

THE YOUTH SPORTS EXPERIENCES OF COLLEGIATE SOFTBALL ATHLETES

Sharon M. Lehman
Azusa Pacific University

Christopher R. Schmidt
Azusa Pacific University

Jennifer L. Livingston
Azusa Pacific University

The purpose of the present phenomenological study was to examine the youth sports experiences of current and former collegiate softball athletes. The 10 female participants ranged in age from 19-40 and participated in individual interviews. Five major themes emerged from the data: (1) 'Cause I Love It, (2) A Family Thing, (3) The Shadow Side, (4) I Needed a Break, and (5) It Was Worth It. Participants uniformly described having strong positive emotions toward, and an identity with, the sport of softball. However, most of the participants also mentioned a negative side of youth sports involving coaches, parents, or weariness from years of continued participation. Overall, participants described having gained important individual and interpersonal attributes from their youth sports experience.