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# INVESTIGATING SOCIAL SUPPORT AND PROFESSION VOLLEYBALL PLAYERS ON INTERNATIONAL TEAMS

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Type: Scientific  
Category: 4: Leadership Issues in Sport Organisations

## **Abstract**

### RESEARCH QUESTION

This qualitative study describes the type of social support available to American professional volleyball players playing in Switzerland.

### LITERATURE REVIEW

Social support has been shown to be an important aspect of athletes' sport experiences (Rees & Hardy 2000). A number of studies with elite athletes have shown the importance of social support. According to Noblet and Gifford (2002), emotional strain related to a performance slump increased when the perceived social support from the coaching staff was reduced or minimized. Hays et al. (2007) reported that world class athletes derive immense confidence in their ability to perform when coaches provide social support, including positive feedback, reinforcement, and compliments. In addition, Connaughton, Hanton & Jones (2010) reported that improving and maintaining mental toughness was enhanced when a large support network was in place.

### RESEARCH DESIGN

This qualitative study describes the type of social support available to American professional volleyball players playing in Switzerland. Interviews were conducted to better understand the overall experience, and how the players would describe various types of social support available to them. The interview questions were adapted from the interview guide used by Rees and Hardy (2000). Interviews were conducted in person with 14 American professional volleyball players, and lasted between 45 to 60 minutes. The researcher reviewed the interview notes numerous times to compile a list of themes. To verify themes, member checks (participants were sent a copy of the transcript to verify and add their additions) were utilized, and an external auditor (another researcher verified the process of indexing and finalizing the

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themes).

## RESULTS AND CONCLUSION

Five key themes emerged: 1) support from other players, 2) support from one key individual, 3) support from family and friends, 4) frustration with volleyball experience, and 5) cultural challenges. The results indicated that parents, family, and friends provided key support via the internet. Fellow American teammates were also essential and provided social support. The athletes did not mention their coaches in regard to any type of social support. This research points to the need to help athletes learn how to maximize the social support available, and ask for assistance from club personnel when needed.

## References

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