

Critical Incidents in Sports

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The tragic American Airlines – Black Hawk Helicopter collision in Washington D.C. calls to mind the unpredictability and inherently fragile nature of life. Among the 67 people who died were 28 members of the international figure skating community. As tragic as all loss of life is, the death of young athletes, seems to strike a particularly responsive cord.

To think that 28 people in a world of billions can have such an everlasting impact on the entire sports community is astounding, but all too true. Those who died will never have to bear pain and suffering again. It is an entirely different story for the ones who are affected by them leaving the world behind. The sports community has suffered a great tragedy and lost the lives of once great athletes that were too young to leave this world. To say that they will be missed is an understatement, and the community will mourn them for years to come.

Following the sudden death of a University of Utah football player, Dr Keith Henschen and Dr. John Heil interviewed the players teammates to understand the impact of that death. The research entitled *A Retrospective Study of the Effect of an Athlete's Sudden Death on Teammates* published in Omega in 1992, explores the response of fellow teammates.

In interviews it was found that even after 5 years had gone by the players were still experiencing grief towards their once fellow comrade. The responses from the teammates were consistent with four major themes: disbelief and shock, continued memories, circumstantial elicitation of memories, and common meaning attached to the event. We were surprised by how strong and enduring were the memories of this incident. At the link below is a full copy of the article.

https://drive.google.com/file/d/1lzwAuEI4Naz_1QMWYjj3X3FORS816Ax/view?usp=drive_link

How does one respond to such devastation? The Center for Performance Psychology recommends following the 6 C's: Connect with the community, coach with information, consider the process, consult with professionals, consider return to play carefully, and care for yourself (Athey & Heil, 2011). So, through the challenging times it is important to consider your own well-being along with others and to pace yourself in the healing process. The full article can be found at the link below.

<https://drive.google.com/file/d/1JoLC4ThVgdqCq9ajqWIAZPdZ7mypo9MU/view?usp=sharing>

A memorial benefit event, "Legacy on Ice" has been scheduled for March 2 at Capital One Arena in downtown Washington D.C. in memory those who died.