alcohol consumption to examine mediational influences of peer, environmental, and parental variables on heavy drinking for student athlete and nonathlete samples. Eight hundred thirty-five freshmen who differed in organized sports involvement were compared on heavy drinking outcomes, peer norms, environmental influences, and parental communication. College athletes reported significantly more heavy drinking experiences than nonathletes. Peer norms, environmental influences, and parental communication were all significant mediators of the athlete-heavy drinking relationship. Athletes reported a higher perception of peer drinking, peer approval of drinking, higher alcohol availability, and direct drink offers, which, in turn, were related to higher rates of heavy drinking. (Turrisi, Mastroleo and Mallett 453-61) From the evidence extracted from this article it is clear that athletes do in fact drink more than their college peers and for good reason, they are in situations which allow them to acquire alcohol more frequently and as a result it leads to a feeling of approval and higher self worth. They are in an environment that encourages drinking and underage drinking and in return allows them to participate in these activities with minute or no consequences due to the fact that the majority of the team and its member are participating in this act.

When is it okay to go against the grain and say no to a drink? From a cultural and societal prospective alcohol has been deemed so customary and in mass quantities that those who take a stance against it and its destructive repercussions are often labeled as outcasts or losers. This in and of itself is a form of exile, standing up for what you believe to be true and just can sometime come with a heavy burden especially when you are dealing with such a tight social group like an athletic team. Athletic teams stick together and protect their own, and when the team is in any way shape or form being threatened they will in most instances go to any lengths necessary to protect the group rather than just one individual who is looking after his own well being, even when that individual in all actuality has a legitimate reason for not participating in the binge drinking and self destructive behavior the group is participating in. There is a common bond among athletes and that is something that is to be either cherished and respected or you are on the fringe of ostracism, it was

said "The study presents extracts of players' conversations from the changing room and student bar, and examines the ways in which the men negotiate masculine positional identity and (re)affirm separation from the 'other', such as women and gay men. The three most predominant topics of conversation (excluding omnipresent talk about football itself) were identified as academic studies, alcohol consumption, and women." (Clayton and Humberstone 295-16) From this article alone it is clear that college athletes are part of a group and that group is a very intimate, fine knit circle of individuals that relate to one another on very specific subject matter. Hypothetically if an individual is to try and not participate in these forms of activities it is more than likely that he is going to be driven out from the group completely, and if not he will be in a state of isolation which would make it hard for him to interact with his other teammates and peers. This form of treatment is deplorable and should not be tolerated in society let alone at the collegiate level. It takes away from one's self worth and makes them feel less than, when in reality they are standing up for what they feel is right and just. In any event this does not prevent this form of treatment from happening and causes many college athletes to conform to their surrounding and become a product of their environment. The real problem that this brings to question is, at what cost are these teams and athletes hurting their overall performance by abusing alcohol on a daily basis, and is this affecting their performance on the field, their reaction time, and their overall scholastic performance in the classroom, and is their segregation of one in all actuality tearing apart the whole at the seams?

Finding a one size fits all definition that encapsulates all heavy drinkers as alcoholics is not fair, nor is it logical, to clarify this discrepancy I look to Melinda Beck, she states, "According to the National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism, more than 30[percent] of Americans engage in risky drinking, but there is no consensus on the definition of an "alcoholic." Alcohol abuse is separated from alcohol dependence, based partly on the problems drinking causes." (Beck D 1) In this example it seems that college athletes would fall into the category of the alcohol dependent but it is hard to hypothesize unless there is further testing and evaluation done. Some would argue that they could not be dependent, they function, they perform well in their required field "sport", and ultimately they function at a relatively

normal state in society. Beck goes on to say, "And people can be dependent and not have abuse problems at all. They're successful students. They're good parents, good workers. They watch their weight. They go the gym. Then they go home and have four martinis or two bottles of wine. Are they alcoholics? You bet. And the goal is to get treatment for these folks, earlier, that is acceptable and attractive and effective." (Beck D 1) So from this perspective it seems that some if not many of the college athletes could potentially have a drinking problem that is affecting their overall way of living. Some simply deny they have a problem and say they are too young to even be considered a problem drinker, others do not even entertain the thought, and then there is the situational factor of the environment which in and of itself is one of the sole contributors to the problem. How can an athlete who is abusing alcohol on a daily basis even consider or fathom life without the bottle, when the environment in which these athletes live and interact in is truly one of the main reasons there is such a growing problem with alcohol abuse among male college athletes ages 18-24.

Male college athletes ages 18-24 need to learn to manage their drinking conduct, or if possible refrain from drinking entirely, because it inhibits their overall performance on the field. Athletes who participate in binge drinking on a daily basis are not only destroying their bodies, but also their capacity to perform at a peak state. Research has shown that problem drinking can lead to many off-putting consequences, "Problem drinking has consequences that affect others, such as motor vehicle accidents, fetal-alcohol syndrome, unsafe sex, domestic violence, and psychological damage to children of problem drinkers. Binge drinking, which is especially prevalent in young adults, leads to violence, unsafe sex, and drunk driving." (Dale & Federman, 2008) Alcohol is a pollutant that not only dehydrates the body, but also kills brain cells. When these men knock back alcohol in excess they position their bodies in a state of shock. When the body is oversaturated with alcohol, the brain, and other organs of the body cannot function at most favorable levels. Alcohol slows down the brain's ability to respond effectively, and efficiently. The amount of alcohol that these men are consuming constricts their overall performance on three levels, mentally, physically, and emotionally.

When alcohol is consumed at the rate in which these men do, brain activity is slowed down. Reaction time and overall state of awareness cannot be achieved when the body is bogged down by alcohol. After a profound night of drinking, these men also have a propensity to in a state of misery. Their minds are foggy, and seem to crushing from the inside out. Some describe this symptom as a hangover, it was said, "Known formally as "veisalgia," the alcohol hangover usually ensues after the consumption of 1.5 g/kg (five to six drinks in men and three to five drinks in women not tolerant to alcohol). The syndrome is characterized by headache, anorexia, nausea, fatigue, diarrhea, and tremulousness. Visuospatial skills, cognitive function, and job performance are impaired despite the clearing of alcohol from the bloodstream and can lead to accidents. Purported mechanisms include dehydration, an excess production of acetaldehyde from alcohol metabolism, and an accumulation of byproducts (congeners) found in dark liquors. Cytokines may play an intermediary role and account for some of the symptoms (e.g., malaise, gastrointestinal upset). Dehydration is common, leading to increases in antidiuretic hormone, cardiac output, and blood pressure; the electroencephalogram is abnormal." (Goroll & Mulley, 2009) There is no cure for a hang over. Many people claim to have undisclosed remedies that ease the discomfort felt from hangovers, but in all reality the only confirmed cure is time. When this variable is evaluated, time, these men are beyond doubt hindering their performance. The key is educating these men, "The best prevention is patient education and counseling. Light to moderate drinkers need to understand that they are at greatest risk from acute alcohol excess; persons with heart disease should be warned that the resultant increase in cardiac work can stress their limited cardiac reserve. All patients should be warned that psychomotor and cognitive impairment can be substantial and appropriate caution is warranted." (Goroll & Mulley, 2009) In order for an athlete to be able to perform at peak performance, he ought to be in a state of awareness, clarity, and purity. These three effects cannot be achieved if the individual ingests alcohol into his system on a habitual basis.

Alcohol also breaks the body down on a physical level. When an individual drinks in excess, stress and demand is to be found on the liver and kidneys. The body is forced to work overtime, in order to process all the surplus

alcohol that is flowing through the body. When the body is oversaturated with alcohol, the body is in a state of severe dehydration. Dehydration is something college athletes must try to steer clear of at all costs, not initiate. When an athlete is in a state of dehydration, he is at serious risk of health complications. The body due to lack of water and fitting nutrients, cannot execute the load being asked upon it by the athlete. Some individuals feel that when they are hung over and dehydrated, merely sweating and putting the body in elevated states of physical exertion can relieve the body's discomfort. This is simply counterfeit. When these men are dehydrated, they need to drink more water and relax, in order to let the body recuperate from the obliteration it was put through. If an individual were to just press on through the body's forewarning signs and workout at high physical exertion, the body reasonably could go into shock, or cardiac arrest. These men need to learn to value their bodies and their overall quality of life at a deeper level.

A staggering fact about alcohol is that most of the individuals that end up going to the hospital for dehydration are in fact dependent on alcohol, "Approximately 27% of persons between the ages of 18 and 64 meet the diagnostic criteria for alcohol dependency (McKinley, 2005). It is estimated that one in every five hospitalized persons is an alcohol abuser (McKinley, 2005). Clinically, only one of every ten alcoholics is diagnosed, and clinicians do not ask about alcohol use unless it is obvious. It is critical to identify people who abuse alcohol to prevent potentially fatal withdrawal symptoms. Surgical clients are at high risk for alcohol withdrawal syndrome because of the pre-procedural and postoperative fasting. Most signs and symptoms are caused by the rapid removal of the depressant effects of alcohol on the central nervous system." (Moyet & Juall, 2009) From this perspective it makes it quite clear why drinking water, and staying hydrated can help thwart fatal withdrawal symptoms.

As I pointed out earlier alcohol affects the brain in negative ways, this study claims, "Depending on its concentration in tissues, alcohol has effects on brain physiology, varying from specific receptor actions to nonspecific membrane changes. Ethanol enhances the actions of the inhibitory neurotransmitter γ -aminobutyric acid (GABA) at a subpopulation of GABA receptors. One of the

effects of ethanol is increased activity of the dopaminergic pathway from the ventral tegmental area (VTA) to the nucleus accumbens (NAc). This activation can be mediated by the effect on GABA receptors through suppression of inhibitory interneurons, but VTA activation results in an increase in extracellular dopamine in the NAc region. This effect can be learned; rats trained to self-administer alcohol begin to show an increase in NAc dopamine levels as soon as they are placed in the chamber where they have previously obtained alcohol. Other drugs of abuse, such as cocaine and heroin, also raise levels of the neurotransmitter dopamine in this brain area." (Humes, et al., 2000) Alcohol is a very powerful substance, and these men should become conscious about what they are ingesting into their bodies. This study makes it apparent that alcohol does indeed affect the brain and its response time.

If there is such a growing problem among male college athletes ages 18-24 in regards to alcohol abuse, what can be done to help thwart this trend. First and foremost a support group needs to be put in place for those who are ready and willing to take a stand against the social favoritism of binge drinking and alcohol abuse. Players need to know they have a place to go in which they can feel safe and secure from the outside world and all that it demands, something similar to this, "OBJECTIVE: The authors aimed to gain information on (1) the challenges for recovering students on a university campus and (2) the most helpful components of a collegiate recovery program. PARTICIPANTS: The 15 students in the study were all in recovery from substance abuse. They entered the university and also entered the campus recovery program either in fall 2002 or fall 2003. METHODS: Semistructured interviews were conducted with students multiple times during their first academic year. RESULTS: Participants identified several challenges on the university campus. Many believed they would have dropped out of school or relapsed without the support of the recovery program, and they described aspects of the program that were particularly important to them. CONCLUSIONS: Support from a campus recovery program is essential for many recovering students. There are a variety of recovery program components that can foster the sense of community that was so important to the students in this study." (Bell, Kanitkar and Kerksiek 650-7) This makes it quite clear that a support group is a key element that needs to be in place in order for college athletes to even

have a chance at attaining sobriety. When these individuals meet they will be able to talk about life issues that are related to their specific unique circumstances, which hopefully will give them some comfort in knowing they are not alone. It will be a form of union that is offered outside of the team, which if the bond from the team is revoked because they refuse to participate in the binge drinking and alcohol abuse, they will ultimately have a safe place to turn to in knowing their beliefs and values will be respected and cherished. It is within this form of framework that individuals need to be reminded that dividends are paid, living a clean and healthy lifestyle that is beneficial to ones wellbeing, unlike the framework of their teammates which revolves around ingesting toxins and alcohol into the system on a daily basis.

There can come a summit at which an individual hits rock bottom from alcohol, and has been defeated mentally, physically, and spiritually. For these cases one must then turn to the program that is offered by Alcoholics Anonymous, for they are a group of men and women who share their common experience of recovery and help each other to stay sober. In order for one to truly stay sober in the eyes of Alcoholics Anonymous, you must "come to believe that a power greater than ourselves could restore us to sanity." (Alcoholics Anonymous World Services 59) If an individual tries to stop drinking on will power alone, it is in their eyes highly unlikely, you must, "made a decision to turn our will and our lives over to the care of God as we understood him." (Alcoholics Anonymous World Services 59) This form of higher power can be whatever the person chooses, as long as the individual believes that he is no longer controlling his life. An example of this is, "There I humbly offered myself to God, as I then understood him, to do with me as He would. I placed myself unreservedly under his care and direction. I admitted for the first time that of myself I was nothing; that without Him I was lost. I ruthlessly faced my sins and became willing to have my new-found Friend take them away, root and branch. I have not had a drink since." (Alcoholics Anonymous World Services 13) It is in this form of self forgetting that one is able to find their true inner being, and forgive themselves for all the harm they have done why they were an active alcoholic. There is a process that the members go through and this is referred to as the twelve steps. If a player were truly fraught with the concept of

sobriety and what it means to be sober I would highly recommend this form of treatment for him.

Many individuals strive to take the attention of themselves to avoid from really finding the problem, Lama Surya Das explains, "Many of us are so quick to deny and cover up the true roots of our unhappiness that we are unaware of the depths of our buried suffering. We lose track of the patterns that haunt us, and we fail to find meaning and purpose in our experience. We get mired in our guilt or anxiety; we get overwhelmed by our sadness. Writing about your losses in a journal is not about getting stuck in the past. It's not about dredging up all the painful garbage and then getting stuck in your misery. Its is about bringing the painful feelings to the conscious awareness so that we can deal with them intelligently and sensitively and thus find some healing and closure." (Das 54) Using a journal as a means of therapy is a very beneficial method to regurgitate all the past experiences, and look at them in a sober state of mind. This I feel would be a great way for those players that are attempting to recover from drinking, and find the primary meaning and motivating origin that made them reach for the drink so often. What was it that made them feel they needed to drink so often, was it esteem, self worth, pleasure, or ultimately the effect that alcohol bequeathed upon them? This exercise could also be very useful for those players who say they do not have a drinking problem. It would be a way for them to be approachable and honest with themselves, and really gauge how much they are drinking and monitor their behavior and lifestyle while they are drinking. This would be something that would be for their eyes only, their own personal journal, because ultimately I feel when you are hiding and masking something inside yourself, it will eventually surface in one way shape or form. This way the players will be able to look back at their previous entries and evaluate what they have written and contemplate what it meant to them, and what it did not mean to them for that matter.

In recovery, support and feedback from those whom you care for intimately is very crucial however it can be very counter productive if the recovering individual feels they are being forced or coerced in anyway. An example from the Ceremony shows how this controlling can have its negative effects, "I don't want any of those others around. They can do their drinking some place else. Not at our place."

"Her face was stiff, and her lips barely moved as she spoke. She had expected that sooner or later he would want to go off with the others, Pinkie and Harley and the rest of them, to go drinking and hell raising- to give her more to worry over- the same things his mother had done, to bring disgrace to the family." (Silko 218) Inside each recovering individual is a desire to turn their life around, they want more than anyone else to rectify the past and make good on all the damage they have fashioned, however if you push and put restrictions on them, more than likely they will go against your counsel and superior reasoning.

It is also known as a form of co dependency when an individual tries to get involved with someone else's recovery, something that is strongly discouraged. It may seem like the appropriate course of action for the sober and sane individual that is trying to steer their loved one along, however they ultimately end up much worse and heartbroken than when they started. It always a good suggestion for the family of a recovering individual to stay at a loving distance and allow them to work their program and get the help they need within that designated framework, then when the time is ready the recovering individual will be ready to come and interact on his or her terms, but forced intimate recovery infrequently works.

Male college athletes ages 18-24 who play division one college sports, abuse alcohol in excess, at a rate that is abnormal and some consider it binge drinking. The systems, in which these men reside, not only sustain their behavior, but also in certain circumstances turn the other way in ignorance. Is this system benefiting these men, or the sports teams for which they play? As long as they participate on the field, deliver their services for which they were required, they are permitted to party as hard and lengthy as they want, devoid of any consequences.

The problem with this school of deliberation, which is at present being applied at countless division one university's, is not only enabling destructive behavior, but also causing young men to get into severe trouble. Where is the contingency plan? Where is the buffer? The college atmosphere is unlike that of any "real world" reality, in some circumstances, everything goes. This

study shows just how dire the problem actually is,"The overall response rate was 64.3% with 637 of 991 schools reporting with usable data on 13,914 student-athletes. For the eight categories of substance use, alcohol was the most widely used drug in the past year at 80.5%, followed by marijuana at 28.4%, and smokeless tobacco at 22.5%. Although anabolic steroid use was reported at 1.1% overall, some sports demonstrated higher use, and 32.1% obtained their anabolic steroids from a physician other than the institution's team physician." (Green MD, Uryasz MBA, Petr MBA, & Bray MS, 2001) When you append to the equation superior than life athletes, with egos larger than the universe, there is bound to be a predicament. There is a predicament, and it is mounting. Each year more and more male college athletes engage in unprotected sex, drunk driving, bar fights, and the list goes on. Why is it that these immature men seem to be living by the seat of their pants; like there is no tomorrow? My belief is that there is no education, awareness, and intervention between the athletes and the "other half" of the campus. These men need to be educated to the reality they are not larger than life, brought back down to reality. Also they need to comprehend precisely what they are ingesting into their bodies, a poison, alcohol is a poisonous toxin, which if consumed in excess can reason serious impairment to the body and brain.

Emotional highs and lows can be a considerable reason why male college athletes abuse alcohol in excess. They are continuously working on their bodies, either on the field, in a game, in the gym, or through their stringent diet regimen. Some of these men find that alcohol is the only form of let loose for them and their pent up left over energy. Is this the safest and most productive way? The counter to that is no, but I would hallucinate that no one has ever tried or even dared to step in and work with these men on emotional management. Why do they do what they do? What makes them feel like they need to get inebriated right after a big win? Why can't they not just relax and get a massage? These are all great forms of healthy stress discharge. They could even try bikram yoga. Whatever they do, being open and honest about their emotions is key.

Alcohol intervention is another key variable in the conflict against athletes and alcohol abuse. Not all of these men are full-blown alcoholics, but some might be well on their way. Making it a obligatory requirement to take an

exercise physiology course could benefit these young men enormously. In this class these men would learn about the body, and what it takes to make it perform at a most advantageous level. These men would also be educated on the negative effects of alcohol, and the destruction that it does to the body, and the mind. This approach could benefit these men by making them realize that in order to thrive on the field, they must treat their bodies like temples. Once they obtain this priceless information, with any luck they decide to change their destructive ways to more proactive causes.

The coaches and athletic commissioner's at a bulk of these larger division one universities enable their athletes by merely allowing them to get away with whatever they want. This honestly needs to stop in order for these men to even have a possibility at restraining their alcohol intake. The coaches simply do not regard their player's harmful shortcomings as punishable, rather as a disarray to clean up. They are more apprehensive with keeping the player on the field, and in the classroom, than making sure his personal life is in order. This is ridiculous. How is an individual possibly going to ever triumph over his addiction or bad behavior, when he knows he has a shelter net that will catch him whenever he falls? This is the case with these athletes. The run of the mill college student does not have this luxury; they are on their own when it comes to paying for their actions. If a student is at a university on pure academic scholarship were to commit the same crime or act that a division one college athlete were to commit, that scholastic student would feel the wrath of his crime to the full extent, with no one in his corner to contest for him. Whereas the college athlete would have the head coach, the team, and the athletic director, all there trying to make thing "go away" in the best interests of the team, the player, and the university. This is not how you help someone this is how you enable them.

Even though the NCAA currently has a no drug policy, I feel it needs to expand much further than that, into the area of alcohol. Breathalyzers should be an acceptable means of monitoring athletes on or off the field. If these men are suspected to be under the influence of alcohol, they should have to take the test. Also as a deterrent, this could be used to build honesty. If an athlete shows up to practice hung-over and lethargic, the coach should

administer the test to see if he indeed was out all last night getting intoxicated. If the individual tests positive there should be consequences for his actions, rather than a slap on the wrist. The current disciplinary action that is taken at a majority of these universities is far from this train of thought. However if they adapted this concept, maybe they would reap the rewards down the road of more assertive and higher performing athletes, due to the elimination of alcohol.

As I mentioned earlier, if that person were alcoholic, I would use Alcoholics Anonymous. Recovery from drinking is a very sensitive and emotional process. You must want it for yourself, and no one else. No one can make you stay sober, no one can make you go to a meeting, and no one can make you not pick up the first drink. It is up to you the individual to want to do it for your self, and know in your heart that you cannot go back to the bottle because it will destroy you.

Once an alcoholic reaches that point of bottom, he can start to make progress, "Why all this insistence that every A.A. must hit bottom first? The answer is that few people will sincerely try to practice the A.A. program unless they have hit bottom. For practicing A.A.'s remaining eleven Steps means the adoption of attitudes and actions that almost no alcoholic who is still drinking can dream of taking. Who wishes to be rigorously honest and tolerant? Who wants to confess his faults to another and make restitution for harm done? Who cares anything about a Higher Power, let alone meditation and prayer? Who wants to sacrifice time and energy in trying to carry A.A.'s message to the next sufferer? No, the average alcoholic, self-centered in the extreme, doesn't care for this prospect--unless he has to do these things in order to stay alive himself." (Alcoholic Anonymous p 25) It is from this framework and mindset that the alcoholic starts to realize he can live again, only if he does not pick up the first drink, and follows the 12 suggested steps. Now I am not saying that these steps are the Holy Grail and that other people cannot stay sober without this program, but it is highly unlikely. The recovering alcoholic needs to be around other alcoholics that are going through the same things he is or have had gone through, and this program offers that option.

There has been many studies done much like this one that show the effectiveness that A.A has on alcoholics, "Twelve-step programs represent a readily available resource for individuals with substance use disorders. These programs have demonstrated considerable effectiveness in helping substance abusers achieve and maintain abstinence and improve their overall psychosocial functioning and recovery." (Donovan 303) It shows that A.A. does in fact help the individual improve his overall quality of life.

Spirituality is a very big part of the A.A. program, and in this study researchers explains why, "Alcoholics Anonymous (AA) and other 12-step programs are widely employed in the addiction rehabilitation community. It is therefore important for researchers and clinicians to have a better understanding of how recovery from addiction takes place, in terms of psychological mechanisms associated with spiritual renewal. A program like AA is described here as a spiritual recovery movement, that is, one that effects compliance with its behavioral norms by engaging recruits in a social system that promotes new and transcendent meaning in their lives. The mechanisms underlying the attribution of new meaning in AA are considered by recourse to the models of positive psychology and social network support; both models have been found to be associated with constructive health outcomes in a variety of contexts." (Galanter p265) It is clear that some form of change occurs inside the alcoholic, and with spiritual acceptance, a recovering alcoholic can potentially stay sober for the rest of his life.

The growing alcohol abuse dilemma that our college athletes ages 18-24 are currently facing, seems like it is here to stay. Is this a problem that we created, one that we simply allowed to snowball out of control? Is it in part our cultural and societal views that permit this to go on, because we believe alcohol to be a social lubricant that is so easily accessible and frequented by those in society that a little excessive drinking among college students is nothing out of the ordinary. Alcohol after all offers us a means of escape from reality, a way out from the here and now. If that is the case then we truly have missed the mark, and have begun to ask less from ourselves

as individuals and as a nation. What these male college athletes ages 18-24 are participating in is far from conventional behavior and is in essence shaping their lives for better or worse; and in most cases for worse. They are binge drinking on a daily basis with little or no consequences, and the only form of reinforcement received is the positive reinforcement they receive from their peers and the effects of the alcohol itself. So it is no wonder why these men are on a collision course to destruction, there are no consequences for their action and they get away with whatever they want. There needs to be a change and a new call to action. Prohibition is clearly not it, but different treatment options are a good start. Opening the door just a crack to the possibility that these men might be alcoholic or depended on alcohol is another platform. For those that choose to take the stand and say no to alcohol and choose to be true to themselves and their bodies, the support groups need to be there for them in order to have a voice to vent. If someone, coaches, administration, or the NCAA, does not shine light on this problem, these men could end up with serious repercussions to their health, and their actions while intoxicated could harm others.

Bibliography

Alcoholics Anonymous World Services, I. (2001). *Alcoholics Anonymous*. New York: The Grapevine.

Alcoholics Anonymous. *Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions*. New York: Alcoholics Anonymous World Services, Inc., 1981.

Beck, M. (2008, January 8). Are You an Alcoholic? *The Wall Street Journal* , p. D 1.

Bell, N., Kanitkar, K., Kerksiek, K., Watsom, W., Kostina-Ritchey, E., Russell, M., et al. (2009, May). "It has made college possible for me"; feedback on the impact of a university-based center for students in recovery. *Journal of American College Health* , 650-7.

Brenner, J., & Swanik, K. (2007, November). High-risk drinking characteristics in athletes. *Journal of American College Health* , 267-72.

Clayton, B., & Humberstone, B. (2006). Men's Talk: A (Pro)feminist Analysis of Male University Football Players' Discourse. *International Review for the Sociology of Sport* , 41 (3), 295-316.

Dale, D., & Federman, D. (2008). *ACP Medicine* (Vol. 4). WebMD Inc., USA.

Das, L. S. (2003). *Letting Go of the Person You Used to Be*. New York: Broadway Books.

Goroll, A., & Mulley, A. (2009). *Primary Care Medecine: Office Evaluation and Managment of the Adult Patient* (Vol. 6). Philadelphia, Pa: Lippincott Williams and Wilkins.

Green MD, G. A., Uryasz MBA, F. D., Petr MBA, T. A., & Bray MS, C. D. (2001). NCAA Study of Substance Abuse Habits of College Student Athletes. *Clinical Journal of Sport Medicine* , 11, 51-56.

Humes, H., DuPont, D., Gardner, H., Laurence, G., Harris, J., Hazzard, E., et al. (2000). *Kelley's Textbook of Internal Medecine*. Philidelphia , Pa: Lippincott Williams and Wilkins.

Joy, E. A., Minami, T., & Toth, R. (2009). High Rish Behaviors in Male Athletes: Results Of A Secondary Screening Study: 795: May 28 2:00 PM. *Medicine and Science in Sports and Exercise* , 41 (5), 83-84.

Marquez, G. G. (2003). *Love in the Time of Cholera*. New York: Vintage Books.

Martens, M., Dams-O'Connor, K., & Beck, N. (2006). A systematic review of college student-athlete drinking; Prevalance rates, sport-related factors, and interventions. *Journal of substance abuse treatment* , 31 (3), 305-16.

- Moyet, C., & Juall, L. (2009). *Nursing care Plans and Documentation: Nursing Diagnosis and Collaborative Problems* (Vol. 5). Philadelphia, Pa: Lippincott Williams and Wilkins.
- Robbins, A. (1991). *Awaken the Giant Within*. New York: Summit Books.
- Shirreffs, S. M., & Maughan, R. J. (2006, August). The Effect of Alcohol on Athletic Performance. *Current Sports Medicine Reports* , 5 (4), pp. 192-196.
- Silko, L. M. (1977). *Ceremony*. New York: The Viking Press.
- Spada PhD, M. M., Nuamah, F., Luty, J. P., & Nikcevic, A. P. (2008). Changes in Alcohol Expectancies and After Inpatient Chemical Detoxification for Alcohol Dependence. *Addictive Disorders and Their Treatment* , 7 (3), 157-161.
- Turrisi, R., Mastroleo, N. R., Mallett, K. A., Larimer, M. E., & Kilmer, J. (2007). Examination of the mediational influences of peer norms, enviornmental influences, and parent communications on heavy drinking in athletes and nonathletes. *Psychology of Addictive Behaviors* , 21 (4), 453-461.

